



PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2018



Chairperson

Paula Campbell
36 Beaubec
Drogheda
Co. Louth
Ph. 087 2786464
Paula_loftus@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Aileen Scott
Health Promotion and Improvement
HSE
St Canice's Hospital
Kilkenny
aileen.scott@hse.ie



Introduction

Tobacco use places an enormous burden of illness and mortality on our society and is the single biggest cause of preventable death in Ireland accounting for 5870 deaths per year with an additional 92 per annum from exposure to second hand smoke, which means that tobacco use is responsible for one in every 5 deaths here(1). 23% of the Irish population age 15 years and over smoke- 19% are daily smokers and 4% are occasional smokers (2). Despite a general decline in smoking prevalence in the last two decades, prevalence is still significantly higher amongst those living in the most deprived decile who are more than twice as likely to smoke compared to those living in the least deprived decile (35% and 16% prevalence respectively), and in young adults (32% in the 25-34 years age group) (2). Death rates from tobacco related diseases in Ireland remain 9% higher than the European average (3). Tobacco use is also the biggest contributor to health inequalities and accounts for up to half the difference in life expectancy between the richest and the poorest groups in our society (4). Smoking prevalence is highest and successful quit attempts lowest for tobacco users in the lowest socio economic groups.

The economic cost of tobacco use in Ireland is significant. The Department of Health report 'An Assessment of the Economic Cost of Smoking in Ireland' (1) found that in 2013, the healthcare costs amounted to €460 million, with a further €1 billion from lost productivity and €9 billion due to loss of welfare. The report estimates that in 2013, 31,500 inpatient admissions were from illnesses attributable to tobacco and exposure to second-hand smoke. This represents 3.3% of total hospital admissions and resulted in 299,400 bed days. There were also 19,200 day cases attributable to tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke.

Tax increases on regular cigarettes brings about a drop in consumption but there is strong evidence that there is a corresponding shift to use of loose tobacco (5) and this shift is evident when we look at the proportion of smokers using roll-your-own tobacco in Ireland, which has increased significantly from 3.5% in 2003 to 28.5% in 2016 (6).

Ireland's public health policy objective in relation to tobacco is to promote and subsequently move towards a Tobacco Free Society with a goal to reduce the prevalence to below 5% by 2025 (7). To succeed in this target, initiatives preventing the uptake of tobacco use among children and young people are paramount.

It's good news that rates of tobacco use are coming down among our young people. Currently 8% of boys and 7% of girls ages 10-17yrs report being current tobacco users (8). However, in this cohort 85% of them are using RYO tobacco or "rollies". Adolescence is a crucial age for initiation and development of tobacco use and manufacturers target and will continue to target this age group. The growth in RYO tobacco consumption has been supported by the introduction of a number of

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new RYO products in recent years, such as combination packs including tobacco, filters, papers, rolling machines, tubes containing filters, and the introduction of RYO versions of premium brand manufactured cigarettes. It's unfortunate that those who use RYO tobacco become more addicted and are less likely to quit.

Going forward the increasing use of RYO tobacco use will present significant challenges if immediate measures are not put in place to curb the alarming rise in consumption in our young people.

Recommendation

Increase tax levels on roll-your-own tobacco until they are equivalent to those on cigarettes.

Roll-your-own tobacco

Roll-your-own cigarettes (also called fine cut tobacco, rollies, roll ups, burns, hand rolled cigarettes or simply rolls) refer to cigarettes made from loose tobacco and rolling paper.

Risks from tobacco use are well documented in terms of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers etc., but the risks are higher for those using RYO in terms of cancers of the oesophagus (9) mouth, pharynx and larynx (10). It has also been shown that RYO smokers are more likely to experience mental health illnesses, hazardous drinking and drug addiction (11). Cancer prevention is the cornerstone of the recently published national Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 (12). We know there is a higher incidence of cancer in the most deprived populations in particular lung, cervical and stomach cancer. 30-40% of cancer incidences are attributable to lifestyle with tobacco use identified as having the biggest impact (12).

The recent report *Roll Your Own Cigarettes in Ireland Key Patterns and Trends 2017*(6) provides a useful insight into RYO consumption in Ireland. The main findings show that:

- the proportion of smokers using RYO tobacco has significantly increased **from 3.5% in 2003 to 24.6% in 2014** and increased again to 28.5% in 2016 (see Table 1);
- those who are unemployed are much more likely to use RYO compared to those in employment;
- Males were 2.5 times more likely to use RYO compared to females;
- The strongest factors associated with RYO cigarettes were if a tobacco user was under 25 years of age, male, and from the lower social classes.

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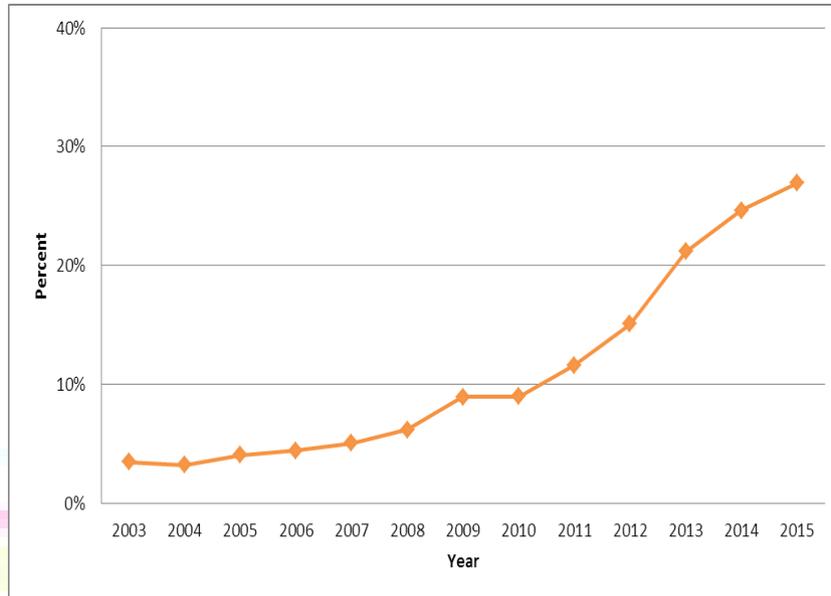
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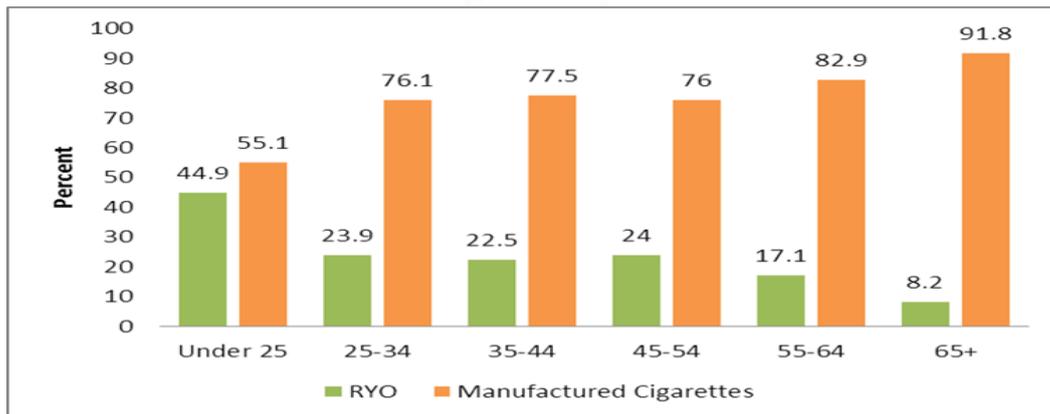


Table 1 Trends in the proportion of Tobacco Users who use RYO Cigarettes



Nearly half (45%) of all tobacco users under the age of 25 are using RYO tobacco instead of manufactured cigarettes(6) – see Table 2.

TABLE 2



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Studies have shown that the price of RYO compared to manufactured cigarettes is a key factor. The excise duty on manufactured cigarettes is €289.98 per 1000 cigarettes and for RYO it is €237.177 per kilogram of RYO. The Dept of Finance Tax Strategy Group have estimated that 1320 RYO cigarettes can be made from 1 kilogram of tobacco and this would equate to €206 per 1000 rolled cigarettes which is 24.6% less than the excise duty on manufactured cigarettes (13).

Taxation policies/price increases are known to be effective in reducing prevalence however the difference in taxation on manufactured cigarettes compared to RYO encourages smokers to switch to RYO rather than quit and also has a role in initiating tobacco use among young people.

Conclusion & Synopsis

Tobacco use has been identified as the single biggest cause of inequalities in death rates between rich and poor, and those from lower socio-economic groups who start using tobacco at a younger age tend to smoke more heavily bear the heaviest burden of death and disease.

Ireland has been to the forefront internationally in leading the fight against tobacco and we are calling on policy makers to consider our submission **to increase tax levels on roll-your-own tobacco until they are equivalent to those on cigarettes**. We believe this will significantly impact on the uptake and use of RYO and will contribute to protecting future generations from the detrimental hazards of tobacco.

The Association for Health Promotion Ireland (AHPI) is the only professional association in Ireland specifically for people involved in the fields of health promotion practice, health promotion education and research. Formed in 1997, it provides a forum through which health promotion professionals can exchange knowledge and ideas.

AHPI members work in statutory and non-statutory health care and community organisations, the voluntary sector, academia (lecturers/researchers/students) and as independent practitioners.

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