

# Teenagers more likely to vape if their parents smoke

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Teenagers whose parents are smokers are 55% more likely to try e-cigarettes, according to research presented at the European Respiratory Society International Congress in Barcelona, Spain. In a large study of

Irish teenagers, the researchers have also found that the proportion who have tried e-cigarettes has been increasing dramatically and that although boys are more likely to use e-cigarettes, the rate of use among girls is increasing more rapidly.

The researchers highlight the risks associated with nicotine addiction and call for more effective regulation to protect children and [teenagers](#).

The research was carried out by a team at the TobaccoFree Research Institute Ireland (TFRI), in Dublin. They examined data on 6,216 17- and 18-year-olds, including information on whether their parents smoked while they were growing up. The teenagers were asked whether they smoked or used e-cigarettes.

The study showed that teenagers whose parents smoked were around 55% more likely to have tried e-cigarettes and around 51% more likely to have tried [smoking](#).

The team also combined several Irish data sets to provide the most comprehensive analyses of teenage e-cigarette use in Ireland, with information on more than 10,000 Irish teenagers (aged 16 to 17), to look at the overall numbers of teenagers trying or regularly using e-cigarettes and how this is changing over time. This showed that the proportion who had tried e-cigarettes had increased from 23% in 2014 to 39% in 2019.

The main reasons teenagers gave for trying e-cigarettes were curiosity (66%) and because their friends were vaping (29%). Only 3% said it was to quit smoking. The proportion who said they had never used tobacco when they first tried e-cigarettes increased from 32% in 2015 to 68% in 2019.

TFRI Director General Professor Luke Clancy explained: "We have found increasing use of e-cigarettes in Irish teenagers and that's a pattern

that is emerging elsewhere in the world. There's a perception that vaping is a better alternative to smoking, but our research shows that this doesn't apply to teenagers who usually haven't tried cigarettes prior to e-cigarettes. This indicates that, for teens, vaping is a route into nicotine addiction, rather than out of it."

Finally, the researchers looked in detail at data on 3,421 16-year-olds to see if there were differences between boys and girls. Although boys were more likely to try or use e-cigarettes, the researchers found that rates were increasing more quickly among girls with 23% saying they had tried e-cigarettes in 2015 and 39% in 2019, and 10% saying they were currently using e-cigarettes in 2015, rising to 18% in 2019. Researchers found that having friends who smoke and having less parental monitoring were both major factors in teenage use of e-cigarettes, more so for boys than girls.

Doctoral researcher Ms. Salome Sunday told the Congress: "We can see that parents and friends have an influence on teenagers' decisions to try e-cigarettes and that's important because these are factors that we can try to change. However, governments need to play their part by making laws to protect children and young people. We already do this with smoking and we need to do the same with vaping."

Lead Researcher Dr. Joan Hanafin added: "We can see that the number of teenagers using e-cigarettes is changing fast, so we need to keep monitoring the situation in Ireland and around the world. We also plan to study [social media](#) to understand how this influences girls' and boys' vaping behavior."

Professor Jonathan Grigg is Chair of the European Respiratory Society's Tobacco Control Committee and was not involved in the research. He says: "These findings are worrying, not just for teenagers in Ireland, but for families all around the world. We know already that children of

parents who smoke are more likely to take up smoking. This study suggests that teenagers are also influenced by smoking [parents](#) to start using e-cigarettes and become addicted to nicotine.

"This work indicates that more and more teenagers are trying e-cigarettes and they are not doing so to help them quit smoking. This is important because we know that e-cigarettes are not harmless. The effects of [nicotine addiction](#) are well-established, and we are discovering that [e-cigarettes](#) can harm the lungs, blood vessels and brain. We need to do more to protect children and teenagers from these harms."

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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