

# Impacts of EU Tobacco Products Directive regulations on use of e-cigarettes in adolescents in Great Britain: a natural experiment evaluation

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## Declared competing interests of authors

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## Plain language summary

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## Plain language summary

**M**uch has been achieved in preventing young people smoking; however, e-cigarettes have emerged as a new issue. E-cigarettes can help smokers stop, but might also appeal to young people or make smoking look 'normal'.

Until recently, in the United Kingdom, there were not many rules for e-cigarettes. In 2016, new rules came in as part of the European Union Tobacco Products Directive regulations. The Tobacco Products Directive regulations limited advertising and included rules about how e-cigarettes should be labelled.

In our study, we wanted to know if (1) e-cigarettes make young people think smoking is 'normal' and (2) people's use of e-cigarettes changed after new rules.

We included young people who took part in surveys in England, Scotland and Wales between 1998 and 2019. Overall, about 360,000 young people did one of the surveys and about 90,000 were included in our main analysis. We spoke with young people in 2017 and 2018. In addition, in 2018, we spoke with people involved in tobacco policy, trading standards officers and people who sold e-cigarettes.

Young people held negative attitudes about smoking and said that friends disagreed with smoking. Young people approved of occasional social e-cigarette use, but not regular use.

Stakeholders described a range of views on how e-cigarettes should be regulated. Retailers and trading standards officers said that some retailers did not get much information about Tobacco Products Directive regulations, but new rules were implemented well.

The percentage of young people saying that they had tried e-cigarettes was growing, but the number had stopped growing after the new rules. Regular use remained low throughout.

Our findings suggest that e-cigarettes are not making smoking look normal again and new rules may have helped stop growth in use of e-cigarettes by young people.



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