

## RECESSION SAW FEWER SMOKERS QUITTING

SINCE the recession began the number of smokers quitting has fallen according to new research being presented at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Liverpool today (Tuesday).

In 2007 around 32 per cent of smokers said they had tried to quit within the previous three months. This was before the recession hit the UK economy in the second half of 2008. But this had fallen to 23 per cent by 2008, 22 per cent by 2009 and by 2010 only 17 per cent according to the report.

Professor Robert West, director of tobacco studies at the Cancer Research UK Health Behaviour Research Centre, has been tracking the number of smokers and their quitting patterns\* in England since November 2006 before the smoking ban came into force in July 2007.

His figures reveal the rate of quitting slowed down when recession hit the UK economy.

Professor West also highlighted that very few smokers use the most effective methods to help quit. Fewer than five per cent of smokers use the NHS quit smoking services even though it is four times more effective than other methods.

From the 1970s the number of UK smokers has fallen from 55 per cent of the population to around a fifth (22 per cent) of the population in 2008. Professor West urged the government not to lose focus on reducing the impact of tobacco.

Maintaining support for smokers who have given up and trying to stop young people from starting are key.

Nine out of ten lung cancers are caused by smoking and half of all long term smokers will die from the addiction.

Professor Robert West said: "As the country tightens its financial belt we've seen the number of smokers trying to quit slow down. While no one can be sure about the cause and effect with data of this kind this could be another very damaging impact of the financial crisis."

Sara Hiom, Cancer Research UK's director of health information, said: "Later this year the Department of Health will issue a white paper on public health. This is an opportunity to give a serious shot in the arm to tobacco control. We need to pay close attention to the evidence on what helps smokers to quit if we are to give hope and encouragement to the 70 per cent of smokers who want to stop."

**ENDS**

**For more information contact Paul Thorne in the press office on 020 3469 8352, or out of hours on 07050 264 059**

### Notes to Editors:

\* Data for Professor West's presentation is taken from the Smoking Toolkit Study.

This is a monthly series of national household surveys with smokers and recent ex-smokers being followed up for six months. Data collection began in October 2006. The study is currently funded by Cancer Research UK, McNeil, Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline. The fieldwork is undertaken by the British Market Research Bureau (BRMB).

### About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's major forum for showcasing the best British and international cancer research. The Conference offers unique opportunities for networking and sharing knowledge by bringing together world leading experts from all cancer research disciplines. The seventh annual NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 6-9 November 2011 at the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool. For more information visit [www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference](http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference)

### About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 member organisations for the benefit of patients, the public and the scientific community. For more information visit [www.ncri.org.uk](http://www.ncri.org.uk)

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