

## Teens say 'slim cigs are cool' while government stalls on packaging

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Slim-line cigarettes have been voted 'cute, classy and feminine' by 15 year olds who rate the slimmer brands as weaker and less harmful than 'smelly and disgusting' brown cigarettes, according to new research\* to be published in the *European Journal of Public Health* this autumn, ahead of the Children and Families Bill being discussed in the House of Lords.

In this unique Cancer Research UK study teenagers said they were most attracted to slim and superslim [cigarettes](#) with white filter tips and decorative features – describing them as 'classy' and 'nicer'. But they viewed a long brown cigarette as particularly harmful – labelling it 'disgusting', 'really really strong' and 'old fashioned'.

The new revelations follow last month's study of more than 1000 children which showed for the first time that glitzy and glamorous cigarette packaging makes children susceptible to smoking. But still the government stalls on bringing in standardised packs. The House of Lords is debating the issue over the next few weeks which could allow Parliament a chance to vote on legislation to protect children's health.

Cancer Research UK is urging the public to support its campaign for plain standardised packaging of cigarettes with a hard-hitting film showing how the [tobacco industry](#) encourages children to smoke. The film, launched online today, is a powerful evocation of big business preying on vulnerable children.

The children in the new study rated the slimmer brands weakest and least harmful because their thin diameter contained less tobacco. In fact some super slim brands have more tobacco-specific harmful nitrosamines and aromatic amines than regular cigarettes.

The study by Cancer Research UK researchers at the University of Stirling asked 48 boys and girls from Glasgow about their views of eight cigarette brands\*\* differing in length, diameter, colour and decorative design.

One 15-year-old girl said: "Because it's skinny you feel that you're not doing as much damage. " Another said: "They don't look like cigarettes so you wouldn't think, like, harmful."

And a 15-year-old boy added: "If someone hands you a stronger or a weaker one you'd probably take the weaker one depending on how long you'd been smoking for... so they're just jumping into the shallow end instead of the deep end, kind of thing."

The study found that teenagers thought white tips and a longer length portrayed a cleaner, feminine image reminiscent of glamorous female stars from old movies – softening perceptions that smoking was harmful. Cigarettes with white tips were also associated with menthol - perceived as weaker and less harmful.

Professor Gerard Hastings, Cancer Research UK's social marketing expert at the University of Stirling and an author on the paper, said: "Our research confirms previous studies that both the pack and the product are powerful marketing tools in the hands of the tobacco industry which it is using to recruit a new generation of smokers. It's time policy makers moved to standardise both."

Dr Allison Ford, lead author of the study and also from the University of

Stirling, said: "This important study reveals for the first time that adolescents associate slim and decorative cigarettes with glamour and coolness, rating them as a cleaner, milder and safer smoke. It is incredibly worrying to hear that adolescents believe that a stylishly-designed cigarette gives a softer option."

Mumsnet CEO and co-founder, Justine Roberts, said: "Very few parenting issues are completely black and white, but nobody wants their child to start smoking. Standardised packs may not be a silver bullet, but Mumsnet users are clear that they'd be very happy to see them as part of a range of measures to discourage children from getting hooked."

Dr Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said: "This research once again highlights how the tobacco industry exploits any opportunity to lure young smokers to secure a profitable future.

"The evidence shows children are attracted to glitzy, slickly-designed cigarettes and packs and every year more than 207,000 UK children between 11 and 15 start smoking. We are urging the government to introduce standardised packaging to discourage these children from starting this life-threatening habit and to prioritise [children](#)'s health over tobacco company profits."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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