

Elf Bar sales skyrocket: some retailers' figures rise by up to 883% as industry experts voice black market concerns



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Industry experts call for greater regulation amid rising cases of counterfeit disposable vapes sold illegally through TikTok, with fake Elf Bar profiles followed by up to half a million young people

New data has found UK sales of disposable vapes boomed over the last year, growing 883% between May 2021 and May 2022 at some retailers.

This growth has been driven by the increasing popularity of Elf Bar products, which have become one of the most popular vaping products. Elf Bar sales are almost double what they were by this point last year and are now taking up 70% of the total disposable vapes market.

The data was collated by Vape Club – the UK's largest online vaping and disposable vape retailer – and identifies the expanding market for these products.

The figures represent fully age-verified sales, but the vaping industry has raised concerns that high demand for Elf Bars has created a black market in counterfeit, non-compliant devices, which are often sold to underage users. Legitimate retailers have demanded tougher enforcement of the regulations to combat this issue.

Social media platforms, predominantly used by teenagers, are often used to sell these counterfeit products illegally. On TikTok alone, there are around 205 unofficial accounts selling

Elf Bar devices. Some of these accounts are followed by half a million young people and parents are now being urged to educate their children on the dangers associated with illegal vaping products.

Dan Marchant, founding member of the UK Vaping Industry Association and director at Vape Club, says:

“It’s worrying that there are so many fake social media accounts posing as retailers. Not only will unscrupulous people sell vaping products to underage users this way, but the products themselves might not even be genuine. Worse still, these fake products could be dangerous.

“Reputable sellers have safeguards in place to ensure that children can’t buy vaping products. For instance, we conduct full digital age verification on every new customer before we allow an order to go out the door.

“Regulations in the UK are great on paper, but enforcement is sadly almost entirely lacking. So when illegal vaping products are widely available, or when vapes get into the hands of kids, the vaping industry gets blamed. Yet the responsible side of the industry are literally begging for the authorities to enforce the regulations and take serious action against the businesses flouting the rules.

“What’s needed is a licensing scheme, so proper age verification tests can be applied to every retailer. And there must be higher fines, applied to every breach, for the rogue sellers. The UKVIA (UK Vaping Industry Association) is calling for the fines to be raised to at least £10,000, which would be a real deterrent.

“And action is needed urgently, with disposable vape sales rising so quickly. A full quarter of our sales, for example, are now disposable vapes. So Elf Bars and similar products are where the government should be concentrating its crackdown.”

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