



E-cigarette Use Among Youth in Ireland: Prevalence and Use among Never Smokers

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Context

Tobacco use among young people in Ireland is declining but the use of the relatively-new product, the e-cigarette, seems to be increasing and the implications of this are unclear.

In our 2014 Irish study of 16-17 year olds (Babineau, K. et al., 2015):

- 23.8% (n=196) of respondents had used e-cigarettes at least once;
- 4.2% of never smokers had used e-cigarettes.

Methods

European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD):

- A cross-sectional, representative paper-and-pencil survey
- 2000 young people aged 14-16 (born 1998–2000)
- 4 items on e-cigarettes as well as items on smoking behaviours and attitudes
- Follows standardised methodology in line with ESPAD in 35 countries

Compared to a TFRI 2014 study of 16-17 year olds conducted in secondary schools. This study was conducted a year before ESPAD and sampled older participants.

Findings

- 24.1% of respondents had ever used an e-cigarette (n=463).
- 10.5% of respondents had used an e-cigarette in the last 30 days (are “current” users) (n=202).
- 123 students reported daily use of e-cigarettes (6.4% of sample).
- Ever use of e-cigarettes (24.1%, n=463) was lower than ever tobacco smoking (32.9%, n=655).
- However, e-cigarette use in the last 30 days (10.5%, n=202) was similar to 30-day tobacco use (12.9%, n=257).

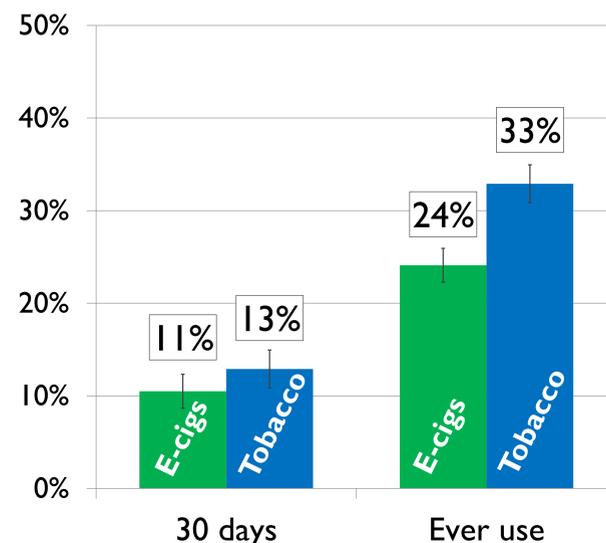


Fig. 1: Prevalence of e-cigarette use and smoking with confidence intervals (ESPAD, 2015)

Acknowledgements

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E-cigarette use by never smokers

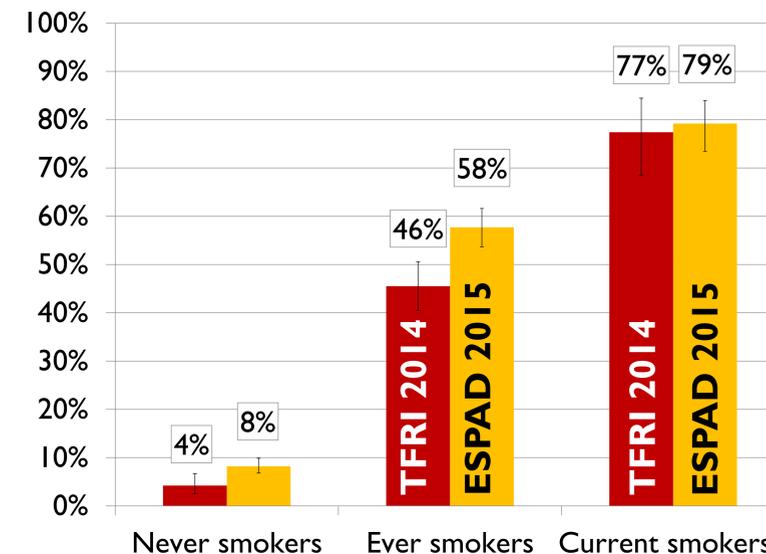


Fig. 2: Use of E-cigarettes by Tobacco Smoking History

- A strong association between smoking tobacco and using e-cigarettes was found [ESPAD: $\chi^2(9)=529.091$, $p<.001$; Somer's $d_{sym} = .534$].
- More students who had never smoked tobacco had tried e-cigarettes in the later ESPAD study of 14-16 year olds (8.2%, n=106) than the earlier TFRI study of 16-17 year olds (4.2%, n=18).

Tobacco-smoking by e-cigarette users

- In the 2014 TFRI survey of 16-17 year olds, 9.2% of e-cigarette users had never smoked tobacco (n=18). However, in the 2015 ESPAD survey, a much higher proportion of e-cigarette users had never smoked tobacco (22.9%, n=106).

E-cigarette use by never smokers may be increasing, as it was higher in the ESPAD 2015 survey than the TFRI 2014 study, despite ESPAD sampling younger students.

Conclusions

Use of e-cigarettes by Irish youth is popular, with around a quarter of respondents reporting they had used e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes are now used as commonly as tobacco in this age group.

Use is particularly common among regular smokers, but a worrying number of never-smokers have also used e-cigarettes. E-

cigarette use among never smokers was higher in the 2015 survey of younger students compared to the earlier 2014 study.

The implications for future smoking are unknown but nicotine addiction seems set to continue.

Bibliography

Babineau, K., Taylor, K. & Clancy, L. (2015) *Electronic Cigarette Use among Irish Youth: A Cross Sectional Study of Prevalence and Associated Factors*. PLoS ONE 10(5).