

YOUNG PEOPLE AND E-CIGARETTES IN SCOTLAND: A SURVEY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS



HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2014, the Scottish Government commissioned a survey with a representative sample of secondary school pupils to gather data on: their experiences of e-cigarettes in their environment; the degree to which adolescents are exposed to the marketing and promotion of e-cigarettes; and their knowledge and attitudes in relation to e-cigarettes. The survey provides valuable baseline information on the place of e-cigarettes in the lives of secondary school pupils in Scotland.

Awareness of e-cigarettes is almost universal across secondary school pupils in Scotland and many know family members and friends who use e-cigarettes. In line with other surveys in Scotland and other parts of the UK, the vast majority (81%) of pupils have never tried an e-cigarette. Of the 16% of the sample who had ever used them the majority of this group (81%) had tried them just 'once or twice'. Current use (defined as at least once a month) was reported by 3%.

In common with other surveys of adults, young people and children, most pupils who use or try e-cigarettes are also tobacco smokers: 5% of pupils who had never smoked had ever tried e-cigarettes and the more tobacco cigarettes a pupil smoked the more likely they were to have ever used an e-cigarette. Current use was largely confined to pupils who also currently smoke tobacco. A very small proportion of the small group who had ever used both e-cigarettes and conventional tobacco had tried an e-cigarette first.

Most of those who had tried an e-cigarette had, on their first use, been given it by someone they knew, usually a friend or someone with whom they were hanging out. Curiosity was the main driver for their first use, sometimes motivated by seeing a friend or family member using an e-cigarette.

In the past week, most pupils had been exposed to some form of e-cigarette marketing and promotion, including in-store displays for sale and in broadcast, online and print media. When asked whether e-cigarettes adverts make using them look cool, 61% disagreed, 11% agreed and the remainder either said they did not know or neither agreed nor disagreed.

Four questions to gauge their knowledge and understanding elicited a rate of 22-30% of "don't know" responses, suggesting a high degree of uncertainty and a lack of knowledge about the products. Two-thirds knew that e-cigarettes can contain nicotine and 70% correctly thought that they are less harmful than tobacco. The other two questions (on whether e-cigarettes are addictive and whether they are harmful to health) were more ambiguous in terms of current evidence so the fact that 30% did not know how to answer is unsurprising. While a clear majority (87%) do not think that smoking is "cool", pupils were less sure about whether using e-cigarettes is "fun": 18% did not know and 64% disagreed.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to summarise the results of a survey of secondary school pupils in Scotland about e-cigarettes. The aim of the survey was to gather information about pupils' levels of awareness of e-cigarettes; experimentation and use of e-cigarettes; exposure to the marketing and promotion of e-cigarettes; and their knowledge and attitudes about the products. The results of the survey contribute to a growing evidence base which the Scottish Government will draw on to inform its policies on e-cigarettes.

Background

E-cigarettes or electronic cigarettes are battery-powered handheld devices which heat a liquid to deliver a vapour which is then inhaled by the user, in an act known as “vaping”.¹ They typically consist of a battery, an atomiser and a cartridge containing the liquid.² Earlier models, often referred to as “cigalikes”, were designed to closely resemble cigarettes but there is now a wide variety of product types on the market and continued evolution in their design. The liquid is usually flavoured and may or may not contain varying concentrations of nicotine, although in most cases e-cigarettes are used with nicotine.

In the UK e-cigarettes are currently (autumn 2015) subject to general consumer product regulations or manufacturers can apply to the UK Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for a medicines licence.³ Other countries have developed alternative approaches to classifying and regulating e-cigarettes (Institute for Global Tobacco Control 2015). The EU Tobacco Products Directive (TPD)⁴ will extend and strengthen existing regulation by creating a consistent regulatory regime for nicotine-containing e-cigarettes and e-liquids across EU Member States. The TPD will be transposed into the domestic law of member states by May 2016. It introduces a number of limitations on e-cigarettes which contain nicotine, including regulations related to their contents and how they are brought to market, and will ban several forms of marketing.

In Scotland, adult smoking rates have been decreasing or have remained fairly stable in recent years (Scottish Government 2015a), while smoking has steadily declined amongst under 18s (ISD 2014). In March 2013, the Scottish Government launched its current tobacco control strategy, *Creating a Tobacco-Free Generation*, which articulated an ambitious aim of creating a Tobacco Free Generation by 2034 where 5% or fewer of the adult population smoke. The strategy recognised the challenges for tobacco control posed

¹ They are also referred to by a variety of other terms including Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) and e-shisha.

² The ASH (2014) and ASH Scotland (2014a) briefings include useful descriptions of the main types of device on the market.

³ At the time of writing no MHRA-licensed e-cigarette was on the market.

⁴ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOL_2014_127_R_0001

by novel products, including e-cigarettes, and included an action to consider policy responses.⁵ The *Programme for Government for 2015-16*⁶ indicated that legislative restrictions on e-cigarettes would be introduced and, subsequently, the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Bill⁷ was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 5 June 2015. The Bill introduces a number of measures designed to prevent access to e-cigarettes by children and people under the age of eighteen which brings them into line with other age-restricted goods like tobacco and alcohol. The provisions in the Bill were informed by the outcomes of public and stakeholder consultation (including a three-month written consultation: Scottish Government 2015b), ongoing monitoring of the evidence base, policies in other countries, and engagement with the academic and public health communities.

The benefits and risks of e-cigarettes will take time to fully emerge, although there is consensus that they are safer than smoked tobacco (Cancer Research UK 2014; McNeil et al 2015; Nutt et al 2014). Given the relatively short time that they have been in widespread use, there is a shortage of data on the long-term effects of their use for individuals and for public health (Hajek et al 2014; McRobbie 2014; Nutt et al 2014), complicated by the differences in contents and quality of the hundreds of models and liquid brands on the market. There is ongoing debate on the long-term impacts e-cigarettes may have on smoking rates and on global tobacco control efforts.

Sufficient numbers of survey respondents have reported that they have successfully quit smoking tobacco through the use of e-cigarettes for them to be taken seriously as a potentially useful tool to support smoking cessation or for tobacco harm reduction. Surveys with adults repeatedly confirm that most users are either current or former smokers, and that their main motivations for use are to support a cessation attempt or to help the user cut down their tobacco use (ASH 2015a; ASH Scotland 2014a; ONS 2014; West et al 2015).⁸ A proportion will also adopt a pattern of prolonged dual use of tobacco and e-cigarettes so, for example, they can use nicotine in smoke-free environments, or for reasons such as cost.

Although evidence suggest e-cigarettes have a potentially important role in reducing smoking rates, there are a number of important questions which cannot be answered by the existing evidence base. A Cochrane Review⁹ (McRobbie et al 2014) assessed the evidence for their use in cessation and confirmed that there was a shortage of conclusive trials. At this stage, there is a shortage of longitudinal data and clinical trial results to fully assess their effectiveness for smoking cessation. It is not certain how effective e-cigarettes are compared to well-established and proven cessation methods; it is unknown what proportion of people who have stopped smoking with an e-cigarette will remain

⁵ www.gov.scot/tobaccofreegeneration

⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/programme-for-government>

⁷ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/89934.aspx>

⁸ The monthly Smoking in England Survey is a good source of up-to-date information on adult use of e-cigarettes. A quarterly summary report is provided on the Smoking Toolkit website:

<http://www.smokinginengland.info/latest-statistics/>

⁹ Cochrane Reviews are systematic reviews of primary research in health care and health policy, and internationally recognised as the highest standard in evidence-based health care. They investigate the effects of interventions for prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

abstinent over the long term; and there are insufficient data to pinpoint the characteristics of smokers which might make individuals more or less likely to benefit from using e-cigarettes.

While some smokers could benefit from using e-cigarettes, the Scottish Government does not think these products are suitable for under-18s and the Bill currently before the Scottish Parliament includes a number of provisions to enforce an age restriction on sales.

Two themes often dominate debates about e-cigarettes and children and young people: the risk that their use could act as a gateway into the use of smoked tobacco; and the risk that widespread use and promotion could re-normalise tobacco use by undermining or undoing hard-won successes by governments to de-normalise smoking. It is still too early to establish the extent to which these risks pose a genuine threat to tobacco control efforts.

There are also concerns about the effects of e-cigarette marketing on young people. Analyses¹⁰ of the content of websites, adverts and promotional materials have shown that some marketing appears to have been aimed at a younger adult demographic; could appeal to adolescents and children, who look to elders as role models; and could lead to confusion and to associations being made with tobacco. Until this survey was undertaken, there were no representative data on the extent to which adolescents in Scotland are exposed to e-cigarette marketing. During the fieldwork period the UK Committee of Advertising Practice and the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (2014) launched a new code to ensure that e-cigarettes are promoted responsibly. The rules are enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority. The CAP/BCAP rules require that adverts should not target children.

There is a well-established evidence base for the association between smoking and an individual's exposure and receptivity to tobacco marketing which has underpinned legislative measures to protect young people and adult non-smokers from exposure to tobacco advertising.¹¹ Experience with tobacco and other products (e.g. alcohol and junk food) shows that it is not possible to create a regime which guarantees that children will not be exposed to advertising aimed at adults.

Methods

The Scottish Government's Health Analytical Services Division and Public Health Division commissioned a module of questions on e-cigarettes in the Young People in Scotland schools omnibus survey. The survey is managed by Ipsos-MORI who undertook the field-

¹⁰ For example, see reports drawing on research undertaken for Cancer Research UK: de Andrade et al 2013a, 2013b; Bauld et al 2014.

¹¹ These include the Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act 2002 which banned most forms of tobacco advertising across the UK; the Tobacco and Primary Medical Services Act (Scotland) 2002 which banned tobacco displays in shops; and the UK-wide regulations introduced as part of the Children and Families Act 2014 which will bring in a requirement for standardized packaging from May 2016.

work and collaborated with the Scottish Government on the development of the research questions. The questionnaire is included as an Appendix.

The fieldwork was undertaken between 23 September and 14 November 2014 with a representative sample of 2,016 pupils, aged 11-18 years, in 50 state secondary schools across Scotland. Schools were selected from the national schools database using a sampling frame stratified by local authority, school size, and urban-rural classification. Two school years from each school were selected through randomised allocation. Respondents participated in the survey during mixed ability class time (e.g. Personal and Social Education) using a confidential self-completion, paper-based questionnaire. Teachers were provided with written instructions on questionnaire administration and each respondent was provided with a sealable envelope for their completed questionnaire to ensure confidentiality. Information leaflets and opt-out forms were provided to respondents' parents and/or guardians. Pupils were provided with information leaflets explaining the purpose of the survey, how confidentiality was maintained, that they were free to accept or decline participation, and if they chose to participate to what extent they did so. The survey was conducted in accordance with the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct for good practice.

This report has been prepared by the Scottish Government's Health Analytical Services Division. Analysis was undertaken by an Abertay University PhD student as part of an internship with the Scottish Government through the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences. The results in this report are primarily descriptive statistics. Percentages reported may not always equal 100% due to rounding. For brevity, the Young People in Scotland module on e-cigarettes is referred to as the "YPIS" in this report. Data are compared to a number of other surveys, particularly the Scottish Government's Scottish Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS), which is the most authoritative source of information on tobacco, alcohol and drug use amongst adolescents in Scotland.¹²

¹² <http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Public-Health/SALSUS/>

SURVEY RESULTS

Sample

Respondents were asked for their age, gender, ethnicity, and school year. They were also asked for their postcode which was used to assign their home area to a quintile in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The data were weighted to be representative of Gender, School Year, Ethnicity, Rural/Urban classification and SIMD.

	Demographics	Unweighted (n)	Weighted (n)	Percentage (weighted)
Gender	Female	998	987	50%
	Male	988	999	49%
School Year	S1	396	352	17%
	S2	407	355	18%
	S3	258	361	18%
	S4	573	374	19%
	S5	173	332	16%
	S6	209	241	12%
Age	11	100	95	5%
	12	364	325	16%
	13	378	346	17%
	14	355	393	19%
	15	458	354	18%
	16	193	306	15%
	17	153	182	9%
	18	3	3	*
	17/18	156	185	9%
	Not stated	-	-	1%

Ethnicity	White	1842	1847	92%
	Non-white	153	146	8%
SIMD	1 (most deprived)	160	404	20%
	2	418	384	19%
	3	439	383	19%
	4	469	421	21%
	5 (least deprived)	530	423	21%

Table 1: Demographic profile of sample

Base: 2,016

It was decided to analyse the results by school year group rather than by age as the former may have more of a bearing on the composition of a pupil's peer group and on the health education they would have received in school.

Smoking status

Pupils were asked about their use of conventional tobacco cigarettes towards the end of the survey and after the questions on e-cigarettes to minimise possible confusion for respondents when answering questions intended to be only about e-cigarettes. Figure 1 summarises smoking categories captured by the YPIS.

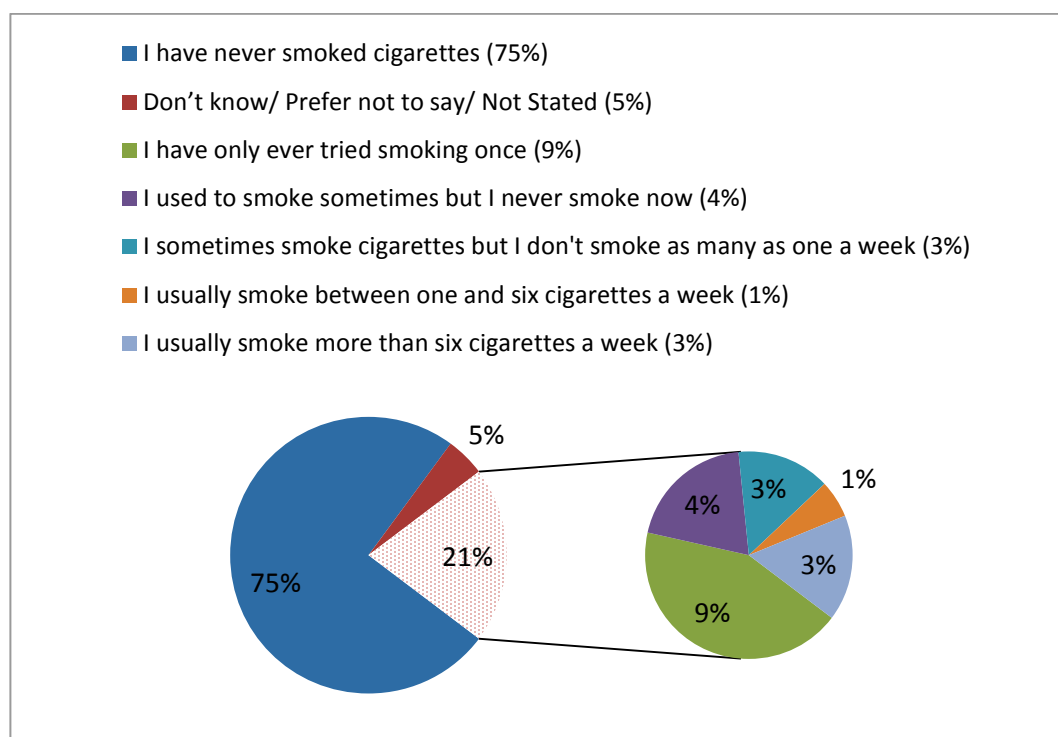


Figure 1: Smoking status (%).

Base (all respondents): 2,016.

Figure 2 shows how ever smoked status varies across the school years.

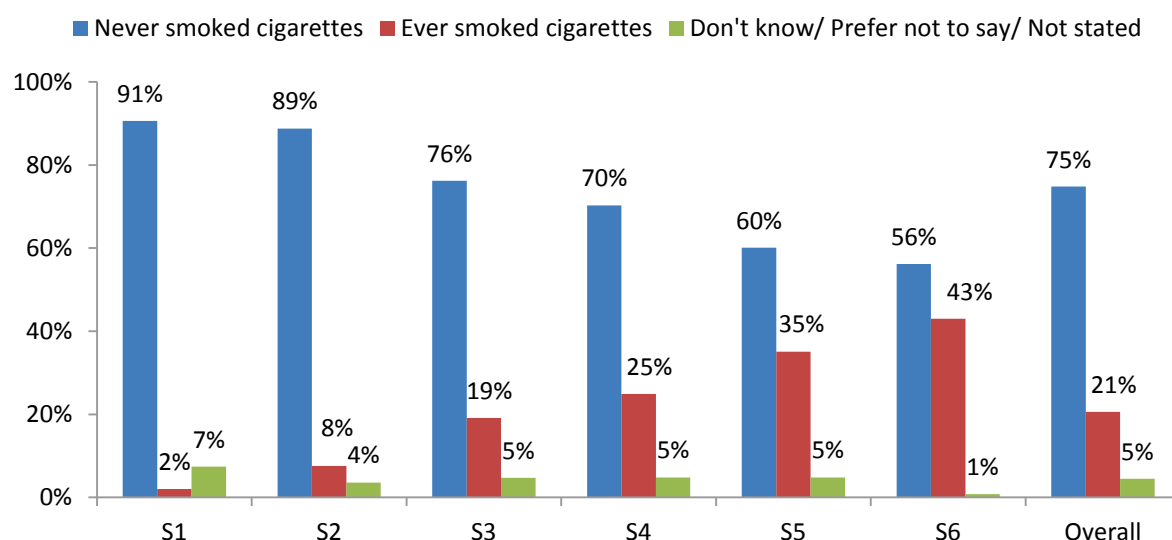


Figure 2: Smoking status and school year (%).

Base (all pupils): 2,016.

General awareness of e-cigarettes

As e-cigarettes have only been widely accessible for a few years, many surveys have included a basic question to gauge general awareness of the products amongst adults and adolescents. Surveys with adults in the UK show near-universal awareness of e-cigarettes: ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) (ASH 2015a) reported that 95% of smokers and 93% of non-smokers had heard of e-cigarettes in 2015. In surveys of young people across the UK, ASH found that in 2013, two thirds of 11-18 year olds and 83% of 16-18 year olds had heard of electronic cigarettes; by March 2014, this had risen to 84% of 11-18 year olds and 90% of 16-18 year olds (ASH 2015b). A survey of 11-15 year olds in England in 2014 found that 88% were aware of e-cigarettes (Health and Social Care Information Centre 2015). This high level of awareness is unsurprising given the visibility of e-cigarette use in everyday environments, their availability in a wide range of sales outlets, marketing which uses an array of channels, the popularity of stories about e-cigarettes in the media, and their use and endorsement by celebrities.

The first question in the YPIS, after those asking for basic demographic data, was used to establish existing awareness of e-cigarettes amongst the pupils. Respondents were asked whether they had heard of e-cigarettes prior to reading the following description:

“When people smoke e-cigarettes, they inhale a vapour that looks like smoke but, unlike normal cigarettes, you don’t light them with a flame and they don’t burn tobacco. E-cigarettes come in different styles: some look like normal cigarettes and have a glowing tip, while some look more like pens. E-cigarettes are also sometimes known as electronic cigarettes, e-cigs or e-shisha sticks/hookah pens. Using e-cigarettes is sometime called ‘vaping’.”

Of those who responded to this question, 90% had previously heard of e-cigarettes, which provided a base of 1,777 pupils for subsequent questions about e-cigarettes. Those who had not heard of e-cigarettes were routed away from the questions about e-cigarettes to the questions on tobacco smoking. Slightly more females (91%) than males (89%) had previously heard of e-cigarettes and, unsurprisingly, awareness increased with school year (Figure 3).

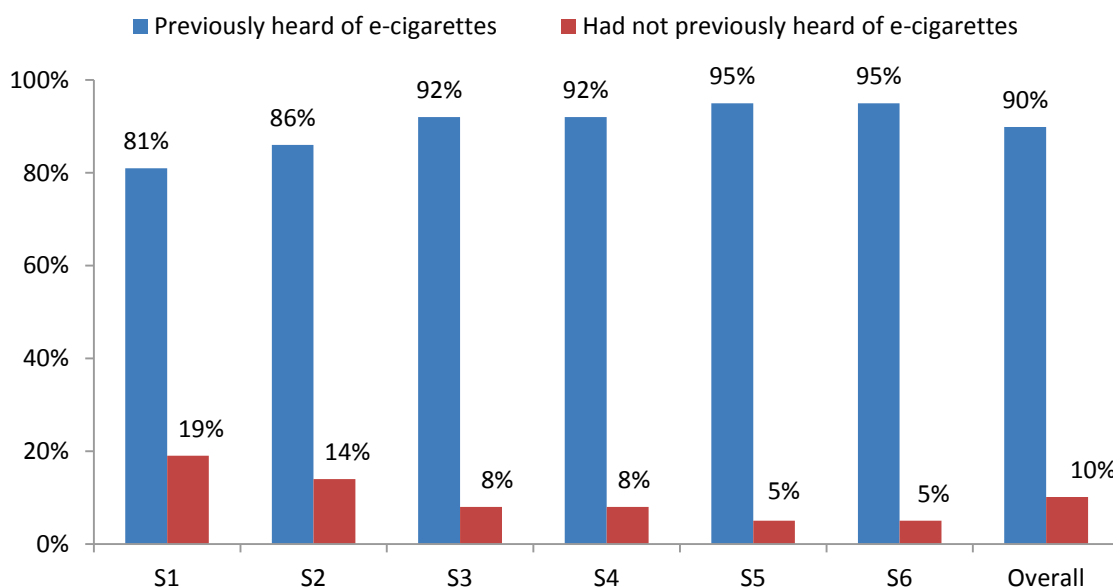


Figure 3: Prior awareness of e-cigarettes by school year (%).

Base (all pupils): 2,016

Pupils who had heard of e-cigarettes were asked a series of questions about their exposure to e-cigarettes in terms of where they had seen them being used, people they know who use them, recent exposure to marketing and promotion, about their own use or experimentation, and their knowledge and attitudes.

E-cigarette use by respondents

Pupils were asked about their own e-cigarette use: “Have you ever used e-cigarettes? Please tick one box only.”

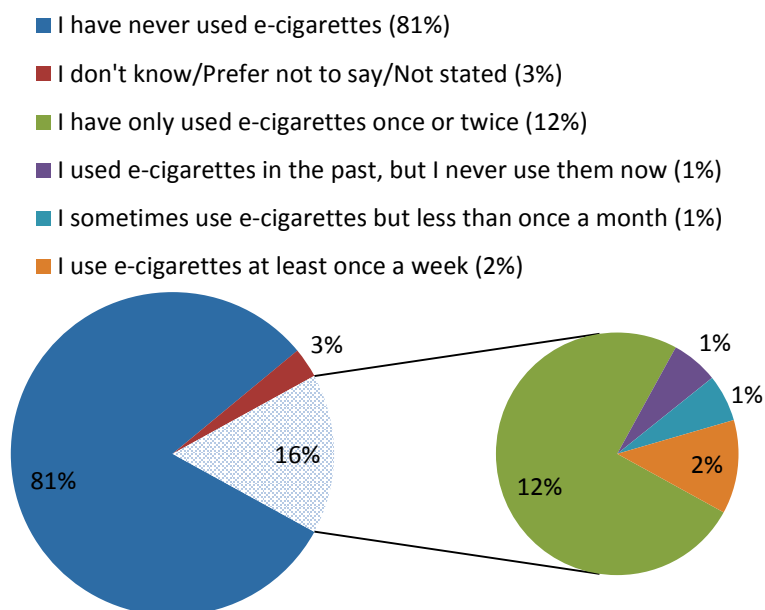


Figure 4: E-cigarette use (%).

Base (pupils who had heard of e-cigarettes): 1,777

In this report “current use” is defined on the basis of the pupil choosing one of the following responses:

- I sometimes use e-cigarettes but less than once a month
- I use e-cigarettes at least once a month, but less than once a week
- I use e-cigarettes at least once a week

However, it is important to acknowledge that use which is less often than monthly represents a range of possible behaviours, from the early stage of a developing habitual use to experimentation. “Previous use” is defined on the basis of the pupil choosing one of the following options:

- I have only tried using e-cigarettes once or twice
- I used e-cigarettes in the past, but I never use them now.

These two options also represent a range of behaviours from a one-off trial to possibly previous habitual use.

Figure 4 shows that 81% had never used them and most of those who had ever tried had only done so once or twice; 3% were using them “currently”; and 13% had previously used them. Eight-two per cent of the 265 who had ever used them had only ever used them once or twice (n=216).

The 2013 wave of SALSUS collected data on electronic cigarettes use amongst 13 and 15 year olds in Scotland for the first time with a sample of 33,685 pupils in S2 and S4 (ISD 2014). SALSUS found that 88% of 13 and 15 year olds had never used an e-cigarette. Figure 5 compares the rates of ever use for matching ages/school years in the YPIS, SALSUS and a 2014 survey of over 6,000 11-15 year olds in England (Health and Social Care Information Centre 2015). This shows that the YPIS recorded higher rates of having ever used e-cigarettes than SALSUS in 2013 but lower rates than the HSIC survey in 2014.

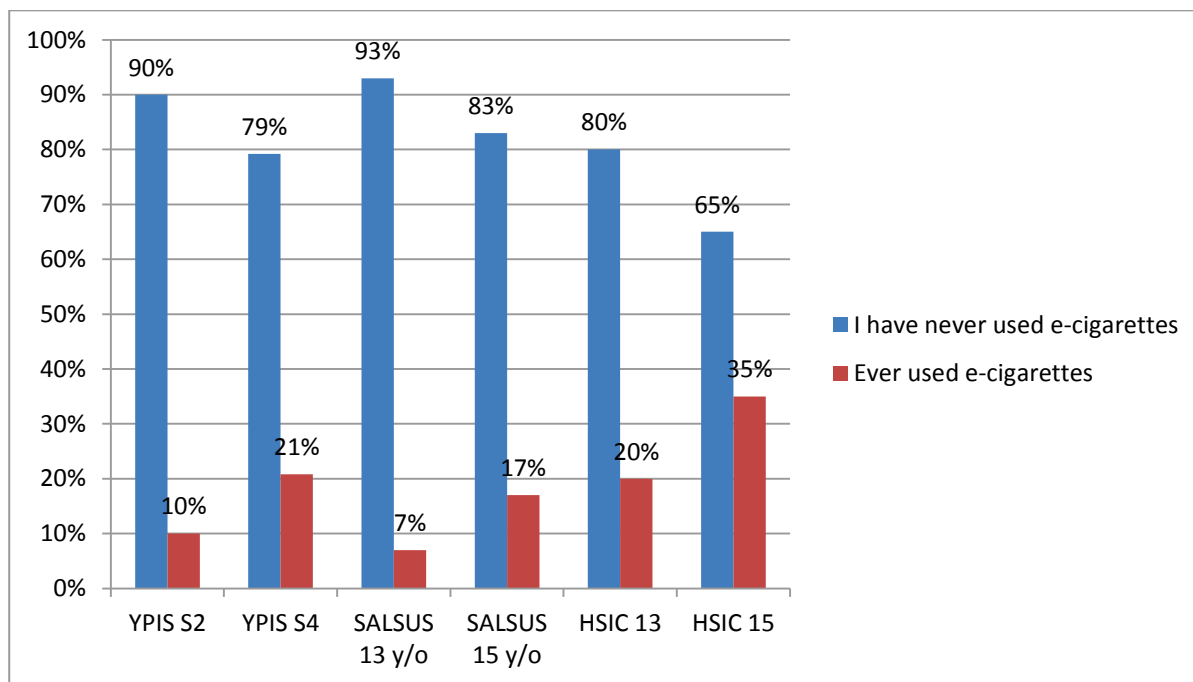


Figure 5: Ever use: comparison of YPIS, SALSUS and HSIC.

The YPIS 2% rate of regular use of e-cigarettes (net “at least once a month but less than once a week” and “at least once a week”) was consistent with the 2% who reported using them monthly or weekly in the ASH 2014 survey (ASH 2015b) and the 2% who use them regularly in the 2015 HSIC survey. Regular use was under 0% of the total SALSUS sample.

Females in the YPIS were more likely to have never used e-cigarettes than males (83% versus 81% respectively); 18% of males had ever used an e-cigarette compared to 16% of females; and 3% of males reported using e-cigarettes at least once a week compared to 1% of females. SALSUS found that 13 year olds boys were more likely to have tried e-cigarettes, but at 15 years there was no difference by gender (ISD 2014). HISC (2015) found that 23% of boys and 20% of girls had ever used e-cigarettes.

There was an association between school year and e-cigarette use: rates of ever use increased through each year between S1 (4%) and S5 (29%), although it dropped for S6

(20%). The highest rates of at least weekly use were 4% by S4 pupils and 3% by S3 pupils. The numbers are too small for detailed analysis of use categories by other demographic characteristics.

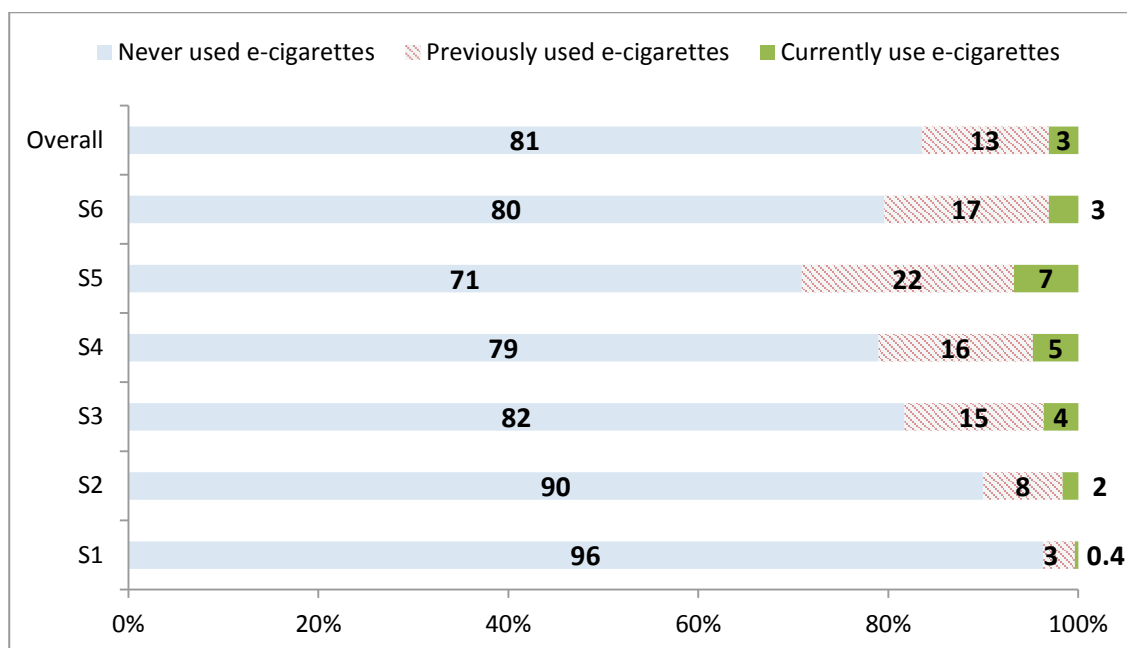


Figure 6: Use of e-cigarettes by school year (%)
Base (pupils who have heard of e-cigarettes) = 1,777.

Tobacco smoking and e-cigarette usage

Two of the main concerns about use of e-cigarettes by children and young people is that they may serve as a gateway into tobacco use and that their widespread use may undermine and hamper continued efforts to de-normalise smoking. The survey asked pupils which they had used first, tobacco or e-cigarettes and the analysis compared smoking status with e-cigarette use status, alongside questions about attitudes to smoking and e-cigarette use. The limits of what the data can reveal about links between tobacco and e-cigarette use must be understood: a one-off cross-sectional survey of this kind provides a snapshot of reported experience for a sample of young people who are going through a period in their lives of considerable developmental and social change and adaptation. The data can suggest a patterning of associated behaviours but cannot confirm or disprove whether there is a risk of a gateway effect materializing or that there is any causative relationship between the two behaviours.

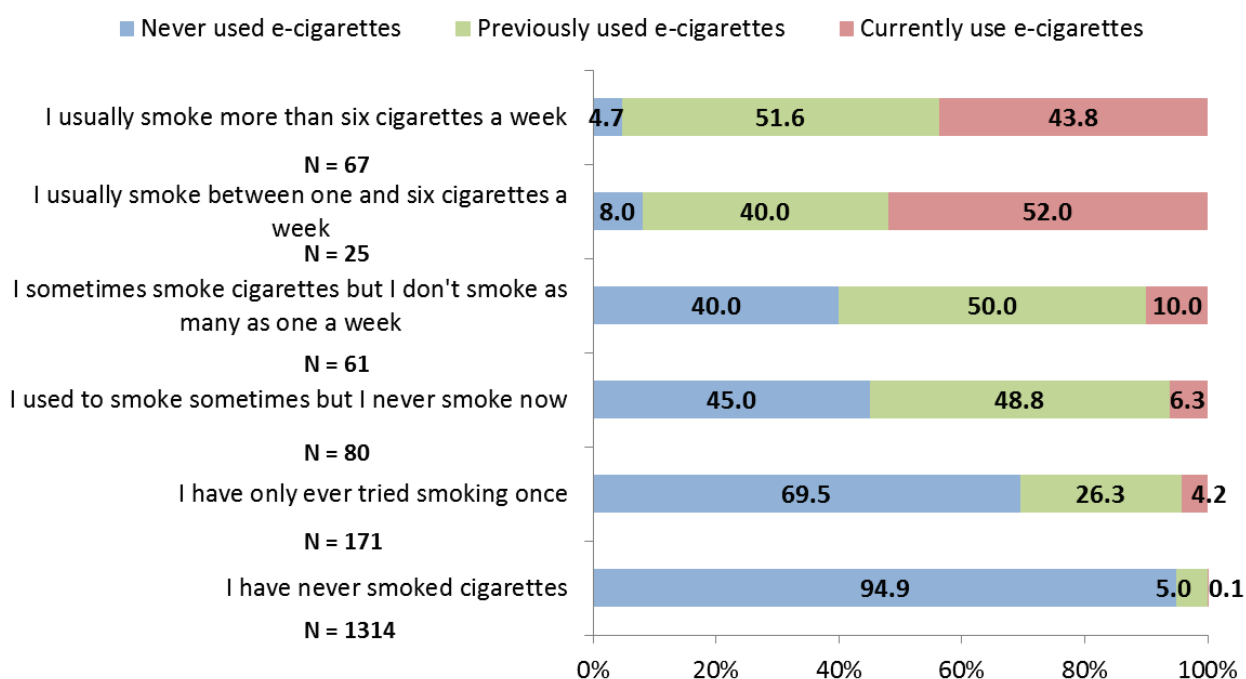


Figure 7: Use of e-cigarettes by smoking status (%).

Base (pupils who have heard of e-cigarettes) = 1,777

In common with other surveys of young people in the UK (Bauld et al 2015), the YPIS found an association between smoking tobacco cigarettes and using e-cigarettes. Figure 7 shows, for example, that 95% of those who had never smoked cigarettes had also never tried e-cigarettes compared to 4.7% of those who smoke more than six cigarettes a week. Ever use was associated with increasing use of tobacco. Current use of e-cigarette rose with more frequent tobacco use, apart from a fall with the heaviest smokers (more than six cigarettes a week), although the numbers were small.

SALSUS, which has a much larger sample than the YPIS, found that:

- as noted above, regular use across the sample, was less than 0%
- pupils who had tried smoking, used to smoke or are current smokers were more likely to have tried an e-cigarette;
- 6% of regular and 2% of occasional smokers used e-cigarettes weekly.
- 11% of regular and 6% of occasional smokers used e-cigarettes at least monthly.
- 17% of 15 year olds and 7% of 13 year olds had ever tried or used an e-cigarette.
- 4% who had never smoked had ever used electronic cigarettes.
- 24% of those who have tried smoking had ever used electronic cigarettes.
- 39% of former smokers had used them (19% once, 14% a few times, 3% used to use them and 2% were using them once a month or more).

- 66% of regular smokers and 46% of occasional smokers had used e-cigarettes, however most had only tried them once or a few times (48% of regular and 38% of occasional smokers).

The YPIS and SALSUS findings are broadly similar to those from other UK surveys with young people. ASH (2015b) surveys with young people in March 2013 and March 2014 found that frequent use (more than weekly) was confined almost entirely to ex-smokers and daily smokers and sustained use was rare and confined to children who currently or have previously smoked. The HSIC survey in England also found that pupils that have tried smoking were more likely to have also tried e-cigarettes.

The 366 pupils in the YPIS who had ever smoked tobacco were asked whether they had tried tobacco or an e-cigarette first. Twenty-eight per cent had only ever tried tobacco and 16 per cent did not remember or know which was first, preferred not to say or provided no response. Five per cent (N=19) of all those who had ever smoked tobacco had tried an e-cigarette first which equates to 8% of the 235 pupils who had both ever smoked tobacco and ever used an e-cigarette. The numbers are too small to allow for further analysis and, as stated above, a cross-sectional survey cannot indicate a causal link between two activities such as the use of tobacco and the use of e-cigarettes.

Source of first e-cigarette

Pupils who had ever tried an e-cigarette (n=265) were asked where they had obtained it, being asked to select all the response options that applied to them. For the majority (87%) the source of their first e-cigarette was someone they knew, dominated by a friend or someone they were hanging out with (61%) and almost a fifth were given or took the e-cigarette from a family member, and 5% had tried someone's e-cigarette without permission.

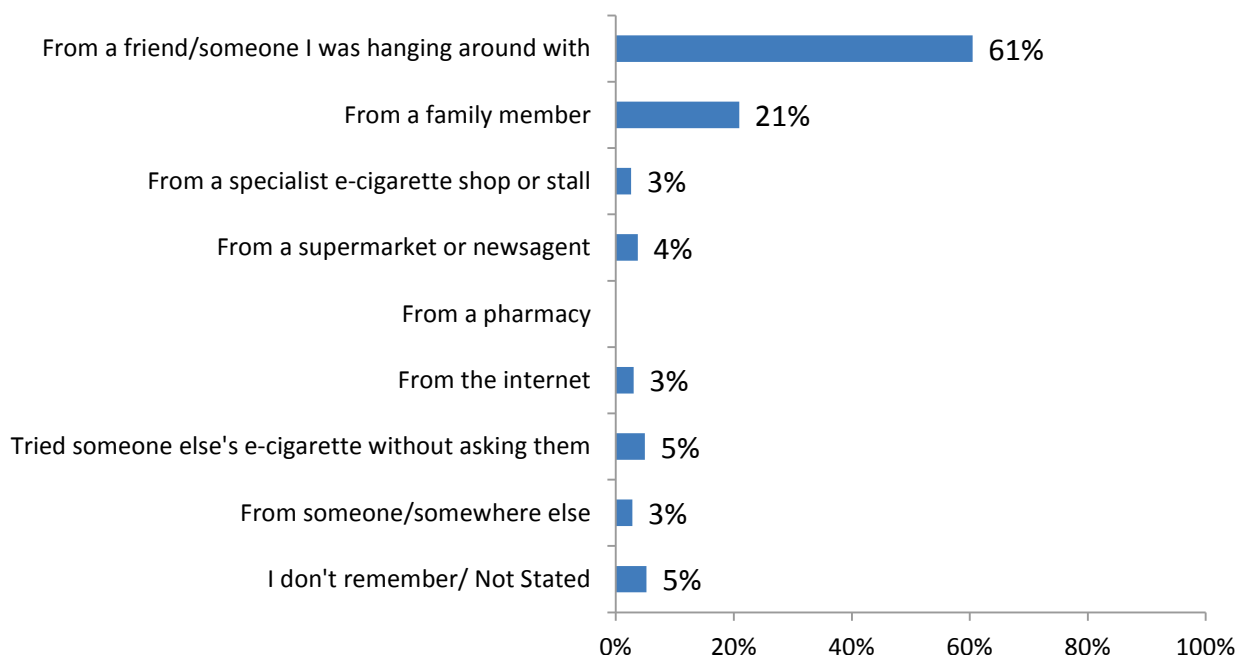


Figure 8: Source of first e-cigarette.

Base (pupils who had ever used e-cigarettes): 265

Ten per cent indicated that it had come from a retail outlet or internet but this may include some who also reported that the e-cigarette belonged to, or was given to them by, someone else because they were allowed multiple options. While the sale of e-cigarettes to under-18s is currently legal, representatives of the e-cigarette sector say that responsible members observe a voluntary restriction not to sell to minors and many products carry an age warning. However, there is evidence, in addition to survey findings on use, that under-18s are able to buy e-cigarettes despite the good practice aspirations in the sector (Trading Standards Institute 2014; Hughes et al 2014).

Reasons for use

Surveys show that adult e-cigarette users are primarily smokers or former smokers who initiated use to help them stop or reduce their tobacco use. However, reasons for experimentation and continued use are likely to be different for young people amongst whom levels of cigarette use are lower. Pupils who had ever used e-cigarettes were asked what had motivated their first use.

Thinking about the first time you ever tried an e-cigarette, which of the following best describes your reason(s) for doing so? Please tick all that apply.	%
I just wanted to try them to see what they were like	42
I saw a friend use an e-cigarette, so I wanted to try them	27
I saw a family member using an e-cigarette, so I wanted to try them	19
I wanted to stop smoking normal cigarettes	10
I wanted to reduce the number of normal cigarettes I smoke	9
I saw e-cigarettes displayed for sale (e.g. in a shop, at a stall in a shopping centre, in the street or at a market), so I wanted to try them	2
I saw an advert for e-cigarettes (e.g. online, on social media, on TV, on a billboard), so I wanted to try them	1
Other reason	3
I can't remember/ I don't know/ Not stated	9

Table 2: Reasons for first use

Base (pupils who had ever used e-cigarettes): 265

What seems clear from these results is that curiosity, impulsivity and a wish to experiment are the main drivers for youth use, in some cases prompted by use by peers and kin.

The small number (30) of pupils who reported that they use e-cigarettes at least once a week were asked “Why do you currently use e-cigarettes? Please give the MAIN reason only.” Due to the small numbers involved, the following results should be interpreted with caution:

- 17 respondents reported that they use e-cigarettes as a substitute for normal cigarettes, with 11 reporting that they use them to “reduce the number of normal cigarettes I smoke” and 6 using them “to help me stop smoking normal cigarettes altogether”.
- 9 respondents use e-cigarettes simply “because I enjoy it”.
- 3 respondents currently used e-cigarettes “to try it out”;
- 3 respondents listed their reason as “other”.
- No respondents reported using them because “I feel pressure to fit in with everyone else who is using them”, “just because my friends use them”, “I can’t stop using them/I am addicted to them”, or “using them is a new trend and I want to be part of it”.

It is not possible to draw generalisations for adolescent motivation for regular e-cigarette use from a sample of this size; this is an area where further research is needed.

Exposure to e-cigarette use by others

To understand the ways in which young people are exposed to e-cigarettes, the survey asked a number of questions about use by people they knew and the situations where they had seen e-cigarettes being used.

E-cigarette use by family and friends

Pupils who had heard of e-cigarettes were asked: “How many of your family use e-cigarettes? When we say family, we mean the close family that you live with (even if you only live with them for some of the time). (Please tick one box only)”

Use by family	%
All or almost all	1
More than half	1
Half	2
Less than half	5
Hardly any	19
None	66
I don't know	7

Table 3: Use by family members (%)

Base (pupils who have heard of e-cigarettes) = 1,777

Pupils were asked: “How many of your friends use e-cigarettes? Please tick one box only.”

Friends' use	%
All or almost all	1
More than half	1
Half	1
Less than half	6
Hardly any	21
None	50
I don't know/not stated	22

Table 4: Use by friends (%)

Base (pupils who have heard of e-cigarettes) = 1,777

Over two-thirds (71%) stated that none/hardly any of their friends use e-cigarettes and more females (57%) than males (45%) reported that none of their friends use e-cigarettes. In total, 0.5% of respondents reported that all or almost all of their friends use e-cigarettes. There were some differences in friends' use by school year, most notably differences in S1 and S2 compared to other years: 66% of S1 pupils report that none of their friends use e-cigarettes compared to 40% of S3 pupils; 9% of S1 pupils report that (at least) some of their friends use e-cigarettes compared to 37% of S3 pupils.

Use by friends	All or almost all	More than half	Half	Less than half	Hardly any	None	I don't know	Not stated
S1	0	0	0	3	5	66	20	5
S2	0	1	1	4	17	52	22	3
S3	1	0	1	5	30	40	22	1
S4	2	2	2	9	20	45	19	2
S5	0	0	1	10	25	41	22	0
S6	0	0	1	3	26	58	11	1

Table 5: Use by friends by school year (%)

Base (pupils who have heard of e-cigarettes) = 1,777

Contexts for e-cigarette exposure

Respondents were asked to select situations and environments in which they had recently seen someone use an e-cigarette:

“Thinking about the last 4 weeks, have you seen anyone use e-cigarettes in the following locations? Please tick the box next to every place where you have seen this.”

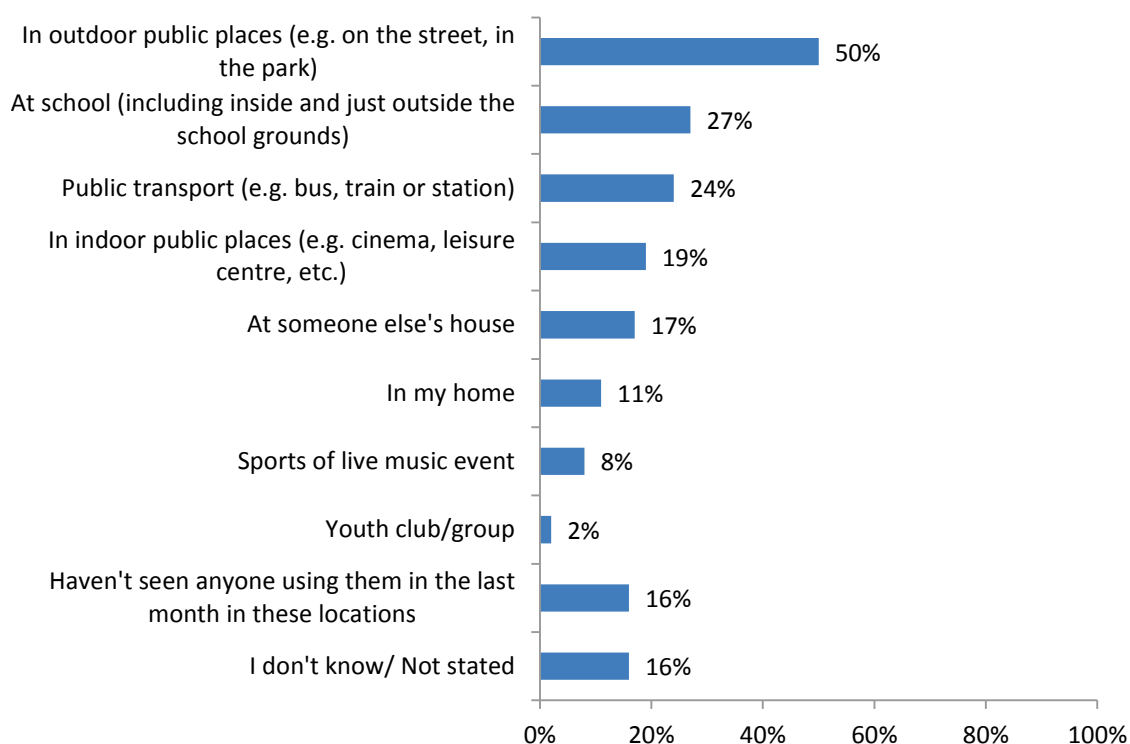


Figure 9: Where e-cigarettes use had been seen in past 4 weeks

Base (pupils who had heard of e-cigarettes): 1,777

Unsurprisingly, pupils had seen e-cigarettes in a wide range of environments, although 16% had not seen them being used and the same proportion said they did not know or did not respond to the question. Half of pupils had seen them in use in an outdoor public place (e.g. in the street, in a park) and more than a quarter had seen them being used in or around their school.

Exposure to the marketing of e-cigarettes

As noted above, the Scottish Government recognises that e-cigarettes may help some smokers to stop or reduce their tobacco use, but does not believe that e-cigarettes are suitable for use by under-18s and is concerned about their exposure to the marketing of such products. A number of studies in the UK and USA (de Andrade et al 2013a, 2013b; Grana 2014; Legacy 2014) have analysed the content of e-cigarettes marketing and concluded that some of the ways in which they are promoted appear to be targeted at young adults and would be appealing to adolescents and even children. However, there had been little research with young people on their interaction with e-cigarette marketing until 2014.¹³ There was a need in Scotland to establish, from young people themselves, the extent to which they are aware of e-cigarette marketing in its different forms.

¹³ The UK-wide Youth Tobacco Policy Survey introduced a number of questions on e-cigarettes including marketing. Results were in press at the time this report was being written.

Respondents were asked:

“Have you seen any of the following in the last 7 days?”

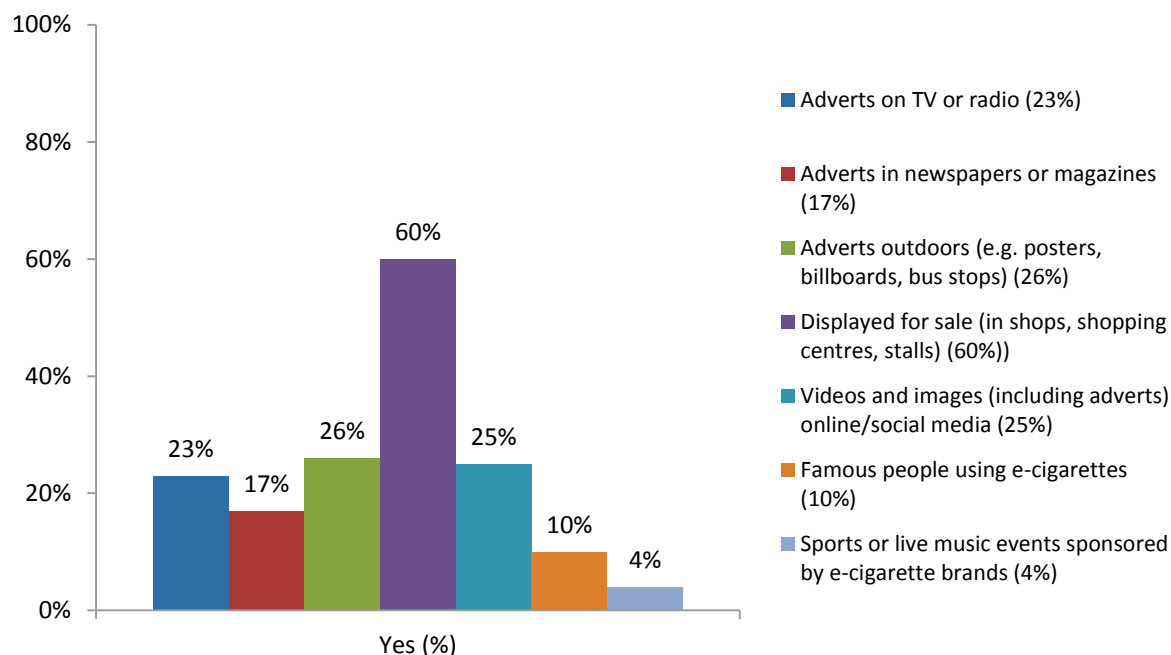


Figure 10: Exposure to e-cigarette marketing and images in past seven days (%).
Base (all pupils who had heard of e-cigarettes): 1,777

The YPIS survey shows that secondary school pupils in Scotland are being exposed to e-cigarettes promotional material in a wide range of marketing contexts. Figure 10 illustrates that in the past week, a majority (60%) had seen e-cigarettes displayed for sale in shops, shopping centres and stalls. Around a quarter of respondents had been exposed to e-cigarette adverts in each of the following contexts: outdoors on posters, billboards or bus stops; on TV or radio; and in videos and online images. Around 4% of respondents reported seeing sports or live music events sponsored by e-cigarette companies and a tenth had seen celebrities using e-cigarettes.

Knowledge and attitudes about smoking and e-cigarettes

It is important to find out how much young people know about e-cigarettes so pupils were given four knowledge statements.

“Please read the following statements about e-cigarettes and say if you think they are true or false. Please tick one box only for each row.”

	True	False	Don't Know	Not Stated
E-cigarettes can contain nicotine	65%	10%	24%	1%
E-cigarettes are addictive	54%	15%	30%	2%
E-cigarettes are not harmful to health	17%	51%	30%	2%
E-cigarettes are less harmful to health than normal cigarettes	69%	7%	22%	2%

Table 6: Responses to knowledge statements on e-cigarettes (%)

Base (respondents who have heard of e-cigarettes): 1777.

Given public uncertainty around the immediate and long-term safety of e-cigarettes and their relative risk compared to tobacco, it is perhaps unsurprising that a fairly high proportion of respondents chose 'don't know' for each of the statements.

Two-thirds knew that they could contain nicotine. Nearly 70% correctly thought that they are less harmful than normal cigarettes and just 7% did not, and 22% did not know. The ASH 2014 survey found that 11-18 year olds believed that they are less harmful than tobacco cigarettes to the user (74%) and to those around them (79%) (ASH 2015b).

The other two statements are more ambiguous, with no 'right' answer, and the pupils' responses reflect that. There is insufficient evidence to say with complete certainty that e-cigarettes are not harmful to health in any way and the results suggest that pupils appreciate that they are not as risky as tobacco but cannot be said to be risk-free. Thirty per cent did not know whether the statement was true. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance and most e-cigarettes are used with a liquid which contains nicotine. However, the degree to which the nicotine used in e-liquids and the behavioural factors of vaping may independently and in combination render e-cigarettes more or less addictive than other nicotine products cannot be definitely concluded on the basis of current evidence. More than half of respondents thought that e-cigarettes are addictive, which would in part be based on their knowledge of nicotine, but again 30% did not know how to respond.

Interestingly, surveys with adults show contrasting results on the question of perceived relative risk. ASH found that between 2013 and 2015 the proportion who wrongly think e-cigarettes are as harmful as tobacco increased from 6% to 20% balanced against an increase in the number who think electronic cigarettes are less harmful from 43% in 2013 to 52% in 2015 and a decrease in the number of people who do not know whether an e-cigarette is more or less harmful than a regular cigarette (38% in 2013 to 23% in 2015) (ASH 2015a).

Pupils were also given three attitudinal statements, one on smoking tobacco and two about e-cigarettes:

"Please read the following statements about e-cigarettes and normal cigarettes and say how much you agree or disagree with each one. Please tick one box only for each row."

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know	Not stated
Smoking normal cigarettes is cool	1%	1%	7%	9%	78%	3%	1%
Using e-cigarettes is fun	1%	3%	12%	10%	54%	18%	2%
E-cigarette adverts make using them look cool	3%	8%	11%	11%	50%	16%	2%

Table 7: Attitudes to tobacco and to e-cigarettes.

Base: (respondents who have heard of e-cigarettes): 1777.

A clear majority did not think smoking conventional cigarettes is 'cool' (87% net 'tend to disagree/strongly disagree') and only 3% thought smoking is cool. In contrast, although 64% of pupils disagreed that using e-cigarettes is 'fun', they seemed less certain about how they felt about using e-cigarettes, with almost a fifth (18%) choosing 'don't know' and another 12% neither agreeing or disagreeing. A majority (61%) also did not think that e-cigarettes adverts make them look 'cool' and again there was a degree of uncertainty, although 11% agreed with the statement.

Over time it will be important to monitor young people's changing knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards e-cigarettes and towards smoking tobacco to see to what extent e-cigarettes become an acceptable, normalised recreational product and whether attitudes to tobacco smoking change which might provide an indication of whether a re-normalisation or an increased social acceptability of smoking are occurring.

CONCLUSION

The majority of secondary pupils in Scotland are aware of e-cigarettes and know family members and friends who use them. They see e-cigarettes being used and marketed in a wide range of public and private spaces.

Surveys on e-cigarette usage have shown a steady increase in the number of people trying e-cigarettes and using them on a more sustained basis in recent years. Evidence from other countries and other parts of the UK suggests that rates of children and adolescents trying and using e-cigarettes have increased over the past few years, but more research is needed to understand which young people are most likely to use or experiment with e-cigarettes, reasons for use, and the implications of use for health and social behaviours.

In Scotland, SALSUS and the YPIS provide us with robust baselines for adolescent experience of e-cigarettes. Consistent with other parts of the UK, a proportion of secondary pupils have experimented with e-cigarettes but use is largely confined to those who already smoke tobacco, although it is not known whether this will inevitably continue to be the case over the longer term. Current data show that experimentation for the vast majority is not leading to habitual use and the small proportion who are using e-cigarettes regularly (at least once a month) are already smoking tobacco.

Overall, 16% of respondents reported having *ever* used e-cigarettes and this was highest amongst the small number who smoked more than 6 cigarettes a week and lowest amongst those who have never smoked cigarettes, the vast majority of the sample. Three per cent of respondents reported *currently* using e-cigarettes. This was highest amongst those who reported smoking between 1 and 6 cigarettes a week (52%) and lowest amongst those who have never smoked cigarettes (under 1%). Of the small group who had tried both smoking normal cigarettes and using e-cigarettes, 8% reported having tried an e-cigarette first. No respondent who reported currently smoking more than 6 cigarettes a week (the heaviest smokers) reported having used an e-cigarette before trying tobacco.

When asked their reasons for initially trying an e-cigarette, 42% of respondents stated, “I just wanted to try them to see what they were like”, with a further 46% stating that they saw a friend or family member use them and wanted to try them as a result. The responses on motivation for first use suggest that curiosity about a relatively new phenomenon is a main driver, contrasting with the main reasons why adults start to use e-cigarettes as part of a smoking quit attempt or to reduce their tobacco consumption.

While a majority of the small number (N=32) of pupils who use e-cigarettes at least once a week state their reason for doing so is to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke or to stop smoking entirely, about a third of this group reported that they use e-cigarettes simply because they enjoy doing so.

The majority (83%) had tried their first e-cigarette after being given it by either a friend or family member, or trying someone else’s e-cigarette without permission, while just a tenth

reported purchasing it. There are possibly a number of reasons for these responses, including the likely opportunistic or impulsive nature of initial experimentation; a social context for experimentation which may involve sharing; and the initial cost of buying some e-cigarettes which may deter purchase, as well as the fact that within the e-cigarette industry there is a voluntary standard for not selling to under-18s.

The YPIS clearly shows that a majority of Scottish secondary pupils had recently been exposed to e-cigarette marketing and promotion, particularly in places where the products are sold, and they were conscious of adverts across a wide range of channels.

Responses to questions on knowledge, understanding and attitudes reflect high levels of uncertainty about e-cigarettes, as is the case with adults, due in part to a lack of reliable publicly available information.

It is probably too early for a measurable shift in attitudes to have taken place which might indicate any increased social acceptability of smoking amongst young people which could herald renormalisation. The negative attitudes towards smoking and the low smoking rates of respondents to the YPIS and SALSUS do not hint at incipient renormalisation or a gateway effect. However, the markets for e-cigarettes and other novel nicotine and tobacco products have shown rapid developments in the past few years so care is needed not to be too complacent that this could not change and good survey data will be essential for monitoring.

The YPIS survey provides useful baseline Scottish data on secondary pupils' experiences and perceptions of e-cigarettes, based on a set of questions which could be repeated in the future to monitor trends. This will help the Scottish Government and public health partners to understand and respond to the evolving behavioural landscape.

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APPENDIX: THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND SCHOOLS OMNIBUS 2014: QUESTIONS ON E-CIGARETTES

This section of the questionnaire first asks you about e-cigarettes and then asks you about smoking normal cigarettes.

When people smoke e-cigarettes, they inhale a vapour that looks like smoke but, unlike normal cigarettes, you don't light them with a flame and they don't burn tobacco. E-cigarettes come in different styles: some look like normal cigarettes and have a glowing tip, while some look more like pens. E-cigarettes are also sometimes known as electronic cigarettes, e-cigs or e-shisha sticks/hookah pens. Using e-cigarettes is sometime called 'vaping'.

Q6 Before reading the description above, had you heard of e-cigarettes?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

- ☐ Yes (Please go to question 7)
- ☐ No (Please go to question 17)

Q7 Have you ever used e-cigarettes?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

- ☐ I have never used e-cigarettes
- ☐ I have only tried using e-cigarettes once or twice
- ☐ I used e-cigarettes in the past, but I never use them now
- ☐ I sometimes use e-cigarettes but less than once a month
- ☐ I use e-cigarettes at least once a month, but less than once a week
- ☐ I use e-cigarettes at least once a week
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I prefer not to say

If you have ever used/tried e-cigarettes, please go to Q8.

If you have never used/tried e-cigarettes, please go to Q11.

Q8 Thinking about the first time you ever tried an e-cigarette, which of the following best describes your reason(s) for doing so?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ALL THAT APPLY

- ☐ I saw a friend using an e-cigarette, so I wanted to try them
- ☐ I saw a family member using an e-cigarette, so I wanted to try them

- ☐ I saw a famous person using an e-cigarette, so I wanted to try them
- ☐ I saw e-cigarettes displayed for sale (e.g. in a shop, at a stall in a shopping centre, in the street or at a market), so I wanted to try them
- ☐ I saw an advert for e-cigarettes (e.g. online, on social media, on TV, on a billboard), so I wanted to try them.
- ☐ I just wanted to try them to see what they were like
- ☐ I wanted to reduce the number of normal cigarettes I smoke
- ☐ I wanted to stop smoking normal cigarettes
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I can't remember
- ☐ I don't know

Q9 Thinking, again, about the first time you ever tried an e-cigarette, where did you get it from?

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- ☐ From a friend/someone I was hanging around with
- ☐ From a family member
- ☐ From a specialist e-cigarette shop or stall
- ☐ From a supermarket or newsagent
- ☐ From a pharmacy
- ☐ From the internet
- ☐ Tried someone else's e-cigarette without asking them
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I don't know

If you use e-cigarettes at least once a week, please go to Q10.

If you do not use e-cigarettes at least once a week, please go to Q11.

Q10 Why do you currently use e-cigarettes? Please give the MAIN reason only.

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

- ☐ Because I enjoy it
- ☐ To help me reduce the number of normal cigarettes I smoke
- ☐ To help me stop smoking normal cigarettes altogether
- ☐ Just because my friends use them
- ☐ I feel pressure to fit in with everyone else who is using them
- ☐ Using them is a new trend and I want to be part of it
- ☐ I can't stop using them/I am addicted to them
- ☐ Other, please write in
- ☐ I don't know

Q11 How many of your friends use e-cigarettes?
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

- ☐ All or almost all
- ☐ More than half
- ☐ Half
- ☐ Less than half
- ☐ Hardly any
- ☐ None
- ☐ I don't know

Q12 How many of your family use e-cigarettes? When we say family, we mean the close family that you live with (even if you only live with them for some of the time)
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

- ☐ All or almost all
- ☐ More than half
- ☐ Half
- ☐ Less than half
- ☐ Hardly any
- ☐ None
- ☐ I don't know

Q13 Have you seen any of the following in the last 7 days?
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY FOR EACH ROW

	Yes	No	Don't know
a) Adverts for e-cigarettes on TV or radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Adverts for e-cigarettes in newspapers or magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Adverts for e-cigarettes outdoors (e.g. posters, billboards, bus stops, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) E-cigarettes displayed for sale (e.g. in shops, shopping centres, stalls)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Videos and images of e-cigarettes (including adverts) on YouTube, Facebook, Tumblr, Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Famous people with e-cigarettes (e.g. in films, music videos, on TV or pictured in magazines)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Sports or live music events sponsored by e-cigarette brands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q14 Thinking about the last 4 weeks, have you seen anyone use e-cigarettes in in the following locations? Please tick the box next to every place where you have seen this.

PLEASE TICK ✓ ALL THAT APPLY

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In outdoor public places (e.g. on the street, in the park) | <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport (e.g. bus, train or station) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At school (including inside and just outside the school grounds) | <input type="checkbox"/> In my home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In indoor public places (e.g. cinema, leisure centre, cafes/restaurants, pubs/clubs) | <input type="checkbox"/> At someone else's house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth club/group | <input type="checkbox"/> Haven't seen anyone using them in the last month in these locations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports or live music event | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know |

Q15 Please read the following statements about e-cigarettes and say if you think they are true or false.

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY FOR EACH ROW

- | | True | False | Don't know |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) E-cigarettes can contain nicotine | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) E-cigarettes are addictive | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) E-cigarettes are not harmful to health | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) E-cigarettes are less harmful to health than normal cigarettes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q16 Please read the following statements about e-cigarettes and normal cigarettes and say how much you agree or disagree with each one.

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY FOR EACH ROW

- | | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree or disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Smoking normal cigarettes is cool | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Using e-cigarettes is fun | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) E-cigarette adverts make using them look cool | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The next two questions are about smoking NORMAL cigarettes with tobacco in them and not e-cigarettes.

Q17

Please read the following statements carefully and tick the box next to the ONE that best describes you.

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

- ☐ I have never smoked cigarettes
- ☐ I have only ever tried smoking once or twice
- ☐ I used to smoke sometimes but I never smoke now
- ☐ I sometimes smoke cigarettes but I don't smoke as many as one a week
- ☐ I usually smoke between one and six cigarettes a week
- ☐ I usually smoke more than six cigarettes a week
- ☐ I prefer not to say
- ☐ I don't know

If you have ever tried smoking a normal cigarette, please go to Q18.

If you have never tried smoking a normal cigarette, please go to Q20.

Q18

If you have also tried an e-cigarette, which did you try first?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

- ☐ I tried a normal cigarette first
- ☐ I tried an e-cigarette first
- ☐ I have only ever tried normal cigarettes
- ☐ I don't remember
- ☐ I prefer not to say
- ☐ I don't know

Q19

Please write in the box how many cigarettes you have smoked in the last 7 days.

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

- ☐ I prefer not to say
- ☐ I don't know

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

- ☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- ☐ are available via the email
- ☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors.
Please contact socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk for further information.
- ☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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