

Use of electronic cigarettes in Great Britain

Summary of findings

- An estimated 2.1 million adults in Great Britain currently use electronic cigarettes.
- About one third of users are ex-smokers and two-thirds are current smokers.
- The main reason given by current smokers for using the products is to reduce the amount they smoke while ex-smokers report using electronic cigarettes to help them stop smoking.
- Regular use of electronic cigarettes amongst children and young people is rare and is confined almost entirely to those who currently or have previously smoked.

Background

This fact sheet examines the use of electronic cigarettes among adults and young people in Great Britain. ASH has commissioned a series of surveys on electronic cigarette use starting in 2010¹ with a survey of adult smokers. Questions about electronic cigarettes were extended to include all adults in surveys conducted in February 2012,² 2013³ and March 2014.⁴ In March 2013⁵ an additional survey of children aged 11 to 18 was conducted. This was repeated in March 2014.⁶ Using the findings of the YouGov surveys and applying these to the most recent population data ASH has estimated the prevalence of electronic cigarette usage in Great Britain.

Electronic cigarette use among adults

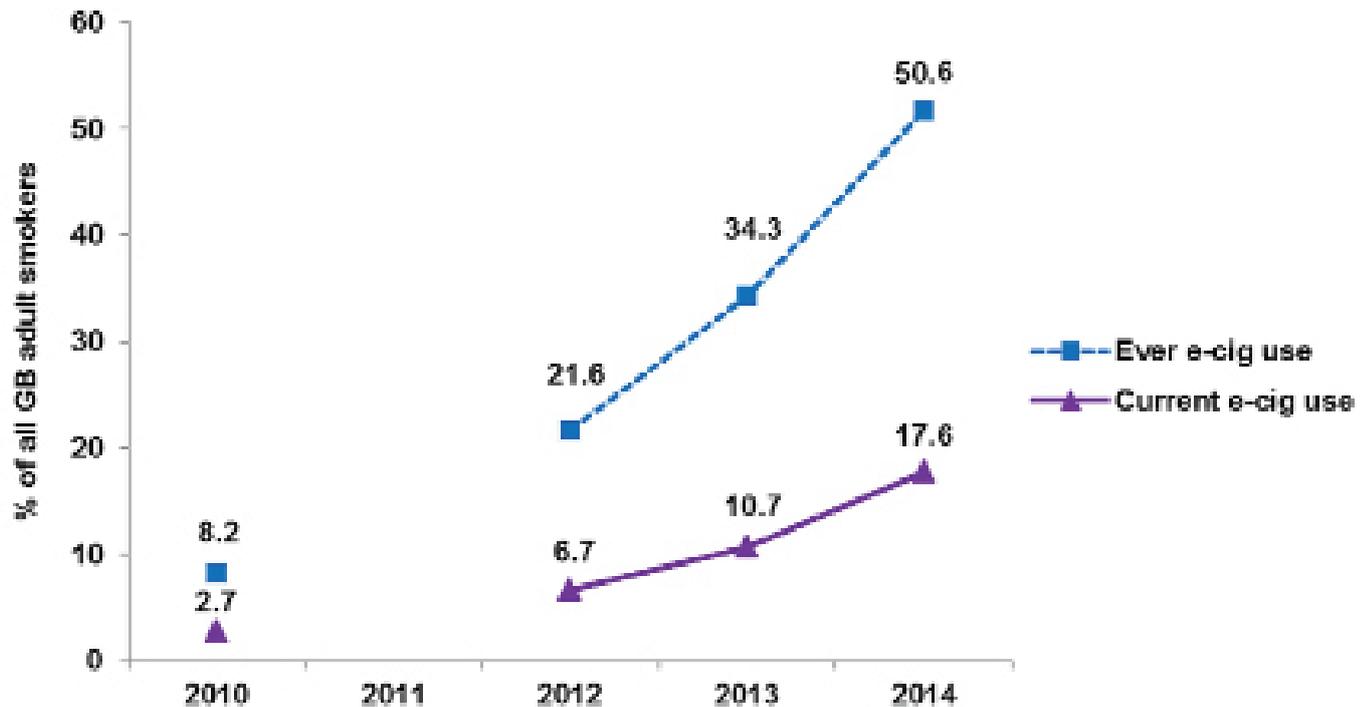
ASH estimates that there are currently 2.1 million adults in Great Britain using electronic cigarettes. Of these, approximately 700,000 are ex-smokers while 1.3 million continue to use tobacco alongside their electronic cigarette use. Electronic cigarette use amongst never smokers remains negligible.⁷

- There has been a substantial rise in the number of current smokers who have tried electronic cigarettes since 2010. In 2010, only 8.2 per cent of current smokers had ever tried electronic cigarettes. By 2014, this figure had risen to 50.6 per cent.
- There has been a gradual but consistent rise in the number of current smokers who also use electronic cigarettes on a regular basis, from 2.7 per cent in 2010 to 17.6 per cent in 2014.

Awareness of electronic cigarettes is widespread among adults. The 2014 survey found that 95% of smokers and 90% of non-smokers had heard of electronic cigarettes. Regular use of the devices is confined to current and ex-smokers.

Just over a third (35%) of British adults believe that electronic cigarettes are good for public health while around a quarter (22%) disagree.

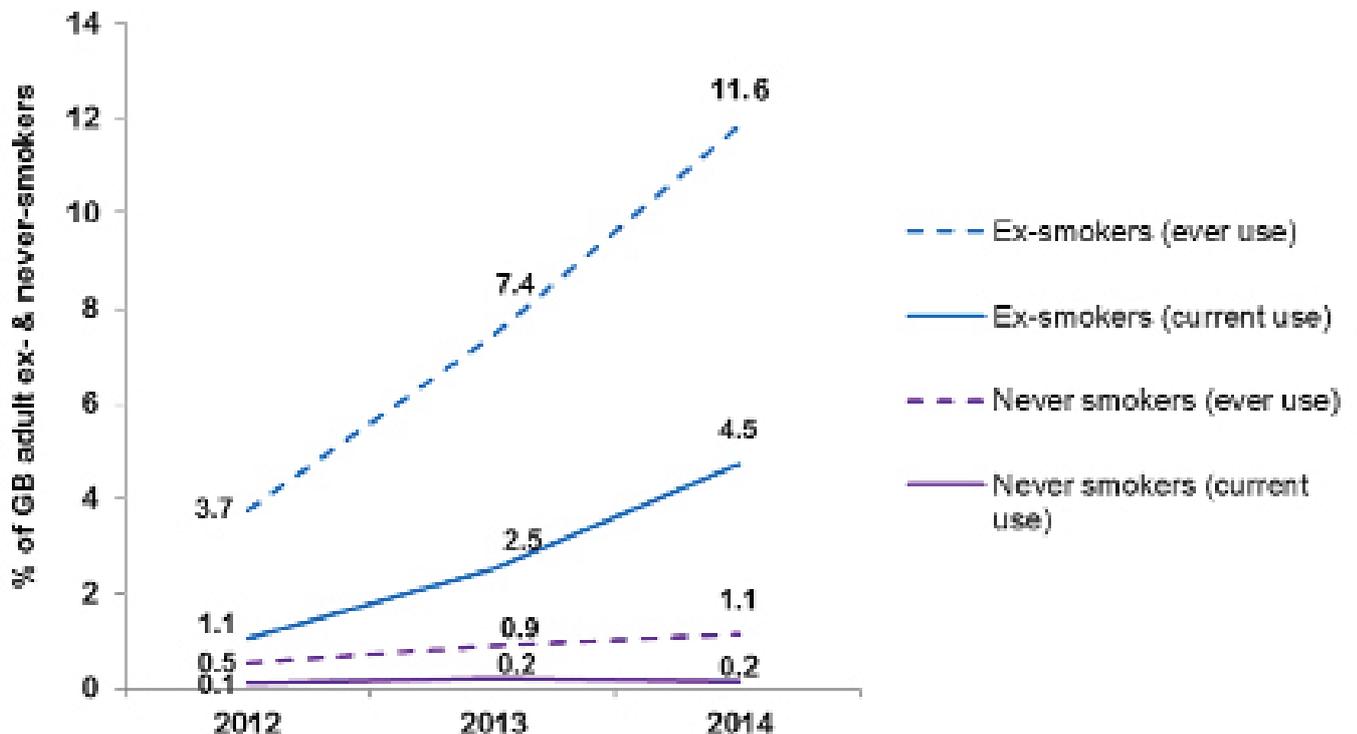
Electronic cigarette use among current adult cigarette smokers in Great Britain (2010-2014)



Unweighted base: GB adult smokers (2010, n=2297; 2012, n=2093; 2013, n=1895; 2014, n=1710)

The survey conducted in 2014 found that electronic cigarette use amongst never smokers remains negligible. Less than 1 per cent of never smokers have ever tried electronic cigarettes and virtually none continue to use them. Among former smokers, 11.8 per cent have tried electronic cigarettes but only 4.7 per cent use them on a regular basis.

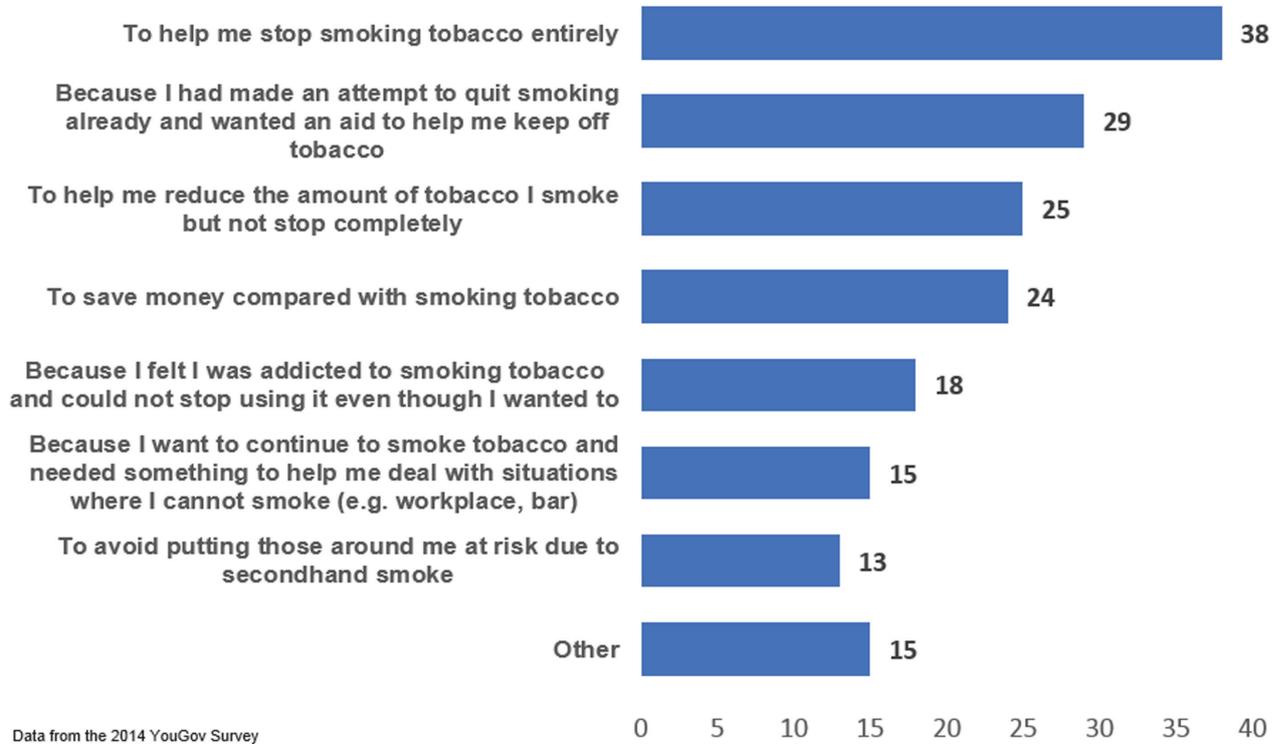
Electronic cigarette use among former and never smokers in Great Britain (2012-2014)



Unweighted base: GB adult ex-smokers (2012, n=4473; 2013, n=4303; 2014, n=4498),
GB adult never smokers (2012, n=5886; 2013, n=5973; 2014, n=5995)

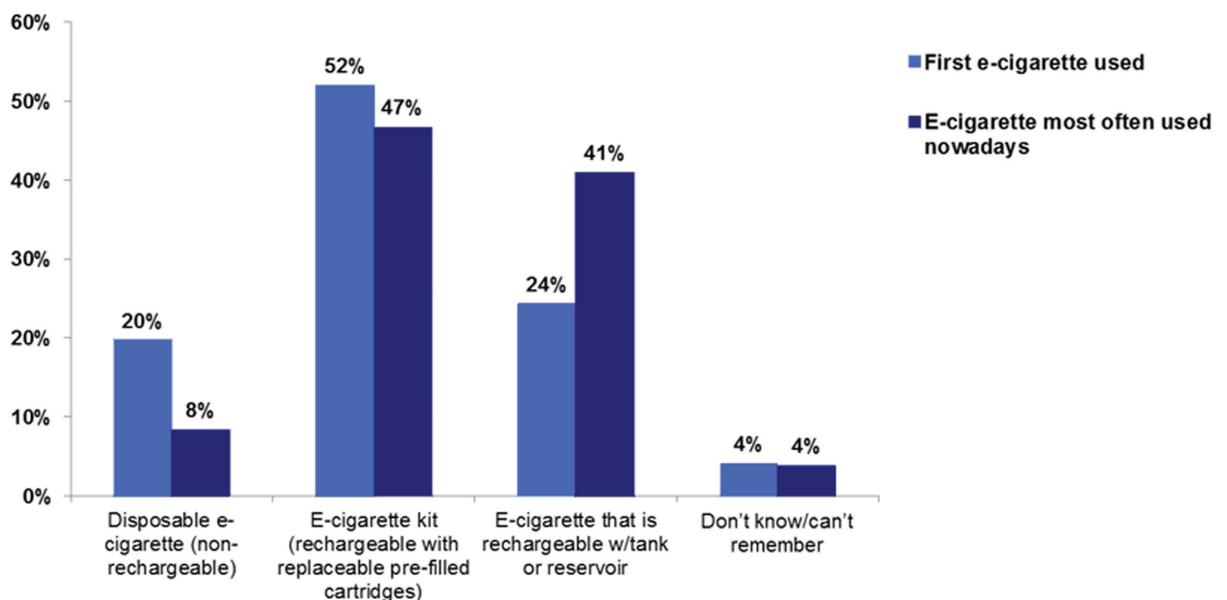
Smokers and ex-smokers give a number of reasons for using, or having tried electronic cigarettes. Among current users of electronic cigarettes, the principal reasons given by ex-smokers are “to help me stop smoking entirely” (56%) and “to help me keep off tobacco” (34%). The principal reasons given by current smokers are to “help me stop smoking entirely” (32%) and “to help me reduce the amount of tobacco I smoke, but not stop completely” (32%).

**All Adults who report using / having used electronic cigarettes (2014)
figures in %**



Most electronic cigarette users (or “vapers”) use a rechargeable product with either replaceable, pre-filled cartridges or a reservoir/tank. Only 8 per cent of electronic cigarette users use disposable products although 20 per cent report that the first electronic cigarette they tried was a disposable brand.

Type of electronic cigarettes product tried and currently used (2014)



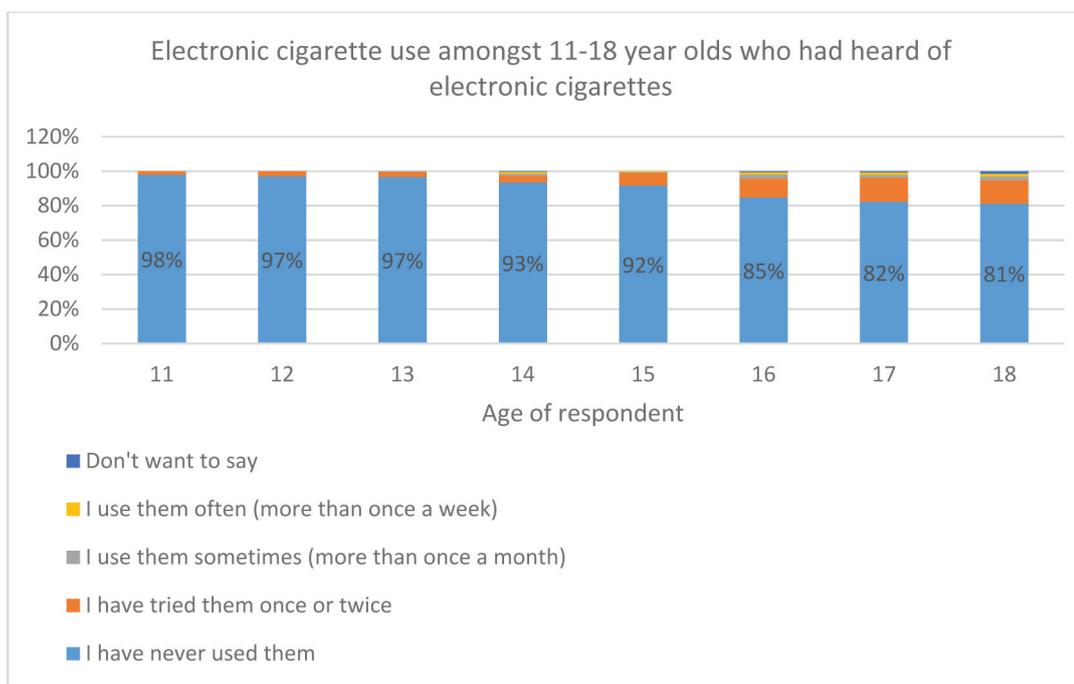
Unweighted base: GB adults who reported having tried e-cigarettes (n=1337) and still use them (n=498)

There is some variation of product choice between current and ex-smoker electronic cigarette users.

- More current smokers use a rechargeable kit with replaceable cartridges than ex-smokers (50% compared to 40%).
- Current smokers are also more likely to use a disposable brand than ex-smokers (10% compared to only 4%).
- Ex-smokers favour a rechargeable product with a reservoir or tank (54% compared to only 35% of current smokers).

Electronic cigarette use among children

In 2013, just over two thirds (67%) of 11-18 year olds and 83% of 16-18 year olds had heard of electronic cigarettes. By March 2014, this had risen to 84% of 11-18 year olds and 90% of 16-18 year olds. Overall, of those children who were aware of e-cigarettes, the number of 11-18 year olds who have ever tried an electronic cigarette increased from 5% in 2013 to 8% in 2014. However, use is closely linked with smoking behaviour.



Based on the 84% of a sample of unweighted base of 2068 11-18 year olds, who had heard of electronic cigarettes

Understanding of electronic cigarettes among children is generally good. Children who have heard of electronic cigarettes believe correctly that they are less harmful than cigarettes to the user (66%) and those around them (73%). About two-thirds (67%) of 16-18 year olds who have heard of electronic cigarettes believe that either all or some e-cigarettes contain nicotine. A third (34%) correctly reported that some products do contain nicotine and some don't.

- **Among children, sustained use is rare and generally confined to children who currently or have previously smoked.** Eight percent (13% among 16-18 year olds) had tried electronic cigarettes at least once or twice. Two percent reported using them monthly or weekly. Among children who reported ever using electronic cigarettes, 33% had used them in the last month. Of those who had heard of e-cigarettes and had never smoked a cigarette, 98% reported never having tried electronic cigarettes and 2% reported having tried them "once or twice". There is almost no evidence of regular electronic cigarette use among children who have never smoked or who have only tried smoking once.

- **Few children who have never used them expect to use an electronic cigarette soon, except those who already smoke.** Only 1% of those who had never smoked think that they would try an electronic cigarette soon. This remained unchanged from 2013.
- **Frequent (more than weekly) use of electronic cigarettes by children was confined almost entirely to ex-smokers and daily smokers.**

For further information about electronic cigarettes, please see the ASH Website or download the [ASH Briefing on Electronic Cigarettes](#).

References

- 1 YouGov survey. Total sample size was 12,597 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17th and 22nd March 2010 All surveys were carried out online. All figures have been weighted and are representative of GB adults (aged 18+) or children (11 to 18) as appropriate.
- 2 YouGov survey. Total sample size was 12,436 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 27th February and 16th March 2012.
- 3 YouGov survey. Total sample size was 12,171 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st and 19th February 2013.
- 4 YouGov survey. Total sample size was 12,269. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th and 14th March 2014. All surveys were carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB Adults (aged 18+).
- 5 YouGov survey. Total sample size was 2,178 children aged 11 to 18. Fieldwork was undertaken 21st - 28th March 2013.
- 6 Total sample size was 2,068 children aged 11 to 18. Fieldwork was undertaken 21st March – 1st April 2014.
- 7 Methodology: Calculations are by ASH. This was done by applying the proportions of e-cigarette use by smoking status in the 2014 YouGov survey to the most recent available ONS mid-year GB population estimates (2012).