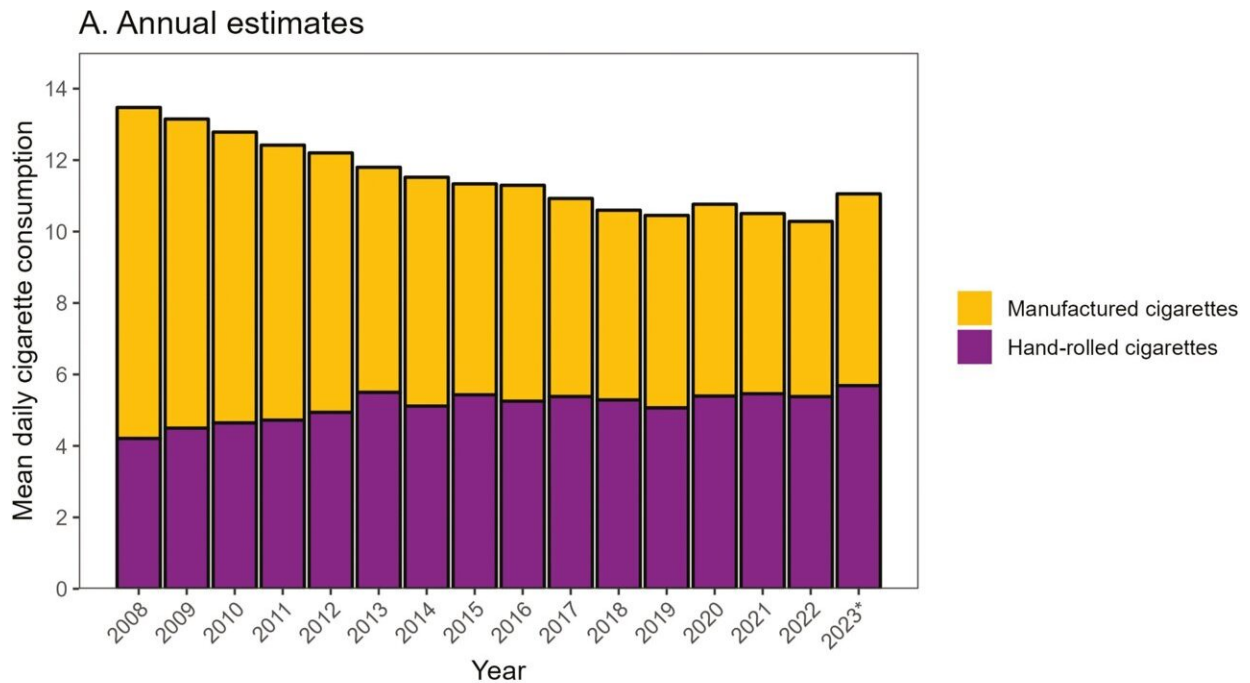


# Decline in cigarettes smoked per day in England is stalling

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Mean daily cigarette consumption among adult ( $\geq 18$  years) smokers in England, 2008 to 2023. Panel A shows weighted data aggregated by year. Panel B shows modeled time trends, overall, and by cigarette type. Credit: *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* (2024). DOI: 10.1093/ntr/ntae071

A decade-long decline in the number of cigarettes a smoker has per day

has stalled, with some people actually smoking more, according to a new study by UCL researchers.

Researchers found that the average person who smokes dropped from smoking 14 cigarettes per day in January 2008 to 11 cigarettes per day in October 2019. But the number hasn't budged since. And people who smoke daily are getting through an extra cigarette every day now.

Across the population there are still 45.5 million cigarettes smoked every day in England, down from 77.1 million per day in 2011.

This latest study, [published](#) in the journal *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, shows that the fight against tobacco is far from over, as smokers continue to struggle to cut down their intake.

Smoking is the biggest cause of [cancer](#) in the U.K., causing about 150 cases every day. Tobacco is the one legal product that will kill most users—causing one death every five minutes in the U.K.

Cancer Research UK is calling for continued funding for smoking cessation services nationwide, and for the Government's landmark Tobacco and Vapes Bill to be moved swiftly through Parliament and implemented as soon as possible.

Dr. Sarah Jackson, lead author of the paper and principal research fellow at UCL's Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care, said, "This 15-year study captures shifts in smoking behavior, showing that while the average number of cigarettes smoked per day has fallen, this trend has stalled since 2019.

"People are increasingly opting to use cheaper hand-rolled tobacco over more expensive manufactured cigarettes, proving that consistency in the taxation and regulation across all cigarette types is key.

"Some groups across England still smoke more heavily than others. It's vital that smoking cessation services are made easily and equally available across the U.K., so that those who want to quit smoking are given all the support they need to do so."

Dr. Ian Walker, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy, said, "This study makes it clear that the UK Government must not let up in its fight to reduce smoking. All tobacco products are harmful, and more work needs to be done to end cancers caused by [smoking](#) for good.

"By voting in favor of the age of sale legislation, MPs have positioned the U.K. as a world leader in [tobacco control](#). Now, it's vital that MPs continue to listen to the demands of their constituents and place themselves on the right side of history. The Bill must be passed through Parliament swiftly and implemented so we can begin to reap the benefits of a smokefree future."

The study also showed that the average smoker is having 35% more hand-rolled cigarettes (up from 4 to 6 per day), and 47% fewer manufactured cigarettes (down from 10 to 5 per day). This trend was seen between January 2008 to September 2023.

Researchers speculated that this shift is likely down to affordability of cigarette types driven by greater tax increases on manufactured cigarettes and exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

Older people, men, people from more disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, and those in the north of England consistently smoked most heavily over this period.

Right now, the UK Government is set to miss its own target of being smokefree by 2030 by nine years and Cancer Research UK analysis shows that the most deprived 10% of the population in England won't be

smokefree until after 2050.

**More information:** Sarah E Jackson et al, Trends in Daily Cigarette Consumption Among Smokers: A Population Study in England, 2008–2023, *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* (2024). [DOI: 10.1093/ntr/ntae071](https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntae071)

Provided by University College London

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