

A NON SMOKING  
*Generation*  
SINCE 1979

# NEXT GENERATION NICOTINE ADDICTED CUSTOMERS



 Swedish Heart  
Lung Foundation



UNIVERSITY OF  
GOTHENBURG



Karolinska  
Institutet

## Next generation nicotine addicted customers

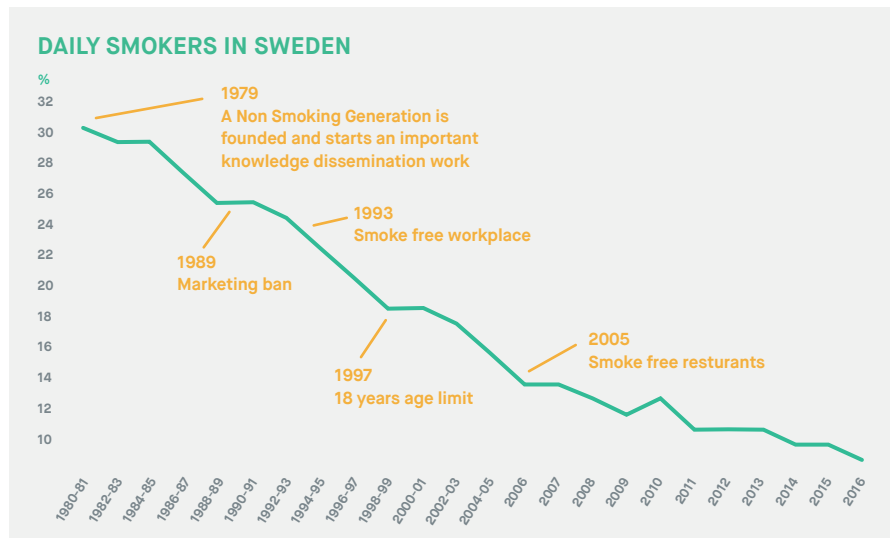
Most likely you have heard about the tobacco industry’s new products; less harmful, nice flavors, helping smokers to quit. But is this really the truth? Or is it yet another tobacco industry tactic – to create the next generation of nicotine addicted customers?

Let us tell you a recent story from Sweden.

### The result of efficient tobacco control

In Sweden, cigarette smoking have decreased steadily since the early eighties. Today somewhere between six and ten percent of the adult population is smoking on a daily or regular basis. The decrease in smoking prevalence is the ultimate proof that

tobacco control works. In 1979 the NGO A Non Smoking Generation was founded and started an important knowledge dissemination work to raise awareness about tobacco health risks to prevent youth from starting. Together with the Public Health Agency, the Swedish Heart-Lung Foundation, the Swedish Cancer Society, and

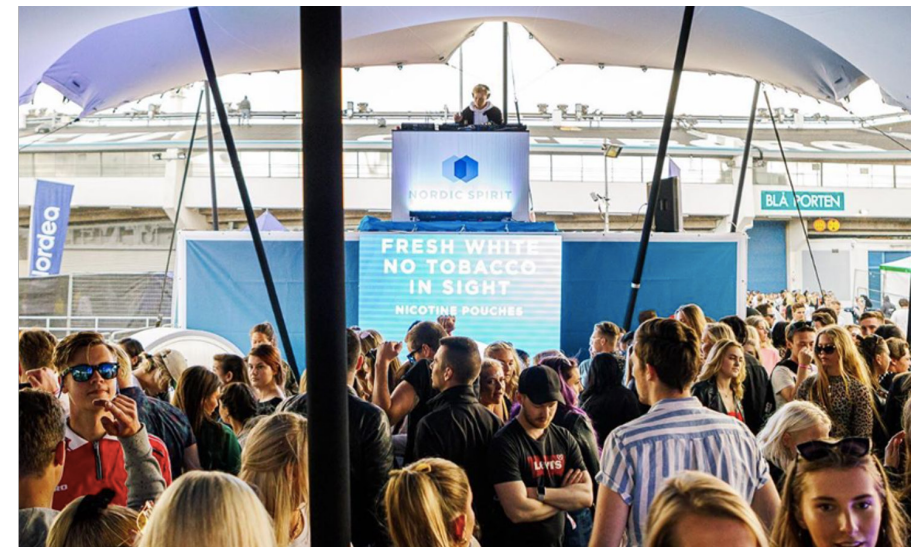


many other organizations, we have jointly worked for the implementation of the tobacco control initiatives according to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

In 1989 Sweden implemented a marketing ban on all tobacco products. In 1993 the smoke free workplace was implemented and in 1997 an 18 years age limit for buying tobacco products. Furthermore, in 2005 it was legislated that restaurants should be smoke free and finally, in 2019 smoke free outdoor seating’s were implemented. Along with continuous tax increases on tobacco, these tobacco control initiatives have brought Sweden to today’s relatively low smoking prevalence among adults.

### The launch of the so-called “tobacco free” white snus

In 2016 the Swedish tobacco industry launched the so-called “tobacco free” white snus (nicotine pouches). By calling it tobacco free they could circumvent the Swedish tobacco laws and years of work for efficient tobacco control were suddenly wiped out. In the blink of an eye social media, popular podcasts, TV and radio were flooded with commercials targeting youth with the promise of a great nicotine kick without any health risks or bad side effects like bad breath or miscolored teeth. Popular influencers were hired to reach out to young people and promote these new products through flavors, design and



Free samples of the white snus were handed out in different launch events on music festivals.

glamorous effects. Free samples were just one click away or handed out in different launch events on music festivals and even outside schools. Thousands of teenagers got their first fix for free and now struggle with a strong nicotine addiction.

Not only have the tobacco industry circumvented the marketing ban, the ban on flavors, age limits for buying and smoke free areas. By calling their new products "tobacco free" they also managed to circumvent tobacco taxation. These products have a low nicotine tax which makes them even more accessible to price sensitive teenagers.

### The tobacco industry lobbying for Harm Reduction

Despite many loud warnings our politicians failed to take control and implement an immediate or interim regulation that would protect children from the tobacco industry's tactics. The white snus contains high amounts of nicotine extracted from tobacco, so the question is how tobacco-free it is and why neither authorities nor politicians did more to protect the health of children and young people? Maybe part of the explanation is a naive desire for a quick and easy solution to a large and serious problem. It sounds like a nice and easy solution, if millions of smokers' lives could be saved simply by switching into a new and less harmful alternative to the lethal cigarette.

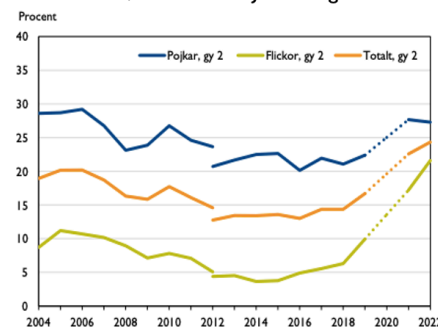
But maybe more importantly because of the tobacco industry's economic power and the lack of implementation of article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Swedish politicians and members of the parliament have not declined meetings with the tobacco industry lobbyists, and the industry has been busy founding new "independent" think tanks like Environment and Public Health Institute (EPHI) and organized "post-tobacco/public health" seminars. Within these so-called independent think tanks the industry can recruit and engage former medical practitioners, researchers and "public health experts" to promote their agenda and lobby for so-called harm reduction.

Politicians and the public health community needs to be informed that the intention behind these efforts is not to enhance global health, but to legitimize the industry's existence and influence the public health policies.

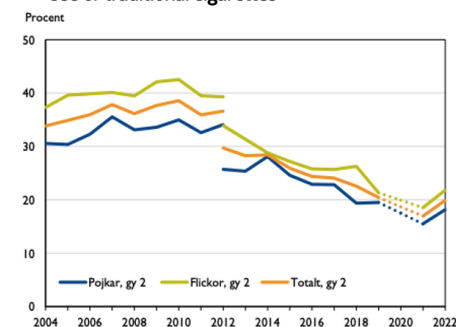
### The result: A new generation of nicotine addicts among youth

The tactics by the Swedish tobacco industry and the introduction of the "tobacco free" white snus has resulted in a new generation of nicotine addicts. The Swedish council for information on alcohol and other drugs has conducted a yearly survey in Swedish schools since 1971. The latest report shows that the use of new nicotine products such as

Use of snus, in the second year of high school



Use of traditional cigarettes



Survey from The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs latest report from 2022.

white snus and e-cigarettes increases rapidly. Forty percent of the students in the second year of high school have used white snus. Forty two percent of the girls had used white snus and thirty seven percent of these girls had never smoked or used any other tobacco before they tried the white snus. Since the launch of disposable e-cigarettes or "puff-bars" the use of vape is skyrocketing among Swedish youth. Forty eight percent of the students in the second year of high school have used e-cigarettes.

The tobacco industry claims their new products are replacing the lethal cigarettes, when in fact the use of traditional cigarettes also is increasing among high school students. From seventeen percent in 2021 to twenty percent in 2022. We believe that this is the effect of an increasing number of nicotine addicts. Independent studies show that if you start using snus or e-cigarettes, you are also

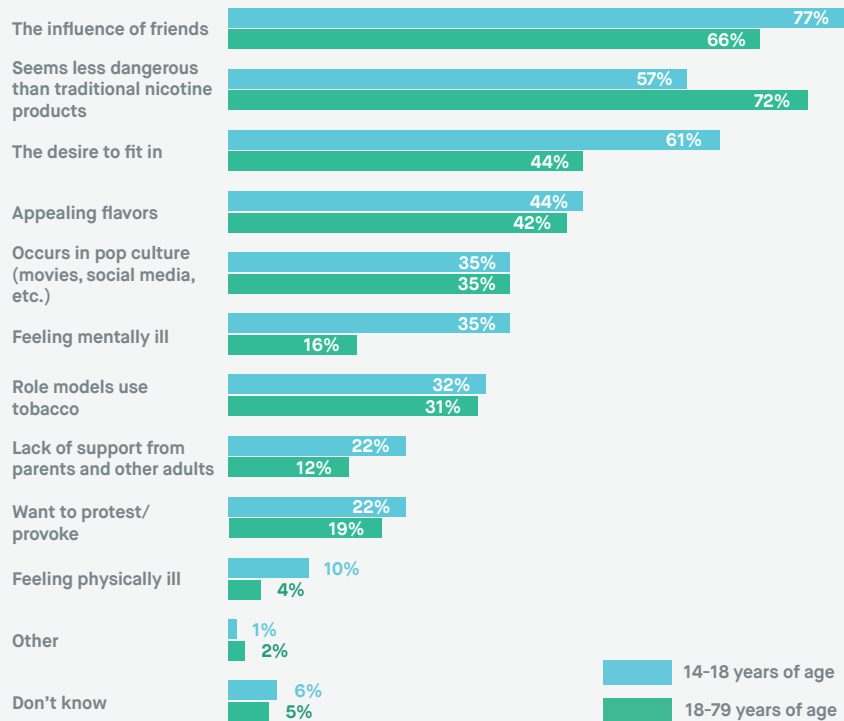
more likely to pick up cigarette smoking. All in all, in 2022, sixty two percent of the Swedish students in the second year of high school have used any kind of tobacco.

### Lack of knowledge and misinformation

On a yearly basis A Non Smoking Generation conducts a survey to monitor youth attitudes towards tobacco use and knowledge about health risks and sustainability issues. In this survey young swedes are asked why anyone wants to try new nicotine products. The answers clearly reflect the tobacco industry's message and marketing strategies. Second to peer pressure the 14-18-year-olds answer, "It seems less dangerous" and "It's got appealing flavors."

The survey also shows that less than half of the responding 14-18-year-olds had received detailed information about tobacco in school.

**WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK ARE REASONS FOR TRYING NEW NICOTINE PRODUCTS?**



This leads to a lack of knowledge, not only about the health risks, but also about the sustainability issues related to tobacco production. Less than five percent knew that the nicotine in the “tobacco free” white snus comes from the very same tobacco leaves as traditional cigarettes. The fact that all kinds of tobacco products are produced with major consequences for global sustainable development

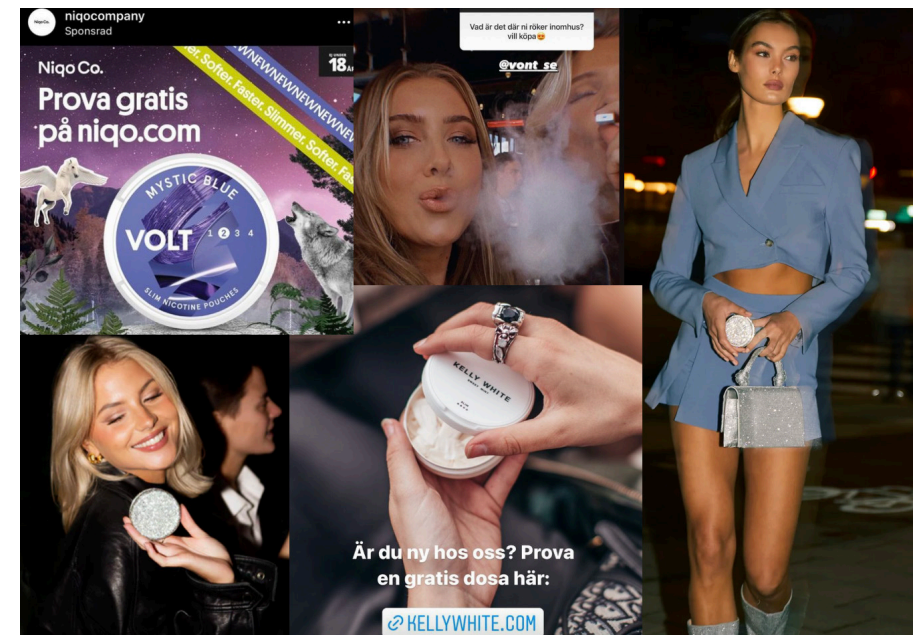
is unknown to the major public. The vast majority of the world’s tobacco growers is trapped in poverty and forced to use their children in the dangerous work at the tobacco fields. The tobacco production also causes massive deforestation, species extinction and environmental toxins in soil and water. This knowledge is important to spread as we know it may contribute to resilient citizens.

**A new law in place**

In August 2022, after many years of intensive advocacy work, Sweden finally got a new law in place regarding the regulation of new nicotine products. Unfortunately, few of the suggested restrictions such as a marketing ban and a ban of flavors were fully implemented. It is still allowed to market white snus, but only to persons older than 25. The advertising must be moderate and cannot refer to flavors. Despite this new law a recently published report from the Swedish Consumer Agency shows that the tobacco industry continues to advertise to young people

in social media. Both appealing flavors and free samples are still being marketed, even though this is now prohibited under the new law.

To protect young people from a harmful nicotine addiction, all of the tobacco industry’s new products need to be regulated as tobacco. The Swedish government chose to believe the tobacco industry’s arguments that their new products are less dangerous and could potentially help smokers quit. The result is now that we have an insufficient and tangled legislation that fails to protect youth from nicotine addiction.



Despite the new law: The tobacco industry continues to advertise to young people in social media. Both appealing flavors and free samples are still being marketed, even though this is now prohibited.

**Less harmful?**

Due to the relatively short time of existence, we do not know exactly how harmful these new products may be. However, what we know for sure is that nicotine, which is the common addictive substance in all of the tobacco industry's products, presents a wide range of serious health risks:

- **Increased risk of illness and death from cardiovascular disease**

A new dissertation on snus and health from 2022 shows that snus users have an increased risk of dying, especially from cardiovascular disease. Previous studies have shown an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes in snus users compared to non-snus users. What is considered to be driving these risks is the nicotine in the snus.

Only  
**10%**  
of adults know that  
nicotine increases the  
risk of mental illness

- **Increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome**

A recently published study conducted in Sweden, which examined how snus in pregnant women affects the fetus,

has shown that the newborn child runs a significantly increased risk of sudden infant death if the mother used snus during pregnancy. The researchers of this study suggests, based on the knowledge from animal studies, nicotine as the most likely cause of this association. The authors' conclusion is that snus during pregnancy affects the risk of sudden infant death as much as smoking 1-9 cigarettes daily.

- **Increased blood pressure, increased pulse as well as vascular damage and airway narrowing**

Studies conducted by Magnus Lundbäck's research group on healthy research subjects point to several negative effects on the body after using e-cigarettes, including increased blood pressure, heart rate, blood clot formation and blood vessel stiffness as well as vascular damage and the narrowing of the airways. In the long run, we believe these findings may lead to an increased risk of the most common diseases of our time, such as heart attack, stroke and COPD. In the studies, we see that the nicotine is the substance that drives the negative effects, and it is the nicotine that we believe will give rise to negative long-term effects.

- **Clear connection between nicotine use and mental illness**

Several studies also show the connections between repeated nicotine



Independent research shows that individuals with a diagnosis of depression indicates that stopping nicotine reduces symptoms, while continued use instead leads to a worsening of symptoms.

use and mental illness such as anxiety, worry and depression. Studies show that nicotine increases the risk of sleeping problems, impaired impulse control, learning difficulties, impaired memory, attention problems, impaired executive function and mood swings. There is also a connection between the use of snus or vaping and an increased risk of getting stuck in other addictions. Ongoing research carried out by Louise Adermark's research group, where Swedish young people have been followed over time, they see that over half of those who use tobacco regularly also suffer from mental illness. The studies also show

that over 30 percent of tobacco users have a risky alcohol intake, while the same figure for those who do not use tobacco is one (1) percent. Research from other research groups that have followed individuals with a diagnosis of depression indicates that stopping nicotine reduces symptoms, while continued use instead leads to a worsening of symptoms. It is therefore possible that nicotine use increases the risk of suffering from mental illness or alcohol addiction, and animal experimental studies support these theories.

### Helping smokers to quit?

In fact, there is no independent scientific evidence in support of the assertion that these products help smokers switch to “less harmful” products. On the contrary, studies show that such attempts to quit smoking often sustain or even strengthen the unwanted behavior – and lead to a dual use. The concept of harm reduction is primarily part of the industry’s plan to weaken or delay tobacco control policies, with the main purpose to facilitate the conversion of healthy younger generations into lifelong nicotine addicts.

Sadly, the Swedish example is not a unique story. There are many alarming



The french Tiktok-trend “Le snus” - Videos are shared where young people are challenged to try the white snus and show their reaction. Many young people get dizzy, start sweating and vomit. Some of them had to seek medical care because of acute nicotine poisoning.

# 60%

of the 15 most popular TV-shows among youth in 2021 contained tobacco imagery

youth trends around the world showing that the tobacco industry tactics indeed have been successful. In recent years, media has reported about the extensive vaping epidemic in the US and the increasing use of “le snus” in France fueled by social media marketing campaigns. While the tobacco industry tries to portray itself as a public health actor, youth around the world suffer from the harmful – and potentially deadly - consequences of its actions.

The currently weak or non-existent regulation of novel nicotine products around the world creates vast opportunities for the industry to target minors. As a result of various misleading marketing strategies many young people perceive these products as harmless and find them attractive.

By exerting its financial power, the industry has gained access to marketing channels reaching a global audience of millions of youths through product placement in popular culture and sponsoring of events. A new report from the Truth Initiative shows that 60 percent of the 15 most popular TV-shows among youth in 2021



Despite repeated calls from public health organizations worldwide, Formula 1 continues to provide a global advertising platform for the tobacco industry.

contained tobacco imagery. Several reports from STOP reveal that tobacco sponsorship within Formula 1 exposes millions of youths to tobacco-related ads. To address the ongoing normalization and glorification of tobacco and nicotine products in youth’s everyday lives, the venues where young people are exposed to tobacco industry messaging need to be properly restricted.

### What needs to be done?

More than nine out of ten tobacco users start during adolescence, due to peer pressure and the tobacco industry’s manipulative tactics. Tobacco control, including strict regulation of novel nicotine products, is an effective tool to promote health equality and health for all generations of today and for those to come.

- Regulate all tobacco industry products as tobacco
- Complete marketing ban on all forms of tobacco
- Ban on flavors/restrict flavoring
- Limit access through raising age limit/reduced number of points of sale
- Raise the tobacco taxation and include all nicotine products from the tobacco industry (not pharmaceuticals)
- Implement a sustainability taxation or a “polluters pay”
- Raise awareness of the health risks connected to nicotine
- Raise awareness of the tobacco industry’s impact on global sustainable development

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