

Research discredits theory that e-cigarettes make tobacco use socially acceptable

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A [study](#) conducted by the Glasgow-based Centre for Substance Use Research (CSUR) has cast doubt on the link suggested by some between the increased visibility of e-cigarette use and the renormalisation of smoking.

The majority (96%) of qualitative responses given in interviews with 100 non-smokers aged between 16 and 29, showed [young people](#) were able to clearly differentiate between smoking traditional cigarettes and e-cigarette use, with most expressing disinterest in vaping, considering the devices were used only for attempting to quit or reduce [tobacco](#) consumption.

There was no reported change in the respondents' desire to smoke after seeing the devices used in public, with some suggesting the products make cigarettes appear even less appealing.

Although 61% of respondents suggested the sight of an e-cigarette made them curious about the devices and what the experience of using them was like, only a third of that group said they had tried one since first seeing the devices used in public, and none had gone on to use e-cigarettes more frequently. 38% commented that seeing an e-cigarette used in public did not make them curious about vaping at all.

Dr Neil McKeganey, Director of CSUR and lead author of the study said, "These results cast doubt on claims of a link between the increased popularity of e-cigarettes, their ensuing visibility when used in public,

and any resulting increase in the desire to smoke tobacco among young people."

"While the study suggests more people now consider vaping to be a 'normal' activity, it also shows that there is no basis for regulating e-cigarettes based on a fear they are making smoking more attractive, because this fear is clearly unfounded. Any restrictions on their use, for example in public places, should reflect the reality that people do not think smoking is any more socially acceptable just because more people are seen to be vaping," McKeganey added. "If anything, the results of this study show the opposite is true. Vaping is making [smoking](#) less interesting for non-smokers. While there is still a need to pursue further research into e-cigarettes, on the basis of our results the devices in their current form can be clearly distinguished from traditional cigarettes. Future regulation that restricts their manufacture or design risks inadvertently pushing e-cigarettes to resemble combustible tobacco products, which could lead to confusion and should be avoided at all costs."

E-cigarettes have been called 95% safer than traditional tobacco by Public Health England, a view that is supported by numerous other [public](#) health and tobacco-control groups, including Action on Smoking and Health UK and Cancer Research UK. All these groups are moving towards a broad scientific consensus that vaping, when compared to conventional [tobacco consumption](#), could present a critical tool in global harm reduction. Yet restrictions on the use of [e-cigarettes](#) could hurt their positive impact.

This study is available in the US peer-reviewed *International Archives of Addiction Research and Medicine*.

Provided by Centre for Substance Use Research (CSUR)

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