

Prevalence of awareness, ever-use, and current use of nicotine vaping products (NVPs) among adult current smokers and ex-smokers in 14 countries with differing regulations on sales and marketing of NVPs: Cross-sectional findings from the ITC Project

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Abstract

Aims: This paper presents updated prevalence estimates of awareness, ever-use, and current use of nicotine vaping products (NVPs) from 14 International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC Project) countries that have varying regulations governing NVP sales and marketing.

Design, setting, participants and measurements: A cross-sectional analysis of adult (≥ 18 years) current smokers and ex-smokers from 14 countries participating in the ITC Project. Data from the most recent survey questionnaire for each country were included, which spanned the period 2013 to 2017. Countries were categorized into four groups based on regulations governing NVP sales and marketing (allowable or not), and level of enforcement (strict or weak where NVPs are not permitted to be sold): (1) most restrictive policies (MRPs): not legal to be sold or marketed with strict enforcement: Australia, Brazil, Uruguay; (2) restrictive policies (RPs): not approved for sale or marketing with weak enforcement: Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand (NZ); (3) less restrictive policies (LRPs): legal to be sold and marketed with regulations: England, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, United States (US); (4) no regulatory policies (NRPs): Bangladesh, China, Zambia. Countries were also grouped by World Bank Income Classifications. Country-specific weighted logistic regression models estimated adjusted NVP prevalence estimates for: awareness, ever/current use, and frequency of use (daily vs. non-daily).

Findings: NVP awareness and use were lowest in NRP countries. Generally, ever- and current use of NVPs were lower in MRP countries [ever-use: 7.1% to 48.9%; current use: 0.3% to 3.5%] relative to LRP countries [ever-use: 38.9% to 66.6%; current use: 5.5% to 17.2%] and RP countries [ever-use: 10.0% to 62.4%; current use: 1.4% to 15.5%]. NVP use was highest among high income countries, followed by upper-middle income countries, and then by lower-middle income countries.

Conclusions: With a few exceptions, awareness and use of nicotine vaping products (NVPs) varies by the strength of national regulations governing NVP sales/marketing, and by country income. In countries with no regulatory policies, use rates were very low, suggesting that there was little availability, marketing and/or interest in NVPs in these countries where smoking populations are predominantly poorer. The higher awareness and use of NVPs in high income countries with moderately (e.g., Canada, NZ) and less (e.g., England, US) restrictive policies, is likely due to the greater availability and affordability of NVPs.

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