

October 2016

ASH Fact Sheet - Use of electronic cigarettes among children in Great Britain

Key Findings

- Although children's awareness of and experimentation with electronic cigarettes is increasing, regular use remains rare and is most common among those who currently smoke or have previously smoked. This indicates that it is unlikely that electronic cigarettes are currently acting as a gateway, something which leads causally to smoking.
- A growing proportion of young people believe that electronic cigarettes are as harmful as smoking tobacco.
- Rechargeable tanks and fruit flavours are the most popular types of e-cigarettes among young people both for experimentation and regular use.

Electronic cigarette use among young people in Great Britain

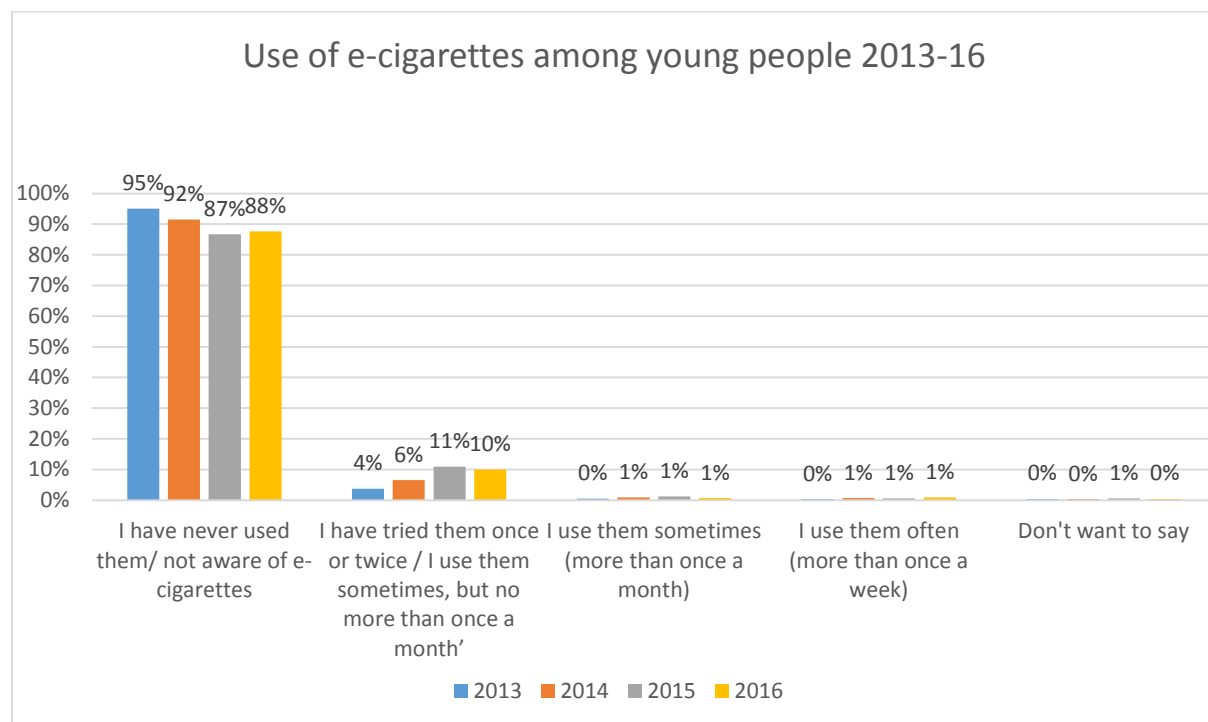
From 2013 onwards YouGov has been commissioned by ASH to conduct an annual online survey of young people aged between 11 and 18, called Smokefree GB Youth Survey. It includes questions on electronic cigarettes. The most recent Smokefree GB Youth Survey was carried out in March and April 2016¹ and relevant comparisons with previous years^{2 3 4} are presented here.

In 2016 only 5% of 11-18 year olds said they had not heard of electronic cigarettes, down from 30% in 2013. 12% of those surveyed had tried e-cigarettes at least once, this is the same proportion as in 2015 (13%).

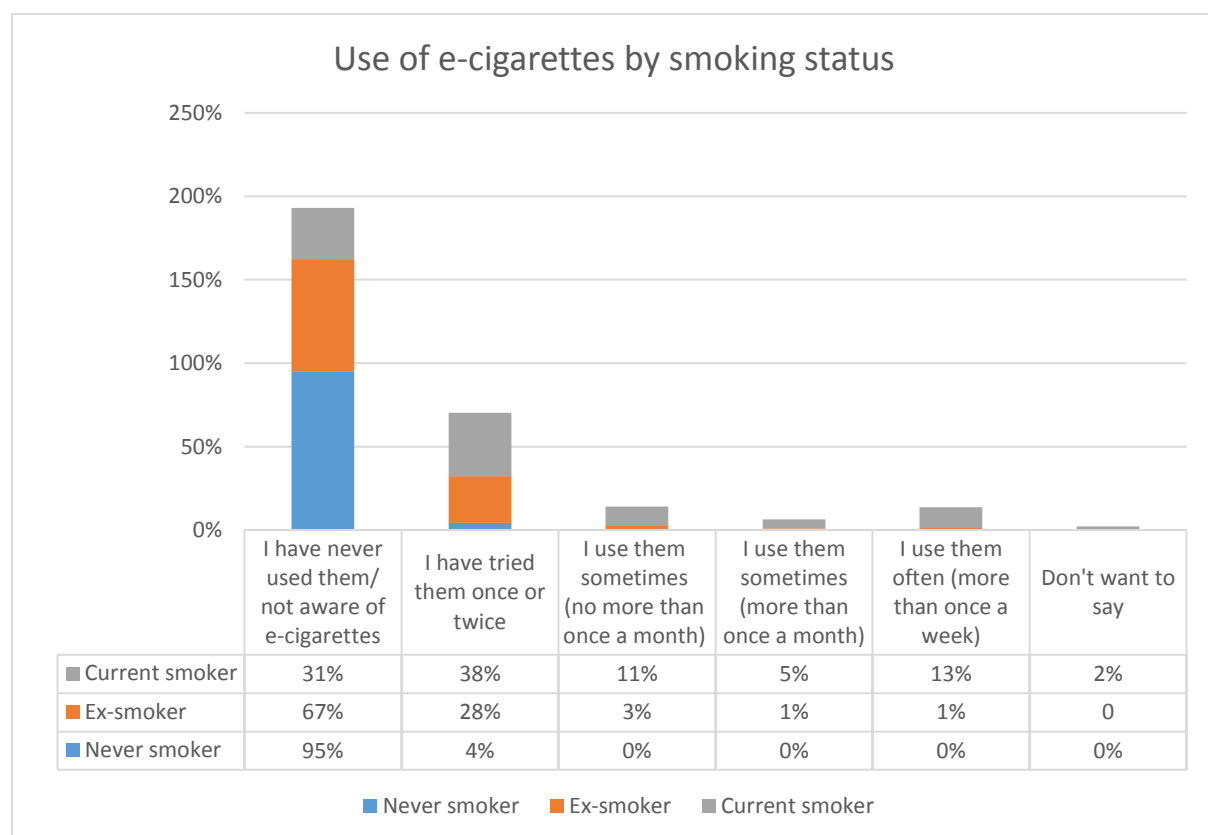
In 2016 more young people (19%) had tried smoking than had tried electronic cigarettes (10%) and 57% of those using e-cigarettes had tried tobacco first.

Regular use (once a month or more) was rare and largely among children who currently or have previously smoked. 2% of respondents said they used electronic cigarettes more than once a month, including 1% who used them weekly. These figures are similar to 2015.

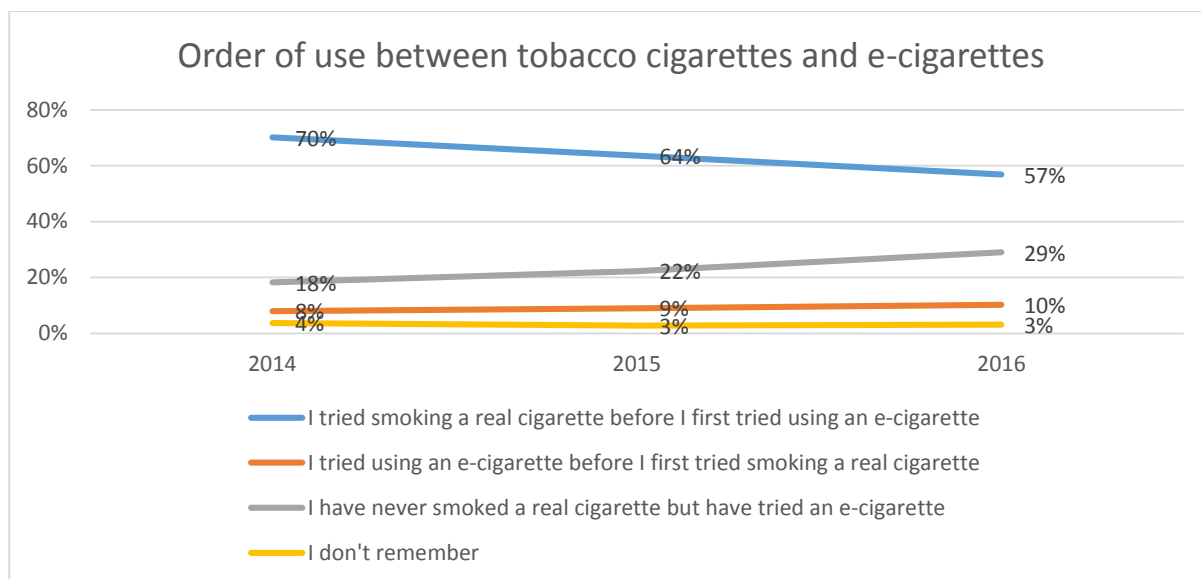
Use and awareness of electronic cigarettes between 2013 and 2016



Unweighted base: All 11-18 year olds (2013 = 2,178, 2014 = 2,068, 2015 = 2,291, 2016 = 2,331)

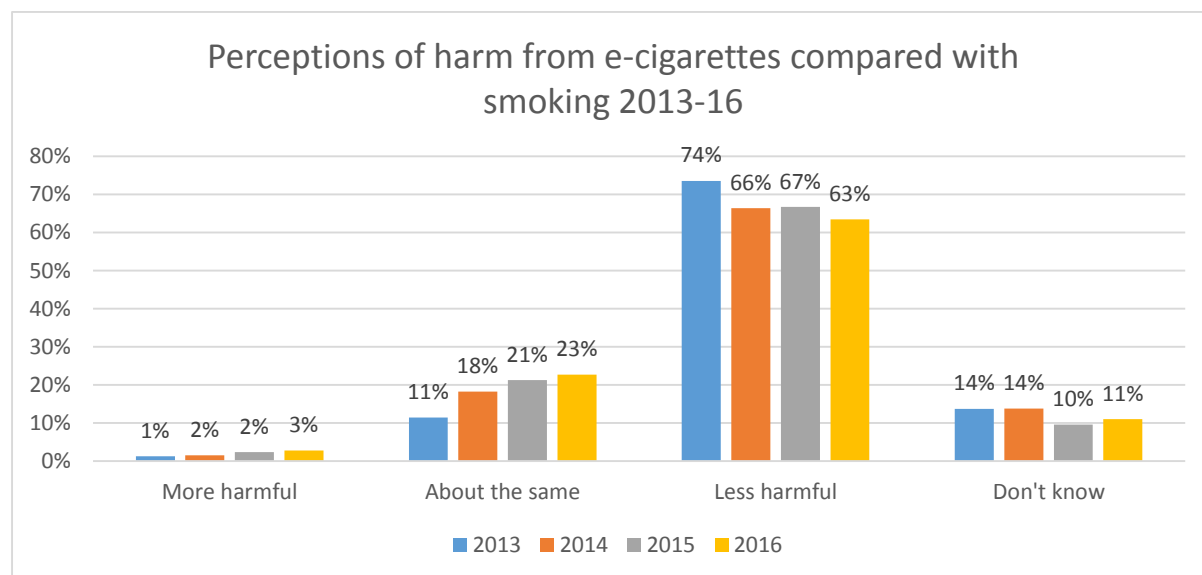


Base: All 11-18 year olds (n=2,331)



Unweighted Base: Tried e-cigarettes (n=318)

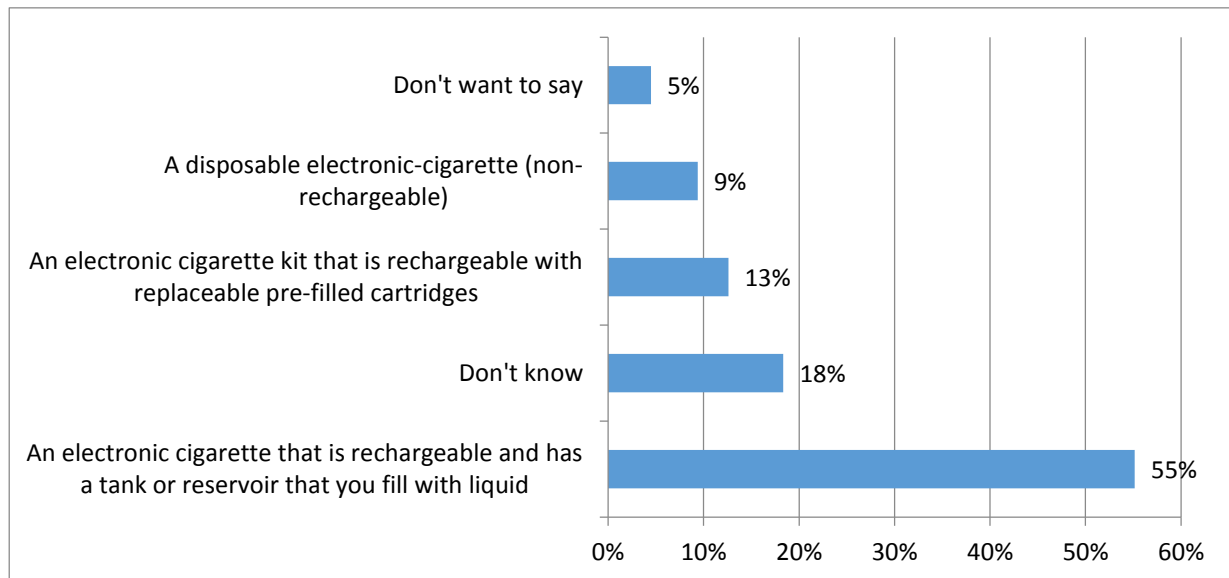
Understanding of electronic cigarettes among children is generally good. Nearly two thirds of children who have heard of electronic cigarettes believe correctly that they are less harmful than cigarettes to the user (63%). However, this has fallen over time, with increasing numbers of children believing they are equally harmful. Between 2013 and 2016 the proportion believing that the electronic devices are equally as harmful increased from 11% to 23%.



Unweighted base: All 11-18 year olds (2013 = 2,178, 2014 = 2,068, 2015 = 2,291, 2016 = 2,331)

The most popular form of electronic cigarettes among regular young users of e-cigarettes are those with a refillable tank (55%), followed by those with a pre-filled cartridge (13%).

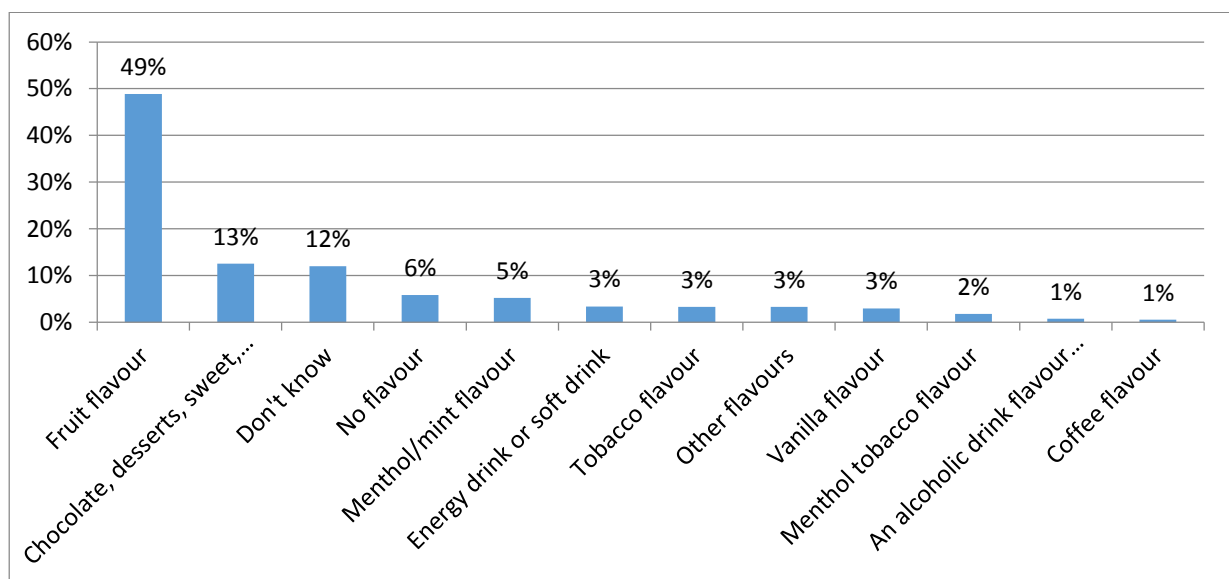
Most often used e-cigarette for current users



Unweighted Base: Currently use e-cigarettes (n = 66)

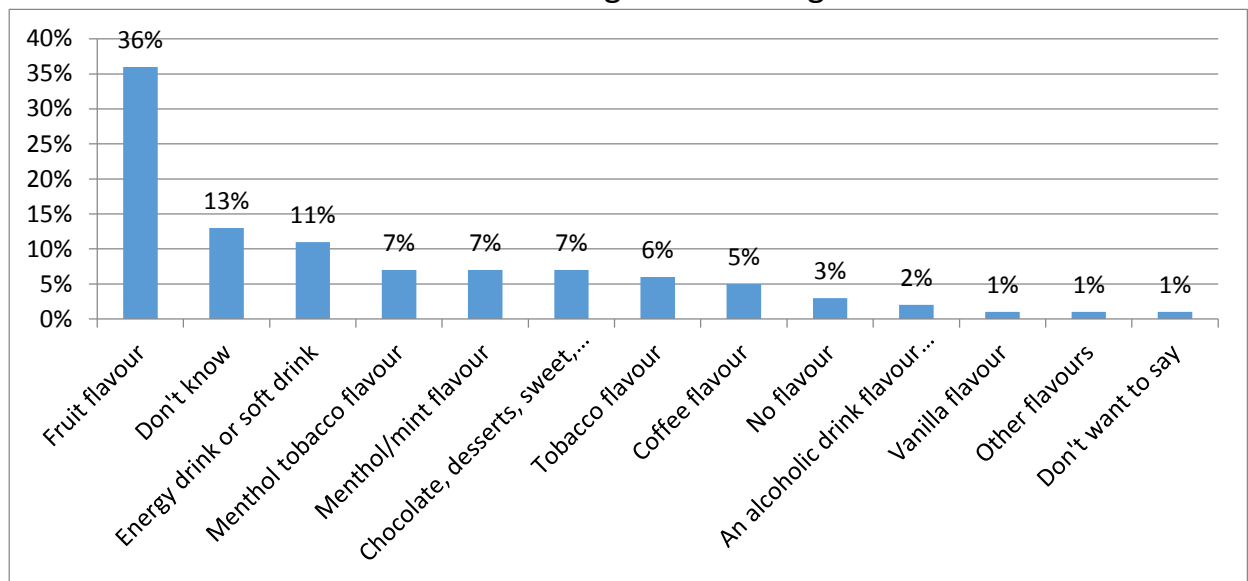
E-cigarettes come in a variety of flavours, particularly refillable 'tank' devices. Fruit flavour was by far the most popular flavour among young people. Fruit flavours were more popular among young people who no longer used electronic cigarettes and among young people who had tried electronic cigarettes but never smoked. Fruit flavours were also the most popular flavour in 2015.

Flavour of e-cigarette last used for young people who have tried, but do not currently use e-cigarettes



Unweighted Base: Tried e-cigarettes (n = 252)

Preferred flavour of e-cigarette for regular users



Unweighted Base: Currently use e-cigarettes (n = 66)

Comparison with other surveys

In 2014 questions on electronic cigarette use were added to surveys carried out in schools by Governments in Wales^{5,6} Scotland⁷ and England.^{8,9} The patterns of electronic cigarette use among all these surveys and the ASH Smokefree GB Youth survey are similar. The surveys taken together indicate that regular electronic cigarette use among young people is a relatively rare phenomenon and is largely among young people who smoke. The surveys do, however, show a higher level of ‘experimentation’ with electronic cigarettes (young people who have tried products one or twice). This too is much more common among children who smoke but can also be observed among children who have never smoked. Some differences between the surveys do exist – for example the high number of young people who had ‘ever tried’ electronic cigarettes in the Smoking, Drinking and Use (SDD) Survey was high. These can be explained by differing methodologies and differently worded questions. For example, SDD prompts young people to consider use as ‘even a puff or two’ whereas the ASH Smokefree GB Youth survey does not include this prompt.

Table: E-cigarette use among young people

Source	Ever tried	Use more than once a month but less than once a week (not just once or twice)	Use more than once a week	Use more than once a month in <i>never</i> smokers	Regular smokers who had tried e-cigarettes
ASH Smokefree GB youth survey (11-18 years) (2016 – March)	12.0%	0.7%	0.9%	0.3%	70%
Health Behaviour in School-aged Children, Wales (11-16 years) (Nov 2013 – Feb 2014)	12.3%	1.5% (use at least monthly)		0.3%	Not reported
CHETS Wales survey (10–11 year olds) 2014	5.8%	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
SALSUS Scotland survey (15 and 13 year olds) 2015	23.57%	1.53%	2.33%	0.52%	90.19%
The smoking, drinking and drug use survey (11-15 year olds), 2014	22%	3%	1%	Not reported	89%
What about YOUTH Survey (15 year olds). 2014	18%	2%	1%	0%	84%

As awareness of and experimentation with electronic cigarettes grows it might be expected that we will see more young people regularly using the products and it will continue to be an area to be closely watched.

For further information about electronic cigarettes please see the [ASH Website](#) or download the [ASH Briefing on Electronic Cigarettes](#) or the [ASH Factsheet on use of electronic cigarettes among adults](#).

¹ Total sample size was 2,331 11 to 18 year olds. Fieldwork was undertaken between 11th March and 10th April 2016 . The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB 11-18 year olds

² Total sample size was 2,291 teenagers aged 11-18. Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th and 22nd March 2015. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of GB 11-18 year olds.

³ Total sample size was 2,068 children aged 11-18. Fieldwork was undertaken between 21st March - 1st April 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of age, gender and region.

⁴ Total sample size was 2,178 children aged 11 to 18. Fieldwork was undertaken between 21st - 28th March 2013. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB aged 11 to 18.

⁵ Moore, G., et al. *Electronic-cigarette use among young people in Wales: evidence from two cross-sectional surveys*. BMJ Open, 2015; Apr 15;5(4):e007072.

⁶ Moore, G.F., et al. *E-cigarette use and intentions to smoke among 10-11-year-old never-smokers in Wales*. Tob Control, 2014: pii. tobaccocontrol-2014-052011. [Epub ahead of print]

⁷ ISD Scotland. *Scottish School's Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS)* 2014. 18 May 2015; Available from: <http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Public-Health/SALSUS/>.

⁸ Hughes, K., et al. *Associations between e-cigarette access and smoking and drinking behaviours in teenagers*. BMC Public Health, 2015;15:244.

⁹ What About Youth? Study. Base =117,577 15 year olds in England for questions on e-cigarettes. <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB17984>