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Smoking falls to historic low showing Australia's comprehensive tobacco control measures are delivering results

Smoking has fallen to a historic low with new Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data showing just 5.6% of Australians 14+ were smoking daily last year. This is well ahead of Australia's target of 10% or fewer adults smoking by 2025. Cancer Council Australia says the new data indicates that Australia's tobacco control and nicotine policies over several decades continue to drive down smoking and vaping, saving lives.

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2025, conducted every three years and released today, found daily smoking dropped dramatically from 8.3% in 2022–23 to 5.6% in 2025. Additionally, more than two-thirds of Australians 14+ (68.7%) have never smoked - a historic high.

Cancer Council Australia CEO Jacinta Reddan said the data should put to rest suggestions that Australia's tobacco control settings need to be weakened in response to illicit tobacco. "This survey shows that Australia's suite of world-leading tobacco controls is working to save Australian lives. Plain packaging, taxation, advertising restrictions and sustained public education on the harmful effects of smoking, which still kills 66 Australians every day, have seen smoking drop to among the lowest in the world," she said.

Ms Reddan said the findings highlight a dual challenge: maintaining the policies that continue to reduce smoking while cracking down on the illicit market. According to the survey, the proportion of people who currently smoke reporting any recent illicit tobacco use rose to 34% in 2025, up from 16.7% in 2022–23, and more than half (57%) of those who purchased branded illicit tobacco did so from a tobacconist.

"Illicit tobacco requires an enforcement and regulatory response, not a tax cut; we need to continue reducing demand for tobacco through proven public health measures while governments and authorities need to work together to disrupt the criminal networks supplying illicit products." Ms Reddan said.

"Cutting tobacco tax won't stop criminal operators selling illicit products. It will simply make all cigarettes cheaper, increase consumption and boost tobacco company profits. Meanwhile criminal supply chains, who pay no tax at all, will simply further undercut the regulated market."

The survey also provides encouraging signs that recent vaping reforms are having an impact. Current vaping among 18–24-year-olds has fallen considerably from 20.6% to 14%, while daily vaping remained stable across all age groups, marking a significant shift from the increasing trend observed in previous surveys.

However, the survey also points to an emerging challenge: illicit nicotine pouches and traditional snus, captured for the first time in this data, are gaining ground with younger Australians, with 8.4% of 18–24-year-olds using pouches and 3.8% using snus in the past year.

Chair of Cancer Council's National Tobacco Issues Committee, Alecia Brooks said this growth shows why any response must combine strong enforcement with measures that prevent uptake in the first place. "These products are illegal to sell in Australia, so a tax cut on legal tobacco does nothing to touch them. The only way to combat this is the same way we need to combat illicit tobacco: sustained, demand reduction control policies alongside enforcement, supply-chain disruption and closing off the retail channels illegally selling them in the first place."

She added that the time to act is now. "We've seen this pattern before," Ms. Brooks said. "A new product enters the market and is heavily promoted by the tobacco industry, gaining ground fastest among young people. By the time the data catches up, a new generation is already addicted. We should act to stop the industry's insidious tactics now, not in three years' time."

Cancer Council Australia said governments' response must focus on both reducing demand and disrupting supply, with greater national coordination. Priority actions include:

- maintaining proven tobacco control measures;
- scaled up and sustained investment in public education campaigns to reach all Australians with a range of messages, including material that elicits an emotional response to create urgency to quit, discourage uptake, reduce consumption and support quitting;
- establishing national minimum standards for licensing for all tobacco retailers and wholesalers, with significant provisions to deter participation in the illicit market;
- significantly increasing enforcement resources to target illicit supply chains; and
- continued support for people who smoke or use nicotine products to quit.

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey is conducted every three years and is considered the gold standard source on drug and alcohol use, including tobacco, in Australia. The 2025 survey collected data from more than 17,500 people aged 14 and over between June and December 2025.

This data comes after [Cancer Council Australia's recent open letter](#), which highlighted growing tobacco industry efforts to exploit concerns about illicit trade to weaken effective public health measures.

Ms Reddan added: "Big Tobacco wants you to believe Australia's policies have failed and that a tax cut is the answer. This data suggests the opposite. Smoking is at an historic low because Australia has consistently over many decades invested in measures that prevent uptake, encourage quitting and reduce demand for tobacco. The answer is not to weaken those policies; it is to protect their success through stronger enforcement against the illicit market and continued investment in public education and quitting support."

"Tobacco and non-therapeutic nicotine products have been deliberately marketed to Australians, and we know quitting can be tough. It's also one of the most important things someone can do for their health, and it's never too late to try," **said Rachael Andersen, Director of Quit**. "Most people who smoke or vape want to quit, and Quit is ready to support, whether that's their first attempt or their tenth."

For support to quit smoking or vaping, visit quit.org.au or call Quitline 13 7848.

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Contact details

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About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory

Cancer Councils to:

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