England off track to meet government's 2030 smoke-free target

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England will fail to be smoke-free by 2030 if current smoking trends continue, according to a report released today from Cancer Research UK.

New figures reveal that England is not expected to reach smoke-free

until 2037—seven years behind the ambitious target set last year. And unless smoking in the poorest communities is tackled, health inequalities will remain rife.

The new projections show around a 20-year gap in smoking rates between the least and most deprived people in England, with the richest expected to achieve smoke-free in 2025, and the poorest not reaching it until the mid-2040s.

The Government hopes that 2030 will be the year when England can call itself smoke-free—getting the overall proportion of adults who smoke down to 5%. 14% of adults in England smoke cigarettes. But plans on how to achieve this are yet to be set out. Reinvesting in stop smoking services and national education campaigns that encourage smokers to quit will be essential, as both have had significant cuts in recent years.

In order to reach its ambition, smoking rates need to drop 40% faster than projected. Cancer Research UK believes there are actions Government must urgently take to achieve this, including a fixed annual charge on the tobacco industry which would provide funding to reduce the £11 billion burden smoking related illnesses cost society in England every year.

This money could help provide more funding for stop smoking services which give smokers the best support to give up for good. But Government need to ensure the tobacco industry are not involved in how this is spent.

If these actions are taken and the Government reaches its target, there could be around 3.4 million fewer smokers in England by 2030 compared with today.

Dr. Katrina Brown, Cancer Research UK statistics manager and report

co-author, said: "Our modelling suggests that if the 2030 target is achieved, there could be around 3.4 million fewer smokers in England compared with today. But unless Government acts to make smoking rates fall faster, we're unlikely to reach the target.

"Smoking is the biggest cause of cancer, leading to around 120 cases of cancer in England every day, so it's vital that the government tackles tobacco to prevent illness and suffering."

Smoking takes the lives of around 115,000 people in the UK every year.

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's director of cancer prevention, said: "Smoking—and its catastrophic impact on health—remains more common within poorer communities. So more funding is needed to help these disadvantaged groups to quit as they are increasingly being left behind.

"The tobacco industry makes more money every year than Coca Cola, Disney, Google, McDonalds and FedEx combined, while its products continue to kill people. It should be made to pay for the damage it causes, which is why we're calling on the Government to introduce an annual charge on the industry to fund these vital services that will help get England smoke-free by 2030.

"The government must act now if they are to see this smoke-free ambition become a reality."

  More information: www.cancerresearchuk.org/healt … rts-and-publications

Provided by Cancer Research UK