

# Cool and fun or stinky and dumb?

It is common knowledge that smoking is a dying trend. But why is it that young people no longer feel that it is cool to be seen with a cigarette?

Is smoking really as it seems?

The most recent figures suggest that 20% of 18 to 24 year olds are smokers. This is a drastic decrease from 1974 when 46% of adults in Britain smoked.

We interviewed young people from our local area to find out their opinion on smoking today. Mabel, a year 8 student told the BBC that she felt even though smoking is disgusting, it is still considered cool. However, she was adamant that she would never smoke herself.

We were also interested in the up and coming trend of vaping and E-cigarettes. We asked another two year 8 students Alex and Ben on their thoughts on the matter. They were both in agreement that vaping was the height of cool. Claiming it was 'sick and good'. They also seemed to think that E-cigarettes were 'totally harmless', from this we can infer that teenagers are ill-educated on the dangers of e-cigarettes as to them they were 'just like sweets'.

We wondered if opinions on smoking were different in adults. To answer our queries we asked George Richards, a male in his late twenties, how he felt about cigarettes. He told us that it had gone out of fashion and nowadays it is more important to be green and healthy, and although he was a smoker as a teenager he would never smoke again. To balance this out we asked a year 11 boy, who would like to remain anonymous, his thoughts on smoking. He disagrees with the other interviewees stating that smoking was as trendy as ever, rating it 10/10 on the coolness scale. He also informed us he had previously smoked and he would smoke again.

In this day and age we are secure in the knowledge that smoking is harmful and young people are well educated on the dangers and disadvantages of cigarettes, but still many people make the choice to become smokers. Why is this?

Do we smoke because we are easily influenced by our parent's decisions? It is well known that if you live with one or more smokers you are more likely to become a full

time one yourself. A survey in 2016 shows us that an astounding 64% of secondary school pupils are exposed to second hand smoke daily.

Or do we smoke because young adults see those we admire smoking on social media? For example, model and reality TV star, Kylie Jenner's Instagram profile picture is of her lying naked and smoking a cigarette, she has 89 million followers to date and is the number one most viewed and followed person on snapchat globally. Most of these followers are impressionable young teens who would get the impression from these posts that smoking was a positive habit, they would want to be seen being just like their idol so they may start smoking themselves which is an obvious health risk.

Peer pressure could be the reason that we smoke, we easily succumb to peer pressure and this could mean we become one of the 3200 people under the age of 18 who smoke their first cigarette every day. In order to stay liked and popular we would continue smoking until we become addicted and one of the 70% of adults who wish to quit smoking.

Perhaps, people smoke because they are attracted to the danger of smoking, worldwide 6 million people die a smoking related death annually. Maybe the concept of having a tragic death at an early age appeals to them like a bungee jump off a bridge appeals to others.

It's dangerous, it's disgusting it's dirty. Yet still we'll do it and we'll never know why.