

Tobacco Policy Brief

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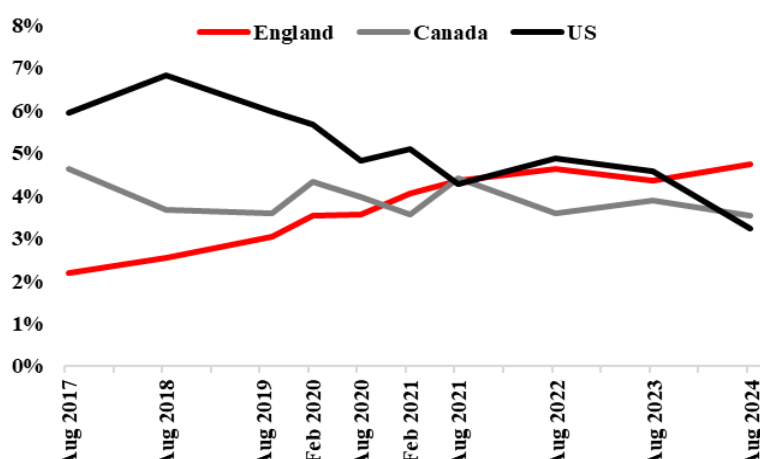
Regulation needed to reduce teen use of cigars/cigarillos

KEY FINDINGS

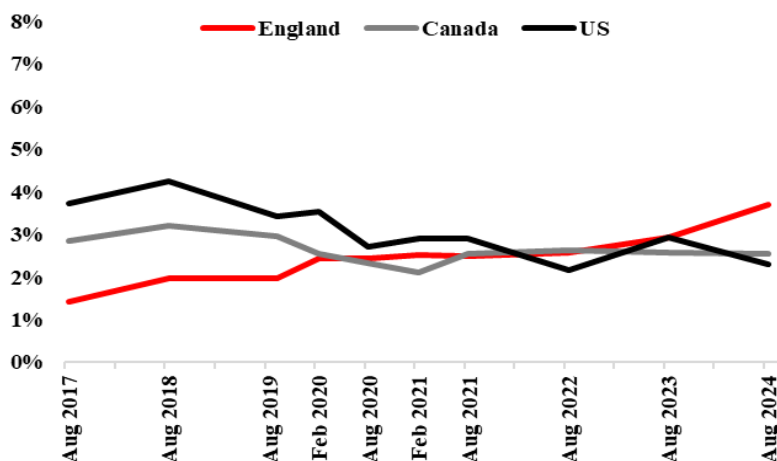
Data from the International Tobacco Control survey among 16-19 year olds clearly show that youth use of cigarillos and cigars are rising in England, up from 2.2% in 2017 to 4.7% in 2024 for cigarillos and from 1.4% to 3.7% for cigars.¹

These trends are consistent with HMRC sales data showing UK cigar sales increased from £73 million in 2019 to £165 million in 2024.

Past 30-day use of cigarillos among youth aged 16-19



Past 30-day use of cigars among youth aged 16-19



Summary

- The Tobacco and Vapes Bill must be accelerated so that it can quickly introduce policies to reduce youth use of tobacco products.
- New regulation for cigars/cigarillos is particularly needed because we have seen a rise in teenage use.
- The Bill could prohibit menthol/flavours, implement minimum pack sizes (e.g., of 20 for cigarillos), standardise packaging, and increase tax. This will bring cigar/cigarillo regulation in line with cigarette regulation.

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¹ Data from 10 waves of the International Tobacco Control Project (ITC) Youth Tobacco and Vaping Survey, of youth aged 16-19 in England (n=41,327), Canada (n=42,499), and the US (n=45,749).

CURRENTLY, UK POLICIES DIFFER BETWEEN CIGARETTES AND CIGARS/CIGARILLOS:

1. **Menthol/flavours:** In May 2020, menthol/flavours were prohibited in cigarettes but not in other tobacco products. Cigars and cigarillos are available in a variety of flavours, and flavour/capsule cigarillo-like-cigarettes were introduced to the UK market around the time that menthol cigarettes were banned (see right image above).
2. **Minimum pack size:** In May 2017, minimum pack size (of 20) was fully implemented for cigarettes but not for other tobacco products. Cigars can currently be bought as singles, and cigarillos are often sold in packs of 10 thus reducing upfront costs.
3. **Standardised packaging:** In May 2017, standardised packaging was fully implemented for cigarettes but not other tobacco products. Cigars and cigarillos can therefore currently be legally sold in colourful packaging.



Flavours, lower costs, and colourful packaging all increase the appeal and use of tobacco products, particularly among youth.²

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

Rates of use have been stable in Canada, which banned menthol/flavors in most cigars/cigarillos in 2017 and implemented standardized packaging for all tobacco products in 2020.



Rates of use in England also differ from the US, where rates fell after the legal age for all tobacco products increased from 18 to 21 in 2019.

Policy recommendations

- The passage of the 2024-25 Tobacco and Vapes Bill will provide the government with powers to more comprehensively regulate cigars and cigarillos through secondary legislation.
- The following clauses are relevant:
 - Clause 89: Retail packaging. The Secretary of State will have powers to regulate the packaging of tobacco products, including markings, appearance, size, shape, and number/quantity of products per pack.
 - Clause 90: Features of products. The Secretary of State will have powers to regulate the features of tobacco products, including appearance, size, and shape.
 - Clause 91: Contents and flavour. The Secretary of State will have powers to regulate the substances included in, and flavours of, tobacco products.
- These powers could prohibit menthol/flavours and mandate standardised packaging and minimum pack size for cigars and cigarillos, bringing them in line with cigarette regulations.
- Cigarillos should also be treated as cigarettes for tax purposes. Currently, they are taxed by weight and this results in a relatively lower level of tax than if they were taxed by number.
- Packaging, flavours, and price significantly impact appeal of tobacco products to youth. Restricting these for cigars and cigarillos is therefore likely to reduce youth appeal and use.

² Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US); 2012.

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