

Non-cigarette tobacco smoking has soared in England over last decade: Study

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There are about five times more people smoking non-cigarette tobacco in England now than there were a decade ago, according to a new study led by UCL researchers.

[The article](#) published today (March 5) in *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, revealed that in 2013 there were about 151,200 exclusive non-cigarette tobacco users, but by September 2023, this figure had risen to around 772,800. Strikingly, the greatest increase was seen in 18-year-olds.

Smoking cigars, cigarillos, pipes, or shisha cause many types of [cancer](#), including lung, mouth and upper throat, esophageal, larynx and stomach cancers. They are also linked with pancreatic, bladder and liver cancers.

Possible causes of the increase include widespread concern about cigarette [smoking](#) worsening coronavirus symptoms, so people may have switched to products they perceived as being less harmful. Financial difficulties may have also caused people to switch from cigarettes to cheaper options, researchers concluded.

The menthol cigarette ban in May 2020 did not apply to non-cigarette [tobacco products](#), so those who prefer this flavor may have switched to other products that were not included in the ban. Cancer Research UK said this was why it was vital the age of sale legislation applied to all products that contain tobacco, so that the same loopholes are not created again.

Lead author Dr. Sarah Jackson (UCL Institute of Epidemiology & Health Care) said, "This 10-year long study captures the shift in trends of non-cigarette tobacco use and paints a concerning picture. Although rates of cigarette smoking have fallen, our data show there has been a sharp rise in use of other smoked tobacco products, particularly among young people.

"It's vital that smoking cessation services are adequately funded and available across the U.K., so that the around 772,800 people who use non-cigarette tobacco products, and the millions who use cigarettes, are given the support they need to quit."

Commenting on the report, Cancer Research UK's Executive Director of Policy, Dr. Ian Walker, said, "Tobacco kills one person every five minutes in the U.K. Research like this shows that the issue of smoking isn't just about cigarettes—all tobacco products are harmful and cause cancer, no matter what form they come in.

"That's why it's crucial that the Government's age of sale legislation applies to all tobacco products. If implemented, this policy will be a vital step towards creating a smokefree U.K., preventing [future generations](#) from ever becoming addicted to tobacco."

The U.K. Government is expected to present legislation to Parliament to increase the age of sale of tobacco products, which will mean anyone born on or after January 1, 2009, will never be able to legally be sold tobacco products.

Currently, tobacco causes about 54,300 cases of cancer every year in the U.K. and is the one legal consumer product that will kill most users when used as recommended by the manufacturer.

More information: Sarah E Jackson et al, Trends in Exclusive Non-Cigarette Tobacco Smoking in England: A Population Survey 2013–2023, *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* (2024). [DOI: 10.1093/ntr/ntae021](#)

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