

Smoking Ban Survey: Interim Results show the Smoking Ban is damaging the trade of over 60% of hospitality premises in England

For the last two months, the campaign group Freedom 2 Choose (F2C) have been carrying out a comprehensive survey of the effects of the smoking ban on hospitality establishments in England.

- With some results still to come in, the survey shows that over 60% of establishments are experiencing reduced trade since the ban was introduced on July 1st 2007. Of those establishments, 98% attribute the smoking ban as the sole or part cause of the reduced trade. Over 50% state the ban is the sole reason for the reduced trade. 66% of respondents want the ban to end. Smoking rooms are cited as the most preferred method of re-introducing smoking.
- There are regional variations in attitudes towards the smoking ban. The North of England is most strongly opposed to the ban. Survey results also show that Labour will probably lose votes to other parties as a result of its imposition of the ban, particularly as it had promised in its manifesto not to implement such a blanket ban.
- The overwhelming message from survey respondents is clear: remove this ban and let the management of the premises decide whether to allow smoking or not. The final report will be issued towards the end of March.

Other findings

- As a result of the ban many premises are reducing staff hours , shutting early or not opening at all on some evenings.
- The ban was unwelcome: 68% stated they had not supported the idea before its introduction.
- 68% thought the public cost of introducing the ban was unjustified, and over 50% were pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the hospitality trade.
- 96% expected further restrictions to be introduced by Government. 97% felt the Government were unsympathetic to the problems faced by the Hospitality Trade.
- Outside smoking is proving to be a major problem. 45% were experiencing problems with the provision of outside smoking areas. Many respondents stated problems with neighbours complaining about noise and other pubs complained they did not have sufficient room to accommodate a proper smoking area. Others mentioned the problems of elderly people having to go outside and smoke in the cold, where they may be louts congregating.
- Political parties take note: there will be an effect on voting intention: 32% state that the smoking ban will change the way they will vote at the next election. Of those, 21% will switch from Labour to Conservative, 28% won't vote, and 40% will consider switching to a party that opposes the ban. UKIP may benefit from this as the only UK political party opposed to the ban.
- The majority of respondents believe that second-hand smoke is a danger to staff, although many made the valid point that most of their staff are smokers. Others made the other point that it is up to the individual to decide if they want to work or not in a smoking environment.

END