

New study finds global adolescent vaping is low

Peer reviewed: Yes

Method of research: Survey

Subject of study: People

A new study published today in the scientific journal *Addiction* has found that approximately 8.6% of adolescents reported using e-cigarettes (vaping) in the past 30 days, but only 1.7% engaged in frequent vaping. This suggests most adolescents who vape are experimenting but not making it a habit.

Researchers from the University of Queensland (Australia) wanted to estimate as far as possible the global prevalence of adolescent vaping. The researchers analysed data from 151,960 adolescents in 47 countries who participated in the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Global Youth Tobacco Survey between 2015 and 2018. The overall weighted prevalence of adolescent vaping and frequent vaping in the past 30 days was 8.6% and 1.7% respectively.

Lead author Dr. Gary Chan says "There are two likely explanations for the low levels of frequent vaping among young people. First, e-cigarettes are relatively new and are often sold in colourful packages with highly palatable flavours that could appeal to adolescents, thus leading to experimentation but not continued use. Second, while some e-cigarettes contain high levels of nicotine, adolescents can also vape non-nicotine or low nicotine e-cigarettes and avoid becoming addicted. Future WHO surveys should ask participants to disclose whether nicotine is in the vaping liquids they use."

The researchers also wanted to test the association between the implementation of World Health Organization (WHO) tobacco control policies and adolescent vaping. In 2008, WHO introduced the *MPOWER* policy package, with six policies to reduce tobacco use: monitoring, smoke-free environments, cessation programs, health warnings, advertising bans, and taxation. Implementation of these policies has reduced tobacco use; however, it is unclear if these policies have had any impact on youth uptake of e-cigarettes.

Using data from the 44 countries where implementation data were available, the researchers found inconclusive evidence that implementation of five of the *MPOWER* policies was associated with lower adolescent vaping. Implementation of the sixth policy – higher taxes on tobacco products – was curiously associated with *more* adolescent vaping. This suggests that some adolescents in countries with a higher tobacco tax may be substituting cigarettes with e-cigarettes.

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For editors:

This paper is free to read for one month after the embargo lifts from the Wiley Online Library: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/add.15892> or by contacting Jean O'Reilly, Editorial Manager, *Addiction*, jean@addictionjournal.org.

To speak with lead author Dr Gary Chan, please contact him at the The University of Queensland by telephone (+61 7 344 32533) or email (c.chan4@uq.edu.au).

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Addiction is a monthly international scientific journal publishing peer-reviewed research reports on alcohol, substances, tobacco, and gambling as well as editorials and other debate pieces. Owned by the Society for the Study of Addiction, it has been in continuous publication since 1884.