

Exposure to smoking and vaping in films increases uptake in young people, study finds

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Smoking and vaping content in films is contributing to the uptake of smoking and vaping by young people, according to research which found that regular exposure to smoking on screen could increase adolescent

uptake by around 40% and exposure to vaping by around 30%.

Researchers from Nottingham Trent University (NTU) and the University of Nottingham reviewed 26 studies which reported the association between exposure to smoking or [vaping](#) in films and smoking or vaping uptake in adolescents.

The review, published in *Health Education & Behavior*, combined data from a number of studies to produce an estimate of the likelihood of smoking or vaping after seeing this content in films.

The findings update a previous research review by the same team and continues to show that children exposed to high levels of smoking [imagery](#) were found to be around 40% more likely to become smokers than those unexposed or exposed to the lowest levels of content. The latest review also included studies looking at vaping and showed that children exposed to high levels of vaping were around 30% more likely to become vapers.

The study, led by Zeinab Hassanein, a Ph.D. student at the School of Medicine, University of Nottingham, with Dr. Alex Barker, lecturer in Psychology at NTU's School of Social Sciences, highlights that current British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) guidelines do not go far enough. In content which appeals to children, smoking is only considered alongside age-classification based on promotion or glamorization. There are currently no classifications guidelines in relation to vaping.

Zeinab Hassanein said: "Our study shows that smoking and vaping imagery has the potential to lead to uptake, and by not including smoking or vaping imagery in its classification guidelines, the BBFC is not delivering on its mission to protect children from this form of harmful imagery. We recommend that all films containing smoking and vaping imagery should be assigned an adult (+18) rating to protect children

from the content."

The paper also recommends that countries all over the world should have a well-designed board which is responsible for age classification ratings for movies and include vaping, as well as smoking, imagery in its classification guidelines. The work of the boards should also be broadened to include TV and other forms of media which are growing in popularity among [young people](#).

The research concludes that exposure to this content in films can have an effect on uptake and questions the role of new media such as video on-demand, online video channels and [social media](#), which is not subject to regulations on images of smoking on screen in the same way as traditional TV and film productions.

Dr. Barker said: "Viewing habits are changing and new forms of visual media are becoming more popular, especially with young people. These services are often unregulated or subject to different regulations than UK films or TV. The current study shows that exposure to this content can lead to uptake and since our previous research has shown that smoking imagery remains prevalent in this media accessed by [children](#) and young people, this likely represents a continuing major and completely avoidable influence on [smoking](#) uptake."

More information: Zeinab M. Hassanein et al, Impact of Smoking and Vaping in Films on Smoking and Vaping Uptake in Adolescents: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis, *Health Education & Behavior* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/10901981221086944](https://doi.org/10.1177/10901981221086944)

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