

# Tobacco and Nicotine Use: Prevalence, Prices, and the Impact of War in Ukraine

## Key messages

- From the beginning of the full-scale invasion, smoking surged and remains higher than it was in pre-war times.
- Cigarettes still dominate, but in the younger and more high income segments e-cigarette use and heated tobacco products (HTPs) has increased.
- Men remain a lot more likely to smoke than women, however daily smoking among women is higher in frontline areas.
- Military personnel, manual workers, the self-employed and less-educated adults are the main groups who smoke daily; in particular, e-cigarettes and HTPs are being taken up by youth.
- Lower-income smokers turn to cheap roll-your-own (RYO) and economy cigarettes, whereas high-income smokers pay extra for premium cigarettes and HTPs.
- About half of smokers report that they would quit or try to quit, with a fifth saying that they would reduce their smoking if prices doubled and/or income dropped by half.
- Frontline female residents and IDPs who self-report higher daily smoking rates call for integrated tobacco control and mental health support both during and after wartime.

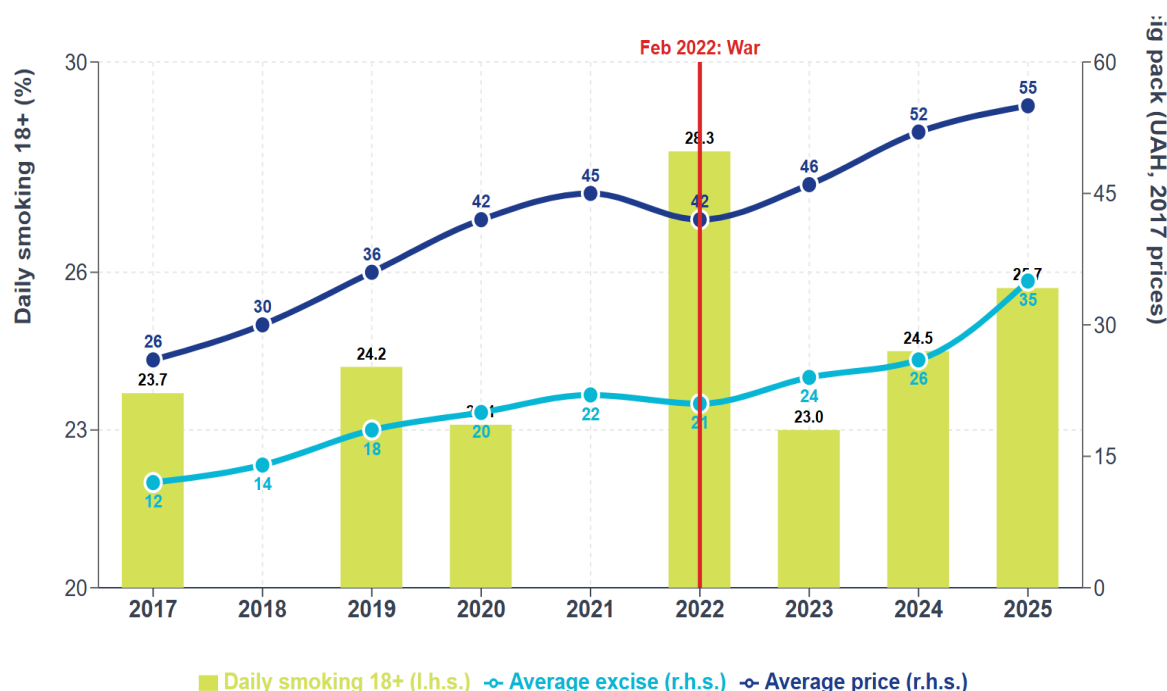
## Background and data

Ukraine made steady progress in reducing smoking prevalence between 2017 and 2021, supported by higher excise taxes, advertising bans and smoke-free legislation. This trajectory was disrupted first by the rapid spread of new nicotine products and then by Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 (Figure 1). The war brought economic shock, displacement, stress and weaker enforcement, as well as a surge in illicit tobacco trade.

## Acknowledgments

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**Figure 1. Daily smoking rates, excise taxes and cigarette prices**

Source: Cigarette prices and inflation - State Statistics Service of Ukraine; Data on prevalence - KIIS omnibus surveys.

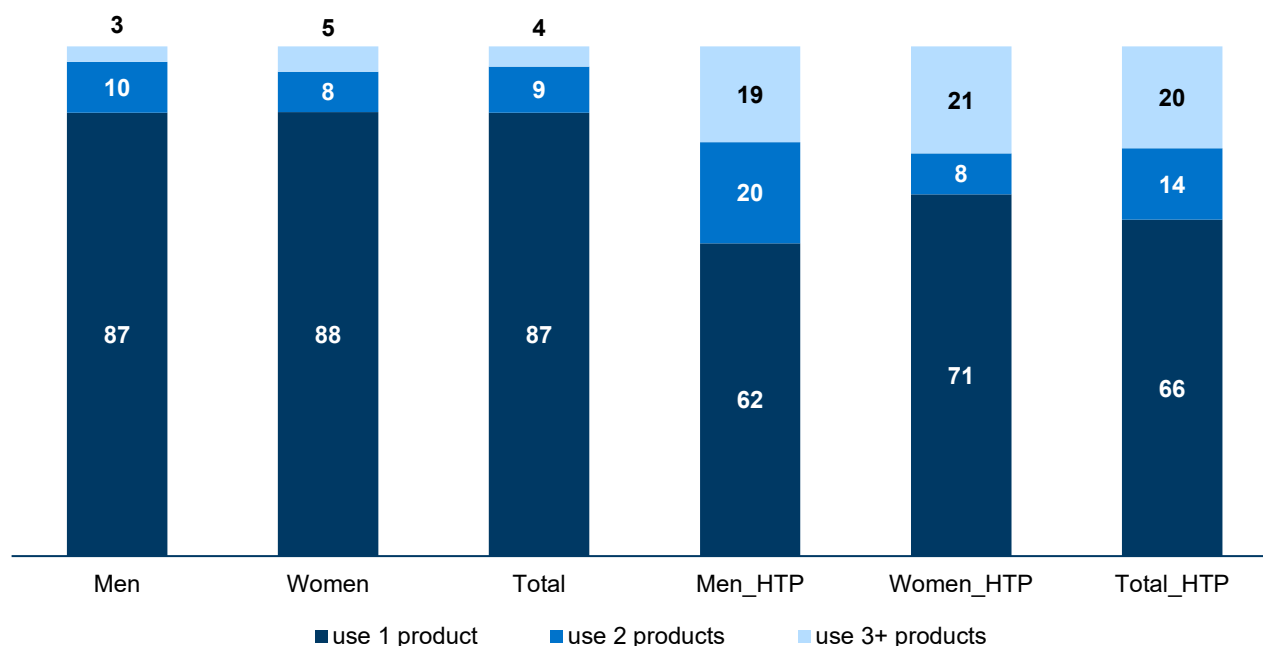
This policy brief draws on the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) Omnibus survey from May 2025. The survey covers 2,004 adults aged 18+, with 1,973 valid responses on smoking status and 564 current smokers. The module includes detailed information on product use, prices and quantities, socio-economic characteristics and self-reported reactions to large income and price shocks.

## Smoking prevalence and product mix

Roughly 30% of adults in Ukraine currently use some tobacco or nicotine product, and about 26% do so daily. Cigarettes remain the most common product, used by around one in five adults, while 4,8% use heated tobacco products (HTPs) and 4,6% use e-cigarettes. While Ukraine's use of traditional and e-cigarettes is above the EU average, its heated tobacco use is the highest in Europe—around three times the EU-27 rate.

Roll-your-own (RYO) tobacco, hookah and nicotine patches are less widespread but play an important role for specific groups, especially older and lower-income smokers.

The vast majority of users are single-product consumers (85.1%), while combining two or more products is less common but still substantial (12.4%). For HTP users combining 2 or more products is more common – 66% are single product users and 24% combine 2 or more products. The rate is even lower for e-cigarette users – only 59% are single product users. Therefore, it is becoming a tool to diversify smoking instead of reducing it.

**Figure 2. Multiple use of tobacco and nicotine products, %**

Source: Authors' calculations based on KIIS May 2025 Omnibus survey.

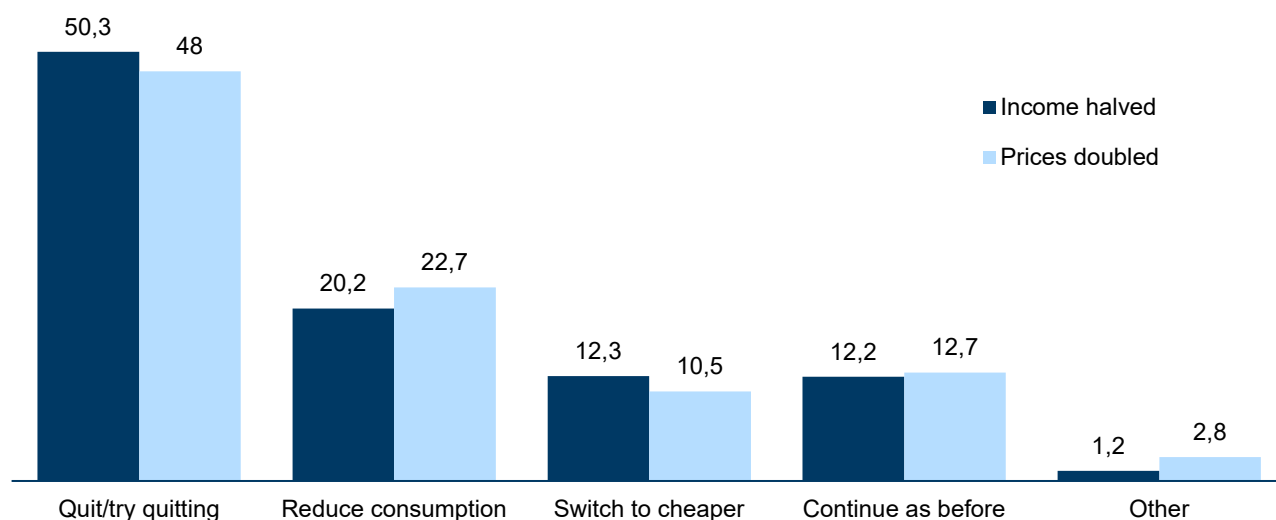
## Social and economic patterns of smoking

Smoking patterns differ sharply across socio-economic groups. Traditionally, Men are about twice as likely as women to use tobacco or nicotine products, and far more likely to smoke cigarettes and RYO. For alternative products such as HTPs, e-cigarettes and hookah, the gender gap is almost non-existent. Smoking prevalence declines with age, but older smokers rely more on cheaper products such as RYO, while younger adults are the main users of HTPs and e-cigarettes.

Daily smoking is highest among military personnel and police, manual workers and the self-employed. Students smoke cigarettes at low levels but have very high daily vaping rates, signalling a shift from traditional to electronic products. Education also matters: adults with secondary education or less have the highest daily smoking rates, while those with higher education smoke less and are less likely to use cheaper alternatives.

## Responses to income and price shocks

The survey asked smokers how they would react if their income were cut in half or if tobacco prices doubled. In both scenarios, about half of smokers say they would quit or try to quit, and roughly one fifth would reduce consumption. Only a small minority report that they would continue smoking as before, while a similar share would switch to cheaper products.

**Figure 3. Stated reactions of smokers to income and price shocks.**

Source: Authors' calculations based on KIIS May 2025 Omnibus survey.

These responses point to high price and income sensitivity. Women are more likely than men to reduce consumption and less likely to continue as before when tobacco becomes less affordable. Younger smokers tend to cut consumption rather than switch to cheaper brands, while older smokers are more inclined to switch. Low-income smokers are especially likely to move toward cheaper products, whereas high-income smokers are more likely to maintain existing consumption levels.

## Impact of the full-scale invasion on tobacco and nicotine use

Smoking rose sharply at the start of the full-scale invasion, reaching about one third of adults, and although it has since declined, it remains above pre-war levels. The war has also changed where and who smokes in Ukraine. Gender differences stand out. For men, daily smoking rates are high across all regions, with only small differences between frontline and non-frontline areas. For women, the contrast is much stronger: about 14% of women in frontline-adjacent oblasts smoke cigarettes daily, compared with around 9% in other regions. This suggests that stress, insecurity and disruption linked to the war may have a deeper impact on women's smoking behaviour in affected areas.

IDPs also show higher tobacco use than the general population. About 37% of IDPs use tobacco or nicotine products, compared with 29% of non-IDPs, and their daily use is higher. Similar patterns have been observed in other conflict settings, where smoking becomes a coping mechanism.

Overall, the data indicate that the war has increased tobacco use in groups facing the greatest stress—women in frontline regions, IDPs, and military personnel. Without targeted support, these patterns could persist and contribute to a higher burden of disease in the post-war period.

## Policy recommendations

Based on the evidence, Ukraine's tobacco control strategy should focus on three pillars: sustaining strong tax and regulatory measures, targeting high-risk groups in wartime, and integrating tobacco control with mental health and post-war reconstruction policies.

1. Maintain or even accelerate the planned excise increases on cigarettes, HTPs and e-liquids, ensuring that tax hikes outpace inflation and income growth bringing Ukraine into faster alignment with EU minimum rates so that real prices rise more rapidly.
2. Limit opportunities for down-trading by applying comparable tax treatment to HTPs and cigarettes reducing the price gap that encourages switching instead of quitting.
3. Strengthen regulation of e-cigarettes and HTPs through health warnings, flavour restrictions, marketing bans and, where feasible, standardised packaging, with particular attention to youth protection.
4. Embed smoking cessation into services for IDPs and residents of frontline oblasts, combining practical quitting support with psychosocial and mental health care.
5. Expand youth-focused prevention and cessation campaigns, especially in schools, universities and online spaces where e-cigarettes and HTPs are heavily promoted circumventing the law.
6. Improve enforcement against illicit trade through electronic excise stamps, track-and-trace systems and stronger penalties for illegal production and smuggling.