Smoke-Free Generation

Factsheet - Northern Ireland

Smoking prevalence

- In 2024/25 **12%** of people in NI smoked, down from **17%** in 2021/22[1].
- On average, someone who smokes loses approximately **20 minutes** of their life for every cigarette they smoke.
- **Three-quarters** of smokers wish they had never started.

Impact of smoking

- Smoking is the leading cause of preventable illness and premature death, killing over **2,000** people every year in Northern Ireland.[2]
- Lung cancer accounts for around **24%** of all cancer deaths in Northern Ireland, with smoking being the main causal factor in **80%** of those deaths.[3]
- Smoking-attributable deaths have reduced from **234 per 100,000** population in 2016-2020, to **198 per 100,000** in 2020 – 2024.
- Smoking substantially increases the risk of major health conditions. For example, smoking during pregnancy results in a **47%** increase in chance of stillbirth.[4]
- In 2024/25, around **25,000** hospital admissions in Northern Ireland were attributable to smoking.[5]

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[1] Health inequalities annual report 2026 | Department of Health
[2] NI Health & Social Care Inequalities System
[3] NI Audit Office Report - Tackling the Public Health Impacts of Smoking and Vaping.pdf (pg.20)
[4] Risk of recurrent stillbirth: systematic review and meta-analysis | The BMJ
[5] NI Health & Social Care Inequalities System

Smoking – cost to health service

- Smoking is estimated to cost Health and Social Care (HSC) system in NI **£218 million** each year.[6]
- In 2015, smoking was estimated to cost the NI economy around **£450 million** annually, while approximately one million working days were lost each year due to smoking.[7]

Stop smoking support

- It's never too late to stop smoking. Quitting at any age improves health and reduces the risk of smoking-related disease.
- In 2025/26, more than **9,200** people accessed stop smoking services in Northern Ireland.
- Around **60% of** people who set a quit date reported successfully quitting after four weeks, showing that support can make a real difference.
- Free stop smoking support is available across Northern Ireland, including behavioural support, nicotine replacement therapy and stop smoking medications.
- Visit www.stopsmokingni.info or speak to your GP, pharmacist or healthcare professional to find out more.

[6] NI Audit Office Report - Tackling the Public Health Impacts of Smoking and Vaping.pdf (pg. 21)
[7] NI Audit Office Report - Tackling the Public Health Impacts of Smoking and Vaping.pdf (pg.21)