

Many young people who have never vaped may be susceptible to starting, study suggests

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Almost two-thirds (62%) of people aged 15–30 in the U.K. who have never used e-cigarettes may be susceptible to taking up vaping in the future, according to results of an international survey by The George Institute for Global Health. The research findings were published June 13 in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

Results from an [online survey](#) of 4,007 people internationally identified exposure to e-cigarette advertising as having the second greatest effect on susceptibility, after current or past tobacco use, while perceived harmfulness reduced the likelihood of susceptibility.

Prof Simone Pettigrew, lead author and program director of health promotion and behavior change at The George Institute said, "These findings suggest that an overwhelming number of [young people](#) may be at risk of e-cigarette use in the U.K. and in other countries. While some types of promotion of these products is prohibited, advertising on posters, billboards, and buses is still prevalent in the U.K. A complete ban on e-cigarette advertising should be considered, as it is clearly influencing young people's attitudes towards these addictive and potentially harmful products."

Results from 333 people surveyed in the U.K. who had never used [e-cigarettes](#) before showed that 55% were curious about them, 50% would use them if offered by a friend, and 41% had intentions to use them in the next year. Researchers also found that almost two-thirds (63%) of U.K. respondents had seen e-cigarette advertising, a far higher number than in China (51%), India (47%) and Australia (30%) where the study also took place. U.K. respondents were less likely to believe that e-cigarettes are addictive (74%) or harmful (67%), compared to those in Australia (87% and 83%, respectively), where susceptibility was lowest (54%).

The U.K. e-cigarette industry generated an estimated revenue of £1.3 billion in 2021. Young people make up a considerable portion of consumers, with around 11% of those aged 16–34—approximately 1.6 million individuals—using e-cigarettes daily or occasionally, according to data from the Office for National Statistics. Young people are also more likely to be exposed to unregulated e-cigarette promotion on [social media](#), via advertisements that are in breach of the U.K. [advertising](#)

code.

Dr. Ana-Catarina Pinho-Gomes, honorary research fellow at The George Institute said, "Many young people worldwide are trialing e-cigarettes despite the unknown health effects of their long-term use. Harmful chemicals in unregistered products are a major concern, as is the often unlabeled amount of nicotine, which is highly addictive. To discourage further uptake of e-cigarettes among young people who have never smoked, the government needs to do more to educate on their negative effects."

More information: Simone Pettigrew et al, Short report: Factors contributing to young people's susceptibility to e-cigarettes in four countries, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2023.109944](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2023.109944)

Provided by George Institute for Global Health

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