Communication

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For a tobacco and nicotine free society !

Mixed results for smoking cessation in Belgium!

The Sciensano Scientific Institute of Public Health unveils the latest trends regarding intentions and attempts to quit smoking in the country, based on its 2023-2024 survey.

By virtue of its statutes, OXY Belgium encourages users of tobacco and all types of non-medical nicotine products to quit. The association therefore paid particular attention to the results of the latest national health survey published by Sciensano last July. This data concerns attempts and intentions to quit smoking in the country, as expressed by smokers aged 15 and over who were interviewed during the survey.

Sciensano approached the subject from two angles: attempts to quit made in the past 12 months and intentions to quit in the next 12 months.

The attempt to quit and the intention to do so reflect the smoker's motivations, but also the impact of prevention and cessation support policies.

Key Results

On average across the country and among daily smokers aged 15 and over, 36.0% (more than a third) have tried to quit smoking in the past year, 11.8% have made only one attempt, and 24.2% have made several attempts.

Among these daily smokers, 13.4% believe they will definitely quit within the next 12 months, and 25.4% consider it a possibility.

However, one in five smokers has no intention of quitting (and two in five say they do not know if they will make this decision).

Regional data do not show any significant differences from national figures and are difficult to interpret, particularly due to the small number of respondents.

The proportion of daily smokers who made one or more attempts to quit smoking in the past year is higher among those with a higher education qualification (42.4%) than among those without higher education (31.9% and 33.1%, n.s.).

Social inequalities also emerge regarding the intention to quit smoking :

- among the least educated respondents, 8.8% are certain they will quit within the next 12 months and 34.7% do not plan to do so.

- among high school graduates, 12.7% are certain they will quit and 20.9% do not plan to do so.

- finally, among respondents with a higher education diploma, 17.1% are certain they will quit and 11.4% do not plan to do so.

How do smokers go about their quit attempts ?

A majority of smokers reported in the survey having attempted to quit without assistance (58.5%), a quarter had used e-cigarettes, 12.2% used traditional nicotine replacement therapy, and 7.7% used pharmacological treatments (Zyban, Champix).

Recourse to professional support remains very marginal:

- less than 2.5% of smokers report having consulted a quit-smoking service;
- acupuncture, hypnosis, aromatherapy, and kinesiology represent only 2.5%;
- a doctor's consultation 2.3%;
- an online service (Tabacstop) 2.3%;
- sessions with a tobacco specialist 1.7%; self-help 2.3%;
- and psychological support 0.7%.

Sciensano concludes that *these data highlight the need to strengthen the visibility and accessibility of support programs. To maximize the chances of success and reduce the risk of relapse, it is crucial that these smokers have access to appropriate and valued support. Information campaigns and the inclusion of healthcare professionals in the cessation process can contribute to this.*

OXY Belgium wishes to highlight the paradoxes that may explain these sometimes-disappointing results, particularly in certain areas, particularly the low level of professional assistance.

Despite the well-known risks of tobacco, many smokers are hesitant to take the plunge. This is due to a strong physical and psychological dependence. Nicotine is highly addictive, quitting is difficult, and habits are ingrained.

Fear of failure and change must also be factored into the quitting process.

Fear of relapsing: Some have already tried without success and dread trying again. Loss of comfort: Cigarettes are often seen as a tool for managing stress or emotions.

Fear of gaining weight: Quitting can lead to weight gain, which discourages some smokers.

In terms of support and information, there is sometimes a lack of awareness of the help available: many are unaware of the existence of therapies, nicotine replacement therapy, or personalized support.

Finally, social and cultural factors should not be overlooked. In some communities, smoking remains a norm or a symbol of belonging, and some smokers do not want to "know" or believe that the harmful effects do not concern them.

For more information :

Gisle L, Demarest S. Enquête de santé 2023-2024 : Consommation de tabac. Bruxelles, Belgique : Sciensano ; 2025. Numéro de rapport : D/2025.14.440/74. Disponible en ligne : www.enquetesante.be
https://www.sciensano.be/fr/resultats-de-lenquete-de-sante-2023-2024/determinants-de-sante#consommation-tabac

Service public fédéral. Cellule Générale de Politique Drogues. Coordination permanente. Stratégie interfédérale 2022-2028 pour une Génération sans tabac. Décembre 2022
https://organesdeconcertation.sante.belgique.be/sites/default/files/documents/2022_12_14_strategie_interfederale_tabac_et_annexe_final_fr.pdf