

Health Warnings Have Bigger Impact on Smokers When Tobacco Products Stripped of Advertising

- New BHF research shows standardised packaging is effective at discouraging smokers -

Smokers are almost twice as likely to take notice of health warnings on tobacco products when their packaging is stripped of advertising, according to a new report by the British Heart Foundation (BHF). (1)

The BHF's *Standardised Packaging for Tobacco Products* report reviewed data from almost 3,000 smokers and ex-smokers to test how effective standardised packaging is as a tobacco control strategy.

The research showed that after tobacco packets were stripped of branding in Australia in December 2012, the number of people taking notice of the warning labels almost doubled.

Just a third (34%) of smokers and ex-smokers noticed the health warnings first in 2010 compared to two thirds (66%) after the legislation was implemented. In the UK, where branded packaging still exists, only 24% of people noticed the health warnings before other aspects such as advertising.

Tobacco products were also found to be significantly less appealing, with more than four in five (82%) Australians saying they did not like the look of tobacco products.

Support for the new legislation in Australia among smokers and ex-smokers has also almost doubled, rising from 28% in 2010 to 51% in 2013. More than a third (37%) of smokers and ex-smokers in the UK back standardised packaging being enforced here.

The BHF is urging the UK Government to take immediate action to ensure standardised packaging is introduced before the general election.

Smoking rates in Australia plummeted to a record new low between 2010 and 2013. Now just 12.8% of people aged over 14 are daily smokers. (2) Meanwhile in the UK, 19% of adults aged 18 or over smoke. (3)

Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive of the British Heart Foundation, said: "The evidence couldn't be clearer. Stripping tobacco products of their branded packaging means important health warnings have more impact. These are toxic products so it's vital these messages are communicated clearly.

"Standardised packaging is an effective and important public health measure which is already having a significant impact in Australia.

"There can be no more delay and the UK Government must act now to make sure standardised packaging is law before the election."

ENDS

For more information please call the BHF press office on 020 7554 0164 or 07764 290381 (out of hours) or email newsdesk@bhf.org.uk

Notes to editors

The Standardised Packaging for Tobacco Products report was commissioned by the British Heart Foundation in collaboration with Kings College London, the University of Waterloo, UKCTAS, ITC and Cancer Council Victoria. The report is a summary of recent evidence from the Australia and United Kingdom International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Projects (the ITC Project).

Findings include results from the 2012 and 2013 ITC Australia Survey of approximately 1,500 smokers and ex-smokers about 1 year before and 2-5 months after standardised packs was implemented.

Findings include results from the 2013 ITC United Kingdom Survey of approximately 1,400 smokers and ex-smokers.

1) All figures, unless otherwise stated, from the Standardised Packaging for Tobacco Products report 2014.

2) National Drugs Strategy Household Surveys 2013

3) Statistics on Smoking 2014 by HSCIC

Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer. For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease. But so many people still need our help. From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure. Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives. For more information visit bhf.org.uk.