

Briefing note

Tobacco use reduction targets

Canadian federal tobacco reduction targets

The current federal target for tobacco use reduction

On February 22, 2017, Health Canada issued proposals for a new tobacco strategy, identifying as a “call to action” its intention “In partnership with all Canadians, we will take action to drive down tobacco use in Canada to less than 5% by the year 2035.”¹ When Health Canada announced its new “Canada’s Tobacco Strategy” on May 31, 2018 this target was reaffirmed.² In 2020/2021, Health Canada changed its progress indicator from “percentage of Canadians (aged 15+) who have used any tobacco product in the last 30 days” to “Percentage of Canadians (aged 15+) who are current cigarette smokers.”³

The 5% tobacco use target is a component of the policy and programming strategy and is also reflected as an administrative result expected by the agency which oversees government operations, Treasury Board. Treasury Board also tracks youth vaping and tobacco use against targets of 10% prevalence of past-month use of both product categories by 2023 among Canadian students (grades 7-12).⁴

Because the 5% target has no legal foundation, it can be amended, failed or ignored without formal consequence. A year after the commitment to “less than 5% by 2035” was made, the government turned down a proposal to include it as one of the purposes of the federal tobacco law. During clause-by-clause study of Bill S-5 (the parliamentary proposal which resulted in the *Tobacco and Vaping Products Act*, opposition parties moved an amendment to the bill which was defeated by 5 votes to 4: only government members opposed the idea.⁵

Previous federal tobacco control targets

Prevalence and other targets were included in the “Federal Tobacco Control Strategy” (FTCS) which preceded “Canada’s Tobacco Strategy”.⁶ Strategies developed before that, such as the Tobacco Demand Reduction Strategy of 1994-1998 and the National Strategy to Reduce Tobacco Use did not have quantified objectives.^{7 8}

In 2001-2006, the FTCS included the following targets:

- Reduce smoking prevalence to 20% from 25%
- Reduce the number of cigarettes sold by 30%
- Increase retailer compliance regarding youth access to sales from 69% to 80%
- Reduce the number of people exposed to environmental tobacco smoke in enclosed public spaces
- Explore how to mandate changes to tobacco products to reduce hazards to health

In 2007-2012, the FTCS was renewed with the following targets:

- Reduce overall smoking prevalence from 19% (2006) to 12% by 2011
- Reduce the prevalence of smoking among youth from 15% to 9%
- Increase the number of adults (including young adults) who quit smoking by 1.5 M
- Reduce the prevalence of Canadians exposed to daily second-hand smoke from 28% to 20%

- Examine the next generation of tobacco control policy in Canada
- Contribute to the global implementation of the World Health Organization (WHO) - Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)
- Monitor and assess contraband tobacco activities and enhance compliance

In 2012-2017, the FTCS was renewed, but no new targets were identified. The goal instead was set to “preserve the gains of the previous decade and continue the downward trend in smoking prevalence”

Canada's participation in global targets

As a member of the World Health Organization, Canada participates in a global voluntary target to reduce tobacco use by 30% among adults over 15 years of age between 2010 and 2025.⁹ As estimated by the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), cigarette smoking prevalence in Canada for the population over 12 years in 2010 was 20.8% (19.9% - 20.3%). (The CCHS does not estimate total tobacco use). With respect to cigarette smoking, Canada will have met the WHO NCD goal if prevalence has been reduced to 14.6% in 2025.

Provincial Strategies

Six Canadian provinces have set specific targets for tobacco use reduction after 2021.

British Columbia

In 2015, B.C. adopted a guiding framework for public health, which set a target to reduce smoking to 10% by 2023.¹⁰ This framework provided a quantified goal for British Columbia's Tobacco Control Strategy, which had been adopted in 2004.¹¹ In 2018, B.C.'s Clean Air Coalition recommended that British Columbia adopt the target of becoming the first Canadian jurisdiction to reach 5% prevalence.¹²

Alberta

Alberta's “Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use” was made public 2012. It contained the following 10-year targets, set for 2022.

- Albertans ages 15 and over: 12 %
- Albertans ages 12 to 19: 6%
- Albertans ages 20 to 24: 20%.
- Pregnant women in Alberta: 11%.
- Reduce estimated per capita tobacco sales by 50 per cent to 745 units in 2022

Saskatchewan

In 2010, Saskatchewan adopted a tobacco control strategy (“Building a Healthier Saskatchewan: "A strategy to reduce tobacco use”), but this no longer appears to be official government policy. In 2019, the Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction recommended 9 policies to government but did not propose a quantified outcome target.¹³

Manitoba

In 2002, the Manitoba government announced a tobacco control strategy aimed at four goals: prevention, protection, cessation and denormalization. The government continues to identify these goals, but no quantified targets have been made public.^{14 15}

Ontario

In 2018 Ontario updated its Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy.¹⁶ The strategy included the target of 10% smoking prevalence by 2023. Elaboration on this goal identified that this would require increasing the number of people who successfully quit using tobacco by 80,000 each year and preventing the initial use of tobacco and vapour products so that no more than 10,000 people start smoking each year.

One other quantified target was included: reducing the number of smoking-related deaths by 5,000 each year. Non-quantified targets included: reducing exposure to the harmful effects of tobacco and the potentially harmful effects of other inhaled substances and emerging products (including medical cannabis) and reducing smoking-related health and social costs.

Quebec

In 2020, Quebec updated its Tobacco Control Strategy (*La Stratégie pour un Québec sans tabac 2020-2025*) The new strategy set a target of 10% current smoking prevalence by 2025.¹⁷

The strategy includes other non-quantified targets, including: raising the price of tobacco products, reducing the density of tobacco retail outlets, increasing the negative perception of tobacco use and the practices of the industry; raising the age of tobacco initiation, diminishing the prevalence of tobacco and vaping products by youth, increasing the proportion of former smokers, increasing the number of smokers who use stop-smoking resources, increasing the number of smokers intending to quit, reducing daily or frequent exposure to second hand smoke in residences, public spaces and vehicles.

New Brunswick

In 2019 New Brunswick updated its “Tobacco Free Living Strategy”¹⁸ which shares the federal goal of reducing tobacco use rates in Canada to 5% by 2035.

The strategy includes 5 other goals related to changes in smoking behaviour: increase the number of people taking action to support tobacco and smoke-free living; increase prevention by reducing the number of New Brunswickers who start using tobacco and vapour products, Increase the number of tobacco users who quit and remain tobacco free; Increase the number of 100% smoke-free spaces. and Advance New Brunswick’s Tobacco-Free Living Strategy by aligning tobacco and smoke-free initiatives with other strategies and networks. There are no quantified targets associated with those goals.

Nova Scotia

The most recent strategy in Nova Scotia was adopted in 2011, and set targets to be met by 2015-2016.¹⁹ These included decreasing tobacco use rates in Nova Scotians’ 15-19 years to 10%, aged 20-24 years to 20% and aged 25 years and older to 15%

Prince Edward Island

The tobacco control strategy of Prince Edward Island is a component of its Wellness Strategy, which was last formalized with goals for 2017.²⁰ The plan does not include any quantified targets but is guided with the goal “To reduce tobacco use and the harms it causes Islanders.” PEI’s Chief Public Health Officer has adopted a strategic plan which includes developing a coordinated harm reduction approach for problematic substance use (including tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and opiates).²¹

Newfoundland and Labrador

The Newfoundland and Labrador government’s Chronic Disease Action Plan²² was released in 2017. It includes the government’s target of reducing provincial smoking rates from 21.7 % to 18.1 % by 2025.

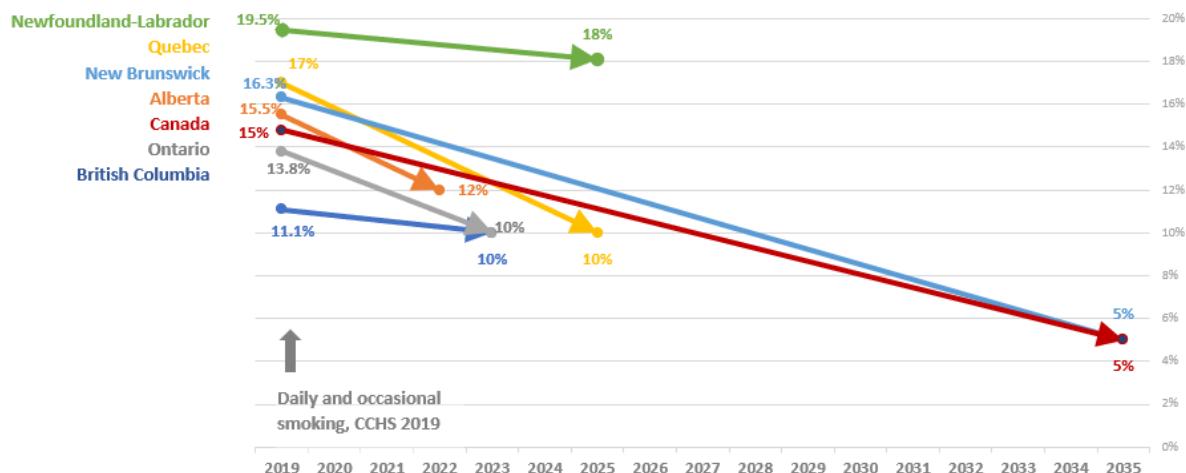
Newfoundland's Tobacco and Vaping Reduction Strategy, released in 2021, was designed by the Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, which is an alliance of government and non-government partners.²³

The strategy identifies 5 action areas (community capacity building, education and awareness, healthy public policy, cessation and treatment services, research, monitoring and evaluation.) It identifies non-quantified goals, such as “preventing children, youth and young adults from starting to use tobacco and/or vaping products” but does not propose quantified targets.

The Territories.

None of the websites managed by territorial governments identify a specific tobacco control strategy. Nunavut adopted its Tobacco Reduction Framework for Action in 2011.²⁴ This framework identified measurable outcomes for its six areas for action but did not set any specific achievement targets.

Canadian Provincial Tobacco Reduction Goals



	Target prevalence.	Year established	Achievement date	Current smoking
British Columbia	10%	2015	2023	11.1%
Alberta	12%	2012	2022	15.5%
Saskatchewan				16.7%
Manitoba				14.8%
Ontario	10%	2018	2023	13.8%
Quebec	10%	2020	2025	17.0%
New Brunswick	5%	2019	2035	16.3%
Nova Scotia	15% (age 25+)	2011	2015-2016	18.3%
Prince Edward Island				16.4%
Newfoundland and Labrador	18.1%	2017	2025	19.5%
Canada	5%	2017	2035	14.8%

Tobacco reduction targets in selected other countries

Denmark

Denmark does not have a target for overall smoking prevalence, but does have an Endgame style target for youth use. In 2019 Danish legislators adopted a Patients Cancer Plan and National Action Plan Against Children and Young People smoking which included the target of no children smoking in 2030.²⁵ The goal was included in amendments to Denmark's tobacco control laws, adopted in December 2020.²⁶ The goal was adopted after encouragement from the civil society Danish Endgame Partnership Smokefree Future (Røgfri Fremtid), which also pushed for the target of a maximum of 5% adult smokers by 2030.²⁷

European Union

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, a key pillar of the European Health Union aims at creating a 'Tobacco-free Generation' by 2040. Aims that less than 5% of the population uses tobacco by 2040.²⁸

Finland

Finland's endgame objective "to end the use of tobacco products and other nicotine-containing products that are toxic to humans and cause addiction" is included in its *Tobacco Act*.²⁹ The endgame objective was first included in the legislation in 2010, when the target date was set at 2040. In 2016, the law was revised to include ending nicotine and tobacco use and the date was moved forward to 2030. In 2021, Finland released proposals for new measures to support the goal.³⁰

France

France's tobacco control program (*Le programme national de lutte contre le tabac (PNLT) 2018-2022*) aims to reduce daily smoking to 16% by 2027, and with less than 5% prevalence among children born after 2014.³¹

Ireland

In 2013, Ireland set the goal of achieving less than 5% smoking prevalence by 2025,³² and initiated the design of an action plan to achieve this.³³ Annual year end reports are produced, providing monitoring and surveillance information to assess progress.³⁴

New Zealand

In 2011, the New Zealand government adopted a goal of reducing smoking prevalence to under 5% by 2025. In 2021 the government launched a consultation on new initiatives aimed at achieving the goal.³⁵

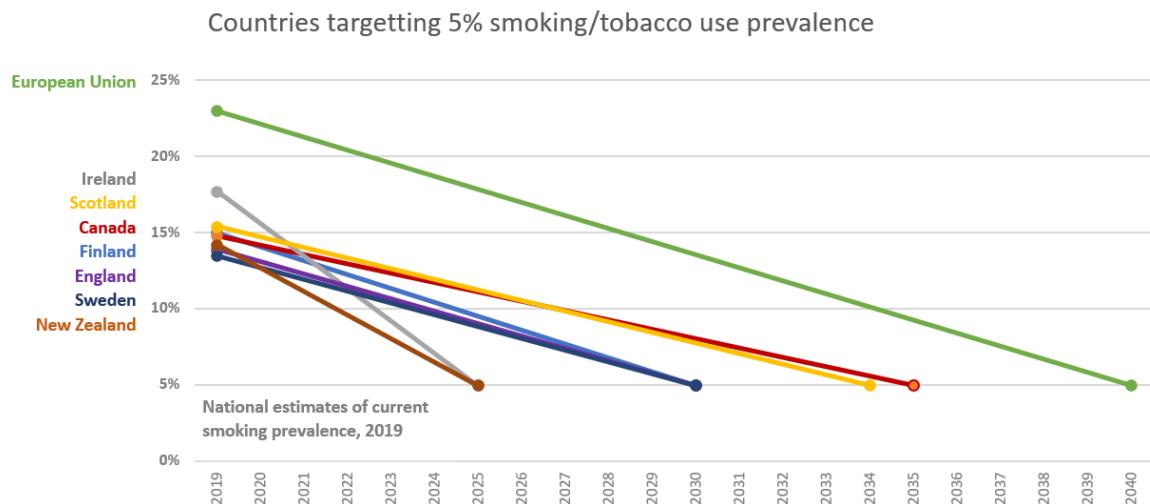
Sweden

In 2016, the Swedish government announced that it was aiming to reduce tobacco smoking to 5% by 2035.³⁶ Implementation of an action plan, however, has been stalled: government was slow to introduce measures,³⁷ and in 2021 the Swedish legislature rejected the government's proposed strategy to address tobacco (and other harmful substances). A reason for rejection was the absence of a harm reduction strategy.³⁸

United Kingdom

In 2019, the government proposed a bolder target for England in 2030 ("This includes an ultimatum for industry to make smoked tobacco obsolete by 2030, with smokers quitting or moving to reduced risk products like e-cigarettes. Further proposals for moving towards a smoke-free 2030 will be set out at a later date.")³⁹ This goal is interpreted as a 5% average prevalence target.⁴⁰ Decisions on the revised Tobacco Control Strategy are expected later this year.

In 2013, the Scottish government adopted a new tobacco control strategy creating a tobacco-free “Generation”, with a target of achieving less than 5% smoking prevalence by 2034.⁴¹ Interim milestones were also established.



	Target Adult smoking prev.	Year established	Achievement date	Age standardized prevalence- 2019 ⁴²
Finland	5%	2016	2030	21.5%
France	16%	2018	2027	34%
Ireland	5%	2013	2025	17.7 ⁴³
New Zealand	5%	2011	2025	14.2% ⁴⁴
Sweden	5%	2016	2035	13.5%
United Kingdom				20%
• Scotland	5%	2013	2034	15.4% ⁴⁵
• England	(5%)	2019	2030	13.9%*
United States	16.2%	2020	2030	17.6%
European Union	5%	2021	2040	23% ^{46*}

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