

Insights from the Latest Eurobarometer: Supporting Tobacco Harm Reduction Efforts Worldwide

This two-pager highlights essential data and insights from the latest [Eurobarometer](#) survey on the attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and related products. These points are selected to support your efforts in promoting tobacco harm reduction through the use of vaping and other safer nicotine alternatives to help smokers quit.

Key findings from the Eurobarometer

1. Prevalence of smoking and safer nicotine products:

Smoking is the largest avoidable health risk in the European Union. It is Responsible for 700,000 deaths each year and around 50% of smokers die prematurely, with an average loss of 14 years of life per smoker. Yet, smoking remains extraordinarily popular: **24% of Europeans currently smoke**, a number that has barely changed since the last Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2020 (25%).

This reveals a profound failure in the European Union's strategy to meet its smoke-free target of achieving a smoking rate below 5% and becoming smoke-free by 2040.

Meanwhile, the use of safer nicotine alternatives that can help smokers quit is still relatively low:

- **Only 4% of Europeans have tried nicotine pouches**, and their use is anecdotal except in Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Finland, Estonia, and Austria.
- **3% of Europeans are vapers.**
- **2% of Europeans use heated tobacco products.**

The European Union should promote the use of these alternatives as tools to help millions of smokers quit.

2. Awareness of safer nicotine products:

Many Europeans remain uninformed about the reduced risks associated with vaping and other safer nicotine products, highlighting the need for better public education. Misinformation is particularly widespread among non-smokers:

- **75% believe e-cigarettes don't help smokers to quit.**
- **76% believe heated tobacco products don't help smokers to quit.**

As a consequence, **59% of non-smokers think that e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products should be regulated as strictly as cigarettes** and a majority of them would be in favour of banning flavours in e-cigarettes.

Among smokers, perceptions of these products are more accurate, but misinformation remains widespread.

3. Reasons for taking up e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products:

Among users of safer nicotine products, the notion that they are useful for smoking cessation is more widespread:

- **36% of vapers started vaping to stop or reduce tobacco consumption**, while 28% believed that vaping is less harmful than smoking.
- **32% of heated tobacco products' users believed that their use was less harmful than smoking**, and 24% started using them to stop or reduce tobacco consumption.

When asked about the factors that were important in their decision to start using these products, users also mentioned the fact that using them was cheaper than smoking (20% and 9% for

vapers and heated tobacco product users, respectively) and that they could use them in places where smoking was not allowed (11% and 13%). Another important factor users from both products mentioned was the fact that using these was more socially acceptable than smoking.

These results highlight the need to keep safer nicotine products affordable, to exclude them from smoke-free areas aimed at preventing secondhand smoking and to not stigmatize its users.

4. Effectiveness of safer nicotine alternatives:

Despite the fact that the majority of Europeans believe that they are not helpful for quitting smoking, the Eurobarometer results reflect the effectiveness of vaping and heated tobacco products in smoking cessation:

- **50% of vapers said e-cigarettes helped them** quit (21%) or reduce their tobacco consumption (29%).
- **53% of users of heated tobacco products said these helped them** quit (16%) or reduce their tobacco consumption (37%).

Despite such success, only 6% and 2% of smokers tried using these products to quit, respectively, while 15% tried to stop without assistance with little success. The experiences of these users should be considered by policymakers aiming to reduce the toll of smoking.

5. Preferences of vapers:

77% of vapers use refillable open-system devices, while 41% use disposables and 40% use pod-system reusable devices. This shows the importance of keeping all products available so that users can choose the option that best suits their needs. Moreover, data reveals **that daily use of disposables is more common among those aged 25-39 and 40-54 than teenagers and young adults (15-24)**, suggesting that these devices are important for adults looking to quit and that their use among adolescents is infrequent.

When it comes to flavours, the data shows that **fruit flavours are the most popular among vapers (48%)**, followed by tobacco (38%), menthol (31%) and sweet candy flavours (20%). Keeping a wide range of flavours available is key to ensure smokers switch to vaping and stay away from smoking, and the EU should reject flavour bans as a consequence.

6. The Swedish success:

The Eurobarometer shows **Sweden is the country with the lowest share of smokers** at 8%, a success largely explained by the popularity of snus and nicotine pouches in the Scandinavian country. According to the survey, **12% and 9% of Swedes use snus and nicotine pouches respectively**.

The fact that Sweden is the country with the lowest smoking rates, and the lowest prevalence of smoking-related deaths and illnesses in the EU despite having one of the highest nicotine consumption rates highlights the necessity for the EU to follow its example and promote the use of safer alternatives to smoking.

Conclusion

To meet the ambitious goal of a smoke-free Europe by 2040, it is imperative to reassess current strategies and adopt proven harm reduction measures. By learning from Sweden's success and the experiences of former smokers, accommodating safer nicotine alternatives within public policies and adjusting incentives, Europe can significantly accelerate its progress towards this goal.

We hope these insights can help you to promote tobacco harm reduction in the European Union and achieve a smoke-free future.