

Study Overview

The South African E-cigarette Survey 2022 aimed to provide data related to the use of electronic nicotine and non-nicotine delivery systems and heated tobacco products (collectively termed “novel products” in this fact sheet) amongst adults in urban South Africa. The survey also aimed to understand how the use of these products relates to the use of traditional combustible cigarettes (referred to as “cigarettes” in this fact sheet). The survey was specifically designed to estimate the prevalence of novel product use, to describe the demographics of novel product users, and to understand the sequence of use between cigarette smoking and novel product use. By analysing the sequence of use, the survey explores some of the biggest issues around novel products, namely whether (1) novel products might be a gateway to cigarette smoking (on-ramping device), and (2) if they might be a tool for smoking cessation (off-ramping device).

Key Findings

Prevalence

- **More than one in ten adults in South African urban areas (11.3%) had ever tried novel products.**
 - 4.0% were current regular users of novel products.
 - 1.5% had used novel products regularly in the past.
 - 5.8% had experimented with novel products.
- More than half (58%) of all current regular novel product users were also current regular cigarette smokers. The overall prevalence of dual users was 2.3%.
- Experimentation with novel products or cigarettes was followed by regular use for many users (49% of novel product users and 64% of cigarette smokers).
- Men were significantly more likely than women to use novel products.
- Regular novel product use was most popular among the younger age groups.

Beliefs

Significantly more dual users believed that novel products were less addictive and had less health risks than cigarettes, compared to those who believed the opposite.

Sequence of Use

On-ramper: Someone who used novel products, with no history of smoking cigarettes, and then started smoking cigarettes.

Off-ramper: Someone who smoked cigarettes, with no history of novel product use, then started using novel products and later quit smoking cigarettes.

- **On-Ramping: One in five (19%) novel product users who had not regularly smoked cigarettes started smoking them after using novel products.**
 - Among novel product users, this behaviour was more likely among those who were young, male, unemployed, lived in low-income areas and self-identified as Black.
- **Off-Ramping: One in eight (13%) cigarette smokers who began using novel products after smoking cigarettes later quit smoking cigarettes.**
 - Most clinical trials only characterise lifetime smoking cessation for those who have quit smoking cigarettes for at least 12 months. If this standard were applied, the percentage of “possible” lifetime off-rampers would be 7%.
 - Off-ramping behaviour was more likely among those who were young, employed, lived in high-income areas, and self-identified as White, Coloured, or Indian/Asian.

Patterns of Use

- **To stop or avoid smoking cigarettes (or other tobacco smoking) was the most commonly cited reason for novel product use (30% of users).**
- More than one third (36%) of novel product users did not know the nicotine strength of the novel products they typically used.
- Daily smoking was more common among current cigarette smokers (90%) than daily novel product use was among current novel product users (62%).
- Many novel product users did not know the brand of the novel products they usually used, and amongst those that did, a wide variety of brands were cited. The most common brands mentioned were Twisp (17%), Vuse (15%), and Smok (13%).

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