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that a majority of vapers still have the illegal single-use devices, and more than half are buying them at corner shops

NEW

[Andrew Ellison](#), Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Tuesday October 21 2025, 6.30pm BST, The Times



The ban on disposable vapes was intended to protect children's health and the environment
ALAMY

Doubts have emerged about the effectiveness of the government's ban on disposable vapes after research found that nearly a quarter of users were still buying them on the black market.

In a survey of more than a thousand vapers, 63 per cent were still using single-use vapes despite the products having become illegal to sell at the beginning of June. Among those aged 25 to 34 the figure was 82 per cent.

Overall, 35 per cent of disposable-vape users — the equivalent of 21 per cent of all vapers — admitted still buying the throwaway devices. Others said they had stockpiled vapes before the ban.

• [Disposable vapes contain 'more toxic metals than 19 cigarette packs'](#)

The research, by the online nicotine retailer [Haypp](#), suggests that the black-market trade is flourishing in plain sight. Fifty-five per cent of those who bought disposables said they did so at a local corner shops, a third said they bought them from specialist vape retailers and a quarter bought them online. One in five used market stalls and the rest from sellers on social media, their friends or family.

The ban was introduced chiefly to stop youth vaping and to reduce the environmental impact of single-use devices, after research found that more than five million every week were being sent to landfill or disposed of on the streets.

The research also suggests that the ban may be having some unintended consequences. Six per cent of vapers saying they [had returned to smoking conventional cigarettes](#) since the ban.

Industry experts said the proportion of users still able to buy disposables raised serious questions about the enforcement and oversight of the policy.



Millions of single-use vapes are discarded every week

JAMES SPEAKMAN FOR THE TIMES

Markus Lindblad, Haypp's head of external affairs, said: "The data from our latest report clearly demonstrates that the disposable vape ban is not yet working as expected. The widespread availability of these illegal devices points to a very active black market that will be very difficult to police.

"In addition, we see that people have obviously stockpiled large quantities of disposable vapes, which presents its own safety issues [because of the built-in lithium batteries, which can catch fire]. In this context, the government's plan to introduce a retail licensing scheme for tobacco and nicotine products is a welcome and necessary move."

The ban made it a criminal offence for a business to sell or supply disposable vapes, defined as devices that are not rechargeable or refillable. Enforcement was supposed to be done by councils and local government Trading Standards teams, who can issue stop notices, compliance notices and £200 fixed penalty notices for first offences. Further offences may then lead to prosecution.

- [Hugo Rifkind: Don't ban vapes, just make them really boring](#)

When the government introduced the ban, it announced an extra £10 million of funding for Trading Standards teams this financial year to tackle help illegal sales and reduce underage access to legal vapes. However, critics said Trading Standards was already overstretched and under-resourced, arguing that the extra funding was nowhere near enough to control such a large illicit market.

The Association of Convenience Stores said it would take at least £30 million a year over the next five years to police the illicit trade properly.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was approached for comment.

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