

Costs of vaping: Evidence from ITC Four Country Smoking and Vaping Survey

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Abstract

Study objectives: To compare the prices paid for nicotine vaping products (NVPs) and supplies among current NVP users to prices paid for cigarettes among current smokers.

Data: The 2016 International Tobacco Control Four Country Vaping and Smoking Survey (4CV1). Key measures included: (1) self-reported prices paid for reusable NVPs (eg, rechargeable devices with cartridges and tank system devices with e-liquids) in the 3-month period prior to the survey among current NVP users, (2) prices paid for disposable NVPs, cartridges and e-liquids purchased in the last 30 days among current NVP users and (3) self-reported prices paid for cigarettes among current smokers.

Results: Disposable NVP price was higher than the price of a comparable unit for combustible cigarettes in England (EN), USA and Canada (CA). Prefilled cartridge price was higher than the price of a comparable unit of cigarettes in USA and CA, but lower in EN and Australia. E-liquid price was consistently lower than the price of a comparable unit of cigarettes across four countries. For start-up costs, price of a rechargeable device is approximately 3–5 times higher than a pack of cigarettes in four countries.

Conclusion: NVP prices were generally higher than prices of combustible cigarettes, especially the high upfront NVP devices. The high upfront costs of purchasing a reusable NVP may discourage some smokers from switching to vaping. However, the average lower costs of cartridges and e-liquids relative to a package of cigarettes make switching to a NVP an attractive alternative to smoking in the long term so long as smokers switch completely to vaping.

Recommended Citation

Cheng, K-W., Shang, C., Lee, H.M., Chaloupka, F.J., Fong, G.T., Borland, R., Heckman, B.W., Hitchman, S.C., O'Connor, R.J., Levy, D., Cummings, K.M. (2021). Costs of vaping: Evidence from ITC Four Country Smoking and Vaping Survey. *Tobacco Control*, 30(1), 94-97.

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