Sharp increase in new vape shops

More than 230 independent vape shops opened across the UK last year, new figures have revealed.

It represents a sharp increase from the 61 new stores which opened in 2022, and a net fall of 23 in 2021, according to a survey of retail areas by the Local Data Company (LDC).

The rise comes amid government plans for new restrictions on **vaping** due to concerns about the impact of the devices on children and the environment.

The LDC said 233 independent vape outlets opened in 2023, bringing the total across the UK to 3,573.

The figures relate to specialist stores only and do not include corner shops, Post Office branches, newsagents and other outlets that stock vaping devices and accessories.

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It comes amid a boom in vaping products in the UK, with growth in value sales of £897m in 2023, according to market researcher NIQ and trade magazine The Grocer.

But there are concerns about the impact of disposable vapes on the environment, along with worries about their use among young people, despite a ban on sales to under-18s.

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The number of children using vapes in the past three years has tripled, according to Action on Smoking and Health. The charity estimates one in five of those aged between 11 and 17 have tried vaping.

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Last year, the government **unveiled plans to introduce tighter restrictions on smoking and vaping**, with a consultation currently ongoing into proposals to potentially ban disposable vapes.

Other plans under consideration include price rises and restricting the flavours and appearance of such products to make them less attractive to children.

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2:26

Pupils ‘can’t last a lesson’ without a vape

But the vaping industry argues that their products play a crucial role in helping people to stop smoking.

UK Vaping Industry Association director general John Dunne said: “The independent specialist vape shop in the UK plays an important role in advising smokers how best to make the switch to vapes, and ultimately how to continue their journey to zero nicotine.

“Vapes are proven to be the most effective way for smokers to quit, helping around 50,000 more smokers beat their habit every year and a rise in the number of specialist vape shops reflects a growing demand from smokers wanting to quit a habit that kills over 200 people every day in the UK alone.”