

Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2021

David Mais

Data and Analysis for Social Care and Health Division

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Overview

- Background to ONS Adult smoking habits figures
- Methodology adjustments
- Headline figures

What data sources do we use?

- Annual Population Survey (APS): provides headline indicators of the number of adults aged 18 years and over who smoke in the UK. Used to monitor against the Tobacco Control Plan for England.
- Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN): collects more detailed information on smoking habits, intention to quit smoking, and e-cigarette users aged 16 years and over in Great Britain.

APS discontinuity

- APS switched from mixed mode (face to face, telephone) to telephone only at the end of March 2020.
- This mode change led to an unrealistic fall in the proportion of smokers.
- This is backed by research which found that telephone-only surveys underestimate smoking behaviour.
- An adjustment methodology was needed to fix this discontinuity.

APS discontinuity

The scaling factor can be defined as:

$$sf = \frac{\Delta\hat{y} - \Delta t}{\hat{y}_{20}}$$

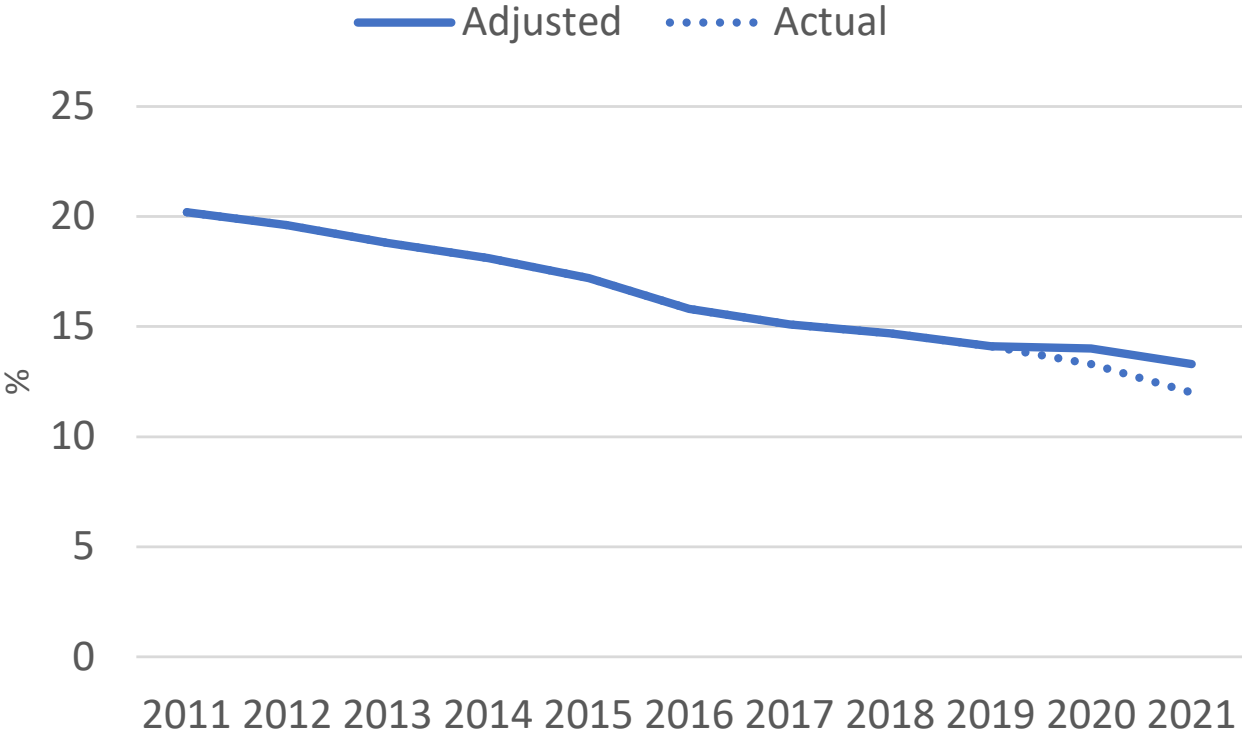
Where

$\Delta\hat{y}$ = the change in estimated value

Δt = the change in trend value

\hat{y}_{20} = the estimated value in 2020

APS discontinuity



- In the UK, in 2021, 13.3% of people aged 18 years and over smoked cigarettes (adjusted from 12.0%)
- In the UK, in 2020, 14.0% of people aged 18 years and over smoked cigarettes (adjusted from 13.3%)

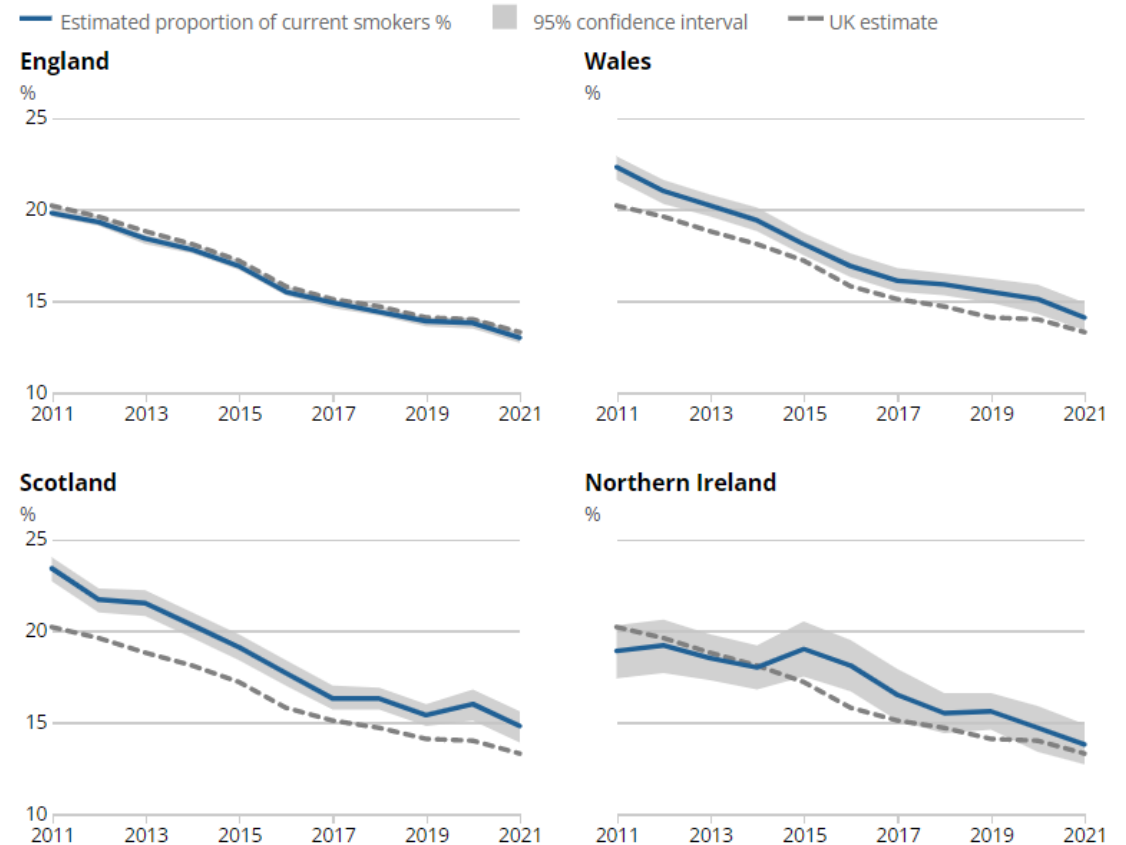
Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey

Key findings: APS

- In the UK, in 2021, 13.3% of people aged 18 years and over smoked cigarettes, which equates to around 6.6 million people in the population; this is the lowest proportion of current smokers since records started in 2011.
- Of the UK countries, smoking prevalence was highest in Scotland in 2021, at 14.8%.
- "The decrease in the proportion of current smokers may be partly attributed to the increase in vaping and e-cigarette use. Data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) have shown regular use of a vaping device has increased in 2021 and the highest usage was among those aged 16 to 24 years."

Figure 1: Smoking prevalence has fallen in all four countries of the UK since 2011

Proportion who were current smokers, all persons aged 18 years and over, UK, 2011 to 2021



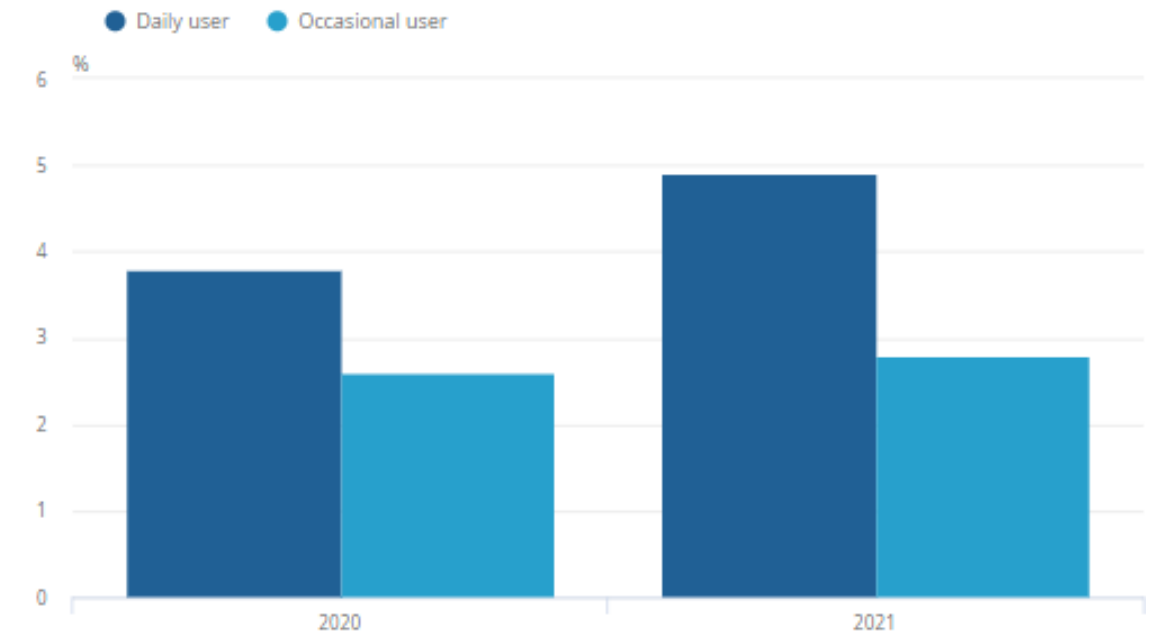
Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey

Key findings: OPN

- In 2021, 4.9% of survey respondents reported that they were currently daily users of an e-cigarette, which is an increase from 3.8% in 2020, although not statistically significant.
- A further 2.8% reported using an e-cigarette occasionally, which is an increase from 2.6% in 2020, although not statistically significant.
- Together, this equates to around 4 million vapers in the population of Great Britain.

Figure 8: The proportion of current daily vapers significantly increased in 2021 compared to 2020

Proportion of daily and occasional vapers, Great Britain, 2020 and 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Thank you

Contact:

health.data@ons.gov.uk