

# BEAT SMOKING LIKE THE SWEDES

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# Introduction

**Sweden's achievement of becoming the first smoke-free country in the world is an inspiring feat that has caught the attention of public health experts worldwide. The country's success in reducing smoking rates has been attributed to its consumer-friendly tobacco harm reduction (THR) policies, which have been embraced by the government and citizens alike.**

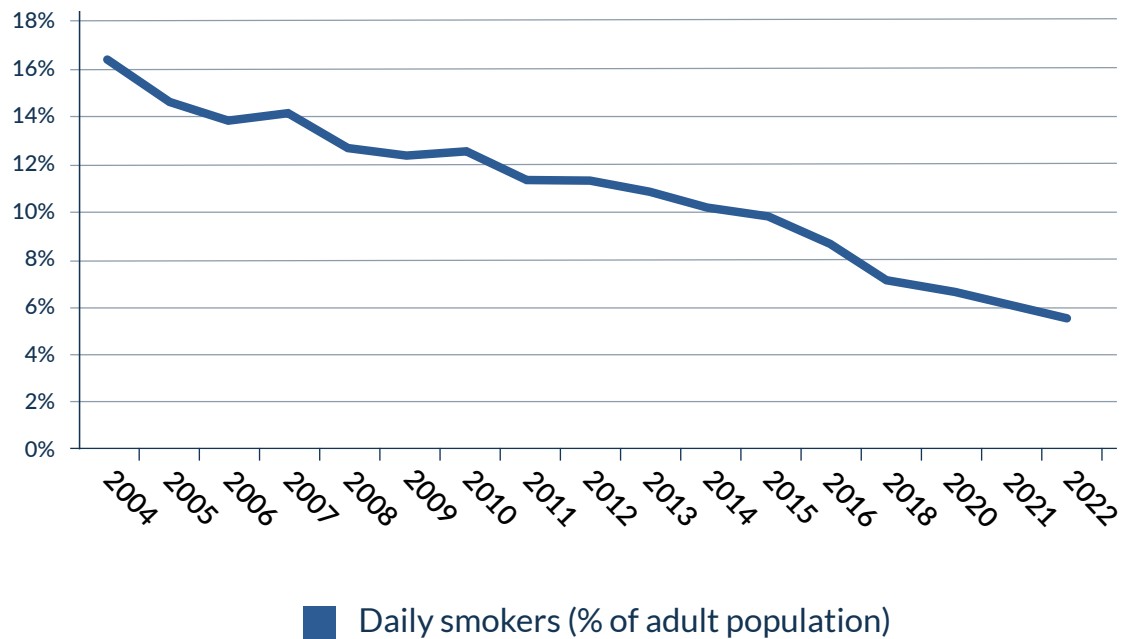
Sweden is on track to put an end to smoking this year and to officially become the first smoke-free country in the world. The Scandinavian nation closed the year 2022 with a daily smokers rate of just 5.6% - the lowest in the EU - and is expected to meet the below 5% smoking prevalence rate this year. 17 years ahead of the target set by the EU. They achieved this staggering success by fully embracing tobacco harm reduction.

### Sweden facts:

- Sweden has the [lowest smoking rate](#) in the EU and is the only country on track to achieve the EU's smoke free-goal
- In the last decade, the smoking rate in Sweden [declined by 55%](#)
- The average smoking rate in the rest of the EU is more than 3.5 times higher
- Smoking-related deaths are [22% lower](#) in Sweden than the EU average
- Overall nicotine consumption is similar to most other EU countries, but cancer incidence is [41% lower](#) than in the rest of Europe, with total cancer deaths being 38% lower

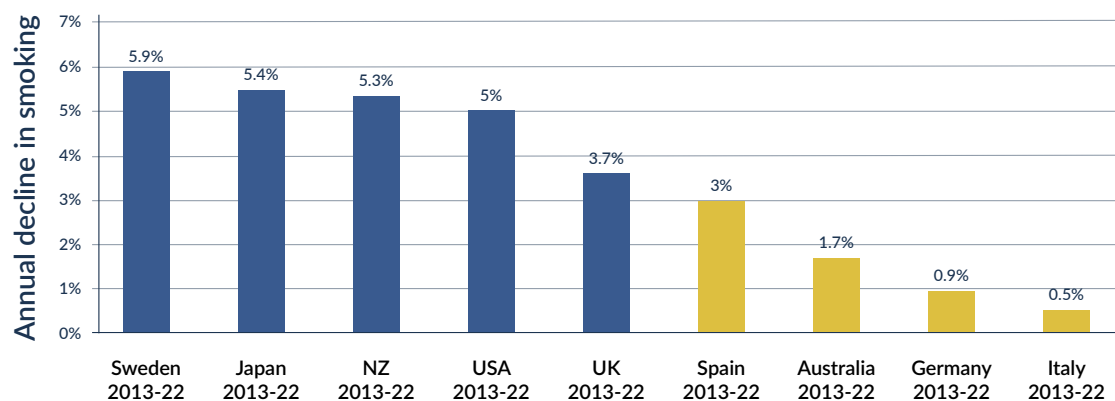
The smoking rate in Sweden has dropped massively since the 1980s, when it was around 35%, to a current level below 6%. Swedish official statistics from the Public Health Authorities show a sharp reduction in smoking over the last two decades.

## Sweden's smoking rates reduction



Comparative data on Sweden and other developed countries show that the Swedes have been able to reduce smoking rates much more rapidly than any other country in the world. The contrast with countries that placed more restrictive policies on tobacco harm reduction products is stark:

### Decline in adult smoking 2012-2022 pa



Source: Dr. Colin Mendelsohn (<https://colinmendelsohn.com.au/science-denial/>) and Special Eurobarometers 385 and 506

Just between 2012 and 2022, the adult smoking rate in Sweden declined almost twice as fast as that of Spain, and almost 6 times faster than that of Australia, a country with strong restrictions on the use of tobacco harm reduction products. How did Sweden manage to reduce smoking rates so rapidly while other countries stalled?

The answer is tobacco harm reduction.

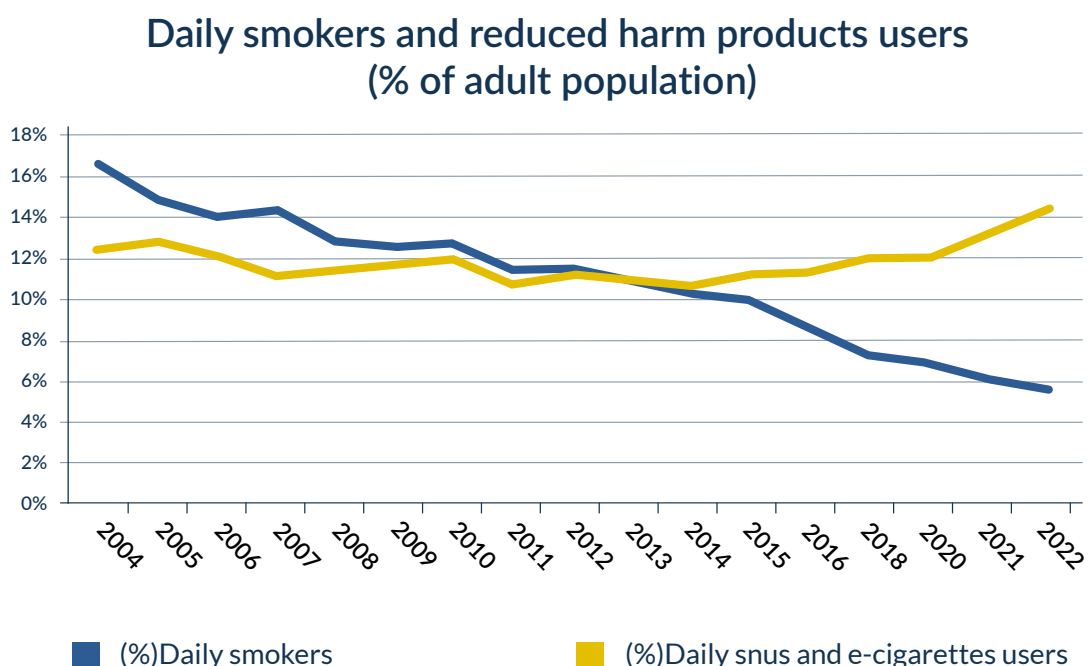
## Backing tobacco harm reduction to beat smoking

The Swedish experience is proof that a good regulation on tobacco harm reduction products and incentivizing smokers to switch to less harmful alternatives is an effective way to reduce smoking rates, and consequently smoking related illnesses.

Sweden is the only country in Europe where snus, an oral smokeless tobacco product which is considerably less harmful than cigarettes, is legal. The availability of snus has led hundreds of thousands of smokers to switch to this reduced harm product and quit smoking.

Additionally, Sweden introduced consumer-friendly regulation for vaping and nicotine products which led to an acceleration in lowering smoking rates.

Official data shows how the reduction in smoking rates in the last decade happens simultaneously with an increase in alternative nicotine products consumption.



Sweden's smart regulation of vaping products is allowing thousands of smokers to switch to this [95% less harmful alternative](#). In Sweden, e-cigarettes use and sale is legal and vaping devices can be purchased without a prescription. A variety of vaping flavours, a [key component](#) for those who switch to quit cigarettes, are also available. Thanks to their open approach, the transition from smokers to vaping has increased reasonably in the last five years, especially among women, occasional users, and those between 16 and 29 years of age. Heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches are also available and widely used in the country. All these products have [significantly lower taxes](#) than traditional cigarettes, yet one more incentive for smokers to switch.

Despite such broad use of alternative products and a nicotine intake similar to that of the other EU countries, Sweden's incidence of cancer is [41% lower](#) and as a result, cancer-related deaths are 38% lower. Additionally, tobacco-related deaths are almost 40% lower. The Swedish example proves that smokeless nicotine products can significantly improve public health and that nicotine is not the substance causing cancer in cigarettes.

Sweden shows that one-size-fits-all solutions are not effective and smokers need to be offered as many options as possible when it comes to quitting. The availability of snus, vaping – which is [twice as effective](#) for quitting smoking as nicotine replacement therapies, heated tobacco, and other options have proved to be successful at reducing smoking prevalence in Sweden.

# Conclusion

Sweden has emerged as a leader in the fight against smoking, and if other countries follow their approach, millions of lives could be saved. Their focus on tobacco harm reduction products has proven successful, and replicating this approach on a global scale could have a significant impact on public health. The message is clear: if we want to beat smoking, we should look to the Swedes for inspiration and adopt their strategies.

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