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Chairman's Office



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The Chairman has asked me to write to you regarding your correspondence on behalf of Vincent Jennings, CEO of the Convenience Stores and Newsagents Association (CSNA), concerning the Illegal Tobacco Products Research Survey, results of which are published on Revenue's website. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding.

By way of background, the Illegal Tobacco Products Research Survey is carried out annually by Ipsos MRBI on behalf of Revenue and the HSE's National Tobacco Control Office. The purpose of this independent market research is to estimate the volume of non-Irish duty paid cigarettes and roll your own tobacco being consumed in Ireland. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic no survey was carried out in 2020, so 2019 and 2021 are the most recent years for which survey data is available.

You have asked about the 2021 survey results which indicate that legal non-Irish duty paid packs of cigarettes made up 8% of total consumption compared to 9% in 2019. Specifically, you have asked why the drop of 1% between 2019 and 2021 was not greater given the 80% drop in travel into the State during 2021 reported by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The survey is typically carried out in October/November each year. This means that the 2021 population surveyed who were found to have non-Irish duty-paid cigarettes, would likely have acquired these packs within a couple of months of the survey rather than at the start of the year when travel restrictions were in place. The overall drop in annual travel of 80% that you referenced does not account for specific travel activity in the months of September and October. Nor does it reflect travel activity from destinations such as Spain, Portugal and Poland where non-Irish duty paid cigarettes are typically sourced. In addition, the survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5% at a 95% level of confidence. This means that the drop from 9% to 8% cannot be regarded as an absolute reflection of the share of total consumption levels attributed to legal non-Irish duty paid tobacco.

You have also requested that the survey be expanded to capture the value of cigarettes bought duty-free by passengers coming into Ireland. Duty-free cigarettes are captured in the survey results within the category of non-Irish duty paid cigarettes. To accurately estimate



the value of duty-free cigarettes consumed, the survey's sample size would need to be increased, thus altering the scope of current research, and potentially adding additional costs. Irish consumers may legally avail of duty-free cigarettes for personal usage while adhering to specific allowances. This legitimate purchase of duty-free cigarettes does not require intervention controls from State agencies. As such, Revenue and the HSE are satisfied that the current scope of the survey meets the data needs for their respective roles in tax enforcement and tobacco control.

Please note that any queries in relation to the Illegal Tobacco Products Research Surveys can be addressed to Revenue's Strategy, Evaluation & Reporting Branch at statistics@revenue.ie.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhain P-611bourne,
Private Secretary.