

Removing branding from cigarette packets stubs out their appeal

April 25 2013



Women say they get less satisfaction and less enjoyment from smoking cigarettes that come in plain, standardised packs - according to new research released today (Thursday).

The study – by researchers at Stirling University – included 187 young [female smokers](#) from across Scotland who used plain brown cigarette packs as they went about their daily lives.

Researchers wanted to examine the extent to which young women smokers are influenced by the aesthetic appeal of packaging by comparing their responses to using the plain packs for a week to their responses of using their own regular packs for a week.

Women in the study said they were more embarrassed about [smoking](#) from plain packs and felt more negative about smoking from the plain

packs, even though they were smoking their regular cigarettes.

Women involved in the study also reported smoking fewer cigarettes, stubbing out cigarettes early, smoking less around others and thinking more about quitting when using the plain packs.

The findings echo an earlier [pilot study](#) using the same approach and anecdotal evidence coming out of Australia, where standardised packs were introduced in December 2012.

Dr Crawford Moodie, lead author from the University of Stirling, said: "Young women are a key target group for both public health and tobacco companies given that smoking prevalence is very high among young women in the UK. [Tobacco companies](#) use slim, elegant packaging to target young women and have been successful in doing so. In contrast, public health initiatives have had limited impact. This is highlighted by the fact that smoking prevalence among 20-24 year old women has only fallen by four per cent since the mid-1980s, from 35 per cent in 1984 to 31 per cent in 2009.

"Our research shows the importance that packaging has for [young women](#). It offers an insight into how packaging could be used to help reduce the appeal of [tobacco products](#) rather than offering the [tobacco industry](#) a chance to market their product."

A [UK wide public consultation](#) on the future of tobacco packaging closed in August 2012 and while the Scottish Government has indicated its support for the measure, there has been no UK government decision yet on whether this will happen. Health campaigners are calling for the slick and colourful packaging to be replaced with packs of uniform size, shape and design – and including large health warnings - to help reduce the appeal of tobacco to children.

Tobacco kills around 100,000 people in the UK each year. It causes at least 14 different types of cancer and is responsible for around a quarter of all cancer deaths.

Eight in ten smokers start before they turn 19 and half of all long term smokers will die from addiction. Around 200,000 under 16s start smoking in the UK every year.

Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy and information, said: "This research highlights just how powerful packaging can be. Replacing current [cigarette packs](#) with plain, standardised packaging changed how these regular smokers felt about smoking and the cigarettes they smoked every day. Earlier research has shown that removing the colourful and slickly designed packs helps to remove the appeal of cigarettes for children, so this research builds on existing evidence.

"We are still waiting for the UK government to respond to the public consultation on tobacco [packaging](#). Every day we wait more children will be lured into the lethal addiction. We urge the UK government to show their commitment to health and give millions of children one less reason to start."

More information: Moodie, C. and Mackintosh, A. (2013). Young adult women smokers' response to using plain cigarette packaging: a naturalistic approach, *BMJ Open*, 3 (3). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2012-002402](#)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: Removing branding from cigarette packets stubs out their appeal (2013, April 25)

retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-04-branding-cigarette-packets-stubs-appeal.html>

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