

Statistical bulletin

Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2022

Cigarette smoking habits among adults in the UK, including the proportion of people who smoke, demographic breakdowns, changes over time and use of e-cigarettes.



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1 . Main points

- In the UK population in 2022, 12.9% of people aged 18 years and over, or around 6.4 million people, smoked cigarettes; this is the lowest proportion of current smokers since records began in 2011 based on our estimates from the Annual Population Survey (APS).
- Of the constituent countries, the lowest proportion of current smokers was in England (12.7%); Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland reported 14.1%, 14.0% and 13.9%, respectively.
- In the UK, 14.6% of men smoked compared with 11.2% of women; this difference has been consistent since 2011.
- People aged 25 to 34 years had the highest proportion of current smokers in the UK (16.3%); those aged 65 years and over had the lowest (8.3%) in 2022.
- In Great Britain, 8.7% of Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) respondents, or around 4.5 million adults, said they currently used an e-cigarette daily or occasionally; this is an increase from 2021 where 7.7% of people reported daily or occasional e-cigarette use.
- E-cigarette use was highest among those aged 16 to 24 years in Great Britain; the percentage of people in this age group who were daily or occasional vapers in 2022 has increased to 15.5% compared with 11.1% in 2021.
- Changes in e-cigarette usage are particularly evident in younger females, with a statistically significant increase in the proportion of women aged 16 to 24 years who were daily e-cigarette users in 2022 (6.7%), compared with 2021 (1.9%).

2 . Collaboration

This publication is produced in partnership with the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities (OHID). As part of a cross-government approach to improve the coherence of statistics on tobacco and e-cigarette use, this release is published on the same day as OHID's update to their [Local Tobacco Control Profiles](#).

3 . Smoking prevalence in the UK by sex, age and region

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) collects data on [adult smoking habits](#) using two surveys. The [Annual Population Survey \(APS\)](#) provides headline indicators of the number of adults aged 18 years and over who smoke in the UK, and the [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey \(OPN\)](#) collects more detailed information on smoking habits, intention to quit smoking and e-cigarette users aged 16 years and over in Great Britain.

The smoking prevalence estimates from the APS for 2020 and subsequent years use an updated weighting methodology. This is to remove the effect of the change in the method of data collection introduced at the end of March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Figures for 2020 onwards are now comparable with previous years. Please see our [methodology article](#) for more information.

Proportion of current smokers

Based on APS data, the proportion of current smokers in the UK in 2022 was 12.9%, or 6.4 million people. This is a decrease from 2021 (13.3% of the population), although not [statistically significant](#), and is a 7.3 percentage point decrease in current smokers compared with 2011 (20.2% of the population).

We use the APS as the official measure of smoking prevalence in England to monitor and track progress against the [Tobacco Control Plan for England](#) and [the Khan review](#). The Tobacco Control Plan aims to reduce smoking prevalence among adults in England to 12% or less by the end of 2022. In the UK in 2022, England had the lowest proportion of current smokers with 12.7%, or 5.3 million people. This is a decrease in the proportion of smokers from 2021 at 13.0% (around 5.4 million people), although not statistically significant.

In 2022, the proportion of current smokers in Wales was 14.1% (around 340,000 people), in Northern Ireland the proportion was 14.0% (around 200,000 people), and in Scotland the proportion was 13.9% (around 590,000 people). Since 2011, there has been a [statistically significant](#) decline in the proportion of current smokers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Figure 1).

Official smoking prevalence estimates for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland should be taken from devolved health or national surveys (see [Section 6: E-cigarette use and vaping prevalence in Great Britain](#))

Figure 1: Smoking prevalence continues to fall in England and Scotland in 2022, but remains constant in Wales and Northern Ireland

Proportion who were current smokers, all persons aged 18 years and over, UK, 2011 to 2022

Notes:

1. Figures have been weighted to account for methodological changes in 2020, and to ensure estimates for 2020 onwards are comparable with estimates for previous years.
2. For Northern Ireland, the estimate over time has been more variable because of the smaller sample size.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

In 2022, as in previous years, men were more likely to smoke than women in the UK. Across the UK, 14.6% of men (around 3.6 million) and 11.2% of women (around 2.8 million) reported being current smokers.

Those aged 25 to 34 years continued to have the highest proportion of current smokers (16.3%, around 1.4 million people), compared with any other age group. This is an increase in comparison with the same group in 2021 (15.8%, around 1.3 million people).

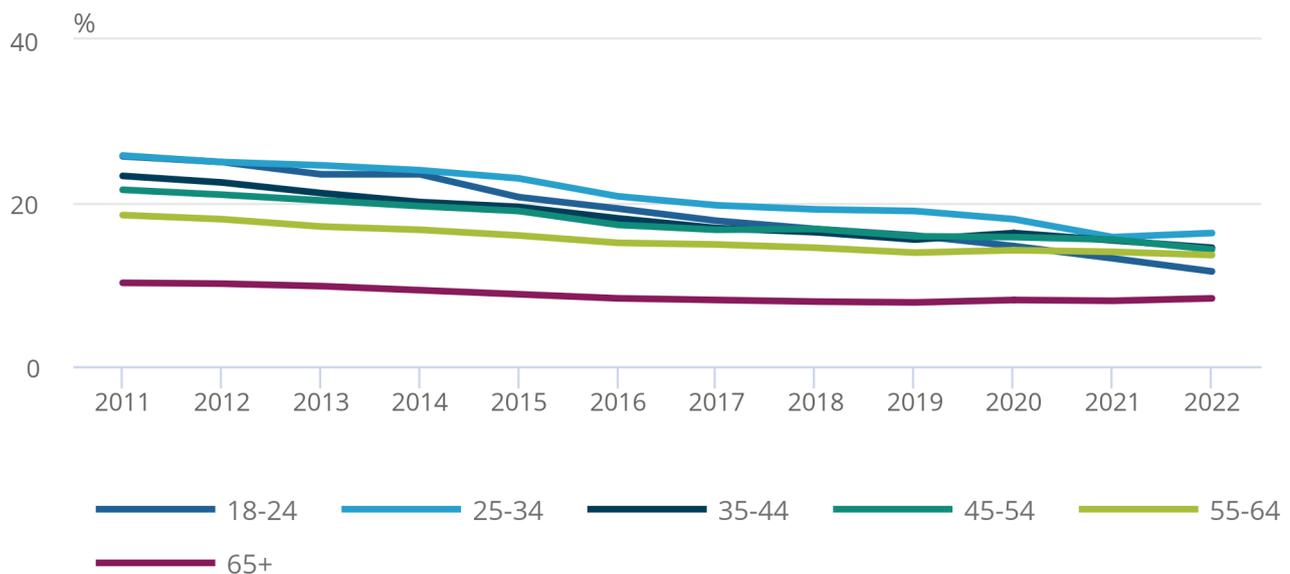
Those aged 65 years and over continued to have the lowest proportion of current smokers (8.3%, around 1 million people), similar to rates in 2021 (8.0%, around 950,000 people). Across time, the largest reduction in smoking prevalence has been among those aged 18 to 24 years; 25.7% of this group smoked in 2011 compared with 11.6% in 2022, a reduction of 14.1 percentage points (Figure 2).

Figure 2: People aged 25 to 34 years continued to have the highest smoking prevalence

Proportion who were current smokers, all persons by age group, UK, 2011 to 2022

Figure 2: People aged 25 to 34 years continued to have the highest smoking prevalence

Proportion who were current smokers, all persons by age group, UK, 2011 to 2022



Source: Annual Population Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Local authority smoking prevalence

Since 2012, Kingston upon Hull and Blackpool have been in the 10 local authorities with the highest proportion of current smokers eight times each. In 2022, the proportion of current smokers decreased in Kingston upon Hull (18.9%) and Blackpool (18.8%), respectively (Figure 3).

In 2022, Stafford (2.9%) and Rushcliffe (4.0%) had the lowest levels of smoking prevalence in England. For more information on smoking prevalence in local and unitary authority areas by sex, see our [accompanying datasets](#). Local authority data for England are also available in Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) [Local Tobacco Control Profiles](#). This tool allows users to compare local authorities within regions and benchmark a local authority against the England or regional average.

Smoking prevalence estimates by local authority area are subject to smaller sample sizes and therefore tend to fluctuate each year because of more statistical uncertainty. Users should therefore look at the long-term trends in smoking prevalence in authorities rather than using the estimates as an indication of year-on-year changes.

Figure 3: The proportion of current smokers by local authority of the UK

The proportion who were current smokers, all persons aged 18 years and over by local authority, UK, 2015 to 2022

Notes:

1. Smoking prevalence estimates for Buckinghamshire unitary authority are not available for 2015 to 2020.
2. Smoking prevalence estimates for North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire are not available for 2015 to 2021.
3. Official smoking prevalence estimates for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland should be taken from devolved health or national surveys.
4. Confidence intervals for local authority estimates of smoking prevalence can be found in the accompanying dataset.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

4 . Characteristics of current cigarette smokers in the UK

Smoking is known to be associated with a variety of characteristics, such as relationship status, education level and socio-economic status.

In 2022, when looking at smoking prevalence by economic activity in the UK, those who were defined as unemployed had a higher proportion of current smokers (20.5%), compared with those who were in paid employment (12.7%), and those who were economically inactive (12.7%).

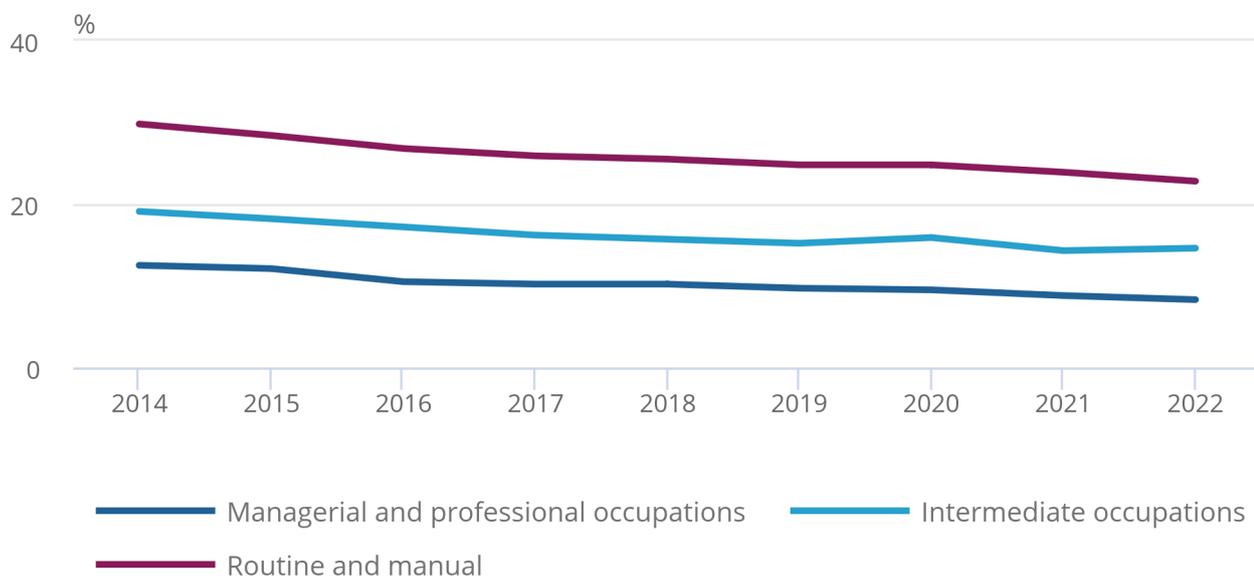
Of those who were classified as being in a "routine and manual" socio-economic classification according to the [National Statistics Socio-economic Classification](#) (NS-SEC), 22.8% were current smokers, compared with 8.3% of "managerial and professional occupations". This follows the same trend since data collection began in 2014 (Figure 4). Further information on smoking prevalence by socio-economic status can be found in our [Deprivation and the impact on smoking prevalence in England and Wales article](#). Data showing the odds of reporting current smoking status among adults with a routine and manual occupation based on Annual Population Survey (APS) data are also available in OHID's [Local Tobacco Control Profiles](#).

Figure 4: In 2022, smoking prevalence continued to be higher in routine and manual occupations than in managerial and professional occupations

The proportion who were current smokers by socio-economic status group, all persons aged 18 to 64 years, UK, 2014 to 2022

Figure 4: In 2022, smoking prevalence continued to be higher in routine and manual occupations than in managerial and professional occupations

The proportion who were current smokers by socio-economic status group, all persons aged 18 to 64 years, UK, 2014 to 2022



Source: Annual Population Survey for the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Socio-economic class is defined using the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC).
2. We have restricted the data to those aged 18 to 64 years of working age.

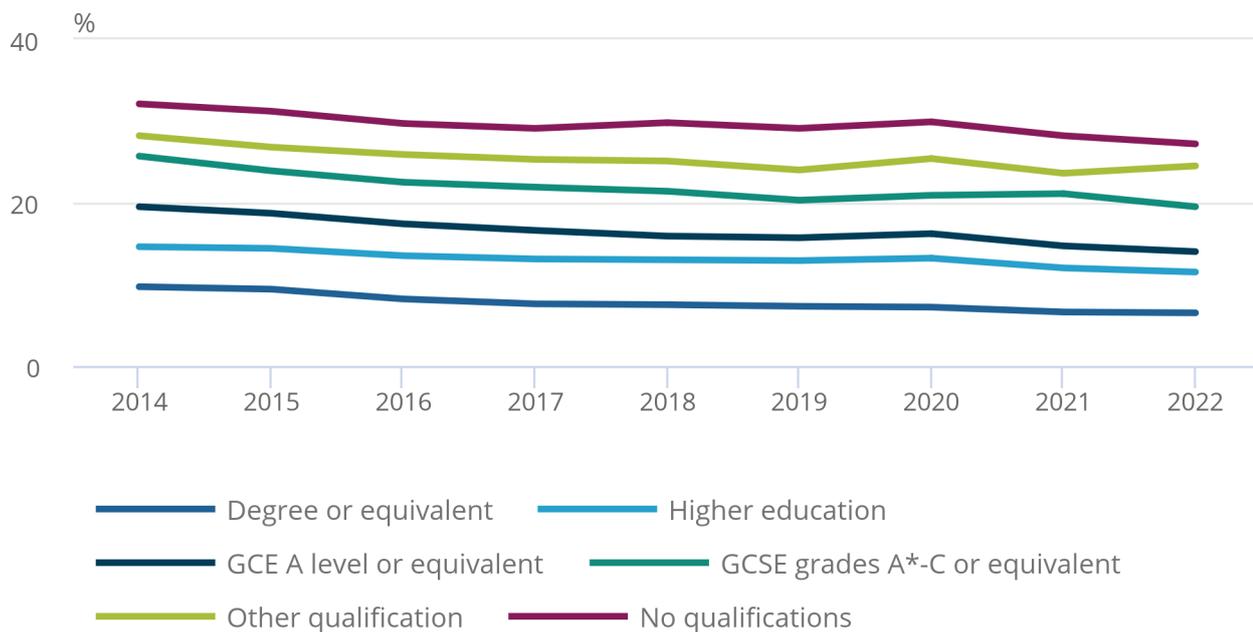
In 2022, 27.2% of people who had no qualifications were current smokers. This is higher than among those who reported their highest level of education as "Other qualifications" (24.5%), and those who reported GCSEs as their highest level of education (19.5%). Those who reported a degree or equivalent as their highest level of education had the lowest proportion of current smokers (6.5%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The highest proportion of current smokers were among those who reported they had no qualifications

The proportion who were current smokers by highest level of educational attainment, all persons aged 18 years and over, UK, 2014 to 2022

Figure 5: The highest proportion of current smokers were among those who reported they had no qualifications

The proportion who were current smokers by highest level of educational attainment, all persons aged 18 years and over, UK, 2014 to 2022



Source: Annual Population Survey from the Office for National Statistics

The [accompanying dataset](#) includes a wider range of data on the characteristics of cigarette smokers from the APS, including estimates by socio-economic status, relationship status, housing tenure, country of birth, ethnicity, and religion. These data for England are also available in Office for Health Improvement and Disparities [Local Tobacco Control Profiles](#).

5 . Smoking prevalence in Great Britain

In this section, we describe data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), which covers adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain.

The [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey](#) changed from an interviewer-led telephone survey to a self-completion online survey since 2020, so we recommend using caution when interpreting the movement in the trend. For more information, please see our accompanying [methodology article](#) and the [OPN QMI](#).

Current smokers

The proportion of adults aged 16 years and over who said they smoked cigarettes in Great Britain decreased significantly from 12.7% in 2021 to 11.2% in 2022, continuing the downward trend seen since 1974. This is in-line with the reduction in smoking we see in the Annual Population Survey (which covers the UK and adults aged 18 years and over).

Conversely, the proportion of people who indicated that they had previously smoked and quit increased in 2022 to 69.4%, compared with 66.9% in 2021 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: The proportion of previous cigarette smokers who have quit continued to increase

The proportion of current smokers and those who had previously smoked and have quit for all persons aged 16 years and over, Great Britain, 1974 to 2022

Notes:

1. The proportion of cigarette smokers who have quit is the proportion of all those who said that they have smoked cigarettes regularly who do not currently smoke.
2. From March 2020, the survey moved to weekly data collection.
3. From 25 August 2021, the survey moved to fortnightly data collection.
4. Data are weighted from 2000 onwards.
5. Data on cigarette use were collected on a two-year basis prior to 2000.
6. Information on the changes in legislation and government policy can be found on the [Action on Smoking and Health \(ASH\) website](#).

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

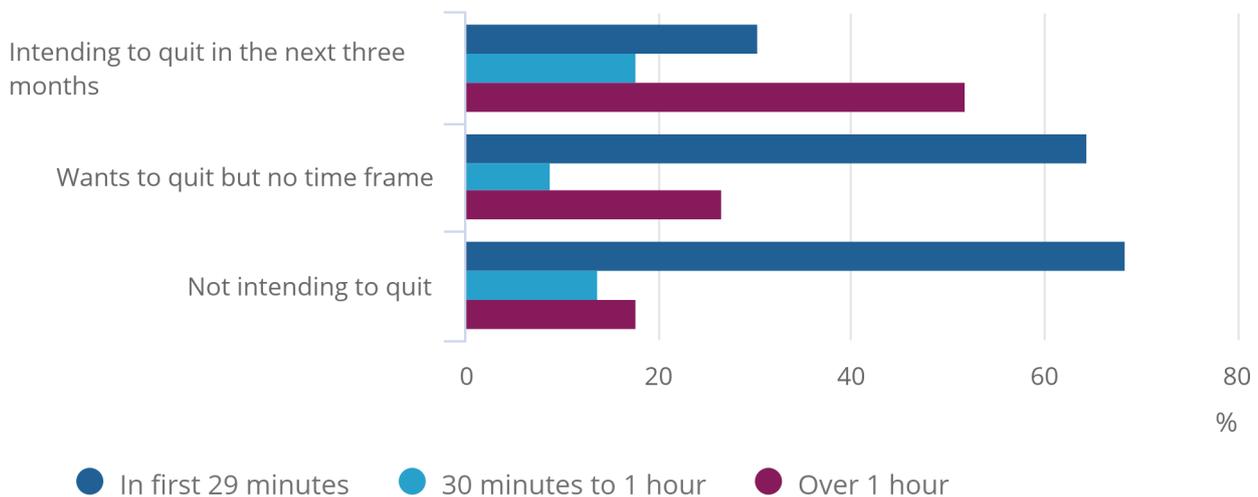
Of the people who currently smoked, 45.4% stated that they intended to quit smoking, with 22.0% of current smokers intending to quit within the next three months at the time of interview. When current smokers intended to quit, they also waited longer to have their first cigarette of the day after waking (Figure 7). Among those who intended to quit within the next three months, 48.0% had their first cigarette within the first hour of waking, compared with 82.3% of those not intending to quit.

Figure 7: Current smokers who intended to quit waited longer to have their first cigarette of the day

Time waited until first cigarette of the day by intention to quit, Great Britain, 2022

Figure 7: Current smokers who intended to quit waited longer to have their first cigarette of the day

Time waited until first cigarette of the day by intention to quit, Great Britain, 2022



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The data refer to the amount of time cigarette smokers typically waited until they had their first cigarette after waking.

6 . E-cigarette use and vaping prevalence in Great Britain

Data for vaping and e-cigarette use come from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), which covers adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain.

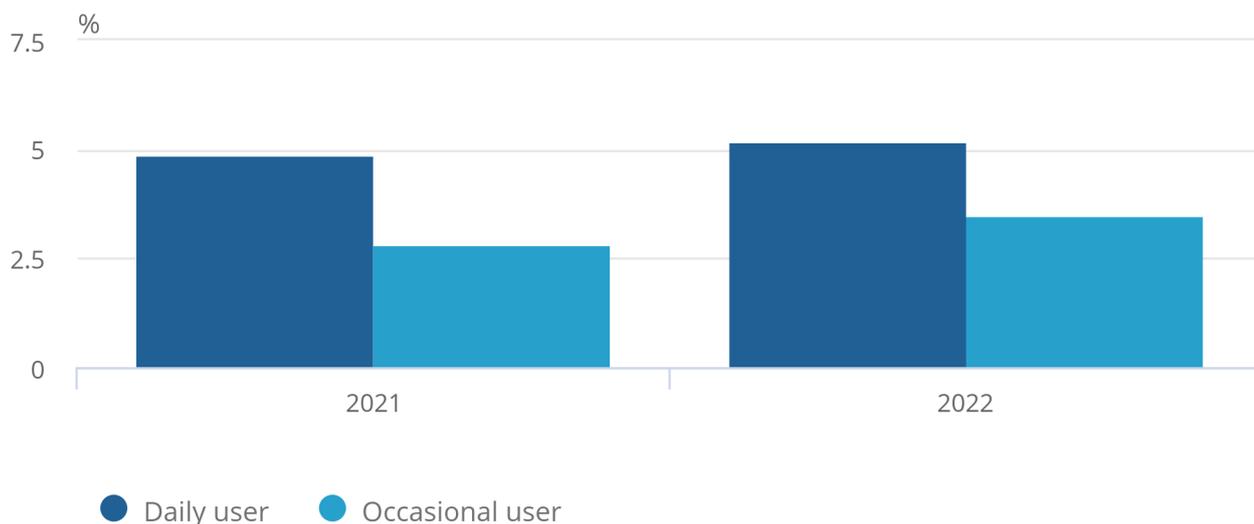
In 2022, 5.2% of survey respondents reported that they were currently daily users of an e-cigarette, an increase from 4.9% in 2021 (Figure 8), although not statistically significant. A further 3.5% reported using an e-cigarette occasionally, an increase from 2.8% in 2021. This equates to around 4.5 million vapers in the population of Great Britain.

Figure 8: The proportion of current daily vapers increased in 2022 compared with 2021

Proportion of daily and occasional vapers, Great Britain, 2021 and 2022

Figure 8: The proportion of current daily vapers increased in 2022 compared with 2021

Proportion of daily and occasional vapers, Great Britain, 2021 and 2022



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The survey moved to fortnightly data collection from 25 August 2021.

In 2022, the proportion of daily and occasional vapers continued to be highest among current cigarette smokers (27.1%) and ex-cigarette smokers (16.5%). Around 2.4% of people who have never smoked reported that they were daily or occasional e-cigarette users in 2022, an increase from 1.5% in 2021. Among those who have never smoked, respondents reporting occasional e-cigarette use showed a statistically significant increase in 2022 (1.8%) compared with 2021 (0.8%).

A higher proportion of men aged 16 years and over reported vaping daily or as an occasional user (9.5%) compared with women (7.9%) in 2022.

The total proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 years who were daily or occasional vapers in 2022 increased to 15.5% compared with 11.1% in 2021 (Figure 9). Changes in e-cigarette usage are particularly evident in younger females, with a statistically significant increase in the proportion of women aged 16 to 24 years who were daily e-cigarette users in 2022 (6.7%), compared with 2021 (1.9%). This is the highest proportion of daily e-cigarette usage in this age group for females since data collection began in 2014.

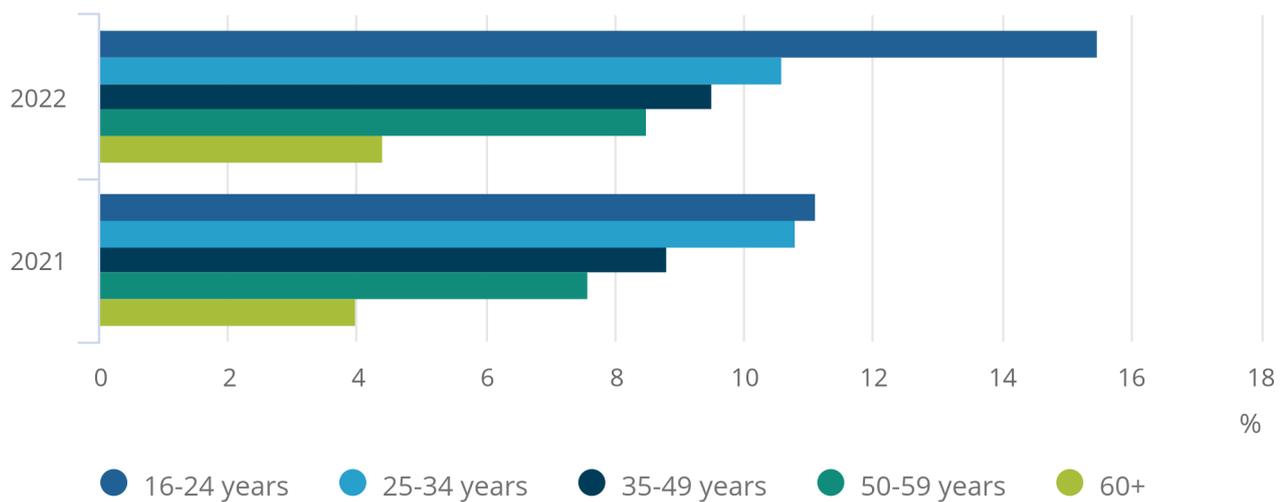
Women aged 16 to 24 years who were occasional e-cigarette users also increased in 2022 to 12.2%, compared with 7.1% in 2021. Occasional e-cigarette use in younger males aged 16 to 24 years increased to 8.7% in 2022 compared with 7.9% in 2021, although this increase was not statistically significant.

Figure 9: Daily or occasional vape use was highest in people aged 16 to 24 years in 2022

Proportion of daily or occasional vapers by age, Great Britain, 2021 and 2022

Figure 9: Daily or occasional vape use was highest in people aged 16 to 24 years in 2022

Proportion of daily or occasional vapers by age, Great Britain, 2021 and 2022



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The survey moved to fortnightly data collection from 25 August 2021.

7 . Other UK data sources on smoking prevalence

The devolved countries of the UK each have their own health surveys that are used to provide official estimates of smoking in each country. These surveys are also used to track progress against each country's targets to reduce smoking. These are:

- the Northern Ireland Health Survey, which shows that [17% of adults smoked cigarettes in 2021 to 2022](#)
- the National Survey for Wales, which shows that [13% of adults smoked cigarettes in April 2022 to March 2023](#)
- the Scottish Health Survey, which shows that [11% of adults smoked cigarettes in 2021 \(PDF, 12.7MB\)](#)

The [Local Tobacco Control Profiles](#) from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) details data on a wide range of indicators related to the smoking of cigarettes, including different measures of prevalence in adults and young people, smoking-related mortality, and the [wider impacts of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) on health](#). The [Health Survey for England](#) and the [Smoking Toolkit Study](#) (non-Government Statistical Service) also collect data on smoking habits and e-cigarettes. NHS Digital also collect data on [smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England](#).

8 . Adult smoking habits in the UK data

[Smoking habits in the UK and its constituent countries](#)

Dataset | Released 5 September 2023

Annual data on the proportion of adults who currently smoke, the proportion of ex-smokers and proportion of those who have never smoked, by sex and age.

[E-cigarette use in Great Britain](#)

Dataset | Released 5 September 2023

Annual data on the proportion of adults in Great Britain who use e-cigarettes, by different characteristics such as age, sex and cigarette smoking status.

[E-cigarette use in England](#)

Dataset | Released 5 September 2023

Annual data on the proportion of adults in England who use e-cigarettes, by different characteristics such as age, sex and cigarette smoking status.

[Adult smoking habits in Great Britain](#)

Dataset | Released 5 September 2023

Annual data on the proportion of adults in Great Britain who smoke cigarettes, cigarette consumption, the proportion who have never smoked cigarettes and the proportion of smokers who have quit, by sex and age over time.

[Adult smoking habits in England](#)

Dataset | Released 5 September 2023

Annual data on the proportion of adults in England who smoke cigarettes, cigarette consumption, the proportion who have never smoked cigarettes and the proportion of smokers who have quit, by sex and age over time.

9 . Glossary

Current cigarette smokers

The Annual Population Survey (APS) defines current cigarette smokers as those who said they smoke cigarettes nowadays. The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) defines current cigarette smokers as those who said they smoked cigarettes, even if occasionally. Current cigarette smokers are provided as a proportion of those in the population.

Cigarette smokers who have quit

From the OPN, those who said they have smoked cigarettes regularly, but they do not currently smoke, are cigarette smokers who have quit. This is provided as a proportion of those who have ever smoked cigarettes regularly.

Current vapers

From the OPN, those who said they currently use e-cigarettes, a vaping device, or both, are current vapers. Current vapers are provided as a proportion of those in the population.

Survey mode

Survey mode is the method that is used to collect information from respondents. There are different types of survey mode, such as face to face, telephone, online and mixed mode.

Selection bias

Selection bias is an experimental error that occurs when the participant pool, or the subsequent data, is not representative of the target population.

Statistical significance

Significance has been determined using [95% confidence intervals](#), which provide the range of values within which we are 95% confident that the true value lies. The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates are available in the [accompanying datasets](#).

Economic activity

International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions of economic activity are used. Unemployed people are those who are not currently in work but who are looking for work. The group "economically inactive" contains those who are not in work, and not looking for work; this includes retired people and students. More information regarding economic activity can be found in the [Labour Force Survey user guide](#).

10 . Measuring the data

Annual Population Survey (APS)

The data on smoking habits in the UK come from the Annual Population Survey (APS). The survey covers residents of the UK aged 18 years and over. For further information on APS survey methodology, see our [APS QMI](#).

The change from a mixed mode to telephone-only data collection for the APS, introduced at the end of March 2020, resulted in a potentially biased sample. The change in the mode of data collection meant our smoking prevalence estimates for 2020 were not comparable with the estimates of previous years. We have updated our weighting methodology to improve comparability of our smoking prevalence estimates for 2020 and subsequent years. For more details about this update, see our [Adult smoking habits in the UK methodology](#).

Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

Data on smoking and e-cigarette use for Great Britain for those aged 16 years and over come from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). In March 2020, the OPN was transformed from a monthly to weekly omnibus survey to understand how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting life in Great Britain. As a result, the number of questions relating to smoking and vaping habits was greatly reduced. For more information on the OPN survey methodology, see our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey QMI](#).

The analysis reported in this release used survey weights to make estimates representative of the population. Survey weights take into account non-response and attrition, as well as the distribution of population characteristics, such as sex and age, where someone lives, and socio-economic characteristics.

11 . Strengths and limitations

Strengths

Robust methods are adopted for the Annual Population Survey (APS) and Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) sampling and weighting strategies to limit the impact of bias. Quality assurance procedures are undertaken throughout the analysis stages to minimise the risk of error.

The sample size of the APS is large, approximately 192,265 respondents, making it possible to generate statistics for small geographic areas. The sample size of the OPN in 2022 was approximately 64,384 respondents.

Limitations

Comparisons between periods and groups must be done with caution as estimates are provided from a sample survey; as such, [confidence intervals](#) are included in the [accompanying datasets](#) to present the sampling variability. These should be taken into account when assessing differences between periods, as true differences may not exist.

There are differences when comparing estimates of smoking prevalence from different surveys. These differences are attributable to a range of factors, for example:

- different survey questions
- different methods of sampling
- different methods of weighting

12 . Related links

[Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Local Tobacco Control Profiles](#)

Web page | Updated as and when new data become available

Data on a wide range of indicators related to the smoking of cigarettes, including different measures of prevalence in adults and young people, smoking-related mortality, and the wider impacts of smoking on health.

[Smoking prevalence in the UK and the impact of data collection changes: 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 7 December 2021

Impact that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had on data collection, how this has influenced estimates of smoking prevalence and the comparability of these estimates.

13 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 5 September 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2022](#)