

New data model gives insight into youth smoking variation across England

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New figures released today estimate smoking rates among young people (aged 15) in local areas of England for the first time.

Modelled by the University of Southampton and the University of Portsmouth, the figures are estimates of youth [smoking rates](#) for every local authority, ward and local NHS level – based on factors known to predict [young people](#) smoking.

The data modelling was commissioned by Public Health England (PHE) and NICE to help local organisations respond to high levels of smoking within their areas.

Professor Graham Moon of the University of Southampton said: "By having a snapshot of their communities, local organisations are best placed to take action so future generations no longer suffer the devastating and preventable harm caused by tobacco. If we can stop young people starting smoking before the age of 19 then they stand the best chance of enjoying the health, social and financial benefits of a smokefree life."

Public Health England's ambition is to reduce smoking rates among young people to secure a tobacco-free generation. Nationally an estimated 12.7 per cent of 15 year olds are regular or occasional smokers, but the data shows considerable variation between areas.

Dr Liz Twigg of the University of Portsmouth said: "We know with

some certainty which factors increase the likelihood of young people starting to smoke - ethnicity, social class and parental behaviour all play a role. For the first time we can combine these factors, national surveys of youth smoking data and what we know about [local communities](#) to identify areas where young people are likely to have a higher risk of being a smoker."

Areas with high estimates included Hartlepool, Gateshead, Plymouth, South Tyneside and Kingston upon Hull.

Areas with the lower estimates were concentrated in Greater London, including Harrow, Newham, Redbridge and Brent.

Professor Kevin Fenton, National Director Health and Wellbeing for Public Health England commented: "Nationally [youth smoking](#) rates are falling and are at their lowest ever levels. But we know smoking rates vary considerably across the country and smoking causes greater harm to more deprived communities. The estimates shine a light on communities where young people have a higher risk of smoking and will help local agencies to focus efforts where they are most needed.

"We want to secure a tobacco-free generation and these figures will help us towards this goal. Our most disadvantaged communities have the most to gain."

Smoking is the single biggest cause of the difference in life expectancy between the richest and poorest in England. Nearly eight million people still smoke, with 90 per cent having started before the age of 19.

Professor Gillian Leng, NICE Deputy Chief Executive, added: "Nine out of ten smokers started by the age of 18. We must do more to prevent our children and young people from using tobacco products, or we will see tens of thousands of them suffer and die prematurely as adults. Fully

implementing proven tobacco control interventions would help keep our children and young people from falling victim to tobacco."

Provided by University of Southampton

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