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**BBC**

**Smoking in films 'encourages teenagers to take it up'**

[Comments (390)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-14971560#dna-comments)

By Michelle Roberts Health reporter, BBC News



Teenagers who watch films showing actors smoking are more likely to take it up, new UK research suggests.

Experts who made the link by questioning 5,000 15-year-olds say their findings should prompt a change in film certification so that under-18s are no longer exposed to such images.

The Bristol University investigators say a precautionary approach is needed.

But pro-smoking choice campaigners say this is unjustified and nonsensical.

They say there is no proof that what a person views at the cinema or on DVD influences their decision about whether or not to smoke.

Social background

The latest research, published in the journal [Thorax](http://www.thorax.bmj.com/), looked at the potential influence of some of the 360 top US box office films released between 2001 and 2005, including movies like Spider-Man, Bridget Jones and The Matrix, that depict smoking.

Adolescents who saw the most films depicting smoking were 73% more likely to have tried a cigarette than those exposed to the least.

And they were 50% more likely to be a current smoker.

Knowing that smoking attitudes are influenced by factors such as whether an individual's parents and peers smoke, the researchers also gathered data about the adolescents' social background.

Even after controlling for these variables, these teenagers were still 32% more likely to have tried a cigarette themselves, they said.

'Harmful imagery'

Dr Andrea Waylen, who led the research, said: "We saw a linear relationship between adolescent smoking and the number of films they had seen depicting smoking.

"More than half of the films shown in the UK that contain smoking are rated UK15 or below, so children and young teenagers are clearly exposed."

She said raising certification to 18 was necessary in the UK and would lower youth smoking rates.

The UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies has written to the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) asking it to do just this to protect children from "particularly harmful imagery".

Both U (universal) and PG (parental guidance) film ratings proscribe "potentially dangerous behaviour which young children are likely to copy".

This includes drug misuse but not cigarette smoking.

David Cooke, director of the BBFC, said: "Smoking is a major public health issue and we consulted the public very extensively on it in 2005 and 2009.

Their clear expectation is that we should be vigilant, sensible and proportionate in how we deal with the issue.

"Glamorising smoking has therefore been included as a classification issue in our published classification guidelines and we frequently use our extended classification information to draw the attention of parents and others to depictions of smoking in films.

'Patronising'

"There is, however, no public support for automatically classifying, for instance, a PG film at 18 just because it happens to contain a scene of smoking.

We always look carefully at all research on this and related subjects drawn to our attention.

"Experience suggests, with media effects research generally, that attempts to claim a causal link between a particular depiction and a particular behaviour are often disputed and seldom conclusive."

Simon Clark, director of the smokers' group Forest, said: "The idea that films need to be reclassified in order to create a utopian, smoke-free world for older children is not only patronising, it is completely unnecessary.

"Today you would be hard-pressed to find a leading character who smokes in any top 10 box office movie.

"What next?

Should government reclassify films that feature fat people as well in case they are bad role models?

"We go to the cinema to escape from the nanny state.

The tobacco control industry should butt out and take its authoritarian agenda elsewhere."

Guardian Unlimited

September 20, 2011 Tuesday

**Smoking in** **films 'should get automatic 18 rating'**  
  
**BYLINE:** Ben Child[guardian.co.uk](mailto:guardian.co.uk" \t "_blank)  
  
**LENGTH:** 607 words

Films that depict actors smoking should be handed an automatic 18 certificate, [according to research published by the British Medical Journal](http://news.sky.com/home/showbiz-news/article/16073171" \t "_blank).

The report, produced by researchers from the UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies, called for movies that feature smoking to attract a similar age classification to those that portray sex or violence.

Their study of more than 5,000 adolescents found that 15-year-olds who saw the most films showing actors smoking were 73% more likely to have tried it than those who had seen the fewest.

Dr Andrea Waylen, from the University of Bristol's school of oral and dental sciences, said: "More than half the films shown in the UK that contain smoking are rated 15 or below, so children and young teenagers are clearly exposed.

"Our results confirm an association between this exposure and youth smoking in this country, indicating that raising the certification to 18 in the UK is likely to lower smoking rates among youth.

"Given that smoking depictions in films are not consistent with the ban on smoking in public places in the UK and that the relationship may be causal, a precautionary principle should be pursued.

Films ought to be rated by exposure to smoking in the same way that they are currently rated by level of violence."

Respondents to the survey were asked whether they had seen 50 films randomly selected from 366 box-office hits between 2001 and 2005, including Spider-Man, Bridget Jones and The Matrix.

Those who had seen the most films in which smoking was shown on screen were almost 50% more likely to be a smoker than those who had seen the least.

Smoking in movies has often been associated with glamour, particularly in the early years of Hollywood when actors such as Audrey Hepburn were regularly seen puffing on a cigarette in films such as Breakfast at Tiffany's.

Despite changes in attitudes towards smoking in subsequent decades and stringent calls from campaigners for new guidelines, film-makers remain free to portray the habit on screen without fear of censorship.

In response to the latest report, the British Board of Film Classification said its current guidelines were "proportionate; take due account of the available evidence of harm; and reflect the clear wishes of the public".

Director David Cooke said: "Glamorising smoking has been included as a classification issue in our published classification guidelines.

There is, however, no public support for automatically classifying, for instance, a PG film at 18 just because it happens to contain a scene of smoking."

Five films that children might be banned from viewing if smoking attracted an 18 certificate

[The Lord of the Rings trilogy](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/102469/lord-of-the-rings-trilogy" \t "_blank) (2001-2003)

Gandalf the wizard has a huge fondness for smoking tobacco through a pipe in Peter Jackson's fantasy trilogy based on the novels by JRR Tolkien (himself a keen smoker).

Hobbits Pippin and Merry also enjoy a puff of the Shire's finest pipe-weed.

[101 Dalmations](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/34770/101-dalmatians" \t "_blank)(1996)

Glenn Close's Cruella DeVille (via a sleek 20s-style cigarette holder called a quellazaire) is rarely seen without a fag poking from her lips.

[Peter Pan](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/82501/peter-pan" \t "_blank) (1953)

Captain Hook takes his smoking habit to extremes in Disney's animated tale, via a holder that allows him to inhale from two cigars at once.

[Alice in Wonderland](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/82042/alice-in-wonderland" \t "_blank)(1951)

The walrus smokes cigars, the dodo enjoys a pipe, and the caterpillar loves to puff on a hookah in the Disney classic.

[Pinocchio](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/91424/pinocchio" \t "_blank) (1940)

Two ruffians do their best to convince the innocent puppet to take up smoking in Disney's animated retelling of the Carlo Collodi fairytale.

Independent.co.uk

September 20, 2011 Tuesday 6:54 AM GMT

**Film censors under fire for failure to stub out smoking**  
**BYLINE:** By Tom Lawrence, PA  
  
**SECTION:** HOME NEWS  
  
**LENGTH:** 455 words

Films that depict actors smoking cigarettes should carry the same age classification as those containing sex and violence, according to experts.

The claim comes after a new study revealed that teenagers are more likely to take up the deadly habit after watching movies which glamorise smoking.

Researchers from the University of Bristol found that 15-year-olds who saw the most films showing actors puffing on a cigarette were 73% more likely to have tried one than those who has seen the least.

They were also almost 50% more likely to be a current smoker than those least exposed.

The UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies has called on the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) and the Government to review their policies on film classification, arguing that under-18s need to be protected from potentially harmful imagery.

Dr Andrea Waylen, who led the medical research, said: "More than half the films shown in the UK that contain smoking are rated UK15 or below, so children and young teenagers are clearly exposed.

"Our results confirm an association between this exposure and youth smoking in this country, indicating that raising the certification to 18 in the UK is likely to lower smoking rates among youth."

The doctor, from University of Bristol's School of Oral and Dental Sciences, added: "Films ought to be rated by exposure to smoking in the same way that they are currently rated by level of violence.

"Such a policy would also make the movie ratings system consistent with the ban on tobacco advertising in all other media."

More than 5,000 adolescents were asked whether they had seen 50 films randomly selected from 366 box office hits released between 2001 and 2005 as part of the study.

They included movies like Spider-Man, Bridget Jones and The Matrix.

The data, published in an article in the journal Thorax, was then compared with whether the individual had ever tried a cigarette or were current smokers.

Researchers also took into account the factors of alcohol use and smoking among the teenagers' peers which are known to affect them taking up the habit.

They found that those who had seen the most films depicting smoking were still 32% more likely to have tried a cigarette themselves.

The BBFC said its current guidelines were "proportionate; take due account of the available evidence of harm; and reflect the clear wishes of the public".

David Cooke, the body's director, said: "Glamorising smoking has been included as a classification issue in our published classification guidelines.

"There is, however, no public support for automatically classifying, for instance, a PG film at 18 just because it happens to contain a scene of smoking."

Metro (UK)

September 21, 2011 Wednesday   
Edition 1;   
Scotland

**Movie smoking 'needs 18 rating'**  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 25  
  
**LENGTH:** 97 words

FILMS showing actors smoking cigarettes should be rated 18, experts have said.

The call follows a new study showing that teenagers who watch the most movies containing scenes of smoking are up to 73 per cent more likely to try cigarettes.

Dr Andrea Waylen, of the University of Bristol, said: 'Raising the certification to 18 is likely to lower smoking rates among youth.

Films ought to be rated by exposure to smoking in the same way that they are currently rated by level of violence.'

However, the British Board of Film Classification said there was no public support for the idea.

telegraph.co.uk

September 20, 2011 Tuesday 10:53 AM GMT

**BBFC defends 'harmful' film smoking guidleines;   
A new study has revealed that teenagers are more likely to take up smoking after seeing film stars in the act.**  
  
**LENGTH:** 420 words

Films that depict actors smoking cigarettes should carry the same age classification as those containing sex and violence, according to experts.

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The Sunday Telegraph (London)

September 25, 2011   
Edition 1;   
National Edition

**Stubbing out the celluloid cigarette**  
**BYLINE:** JENNY McCARTNEY  
  
**SECTION:** FEATURES; OPINION, COLUMN; Pg. 30  
  
**LENGTH:** 235 words

Teenagers are more prone to take up smoking, a report found last week, if they watch films in which the characters smoke.

As a result, there have been calls to give films which depict smoking an 18 certificate.

This seems a tricky argument, not least because you'd have to reclassify nearly every film from the golden age of Hollywood cinema, in which nobody swears but everyone smokes their heads off.

As a child, I remember thinking that smoking was extremely cool, and duly posing in front of the mirror with candy cigarettes (the end thoughtfully daubed with a little cochineal faux-ember).

Corner shops sold cigarettes as singles, and people puffed away freely on buses and in cinemas: if you closed your eyes, you might have assumed that British air was naturally tobacco-flavoured.

The era came drifting back with every smoke-soaked frame of the new film of Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, set in 1973.

We all know, now, that smoking is deeply harmful, but I suspect that - for certain young people - is part of its appeal.

And while the fiddly, transgressive ritual of lighting a cigarette was perfectly designed for flirting, when I see smoking on screen now a little voice tends to whisper "emphysema, lung cancer, yellow nails and teeth", rather than "deeply sexy".

Perhaps it is simply that, as you get older, self-destruction loses its appeal once you understand how very easily it can be accomplished.