

Ethnic minorities in England less likely to report using e-cigarettes to reduce smoking

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Ethnic minority groups may be missing out on a means of reducing smoking. A household survey in England has found it is less common for smokers of Asian, Arab, and other ethnicities to use e-cigarettes to try to reduce their cigarette consumption or when they are not allowed to smoke than those of White ethnicity.

This comparative underuse of e-cigarettes is important because ethnic minority groups in England appear to be at higher risk of [smoking](#)-related diseases. NICE guidance says that reducing smoking prevalence could reduce those health inequalities more than any other measure.

The report, published today in the scientific journal *Addiction*, draws on data from UCL's Smoking Toolkit Study (a monthly household survey) from April 2013 to September 2019. Participants who were current smokers self-reported their ethnicities and their use of e-cigarettes to try to help them cut down on their smoking or when they are not allowed to smoke (temporary abstinence).

Overall, 18.0% (n=4,409) of current smokers

surveyed reported using e-cigarettes or nicotine replacement therapy for cutting down and temporary abstinence. Within this group, the odds of [e-cigarette](#) use were 26% lower among smokers of Asian ethnicity and 49% lower among those of Arab/other ethnicity compared with those of White ethnicity.

Says lead author Dr. Emma Beard (UCL Behavioural Science and Health), "E-cigarettes are substantially less harmful than traditional cigarettes and can help smokers quit cigarettes. The best approach is to use e-cigarettes to quit smoking altogether but there is some evidence that using e-cigarettes to cut down on cigarette smoking may reduce smoking-related harm. Our study suggests that segments of the population that are at higher risk for smoking-related harm appear less likely to use e-cigarettes."

On a more optimistic note, the study found that the odds of [nicotine replacement therapy](#) use were 42% higher among people of mixed and multiple ethnicity compared with those of White ethnicity.

More information: Emma Beard et al, Differences between ethnic groups in self-reported use of e-cigarettes and nicotine replacement therapy for cutting down and temporary abstinence: a cross-sectional population-level survey in England, *Addiction* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/add.15431](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15431)

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