

PM2.5 levels halved since 2003

A report published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) last week has highlighted a significant fall in air pollution in England, putting it at a 20-year low.

The IFS report [Exposure to air pollution in England, 2003-23](#) published on the 6th December 2024, found that average levels of PM2.5 in England fell by 54% between 2003 and 2023, with a dramatic drop during the pandemic which has been maintained since.

Some national press coverage of the report has framed the findings as overwhelmingly negative regarding wood burning. There is nothing within the report to justify this and some of the scaremongering headlines that have ensued.

In fact, the IFS report makes note of the tendency to “overestimate the importance of woodburning” and highlights the complexity and challenges in correctly apportioning the PM2.5 that is monitored in England to a specific source. The IFS states:

“...emissions may be dispersed by the wind or brought to the ground by rain, meaning a large emission of PM2.5 may not translate into significantly higher amounts of PM2.5 in the air we breathe ... Figure 3 only measures so-called primary PM2.5 – fine particulate matter that is directly emitted. PM2.5 concentrations in the air include a lot of so-called secondary PM2.5. Secondary PM2.5 is fine particulate matter that is formed from other air pollutants, such as NO₂ and SO₂ emitted from various sources (including combustion in energy industries, industrial combustion and transport) that turn into PM2.5 a few hours to a few days after being emitted. Considering only primary PM2.5 tends to overestimate the importance of woodburning as opposed to transport and energy combustion.”

Modern stoves burning dry wood fuel make up a very small percentage, under 0.3%, of total UK PM2.5 emissions¹.

The Stove Industry Association and its members are committed to promoting the benefits of modern stove technology and raising awareness on how to use these appliances correctly. Replacing inefficient and highly polluting open fires with a modern, precision engineered stove is the key to dramatically reducing the particulate emissions associated with burning wood.

References:

¹ [NAEI Data, 2022](#)

ENDS

Editor's Notes:

- The Stove Industry Association was formed in 2008 and is a trade association of stove manufacturers, distributors, retailers and installers, wood fuel suppliers, flue and component manufacturers, chimney sweeps and other interested industry bodies.
- With over 200 members, the SIA represents the stove industry in discussion with government departments such as Defra, Welsh Government, Scottish Government, and the Greater London Authority and with local authorities.
- [The SIA's Key Facts document can be downloaded here.](#)
- Please contact Erica Malkin SIA Communications Manager on 07891 097842 or erica@stoveindustryassociation.org for further comment on this press release.
- Further information on the work of the SIA can be found at www.stoveindustryassociation.org