

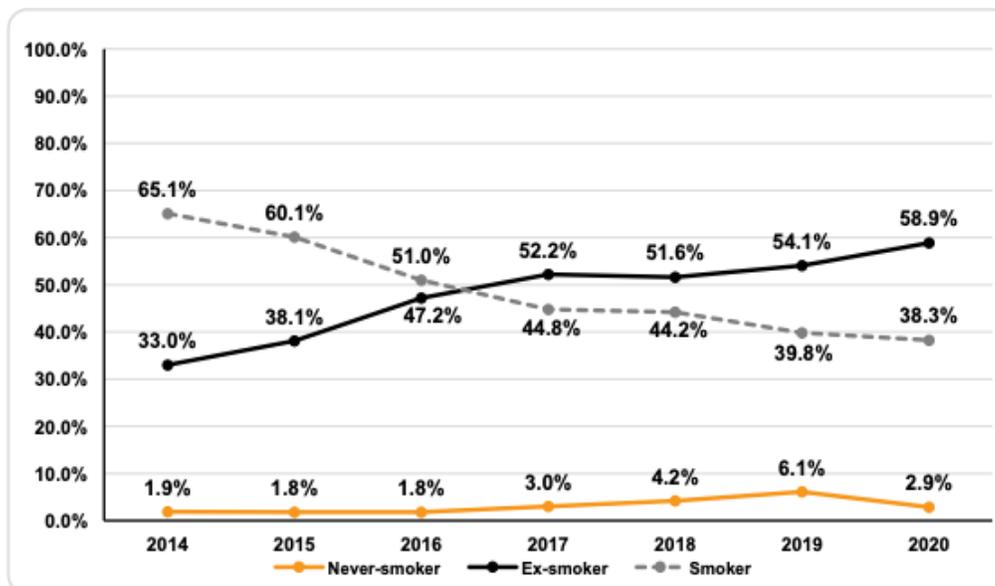
4. Misunderstands dual-use

Dual-use is not a reason for scepticism about e-cigarettes. The justification inappropriately highlights dual use as part of the justification for banning e-cigarette flavours.

However, in the Netherlands, 72% of e-cigarette users had not switched completely by 2018. These were dual users who also used tobacco cigarettes in addition to e-cigarettes. This results in little or no health gain and there are even signs that dual use could be potentially more harmful than using only tobacco cigarettes or e-cigarettes.

Almost all pathways to smoking cessation involve continued smoking. Unless a smoking cessation method is 100% effective immediately, there will be continued smoking in the period between attempting to quit and successfully quitting smoking, if this is achieved at all. Given the very poor efficacy of NRT and prescriptions medicines, most smokers using these approaches will need to make multiple attempts with successive relapses to smoking. What matters is the effectiveness of the pathway to smoking cessation – how quickly it is achieved, how well it is sustained, and how many smokers find that route appealing. On those measures, e-cigarettes score highly.

Dual-use is part of a positive transition from smoking to vaping Dual-use is common in the Netherlands, but less so in the United Kingdom, where there is a more positive government and healthcare system attitude to vaping as an alternative to smoking. In Britain, dual-use is well below 50% of vapers and has decreased over time.¹ The figure below shows the smoking status of current e-cigarette users:



Unweighted base: GB adult vapers 2014, n=498; 2015, n=614; 2016, n=667; 2017, n=669; 2018, n=738; 2019, n= 854; 2020, n=787).

¹ Action on Smoking and Health / YouGov. Use of e-cigarettes among adults in Great Britain, 2020. October 2020. [\[link\]](#)

Quitting smoking can be incredibly hard. For many smokers, dual-use should be understood as a transitional phase in the migration from smoking to vaping. It is often a marker for more dependent smokers trying to quit smoking or cut down – it represents important progress over exclusive smoking.²

Some dual users have higher exposures than exclusive cigarette users, but this is likely due to higher dependence. The justification inappropriately cites a cross-sectional analysis of dual users in a biomarker study³ to claim: “*there are even signs that dual use could be potentially more harmful than using only tobacco cigarettes or e-cigarettes*”. However, this is not what this study does conclude. Because of its cross-sectional nature, the study does not consider the smokers’ baseline cigarette consumption before they became dual users. It is also likely that dual users are more dependent on average and, therefore smoke more frequently and intensely.⁴ Rather than misinterpret the findings of this biomarker study, the government should encourage dual users to switch completely away from smoking as soon as they can, while recognising such behavioural changes are difficult and can take time.

Transition from dual-use to exclusive vaping is held back by anti-vaping activism. If the government, agencies, academics and activists are constantly scaring vapers and smokers about vaping, it is understandable that fewer will find the motivation to move from dual-use to exclusive vaping. Smokers who better understand the vast differences in risk between smoking and switching to vaping are more likely to switch completely.⁵ Dual-use is, in part, caused by anti-vaping activism and those activists and politicians who confuse users about risks (see discussion of EVALI above). By overemphasising the potential risks of vaping and dual-use, the government will mislead and confuse the public. This is likely to result in dual-use persisting longer and fewer smokers trying vaping as an alternative. Sustaining dual-use through anti-vaping communications and rhetoric is one more way in which activists, academics and politicians may prolong smoking – even if unintentionally.

² Simonavicius E, McNeill A, Arnott D, Brose LS. What factors are associated with current smokers using or stopping e-cigarette use? *Drug Alcohol Depend* [Internet] 2017;173:139–143. [\[link\]](#)

³ Goniewicz ML, Smith DM, Edwards KC, et al. Comparison of Nicotine and Toxicant Exposure in Users of Electronic Cigarettes and Combustible Cigarettes. *JAMA Netw Open* [Internet] 2018 [cited 2021 Jan 9];1(8):e185937. [\[link\]](#)

⁴ Shiffman S, Sembower MA, Kim M. Comparisons of dependence on cigarettes and e-cigarettes: Data from the PATH study [Poster for SRNT 2018]. [\[link\]](#)

⁵ Persoskie A, O’Brien EK, Poonai K. Perceived relative harm of using e-cigarettes predicts future product switching among US adult cigarette and e-cigarette dual users. *Addiction* [Internet] 2019;114(12):2197–2205. [\[link\]](#)