

Public ignorant of smoking death toll but back move to ban tobacco marketing

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Very few people are aware of the shocking level of devastation caused by tobacco each year in UK according to new figures released by Cancer Research UK today.

Fewer than one in five (18 per cent) of the 4,300 UK adults surveyed correctly said that there are 100,000 deaths as a result of [smoking](#) every year in the UK.

The figures add further weight to Cancer Research UK's ongoing campaign to remove all attractive and stylish designs from [tobacco](#). Glossy packaging adds to the deadly allure of cigarettes. Standardised packaging would remove this and increase the impact of picture health warnings.

Smoking causes more than eight out of 10 cases of lung cancer, and starting smoking at a young age greatly increases the risk of lung cancer. At least 13 other types of cancer are also linked to tobacco, including oesophageal, mouth, bladder, bowel, pancreatic and kidney.

The findings also show there is strong public support to protect children from [tobacco marketing](#) and remove the design gimmicks from tobacco packaging, putting all tobacco in plain, standardised packaging. Only 12 per cent oppose the measure.

Just over three quarters (76 per cent) also agree that children should not be exposed to any tobacco marketing.

The results are published as standardised packaging takes the next step in becoming law, with the House of Commons now considering the move. A week earlier the House of Lords backed the measure, more than a year and a half after the Government first began consulting on this issue in April 2012.

Jim Richardson, 58 from Prudhoe in Northumberland, started smoking when he was about 15 and was diagnosed with advanced and inoperable lung cancer in 2010. Father of four Jim wants to help prevent more [young people](#) from starting smoking.

"I started smoking because I thought it was cool," he said. "Back then, my friends thought it odd if people didn't smoke. I smoked about 20 a day but I quit cigarettes when I was 21 after the birth of my first son

Jimmy. Then I switched to cigars because I was lured in by the persuasive advertising campaign 'Happiness is a Cigar Called Hamlet.' I honestly thought they were mild and not harmful.

"To my absolute joy and gratitude my treatment seems to be working. Looking at the CT scans I know that the chemotherapy followed by radiotherapy reduced my cancer to a tiny fraction of its size and I feel as if I've been given a second chance.

"I know first-hand how horrific [lung cancer](#) is and how it's almost always preventable by not smoking in the first place. My wife Di and I run children's day nurseries and out-of-school clubs in Hexham and Prudhoe caring for young children. I would hate to think that any of the hundreds of children we have looked after might ever go through what I have because they were tempted by one glitzy packet attempting to make smoking look cool. It's encouraging to know that plain, standardised packs are moving closer to becoming a reality in the UK and I hope the government introduces this as soon as possible."

Last year, the government put the policy on hold, but six months later announced an independent evidence review that will report in March. The review and the decision to create regulations - the details of how and when standard packs will be introduced - are the final hurdles to standardised packs becoming a reality across the UK.

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's head of tobacco policy, said: "With the House of Commons now looking over the Bill today, it's important to remember why reducing [smoking rates](#) is so important. That smoking can kill and cause so much illness has been known for decades, but it's clear that most people remain unaware of just how many people die because of tobacco. What's heartening to see is the level of support to protect children from tobacco marketing and reduce the appeal of smoking.

"Marketing can be the first hook that draws young people into a lifetime of nicotine addiction, an addiction that ends in death for half of all long-term smokers. Standardised packaging will give millions of children one less reason to start smoking, and we urge the Government to make this a reality as soon as possible."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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