

# Smokers believe 'silver', 'gold' and 'slim' cigarettes are less harmful

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Despite current prohibitions on the words 'light' and 'mild', smokers in Western countries continue falsely to believe that some cigarette brands may be less harmful than others. In fact, all conventional brands of cigarette present the same level of risk to smokers, including 'mild' and 'low-tar' brands.

A study published today in the journal *Addiction* polled over 8000 smokers from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA. Approximately one-fifth of those smokers incorrectly believed that "some cigarette brands could be less harmful than others." False beliefs were highest among US smokers.

Current research shows that smokers base their perceptions of risk on pack colour, believing that 'silver', 'gold' and 'white' brands are less harmful to smoke than 'black' or 'red' brands. The reason for those beliefs may lie in the history of cigarette branding. Cigarettes used to carry labels like 'light', 'mild', and 'low tar', and in some places they still do. But in over fifty countries cigarette manufacturers are no longer allowed to use those labels because they are misleading. In some cases, [cigarette manufacturers](#) simply changed their 'light' cigarettes to 'silver' and 'gold' brands -- for example, Marlboro Lights has become Marlboro Gold. A significant percentage of smokers now seem to equate those colours with low-risk cigarettes.

[Smokers](#) in the study also revealed false beliefs that slim cigarettes are less harmful, cigarettes with harsh taste are riskier to smoke than smooth-

tasking cigarettes, filters reduce risk, and [nicotine](#) is responsible for most of the cancer caused by cigarettes.

Dr. David Hammond, one of the researchers on the study, says that the study provides evidence for further regulation. Said Hammond, "The findings highlight the deceptive potential of 'slim' cigarette brands targeted primarily at young women. The findings also support the potential benefits of plain packaging regulations that will soon take effect in Australia, under which all cigarettes will be sold in packages with the same plain colour, without graphics or logos."

Provided by Wiley

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