

France had a million fewer smokers in 2017: ministry

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France had a million fewer daily smokers in 2017 over 2016, the health ministry said Monday, thanking the dissuasive power of higher tobacco taxes.

In a special [report](#) on [tobacco](#) use in a country once synonymous with smoke-filled Parisian street cafes, the ministry did not mention whether electronic cigarettes have had any impact on the apparent trend.

It cited figures from a random representative survey of 18- to 75-year-olds living in France last year.

"In 2017, 31.9 percent of people surveyed said that they smoked occasionally, and 26.9 percent daily," said the report.

"These numbers are 3.2 and 2.5 percentage points lower, respectively, than in 2016."

This represented a decline of a million daily smokers in the space of a year, said the report.

The ministry pointed out that tobacco kills about 200 people in France every day, some 73,000 per year.

Globally, the World Health Organisation (WHO) says tobacco kills up to half of users—more than seven million people every year.

In 2016, according to the latest WHO data, over 1.1 billion people aged 15 and older—about a seventh of the global population—were smokers.

The number was unchanged from 2015.

Tobacco use shows signs of a slow decline globally, though in some countries—especially developing ones—there is a rise.

Smoking has been linked to several types of cancer, heart disease and stroke.

French health minister Agnes Buzyn said the so-called "sin" tax on nicotine was largely to thank for the "encouraging" new trend, boosted by state-reimbursed cessation counselling and nicotine patches, non-branded packaging and health warnings.

The decline in French [smokers](#) was particularly steep among low-income puffers, said the ministry.

Buzyn intends to raise the price of a packet of cigarettes to 10 euros (\$11.6) by 2020, up from almost eight today after a series of hikes in recent years.

The report made no specific mention of any role for the massive global switch, also observed in France, from tobacco to e-cigarettes that emit a tarless vapour that users inhale instead of smoke.

At the press conference, Francois Bourdillon of France's public [health](#) agency did note that e-cigarettes were "clearly" the smoking cessation aid of choice.

The survey found 2.7 percent of [people](#) in France were daily e-cigarette users in 2017.

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