

Smoking (tobacco) causes harm to smokers and to people exposed to the smoke. It causes lung cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and many other cancers. It increases the risk of developing dementia and type 2 diabetes and is associated with increased risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures. It is also associated with poor mental health. ([Office for Health Improvement and Disparities \(OHID\)](#), 2025)

E-cigarettes (vapes) contain nicotine and are often used by smokers to stop smoking tobacco. Research found nicotine vaping to be much less harmful than smoking in the short term but the long term effects are not yet known ([OHID](#), 2022). It is illegal to sell to under 18 year olds and they are not recommended for usage by children or non-smokers. Over the years, however, vaping amongst children has increased.

### Why is this important?



Smoking tobacco causes many diseases & health problems as well as premature death. It is a driver of health inequalities. It harms others through passive smoking. ([OHID](#))

### What is the local context?



In Torbay almost 1 in 6 aged 16+ smoke (2024 GP patient survey, Fig 2), higher than the England average. It is more common in men than women and in more deprived areas.

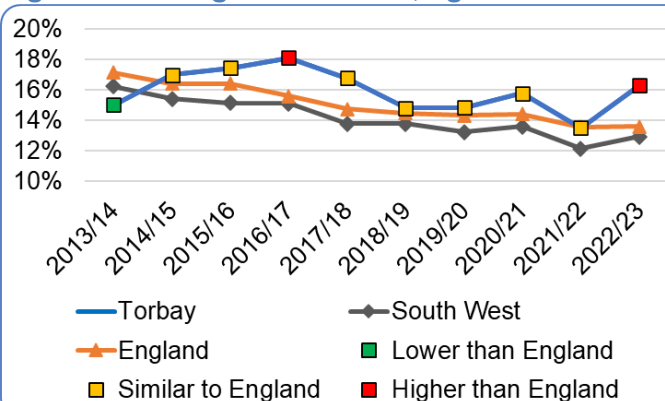
### What should we do?



Support people to quit smoking or remain non-smokers and non-vapers. Work to prevent the take up of smoking or vaping by children.

**Smoking rate:** The percentage of people aged 18+ who smoke tobacco has broadly declined since 2016/17 although Torbay is significantly higher than England in 2022/23. This is a survey of the GP practice populations of each area.

**Fig 1: Percentage who smoke, aged 18+**

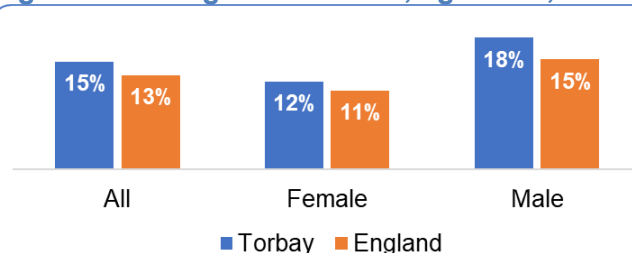


Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#) from GP patient survey- results are weighted to be representative of the population

The 2024 GP patient survey results are available for aged 16+. The methodology has changed from previous years so cannot be compared with Fig 1. In 2024, 15% of people aged 16+ smoked in Torbay, and 18% of males which is significantly higher than females or England males (Fig 2). Analysis shows that in 2024, levels were higher amongst 45 to 64 year olds (22%) than other age

groups, in people living in deprived areas (19% in the 2 most deprived quintiles) and amongst those with long term conditions/illnesses (17%).

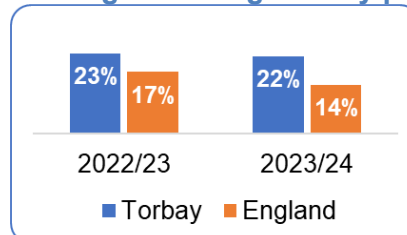
**Fig 2: Percentage who smoke, aged 16+, 2024**



Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#) from GP patient survey- results are weighted to be representative of the population

**Smoking in pregnancy:** The risks to mother and baby of smoking during pregnancy are well known. The percentage of women within the first 14 weeks of pregnancy who are recorded as smoking is significantly higher in Torbay than in England in both 2022/23 and 2023/24 (Fig 3). These are classed as official statistics in development and must be viewed with some caution as they are taken from a new dataset.

**Fig 3: Percentage smoking in early pregnancy**



Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#)

The percentage of pregnant women smoking at the time of delivery is a Devon-wide figure for the whole of geographical Devon. It fell from 11.6% in 2019/20 to 8.0% in 2023/24 ([OHID](#) data).

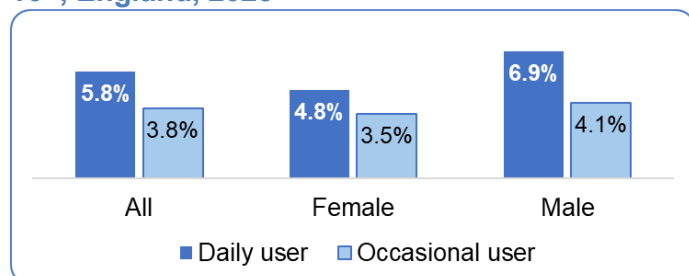
**Adults and e-cigarettes:** A popular way to quit smoking tobacco is to use e-cigarettes. [Research](#) found nicotine vaping to be far less harmful than smoking in the short term but long term effects are not known. An NHS information source on e-cigarettes is: [Using e-cigarettes to stop smoking](#).

In 2023, according to the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, 5.8% of people aged 16+ in England

used e-cigarettes daily with a significantly higher percentage of males than females being daily users (Fig 4). 2023 was significantly higher than 2020 in daily and occasional e-cigarette usage.

The survey reports that in 2023 just over half (54.7%) of smokers have ever used an e-cigarette. This includes 19.2% of smokers who were occasional e-cigarette users and 11.8% who were daily users. 15.1% of ex-smokers reported as daily users of e-cigarettes and 1.1% of people aged 16+ who had never smoked had become users of e-cigarettes.

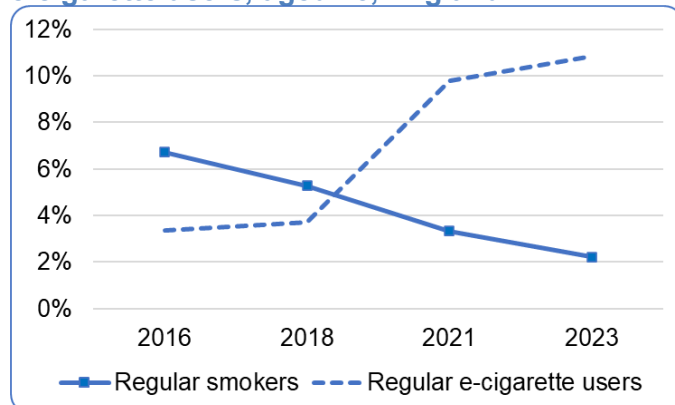
**Fig 4: Percentage using e-cigarettes, aged 16+, England, 2023**



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)- [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey](#)- results are weighted to be representative of the population

**Young people aged 15:** The smoking, drinking and drug use among young people (SDD) survey shows that amongst 15 year olds in England, regular smoking of tobacco cigarettes has declined whereas regular e-cigarette usage (vaping) has increased (Fig 5). Regular smoking/vaping is defined as at least 1 a week.

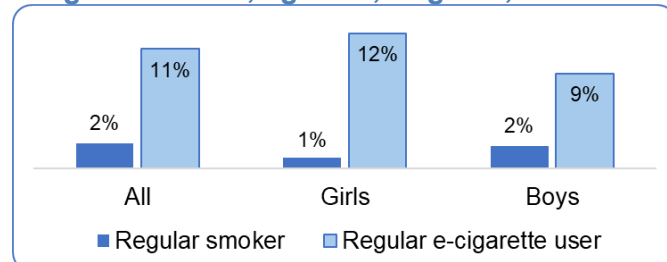
**Fig 5: Percentage of regular smokers/ e-cigarette users, aged 15, England**



Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#) from NHS England SDD survey- results are weighted to be representative of the school population

The SDD survey reports that in 2023 11% of 15 year olds were regular e-cigarette users compared to 2% as regular smokers (Fig 6). The difference was greatest in girls where 12% used e-cigarettes regularly. E-cigarettes are not recommended for usage by this age group.

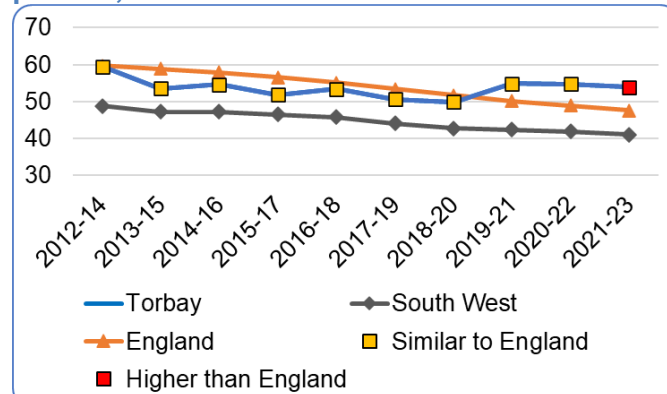
**Fig 6: Percentage of regular smokers/ e-cigarette users, aged 15, England, 2023**



Source: NHS England- [SDD survey](#)- results are weighted to be representative of the school population

**Lung cancer:** Tobacco smoking causes lung cancer. Torbay's mortality from lung cancer is level for the last 3 periods (of 3 years combined) (Fig 7) and equates to an average of around 100 deaths a year from 2019. Torbay is not following England's downward trend and is significantly higher than England in 2021-23. The mortality rate for males is higher than for females in Torbay and England males. The NHS [lung cancer screening](#) page gives information about screening

**Fig 7: Mortality rate from lung cancer, all ages, per 100,000**



Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#), age standardised rates

### Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Smoking causes COPD with Torbay seeing 247 deaths from COPD in the latest 3 year period of 2021-23. Torbay's rate is broadly similar to England and follows England's downward trend with a slight uptick in Torbay in 2021-23. Torbay's rate is 41.6 per 100,000 in 2021-23, England's rate is 43.9. ([OHID](#) data, age standardised rates)

### References:

NHS England: [SDD survey](#), accessed July 2025

OHID: [Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update](#), September 2022, accessed July 2025

OHID: Public health profiles. 2025

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/> accessed 2 July 2025

OHID: [Smoking and tobacco: applying All Our Health](#) updated July 2025, accessed July 2025

ONS: [Opinions & Lifestyle Survey](#), accessed July 2025