



Concern over young smokers

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Some teenagers think smoking is fashionable say campaigners

An increase in teenage smokers has been blamed by anti-smoking groups for the results of a survey which shows Britons light up as much now as they did five years ago. Carried out by analysts Euromonitor, the survey shows 1,338 cigarettes were being smoked per person per year in 1999 compared with 1,358 in 1995 - a drop of just one packet a year.

Action on Smoking and Health (Ash) has blamed the figures on a "fashion blip" which has led to a rise in smoking by young teenagers. Cigarette sales have also been kept stable by young career women who have continued smoking instead of kicking the habit in their 20s when having children, the survey has revealed.

Clive Bates, the director of Ash said: "Of course we want smoking to fall as sharply as possible, but over the period of this survey there has been a surge in smoking among teenagers and young adults, while smoking among adults in general has declined."

Rise across Europe

"Thankfully teenage smoking had its high water mark in 1996 and has fallen sharply since then. We think this was a fashion blip and is disappearing as fast as it happened." But campaigners Forest, which supports freedom of choice for smokers, said: "Millions of pounds have been spent on anti-smoking campaigns and this shows they haven't worked.

"The lifestyle choice of smokers should be respected and they should be left to make their own choices, instead of being persecuted."

The habits of British smokers are not unusual. The amount smoked and spent on cigarettes has gone up across Europe, the survey has showed. In Britain, prices have increased by 25% in five years because of tax hikes. Overall, the country still has some of the lowest rates of smoking in Europe, according to Euromonitor.

Only the Scandinavians and the Dutch smoke fewer cigarettes, with Greeks smoking the most, more than double the rate of Britain. The Spanish, Swiss and Irish are also heavy smokers.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/805989.stm>