

Use of e-cigarettes among smokers and recent quitters: results from the ITC New Zealand Survey

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Introduction

In New Zealand (NZ), nicotine-containing e-cigarettes (ECs) and e-liquids cannot be sold legally in shops, but can be imported via the internet. The NZ Government has proposed making nicotine-containing ECs widely available to help achieve NZ's Smokefree 2025 goal.

Objectives

To explore patterns of EC use prior to a planned legislative change in 2018 or 2019 permitting sales of nicotine-containing ECs.

Methods

- Data from the ITC New Zealand survey, a cohort of 1072 smokers and recent quitters (quit in last 12 months) recruited from participants in the NZ national health survey (NZHS).
- Data collected by a CATI survey, Sept 2016 – April 2017.
- Response – 41.5% of all contacted eligible subjects, 27.6% among all eligible subjects.
- Analysis includes 820 current smokers and 252 quitters; 765 smokers and 235 quitters were aware of e-cigarettes.
- Analysis accounts for over-sampling of some participant groups in the NZHS/ITC sampling stages.

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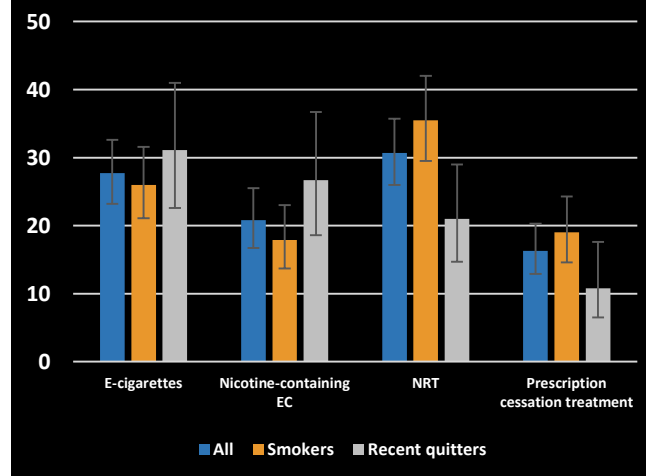
Results

Table: Use of E-cigarettes among smokers and recent quitters

%	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	< Monthly	Tried, not current user	Never tried
All participants (n=1039)	8.7	4.3	3.3	8.6	34.9	40.2
Smokers (n=795)	5.2	4.7	3.9	10.7	35.7	39.7
Ex-smokers (n=244)	19.8	2.9	1.1	1.8	32.3	42.1
All ever EC users (n=569)	14.5	7.2	5.5	14.4	58.4	N/A

- Almost all (95%) participants were aware of ECs and 60% had ever used an EC.
- 16% of participants (14% of smokers and 24% of recent quitters) were using e-cigarettes at least monthly (see Table)
- Among smokers, 40% had never tried ECs, 36% had tried but were not currently using them and 11% were using ECs < monthly.

Figure: Aids used in last quit attempt (%)



Common reason for using ECs included:

- To help quit smoking (84%)
- To help cut down the number smoked (85%)
- By replacing some smoked cigarettes, don't have to give up smoked cigarettes completely.

ECs were commonly used cessation aids in the last quit attempt (within last year) for smokers and recent quitters (see Figure).

Conclusions

High awareness, trial and use in quitting of ECs are encouraging (assuming ECs help quitting or act as substitutes for smoking). Frequent trial, but low current use suggest smokers may need support (e.g. through cessation services &/or restricting sales to specialist shops) to maximize ECs' impact as quitting aids or smoking substitutes.