

In a glimpse

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Tobacco supply for smokers in France, 2014-2022

As part of World No Tobacco Day, the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addition (OFDT), in collaboration with *Santé publique France*, has published a briefing paper on the tobacco supply for smokers in France between 2014 and 2022. It combines available public data covering different aspects of the subject and summarises where tobacco has been purchased outside the tobacco retailer network over the last decade.

The public policy on reducing smoking based partly on price increases has proved effective in decreasing consumption over the last decade. The tobacco price increases have sparked many debates regarding the hypothetical development of the black market, a trend refuted by scientific studies, which show that buying behaviours among smokers remain stable despite the price increases. The black market is consequently estimated by public bodies between 10% and 20%, two to four times less than the estimations made by tobacco industry-funded studies.

Tobacco smoking: gradual decline and sharp fall among adolescents

[Data from the Health Barometer survey by Santé publique France](#) indicates a decline in tobacco smoking among adults since 2014. The Survey on Health and Drug Use on National Defence and Citizenship Day (ESCAPAD), conducted by OFDT with 17-year-olds, shows the collapse in all the indicators pertaining to tobacco use among this population. These trends are confirmed and complemented by the latest [Tobacco smoking and tobacco cessation briefing paper](#) conducted for the year 2023 by OFDT.

For example, according to the data from the Health Barometer, daily smoking among 18-75 year-olds has fallen from 28.6% to 24.5% between 2014 and 2022, and consumption among daily smokers has also decreased from 13.5 to 12.6 cigarettes per day on average. These two factors explain two-thirds of the decrease in the volumes of tobacco purchased from tobacco retailers.

As for 17-year-olds, their daily use has halved, and stands at 15.6% in 2022, compared to 32.4% in 2014. Levels of lifetime use have seen an even more dramatic fall, plummeting from 68.4% in 2014 to 46.5% in 2022, a 22-percentage point drop. This data is all the more important as it is among the factors explaining the decrease in the sales volumes at tobacco retailers: despite the prohibition stipulated by law, purchasing from tobacco retailers still remains the preferred supply mode among adolescent smokers: 76.9% of them claim to have bought their cigarettes themselves from a tobacco retailer at least once during the year.

Stability of the black market

Although statistical surveys make it possible to establish stability among supply modes for French smokers between 2014 and 2022, it is still difficult to accurately pinpoint the black market because it encompasses both illegal (smuggling and counterfeiting) and legal practices (purchase abroad within the limit set by regulation) which are similar to purchase optimisation strategies.

It is clear, however, that the main factor associated with purchases abroad, whether legally or illegally, is living in a border department: the proportion of smokers having purchased their latest packet in a neighbouring country amounting to 42%, in comparison with only 7% on average in other departments. Similarly, the decrease in volumes sold at tobacco retailers is proportionally greater in these neighbouring departments (-33.2% since 2017), in comparison with non-border departments (-24.6%). Mainland France's neighbouring countries have not increased the price of tobacco as dramatically, so tobacco is considerably less expensive there.

As for the proportion of purchases made in the street, it has not surpassed 1% across the entire 2014-2022 period, suggesting that there isn't a significant carry over on this supply channel, despite the price increases seen over the last decade.

Further reading (in French)

- Briefing paper: [Approvisionnement en tabac des fumeurs en France, 2014-2022](#) [Tobacco supply for smokers in France, 2014-2022], 20 p.
- Briefing paper: [Tabagisme et arrêt du tabac en 2023](#) [Tobacco smoking and tobacco cessation in 2023], 17 p.