

# Want to know about vaping? Turn on the TV or go online

June 18 2014, by Sherri McGinnis González

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Adults are widely exposed to e-cigarette marketing through the media, but those messages reach different demographic groups in different ways, according to a survey by researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Institute for Health Research and Policy.

The study is published as a special supplement in the July 2014 issue of *Tobacco Control*.

Eighty-six percent of those surveyed were aware of e-cigarettes, and 47 percent had seen or heard about them on television, on the radio, in print media or online. The survey of 17,522 adults was conducted online last year.

"These are significant findings, given how recently these products have entered the market and the fact that less than 20 percent of the U.S. population was aware of them five years ago," the study authors report.

Television was the most common medium for encountering e-cigs—two-thirds of people said they saw them on TV. Internet banner ads (14 percent), email (13 percent), Internet search engines (11 percent) and Facebook (9 percent) were other ways people encountered e-cigarette information.

Passive exposure to e-cig messaging—receiving information without seeking it—was more likely for [tobacco users](#), [young adults](#), males, those with more than a [high school education](#), and those who use social media

and spend more time online.

"These findings may have implications for e-cigarette marketing regulation," said Sherry Emery, a senior scientist at the UIC institute and lead author of the study.

Although people did report sharing information about e-cigs via Facebook, texting, email and Twitter, word-of-mouth exchange was most common, at 54 percent.

The researchers uncovered important demographic differences in how people search and share e-cigarette information online.

Tobacco users were five times as likely as non-users to report sharing information about e-cigarettes. Young adults were nearly twice as likely as other respondents to have shared e-cigarette information.

E-cigarette users were more likely than nonusers to search for e-cig information on Facebook, and more likely than nonusers to share such information by word of mouth and on Facebook.

The study also found that Latinos and Lesbian, gay or bisexual individuals were more likely than others to share e-cig [information](#).

The study is the first to explore how different groups interact with media messages about e-cigarettes, and it shows that social networking is a critical component of both formal and informal e-cig marketing.

"While we cannot tell from this cross-sectional work whether the differences in e-cig [media](#) consumption reflect targeted marketing, self-selection, or a combination of the two, this work suggests that closer scrutiny of e-cig marketing practices is warranted," said Emery.

**More information:** [tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/23/suppl\\_3.toc](http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/23/suppl_3.toc)

Provided by University of Illinois at Chicago

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