

# Large national survey finds 2.9 million people now vape in Britain: For the first time over half don't smoke

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Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) today publishes the findings from its annual Smokefree GB survey into the use of electronic cigarettes and vapourisers in Great Britain.[1]

The study, conducted by YouGov on behalf of ASH, shows an estimated 2.9 million adults in Great Britain currently use electronic cigarettes.

For the first time ever, the survey finds more ex-smokers (1.5 million) who use e-cigarettes than current smokers and the main reason people offered for their use of e-cigarettes was to stop smoking. While this is positive, there are still many people who "dual-use" combustible and electronic cigarettes which still exposes them to the toxic, cancer causing substances in tobacco smoke.[2]

*Professor Ann McNeill, Professor of Tobacco Addiction at King's College London, said:*

*"This year's ASH survey finds that around 1.5 million vapers are ex-smokers, for the first time a larger number than those who continue to smoke. This is encouraging news as we know that vapers who continue to smoke continue to be exposed to cancer-causing substances. The message for the 1.3 million vapers who still smoke is that they need to go further and switch completely."*

There has been a fourfold increase in the number of vapers since 2012 when the figure was 700,000. However, growth has slowed a great deal in the last couple of years and fewer smokers year on year understand the reduced risk of vaping compared to smoking tobacco.[2]

*Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of ASH, said: "It's excellent news that the number of vapers who have quit smoking is continuing to grow."*

*She went on to say: "The rapid growth in e-cigarette use has come to an end while over a third of smokers have still never tried e-cigarettes, saying the main reasons are concerns about the safety and addictiveness of e-cigarettes. It's very important smokers realise that vaping is much, much less harmful than smoking."*

The research shows that many people are over-estimating the risk posed by e-cigarettes. Only 13% of respondents recognise that e-cigarettes are a lot less harmful than smoking, with 26% thinking they are more or equally harmful. This is a communications challenge that needs to be met in order to reduce the harm caused by tobacco to smokers and those around them. It may also be a factor in the slowed growth of e-cigarette uptake.

These new data also demonstrate that the EU Tobacco Products Directive (TPD) rules on nicotine concentration and tank size will only effect a small proportion of e-cig users. The

legislation coming into effect from 20 May this year includes new regulations that apply to electronic cigarettes as well as tobacco. The maximum strength of nicotine allowed in e-liquid will be 20 mg/ml, the maximum tank size will be 2 ml and the maximum e-liquid bottle size will be 10 ml. The ASH survey found that only 6% of vapers use nicotine above the TPD maximum of 20 mg/ml and only 1% of vapers use more than 10 ml of liquid a day.

The most common reasons given by e-cigarette users for switching from tobacco were to help them stop smoking entirely and to save money.

You can view the factsheet here. [Use of e-cigarettes among adults in Great Britain, 2018](#)

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Notes and Links:

Action on Smoking and Health is a health charity working to eliminate the harm caused by tobacco use. For more information see: [www.ash.org.uk/about-ash](http://www.ash.org.uk/about-ash)

ASH receives funding for its programme of work from Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

[1] Opinion research from YouGov. Total sample size was 12696 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16th February 2017 and 19th March 2017. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).  
Link to factsheet

[2] Shahab L. Goniewicz M. Blount B. Brown J. McNeill A. Alwis K U. Feng J. Wang L. West R. Nicotine, Carcinogen, and Toxin Exposure in Long-Term E-Cigarette and Nicotine Replacement Therapy Users: A Cross-sectional Study. *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

[3] Royal College of Physicians. Nicotine without smoke: Tobacco harm reduction. London: RCP, 2016.

Contact:

Hazel Cheeseman, Director of Policy on 020 7404 0242 / 07754 358 593

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive on 020 7404 0242 or 07976 935 987