

# Smokers in England have become less dependent but also less motivated to stop

*Peer reviewed: Yes*

*Type of study: Repeated cross-sectional surveys*

*Subject of study: People*

*Funding: charity/NGO*

Published online today in the scientific journal *Addiction*, a 10-year study led by researchers at UCL of 41,610 smokers in England has found that smokers today show fewer signs of dependence than a decade ago but are less inclined to try to stop smoking.

Thus, smokers consume fewer cigarettes per day (an average of 10.9 in 2017 compared with 13.6 in 2008) and fewer of them smoke within an hour of waking up each day. The proportion who do not smoke every day has gone up from 9.1% to 13.4%. This goes against a popularly held view that as smoking prevalence has gone down, the remaining smokers are more dependent. The proportion of smokers who tried to stop smoking in the past year has declined from 37.0% to 29.9%.

Other interesting findings are that the proportion smoking roll-your-own cigarettes has dramatically increased from 35.3% to 50.7% and the proportion who are trying to cut down how much they smoke has declined from 56.1% to 47.9%.

Surprisingly, the proportion of smokers who are in low paid and manual occupational groups does not appear to have gone up. This suggests that England's approach to reducing smoking prevalence has been equally successful across different occupational groups. However, more action is required to reduce the persistent inequality: the proportion of people who smoke from low paid and manual occupational groups was 61.7% in 2008 and remained at 61.6% in 2017.

The study's lead author, Dr Claire Garnett (UCL Department of Behavioural Science & Health), commented: "The decline in the proportion of smokers trying to quit or cut down is a worrying trend and may reflect budget cuts on tobacco control, including mass media expenditure and stop smoking services. These are known to be effective and it is a false economy to be cutting back on these."

Kruti Shrotri, Cancer Research UK's tobacco control manager, said: "It's concerning that smokers are now less motivated to quit than a decade ago. Mass media campaigns such as Stoptober and January Health Harms are vital in encouraging people to quit smoking but have seen significant budget cuts in recent years. The Government must invest more in these health campaigns to save lives from cancers that could have been prevented."

-- Ends --

For editors:

**This paper is free to download** for one month after publication from the Wiley Online Library: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/add.14882> (after the embargo has lifted) or by contacting Jean O'Reilly, Editorial Manager, *Addiction*, [jean@addictionjournal.org](mailto:jean@addictionjournal.org), tel +44 (0)20 7848 0452.

**To speak with lead author Dr. Claire Garnett:** contact her at University College London by email

([c.garnett@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:c.garnett@ucl.ac.uk)) or telephone (+44 20 7679 1742) or senior author **Prof. Jamie Brown:** contact him at University College London by email ([jamie.brown@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:jamie.brown@ucl.ac.uk)) or telephone (+44 20 3108 3179).

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**Addiction** is a monthly international scientific journal publishing peer-reviewed research reports on alcohol, substances, tobacco, and gambling as well as editorials and other debate pieces. Owned by the Society for the Study of Addiction, it has been in continuous publication since 1884. *Addiction* is the number one journal in the 2018 ISI Journal Citation Reports ranking in the substance abuse category (science edition).