

Ireland impact 2007

Impacts of Indoor Bans

There is a lot of debate about the impact of indoor bans and it does seem to vary from country to country. The impact data so far comes from countries that have had bans already, and these tend to be temperate rather than tropical; developed rather than developing; and with strong democratic traditions rather than authoritarian ones.

This probably means that when compared to a tropical, developing country with a more flexible view of the law - the chances are that an indoor smoking ban will have less impact there than it had in these first 'pioneer' countries because:

- ⊙ There is more indoor smoking in the 'pioneer' markets than many hotter ones (and so there is more indoor smoking potentially to lose)
- ⊙ Creating outdoor areas is often more difficult in developed countries, as there are lots of controls on creating outdoor facilities, especially in busy city centres (again this probably increases impact on the 'pioneers')
- ⊙ The bans are more easily policed because the public tend to enforce the law themselves and there are real penalties for people who break the law (again this will be the relative impact on pioneers)
- ⊙ Most enclosed non-Hospitality workplaces are already non-smoking, so relatively few people are forced to stop smoking at work (the impact would be greater in other countries where more smoking in the workplace is allowed)

Overall the bans have not been as effective as many regulators hoped, and you can see what happens by using the figures from Ireland.

The Irish figures are good ones to use as they are produced by Government bodies, and so are more likely to be reliable than those produced by a lobby group; illicit trade is not too great a distorting factor; and the market has a famous and highly-developed Hospitality industry.

There are three key sources of information:

- * The Office of Tobacco Control – responsible for implementing anti-tobacco measures
- * The Central Statistics Office, which gathers national data to inform Government policy.
- * The Revenue Commissioners – who publish data on the number of licenses to sell alcohol that are issued

None of these is in any way 'pro-tobacco'.

The smoking ban was imposed in March 2004, and this is what the figures show:

Smoking Incidence

The caption for this report says 'The data show that while prevalence has declined since 2003, there has been a slight reversal of this trend since 2005'. The chart shows the moving annual total of adult smokers at 26.4% in March 2004 at the time of the ban and at 25.7% two and a half years later in December 2006. This suggests that the lasting impact of the ban is less than a 1% point drop in smoking incidence.

The OTC also reports on smoking incidence by age group in 2005 and 2006 (there is no directly comparable earlier research).

	2005	2006	Change
15-18 year old	17.6%	21%	+3.4%
19-35 year old	32.4%	34%	+1.6%
36-70 year old	21%	22%	+1%
71+ year old	10%	11%	+1%

This shows that young people do not appear to be put off smoking by the ban, with the proportion of 15-18 year olds smoking increasing by more than any other age group.

Lastly, the OTC reports on the number of cigarettes smoked daily.

	2005	2006	Change
Occasional (1-5/day)	15.8%	18%	+2.2%
Light (6-10/day)	29.2%	28%	-1.2%
Regular (11-20/day)	45.3%	45%	-0.3%
Heavy (21+/day)	9.7%	9%	-0.7%

Enforcement

The last part that OTC reports on is compliance- how effectively the law is enforced. This was a major surprise to almost everyone – as it was thought that the ban might be ignored. In fact, once the ban was in place the public largely enforced the ban themselves – and they have continued to enforce it. This has been backed up with a vigorous programme of inspections via Environmental Health Officers.

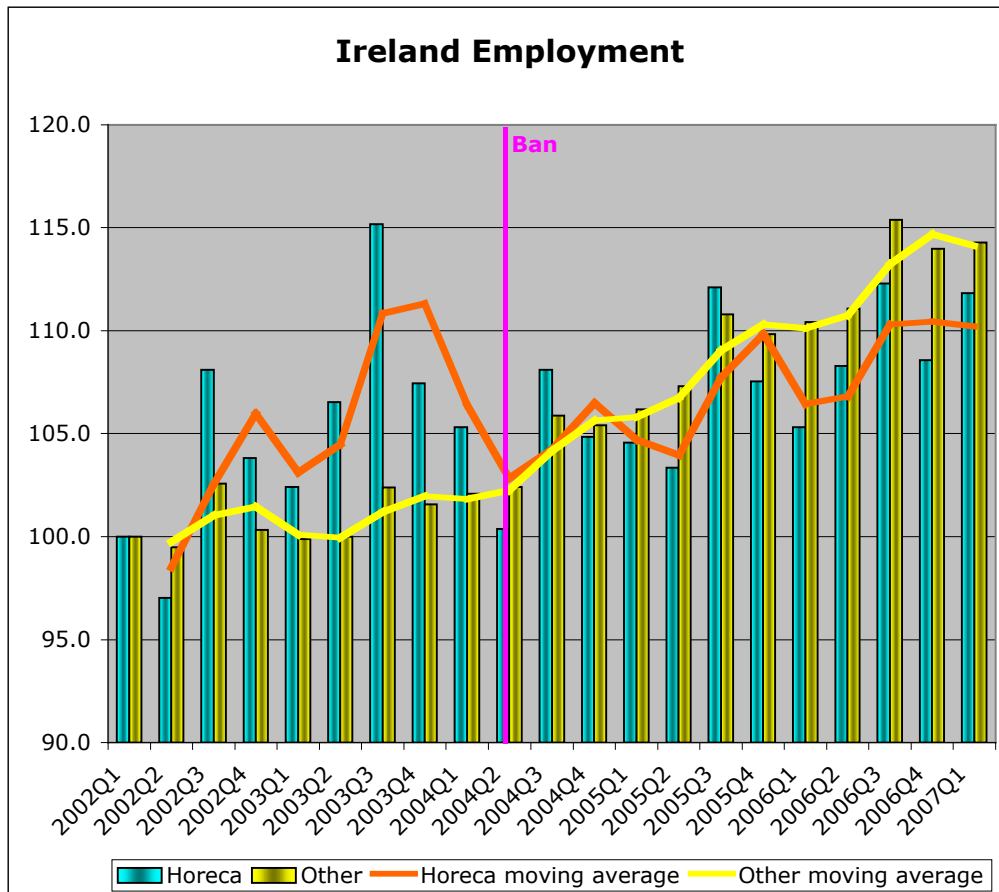
In 2006, two years after the ban, the Environmental Health Officers carried out 32,012 inspections and found overall 95% compliance (in pubs and bars it was slightly lower at 86% and secured 37 convictions).

Employment (Hospitality impact)

The CSO provides data on employment and other matters. This is important for tracking the impact of the smoking ban on Hospitality .

The chart below takes the first quarter of 2002 as its starting point (indexed at 100) and how employment has grown or shrunk since then in the productive economy (ignoring civil servants, the health service etc). The general growth in employment in the productive economy is more or less steady). Hospitality employment grows faster than the rest of the economy before the ban, and slower than it after the ban.

Although these data cannot really show how many actual jobs were ‘lost’ as a result of the ban but the impact of the ban on Hospitality employment is obvious.



Number of Hospitality Businesses

Another source of information is the Revenue Commissioners. They provide a summary of the number of pub licenses in Ireland. This remained very much the same for eighty years – and then changed markedly after the ban. Around 1,000 pubs are believed to have closed in the two years following the ban. These were mainly in rural areas in the west of Ireland where there were too many pubs to support the population once the smoking ban hit.

Year	Number of pubs	Change
2002	9896	
2003	9731	-1.7%
2004	9964	+2.4%
2005	9237	-7.3%
2006	8800*	-4.7%

*as reported in the Times 27/2/07

Summary of 'official' data

These official statistics show that many of the assumptions on which the ban was originally placed were wrong or overstated:

- ⊙ The proportion of smokers did not drop hugely
- ⊙ Young people were not put off smoking
- ⊙ The ban was relatively easy to enforce
- ⊙ There was a negative impact on Hospitality employment

Ireland of course is just one market, and every other market will be different from it in some way. But the major lesson from Ireland is that an indoor smoking ban is not the devastating blow against tobacco usage that many people thought that it would be.