



THE TIMES

Boom in the sale of illegal cigarettes

Alex Ralph
The Times
Mon, 4 Mar 2013
English
238 words

© 2013 Times Newspapers Ltd. All rights reserved

More than one in four cigarettes smoked in Britain is illicit and Gillingham in Kent has emerged as the town with the worst habit.

A study of discarded packs throughout Britain by MSIIntelligence, a Geneva-based company, found that just over 26 per cent of cigarettes had avoided tax in the last quarter of 2012, compared with 19.3 per cent in the same period a year ago.

It is the highest number since the survey was first conducted in 2008 and comes as a parliamentary committee prepares to begin an inquiry into the illicit tobacco trade for the first time.

London is the region with the highest number of illicit cigarettes at 34.8 per cent, followed by the South East, where 33.3 per cent were tax-free. The South West, East Midlands, and East of England are all above the UK average. Scotland is the lowest region: 12.8 per cent of cigarettes smoked do not contribute to the exchequer.

Towns with the highest number of illicit smokes are Gillingham, with 54.5 per cent, Poole at 50.83 per cent and Worthing with 49.24 per cent. Will O'Reilly, a former Scotland Yard detective chief inspector who has conducted research on behalf of Philip Morris since November 2011, said the illicit tobacco trade had reached "epidemic proportions" in some parts of the UK.

Industry(ies)	Region(s)
Cigarettes	United Kingdom
Food/Beverages/Tobacco	European Union Countries
Tobacco Products	Europe
	Western Europe