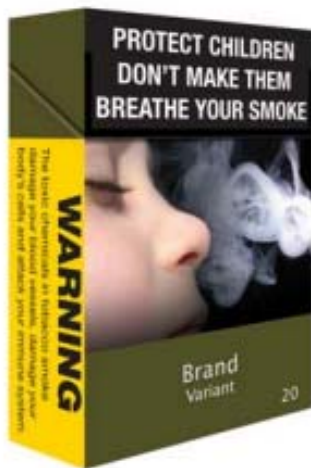


Smokefree Action Coalition Briefing

Standard packs: Fact not fiction



Why we want your support

The Smokefree Action Coalition¹ wants the UK government to commit to standard packaging for all tobacco products to protect children from tobacco marketing.

There is good evidence² published at the time the government consulted on this issue that standard packs:

- are less attractive, particularly to young people;
- make the health warnings stand out more; and
- are less misleading about the harms of smoking than current packs.

Smoking is an addiction of childhood – we need to protect the next generation

- Smokers start as children and continue as addicts: two thirds of smokers start before they are 18 and the vast majority while still teenagers;³
- Every year over 200,000 children in the UK start smoking;⁴
- Two thirds of smokers want to quit and many more regret having started;³ and
- Smoking remains the major cause of premature death and disease killing 100,000 people in the UK each year, more than the next six causes of preventable death put together.⁵

Australia already has standard packs

Since December 2012 all tobacco packs in Australia have been standardised so that :

- The only branding is the product name in a standard font and colour;
- The pack and contents are a standard shape, size and colour;
- Health warnings on front and back have been increased in size;
- Tax stamps remain; and
- All packs carry the quitline number and web address.



Australian pack

Fact not Fiction: The truth behind tobacco industry myths

Myth #1: *There is no evidence standard packaging will work*

FACT: **A large body of evidence demonstrates standard packaging would be effective.**

A systematic review of peer reviewed research from around the world shows that standard packs are less appealing, make health warnings more effective and reduce the ability of the packaging to mislead consumers about the harms of smoking.²

Myth#2: *Tobacco smuggling will increase because standard packs are easily counterfeited*

FACT: Existing packs are no obstacle to counterfeiting. There is no evidence that standard packaging will lead to an increase in the illicit trade in tobacco, thereby reducing legal sales. Tobacco packs are already easily counterfeited which is why the industry puts covert markings on all tobacco packs to distinguish between authentic and counterfeit packs. Standard packs may not have tobacco brand logos and colours but they will have all the health warnings and other markings required on current packs – so they will be no easier to counterfeit.⁶

Myth #3: *Standard packs will cause confusion and extra costs for small businesses*

FACT: It's no more difficult selling standard packs than heavily branded packs. Industry estimates that it would take 45 seconds longer per sale are based on a survey of the opinions of just 6 tobacco retailers.⁷ By contrast, objective research conducted at 100 locations before and after implementation of standardised packaging in Australia found that selection times decreased once the law was in place.⁸ Retail sales will decline gradually but not overnight as the main impact will be on reducing uptake amongst young people not on current smokers, so shops will have time to adapt.

Myth #4: *There is no public support for standard packs*

FACT: Six out of ten people (62%) are in favour of plain standardised packaging for tobacco products, while only one in ten (11%) opposes the measure. Even among smokers, for every five who oppose it there are six who are in favour.⁹

Myth #5: *Standard packaging will breach intellectual property rights leading to compensation claims*

FACT: The use of tobacco trademarks is already limited by law. All standard packaging does is limit the use of tobacco company trademarks. The government will not be acquiring trademarks or other property from the companies so compensation will not be due. International trade agreements do not create a right to use trademarks, and in any case, they allow for governments to implement measures to protect public health.¹⁰

Myth #6: *Tobacco is going to be put out of sight so we don't need standard packs*

FACT: Legislation already passed by parliament will put cigarette packs out of sight in shops, but once outside packaging will continue to work as the industry's 'silent salesman' advertising brands and promoting smoking to children. Tobacco packs have been described as 'badge products' that become 'mobile advertising for the brand'.¹¹

Myth #7: *It may be tobacco today but other consumer products will follow*

FACT: Tobacco is not like any other product, it is the only legal consumer product on the market which is lethal when used as intended. That is why the UK and over 170 other governments have signed up to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control which places legal obligations on governments to strictly regulate tobacco products. Standard packs for tobacco will not therefore set a precedent for other consumer products.¹²

¹ The [Smokefree Action Coalition](#) is an alliance of over 190 health organisations supporting the introduction of standard packs.

² See evidence summarised in the [PHRC report](#) published on the launch of the consultation.

³ Smoking and drinking among adults, 2010. General Lifestyle Survey 2010. ONS, 2012.

⁴ Analysis by Cancer Research UK based on figures from [Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2011](#)

⁵ Beyond Smoking Kills. London. ASH 2008.

⁶ [Smuggling the tobacco industry and plain packs](#). A report by Luk Joossens for Cancer Research UK.

⁷ Potential impact on retailers from the introduction of plain tobacco packaging. Deloitte Australia, February 2011

⁸ Carter O, Welch M, Mills B, et al. Plain packaging for cigarettes improves retail transaction times. *BMJ* 2013; 346: f1063 (Published 19 February 2013)

⁹ Opinion research from YouGov. Total sample size was 10000 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 27th February and 16th March 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all England adults (aged 18+).

¹⁰ Alemanno A., Bonadio E., Do you mind my smoking? plain packaging of cigarettes under the trips agreement. *J. Marshall Rev. Intell. Prop. L.* 450 Spring 2011

¹¹ Freeman B, Chapman S, Rimmer R, The case for the plain packaging of tobacco products *Addiction* 2008;103(4):580–590

¹² WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control