

Transitions from and to roll-your-own tobacco, perceptions and health beliefs among smokers: Findings from the EUREST-PLUS ITC Europe Surveys

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Abstract

Background: The prevalence of roll-your-own tobacco (RYO) in Europe has been increasing. The aim of this study was to investigate transitions between factory-made (FM) cigarettes and RYO in a longitudinal sample of European smokers, and their perceptions of relative harmfulness and knowledge of health effects. **Methods:** We used data collected from the EUREST-PLUS ITC 6 European Country (6E) Surveys in 2016 (n = 6011 smokers) and in 2018 (n = 6027) in Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Spain. A total of 3195 cohort respondents were interviewed in both years. Use of RYO and FM, knowledge of health effects of smoking as well as perceptions about RYO were assessed. We used logistic regression models to explore sociodemographic correlates of transitions from one product to the other, of perceptions and knowledge related to smoking health effects. **Results:** Approximately 7.4% of exclusive FM smokers transitioned to RYO and 29.5% of exclusive RYO smokers transitioned to FM cigarettes from 2016 to 2018. RYO use in 2018 was more frequent among smokers of low education and income, but none of these factors were associated with transitions. Most RYO smokers perceived RYO as cheaper than FM and 21.7% of them considered RYO to be less harmful than FM. Knowledge of the health effects of smoking was not associated with type of product smoked. **Conclusions:** RYO is popular among European smokers; its lower cost seems to be a major factor for RYO users; reasons for transitions to and from RYO are less clear and need to be further investigated.

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