



**Cancer
Council**
Victoria

Perceptions of and support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes among Australian adults

Prepared by:

Elizaveta Ilchenko, Tamara Tabbakh, Eve Mitsopoulos, Sarah Durkin and Melanie
Wakefield

Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer
Cancer Council Victoria

August 2022

Acknowledgements

This work was conducted with funding from Cancer Council Australia and with funding from VicHealth, the Victorian Department of Health, and Cancer Council Victoria - under the auspices of Quit.

We acknowledge the Social Research Centre's probability-based panel, Life in Australia™ as the data source used in this report.

Suggested citation

Ilchenko E, Tabbakh T, Mitsopoulos E, Durkin S, Wakefield M. *Perceptions of and support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes among Australian adults*. Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Cancer Council Victoria: Melbourne, Australia, August 2022. Available from: https://www.cancervic.org.au/downloads/cbrc/R22_EI_Perceptions_of_and_support_for_policies_to_regulate_e-cigarettes_among_Australian_adults.pdf

Table of contents

Summary	1
Method.....	2
Results.....	3
Discussion	5
References	6
Appendix:.....	7

Summary

This report provides data from a survey of 3,522 Australian adults on the extent to which they perceive e-cigarettes to be highly addictive and the extent to which they support the regulation of e-cigarettes.

Overall, there was a high level of agreement among Australian adults that e-cigarettes are highly addictive (70%). A slightly higher proportion of Australian adults aged 18-24 years, who are also the largest group of e-cigarette users¹, agreed that e-cigarettes are highly addictive compared to adults aged 25 years and older. However, there was no variation in this perception by other demographics such as region, socio-economic status, and education.

Support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes was also generally high, with the majority of Australian adults agreeing that: e-cigarettes should be carefully regulated to stop a new generation of Australians from becoming addicted to nicotine (83%); that the promotion and marketing of e-cigarettes through social and digital media should not be allowed (73%); that the advertising of e-cigarettes in and around shops should not be allowed (73%); and that vaping should not be allowed on public transport, in pubs, restaurants, or other indoor venues (83%). Support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes tended to increase with age and was lower among those who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Method

Procedure

Data collection was through the 53rd wave of the Social Research Centre's probability-based panel, Life in Australia™. Questions were added to this survey wave (see below) on behalf of the Cancer Council Victoria to examine perceptions towards e-cigarettes. The survey was carried out from 13 to 27 September 2021.

Sample

A total of 4,426 active panel members were invited to partake in the survey and 3,522 completed the survey (79.6%). The sample comprised Australian adults aged 18 and over, including people with or without internet access. Most respondents were online panel members (96%).

Measures

The questionnaire was developed by Cancer Council Victoria and then refined in consultation with the Social Research Centre. Respondents were asked if they agreed with the following statement: i) 'E-cigarettes are highly addictive'. To assess support for policies to regulate E-cigarettes, respondents were asked if they agreed with the following statements: ii) 'E-cigarettes should be carefully regulated to stop a new generation of Australians becoming addicted to nicotine'; iii) 'The promotion and marketing of e-cigarettes through social and digital media should not be allowed'; iv) 'The advertising of e-cigarettes in and around shops should not be allowed'; and v) 'Vaping should not be allowed on public transport, in pubs, restaurants, or other indoor venues'. Response options were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Don't know and refused responses were excluded from this analysis (<1%).

Statistical analyses

Descriptive statistics were calculated using Stata 16.0 and any significant differences between groups were ascertained through non-overlapping confidence intervals (95%).

Results

As shown in **Figure 1**, the majority of Australian adults agreed that e-cigarettes are highly addictive (70%). As shown in Appendix Table A, agreement that e-cigarettes are highly addictive tended to be higher among adults aged 18-24 years relative to older adults (18-24 years: 76% vs. 25-44 year: 72%, 45-69 years: 67% and 70 years and above: 71%).

The pattern of response did not significantly differ by State/Territory, region, gender, SES, tertiary education attainment, country of birth, speaking a language other than English at home, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status. However, interpretation of findings involving the Northern Territory should be considered with caution, given that jurisdiction's small sample size (see Appendix Table A).

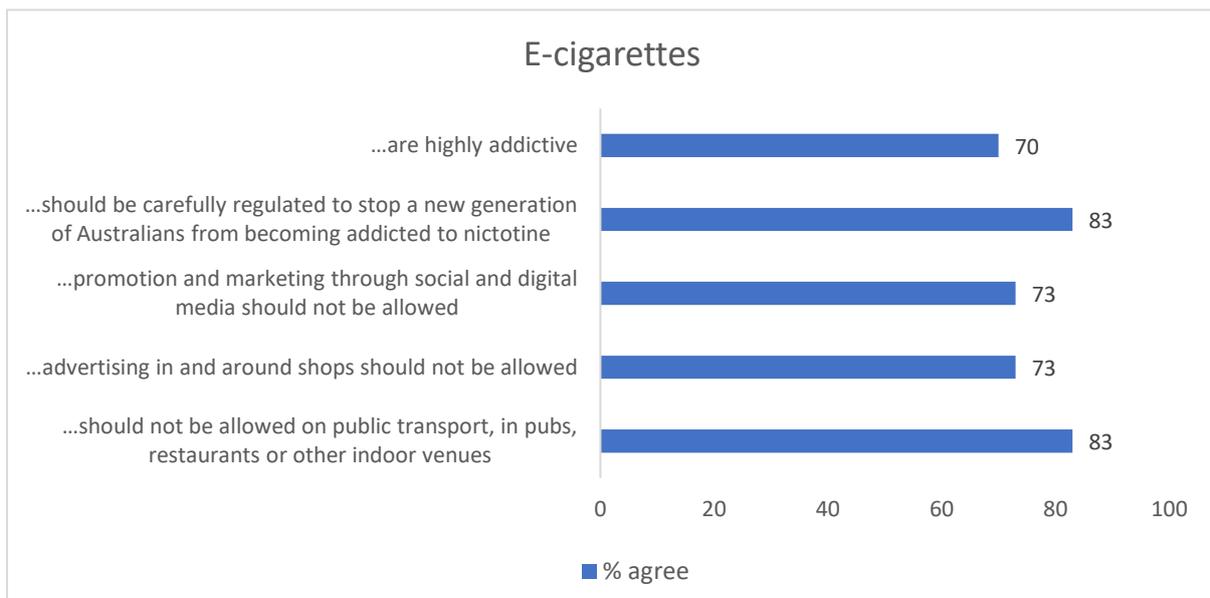


Figure 1 Australians' agreement with various statements about e-cigarettes

Figure 1 also shows support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes was generally high, with the majority of Australian adults agreeing that: e-cigarettes should be carefully regulated to stop a new generation of Australians from becoming addicted to nicotine (83%); that the promotion and marketing of e-cigarettes through social and digital media should not be allowed (73%); that the advertising of e-cigarettes in and around shops should not be allowed (73%); and that vaping should not be allowed on public transport, in pubs, restaurants, or other indoor venues (83%).

Support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes tended to increase with age, with the highest level of support among adults aged 70 years and above, which was significantly higher than the levels of support among 18-24-year-olds (see Appendix Table A).

Support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes was similar across States and Territories; region; male and female gender; SES; tertiary education; and language other than English spoken at home. As above, caution is advised in interpreting findings for the Northern Territory given that jurisdiction's small sample size.

Support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes was lower among adults who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (see Appendix Table A). Relative to non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander adults, adults who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were less likely to agree that: e-cigarettes need to be carefully regulated to stop a new generation of Australians from becoming addicted to nicotine (64% vs. 83%); that advertising of e-cigarettes in and around shops should not be allowed (55% vs. 74%); and that vaping should not be allowed on public transport, in pubs, restaurants, or other indoor venues (67% vs. 83%).

Discussion

Findings suggest that the majority of Australians believe that e-cigarettes are highly addictive. Agreement that e-cigarettes are highly addictive was slightly higher among younger adults aged 18-24 compared with adults 25 years and older. A key factor here could be higher rates of e-cigarette use among young adults and consequent experience with e-cigarette addiction themselves or exposure to their peers becoming addicted to these products.¹

Around three-quarters or more of Australians supported the regulation of e-cigarettes, with the highest level of support for 'e-cigarettes should be carefully regulated to stop a new generation of Australians from becoming addicted to nicotine' (83%) and 'vaping should not be allowed on public transport, in pubs, restaurants, or other indoor venues' (83%). Although support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes was high among all age groups, it tended to increase with age, with highest level of support among adults aged 70 years and above. Lower levels of support for some policies to regulate e-cigarettes were observed among respondents who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Overall, this report indicated Australian adults are aware that e-cigarettes are highly addictive and are supportive of policies to regulate e-cigarettes.

References

1. Greenhalgh EM, Bain E, Jenkins S & Scollo MM. 18B.3 Prevalence of e-cigarette use. In Greenhalgh EM, Scollo MM and Winstanley MH [editors]. Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues. Melbourne: Cancer Council Victoria; 2022. Available from: <http://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-harm-reduction/indepth-18b-e-cigarettes>.

Appendix:

Table A. Perceptions of and support for policies to regulate e-cigarettes among Australian adults

	% agree (95% confidence intervals)				
	E-cigarettes are highly addictive	E-cigarettes should be regulated to stop a new generation of Australians from becoming addicted	The promotion and marketing of e-cigarettes through social and digital media should not be allowed	The advertising of e-cigarettes in and around shops should not be allowed	Vaping should not be allowed on public transport, in pubs, restaurants or other indoor venues
Overall (N=3,522)	70 (69-72)	83 (81-85)	73 (71-75)	73 (71-75)	83 (81-85)
Age^a					
18-24 years (N=140)	76 (68-83)	78 (70-85)	65 (56-73)	67 (58-74)	78 (71-85)
25-44 years (N=1,019)	72 (69-75)	81 (78-84)	69 (65-72)	68 (65-71)	79 (76-82)
45-69 years (N=1,639)	67 (64-69)	83 (81-85)	74 (71-76)	75 (72-77)	85 (83-87)
70 or more years (N=715)	71 (67-75)	92 (89-94)	86 (83-89)	88 (85-90)	92 (89-94)

State					
NSW (N=1,011)	73 (70-76)	86 (83-89)	76 (73-79)	76 (73-80)	84 (81-87)
VIC (N=903)	70 (66-74)	80 (76-83)	70 (66-74)	71 (67-74)	81 (78-85)
QLD (N=692)	69 (65-73)	81 (77-85)	68 (64-73)	71 (67-75)	80 (76-84)
SA (N=321)	67 (60-73)	86 (81-90)	76 (70-81)	74 (67-79)	86 (81-90)
WA (N=375)	66 (60-71)	81 (75-85)	73 (67-78)	73 (67-78)	84 (78-88)
TAS (N=100)	71 (60-81)	89 (79-95)	84 (73-91)	80 (69-88)	88 (78-93)
NT (N=15)	38 (16-67)	51 (24-78)	45 (20-73)	37 (16-65)	70 (35-91)
ACT (N=105)	76 (65-84)	86 (76-92)	75 (61-85)	75 (61-85)	93 (82-98)
Region					
Capital (N=2,367)	70 (68-73)	83 (80-85)	71 (69-74)	72 (70-74)	82 (80-84)
Rest of state (N=1,155)	70 (67-73)	84 (81-86)	75 (72-78)	76 (73-79)	85 (82-87)
Gender ^b					

Male (N=1,535)	68 (65-71)	82 (79-84)	71 (68-74)	72 (69-75)	81 (79-84)
Female (N=1,972)	72 (70-75)	84 (82-86)	75 (72-77)	75 (72-77)	85 (83-87)
Non-binary (N=12)	78 (36-96)	100 (100-100)	41 (15-74)	46 (17-78)	68 (29-91)
Socio-economic status ^b					
Low SES (N=1,200)	69 (66-72)	82 (79-85)	72 (69-75)	72 (69-75)	81 (78-84)
Mid/high SES (N=2,319)	71 (69-74)	83 (81-85)	73 (71-76)	74 (72-76)	84 (82-86)
Tertiary education ^c					
Some tertiary education (N=2,556)	71 (69-73)	84 (82-86)	73 (71-75)	74 (72-77)	84 (82-86)
No tertiary education (N=851)	70 (66-73)	81 (78-84)	72 (68-75)	71 (67-75)	82 (78-85)
Country of birth ^d					
Australian born (N=2,521)	70 (68-72)	83 (81-85)	73 (71-75)	73 (71-75)	84 (82-86)
Mainly NESB background (N=529)	74 (69-78)	82 (77-85)	69 (64-74)	70 (65-75)	79 (74-83)
Mainly ESB background (N=462)	69 (63-74)	85 (81-89)	76 (71-81)	78 (73-83)	82 (76-86)

Language other than English ^e					
Yes (N=545)	73 (68-77)	81 (77-85)	69 (64-73)	71 (66-75)	80 (76-84)
No (N=2,975)	70 (68-72)	83 (82-85)	74 (72-76)	74 (72-76)	84 (82-85)
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ^f					
Yes (N=58)	72 (58-83)	64 (48-78)	63 (47-76)	55 (41-69)	67 (50-80)
No (N=3,461)	70 (68-72)	83 (82-85)	73 (71-75)	74 (72-75)	83 (82-85)

Notes: Socio-economic status was defined using the Australia Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Disadvantage (low SES: quintiles 1-2; mid-high SES: quintiles 3-5). Some tertiary education was defined as Certificate III & IV level or above. Respondents who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both.

Some cases were missing data (^an=9; ^bn=3; ^cn=115; ^dn=10; ^en=2; ^fn=3) and thus excluded from analyses.