

Scotland (figure 3). The proportion of children who have never tried smoking has increased in England and Scotland, and decreased slightly in Wales.

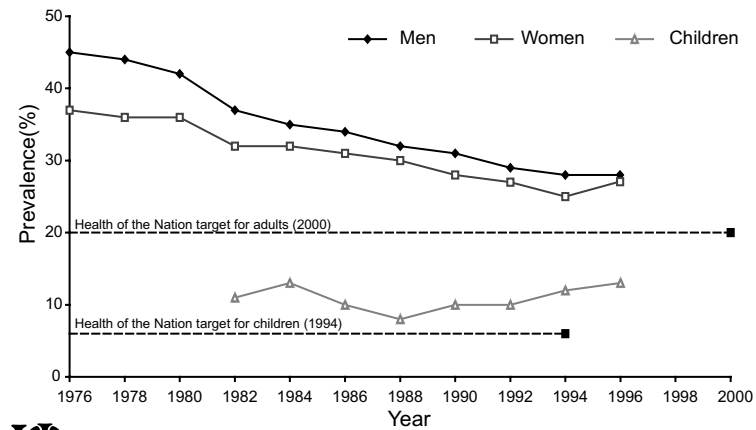
Health of the Nation targets

In July 1992, the Government published a White Paper detailing its Health of the Nation targets for England. Following the 1998 Green Paper, "Our Healthier Nation", it is likely that the smoking targets will be updated. Figure 4 shows the 1992 targets in relation to recent trends. Although smoking prevalence has fallen among adults, a sharper rate of decline would have been needed to achieve the target of 20% prevalence by 2000. Recent studies have also shown an increase in prevalence in young men. In children, the 1994 target prevalence of 6% was not met, although it is now accepted that the 1988 baseline figure of 8% that was chosen was unusually low. Similar targets were also set up for Wales and Scotland. In Wales, a steeper rate of decline may be needed to meet the target of 20% prevalence in adults by 2002. In Scotland, the target reduction of 20% in the number of smokers aged 25-64 was achieved by 1994, but again, the prevalence amongst children and young adults does not seem to be falling.

International variations

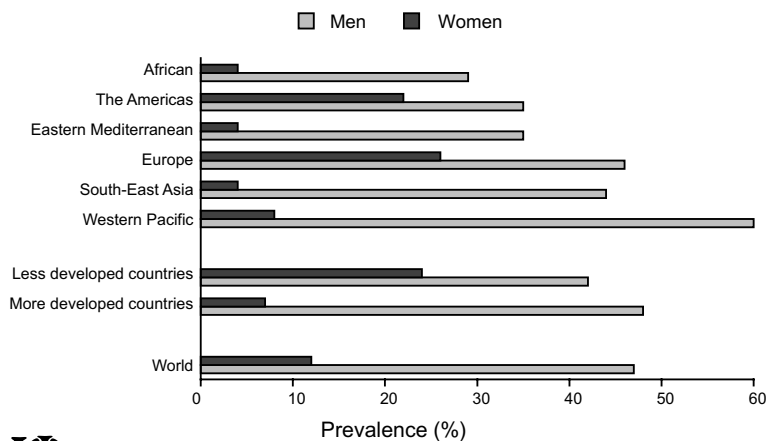
Worldwide, it is estimated that there are about 1,100 million smokers, about one third of the global population aged over 15. There are 800 million in developing countries, and most of these are men (700 million). It is thought that around 47% of men and 12% of women are smokers. The prevalence amongst men is similar in developed and developing countries - 42% and 48% respectively, whereas in women the figures are 24% and 7% respectively. Figure 5 shows the variation in smoking prevalence by WHO region. Prevalence amongst males varies from 30% in the African Region to 60% in the Western Pacific Region. This latter is mostly accounted for by a prevalence of 61% in China. In women, smoking is most common in the European and Americas Regions. Prevalence is very low in women in the other regions.

Figure 4: Prevalence of cigarette smoking in relation to Health of the Nation targets. England, 1974-1996.



Source: ONS

Figure 5: Estimated smoking prevalence by WHO region. Ages 15 and over, early 1990s.



Source: WHO

Summary

- Cigarette smoking has been well-established in men since the First World War. In women, cigarette smoking became popular during the Second World War.
- The prevalence of smoking in men has fallen since the late 1940s, although in young men, prevalence is rising; in women, the prevalence of smoking started falling in the 1970s.
- In children, the prevalence of regular and occasional smoking has changed little since 1984.
- Smoking is equally common amongst men in developed and developing countries; in women, smoking is more common in developed countries.

Footnote

Data sources

Information on smoking habits in adults in Great Britain is available from two sources. Annual surveys commissioned by the Tobacco Advisory Council (TAC) give prevalence estimates from the late 1940s to 1987. The General Household Survey (GHS) carried out by the Office for National Statistics provides information on smoking habits every two years from 1972 onwards. Information on smoking habits in children is available from surveys carried out by the Office for National Statistics since 1982.

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