

Most young people who try e-cigarettes don't become regular users, says study

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Credit: Cancer Research UK

The majority of e-cigarette experimentation among young people doesn't turn into regular use, according to a new study.

It also found that levels of regular vaping in young people who have never smoked remain very low.

The study, part-funded by Cancer Research UK, collated 5 surveys that questioned more than 60,000 young people in total, aged 11-16.

The work is a collaboration between the UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies, Public Health England, Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), and the DECIPHer Centre at the University of Cardiff.

Professor Linda Bauld, from the University of Stirling and lead author of the study, said that despite alarming headlines, e-cigarette experimentation isn't translating into regular use.

She said: "Our study also shows that [smoking](#) rates in young people are continuing to decline."

But she added future studies need to continue to

monitor both experimentation and regular use of e-cigarettes and take into account smoking trends so that the public get the best information.

Regular (at least weekly) use of e-cigarettes ranged from 1-3%, and was most common in regular smokers across the 5 surveys.

The highest rate of regular use of e-cigarettes in young people who had never smoked was 0.5%. For regular smokers it ranged from 7-38%.

The evidence so far shows that e-cigarettes are far safer than smoking. But as a relatively new technology, the extent of any effects from long-term use haven't been fully worked out.

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's director of prevention, said: "Smoking continues to be the biggest preventable cause of cancer, so it's vital we continue to investigate ways to reduce the number of people addicted to tobacco. E-cigarettes have the potential to help achieve this."

Different countries have taken different approaches to regulation. The UK has promoted the devices as a way to reduce the harm caused by tobacco, at the same time as banning their sale to under-18s.

The study highlighted a number of possible limitations due to the nature of the data used, including that it may not be fully representative of the UK's young people. But because the trends in use are similar across the surveys, more confidence can be taken from the findings.

Official statistics show that [e-cigarette](#) usage is increasing while [tobacco smoking](#) is decreasing among young people in the UK.

Cox said that the study provides reassurance that even though vaping is popular in the UK, [smoking rates](#) in young [people](#) aren't rising.

"We'll continue to support research that will help smokers to quit and stop [young people](#) from starting," she said.

More information: Linda Bauld et al. Young People's Use of E-Cigarettes across the United Kingdom: Findings from Five Surveys 2015–2017, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2017). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph14090973](#)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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