

Awareness, trial, and current use of electronic cigarettes in 10 countries: Findings from the ITC Project

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Abstract

Background: In recent years, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) have generated considerable interest and debate on the implications for tobacco control and public health. Although the rapid growth of e-cigarettes is global, at present, little is known about awareness and use. This paper presents self-reported awareness, trial and current use of e-cigarettes in 10 countries surveyed between 2009 and 2013; for six of these countries, we present the first data on e-cigarettes from probability samples of adult smokers.

Methods: A cross-sectional analysis of probability samples of adult (≥ 18 years) current and former smokers participating in the International Tobacco Control (ITC) surveys from 10 countries. Surveys were administered either via phone, face-to-face interviews, or the web. Survey questions included sociodemographic and smoking-related variables, and questions about e-cigarette awareness, trial and current use.

Results: There was considerable cross-country variation by year of data collection and for awareness of e-cigarettes (Netherlands (2013: 88%), Republic of Korea (2010: 79%), United States (2010: 73%), Australia (2013: 66%), Malaysia (2011: 62%), United Kingdom (2010: 54%), Canada (2010: 40%), Brazil (2013: 35%), Mexico (2012: 34%), and China (2009: 31%)), in self-reports of ever having tried e-cigarettes (Australia, (20%), Malaysia (19%), Netherlands (18%), United States (15%), Republic of Korea (11%), United Kingdom (10%), Mexico (4%), Canada (4%), Brazil (3%), and China (2%)), and in current use (Malaysia (14%), Republic of Korea (7%), Australia (7%), United States (6%), United Kingdom (4%), Netherlands (3%), Canada (1%), and China (0.05%)).

Conclusions: The cross-country variability in awareness, trial, and current use of e-cigarettes is likely due to a confluence of country-specific market factors, tobacco control policies and regulations (e.g., the legal status of e-cigarettes and nicotine), and the survey timing along the trajectory of e-cigarette awareness and trial/use in each country. These ITC results constitute an important snapshot of an early stage of what appears to be a rapid progression of global e-cigarette use.

Recommended Citation

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Link To PDF: <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/12/5/4631>