

# Use of electronic cigarettes (vapourisers) among adults in Great Britain

## Summary of findings

- An estimated 2.6 million adults in Great Britain currently use electronic cigarettes.
- Nearly two out of five users are ex-smokers and three out of five are current smokers.
- The main reason given for use by smokers who currently use electronic cigarettes is to reduce the amount they smoke while ex-smokers report using electronic cigarettes to help them stop smoking.

## Background

This fact sheet examines the use of electronic cigarettes among adults and young people in Great Britain. As part of the Smokefree Britain surveys ASH has commissioned a series of surveys on electronic cigarette use starting in 2010.<sup>1</sup> Questions about electronic cigarettes were extended to include all adults in surveys conducted in February 2012,<sup>2</sup> 2013,<sup>3</sup> March 2014<sup>4</sup> and 2015.<sup>5</sup>

In March 2013<sup>6</sup> an additional survey of children aged 11 to 18 was conducted. This was repeated in March 2014 and 2015.<sup>7</sup> Using the findings of the YouGov surveys and applying these to the most recent population data ASH has estimated the prevalence of electronic cigarette usage in Great Britain.

For use among children please see the [ASH factsheet on the subject](#). In summary the ASH Smokefree Youth Survey shows that regular use of electronic cigarettes amongst children and young people is rare and is confined almost entirely to those who currently or have previously smoked.

## Electronic cigarette use

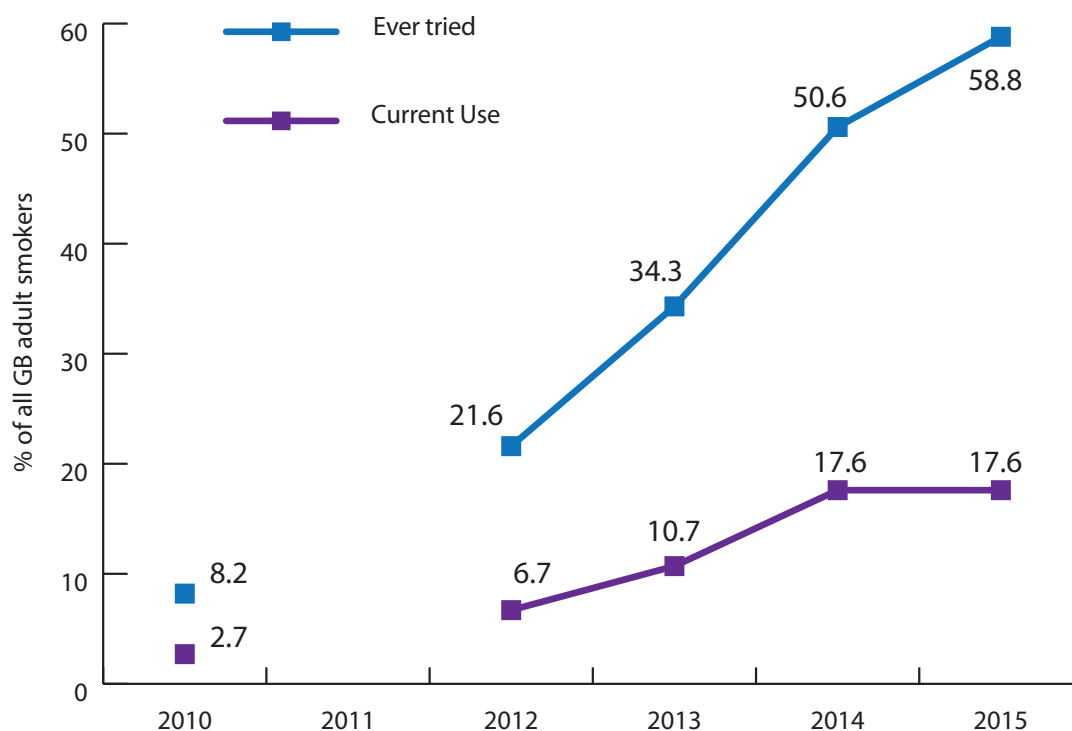
ASH estimates<sup>8</sup> that there are currently 2.6 million adults in Great Britain using electronic cigarettes. Of these, approximately 1.1 million are ex-smokers while 1.4 million continue to use tobacco alongside their electronic cigarette use. Regular use of the devices is confined to current and ex-smokers and use amongst never smokers remains negligible.<sup>9</sup>

Awareness of electronic cigarettes is widespread among adults. The 2015 survey found that 95% of smokers and 93% of non-smokers had heard of electronic cigarettes.

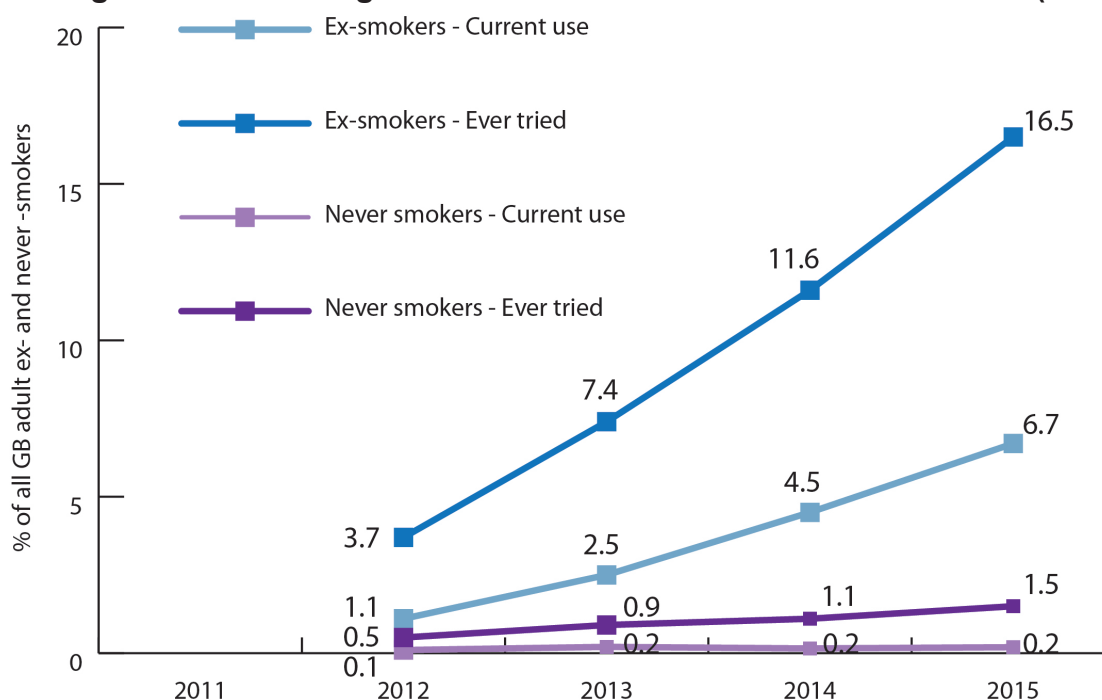
Between 2010 and 2014 there was a rise in the number of current smokers who also use electronic cigarettes, from 2.7% in 2010 to 17.6% in 2014. However, between 2014 and 2015 the proportion did not rise and remained at 17.6%.

## Electronic cigarette use among current adult cigarette smokers in Great Britain (2010-2015)

Unweighted base: GB adult smokers (2010, n=2297; 2012, n=2093; 2013, n=1895; 2014, n=1710; 2015 n=2037)



## Electronic cigarette use among former and never smokers in Great Britain (2012-2015)



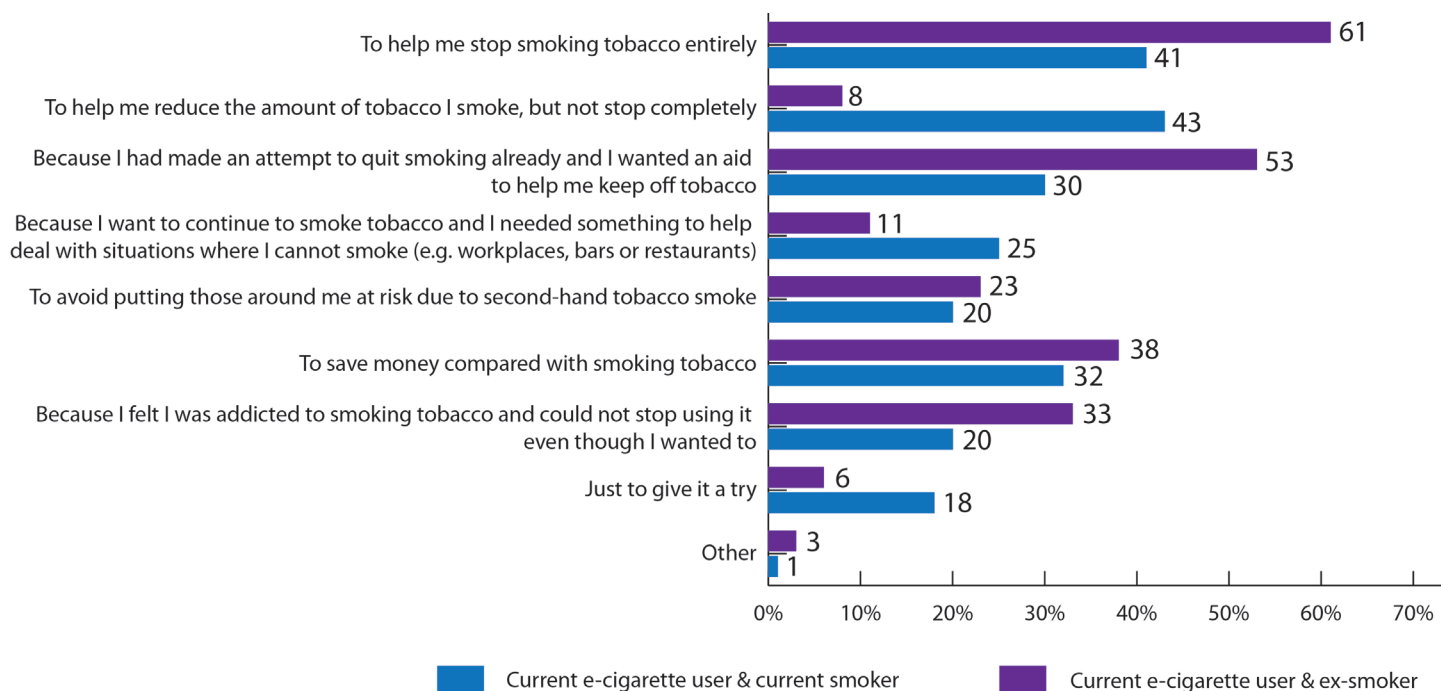
Unweighted base: GB adult ex-smokers (2012 n=4473; 2013 n=4304; 2014 n=4498; 2015 n=3889) GB adult never smokers (2012 n=5886; 2013 n=5973; 2014 n=5995, 2015 n=6129)

The increase in the numbers of people using electronic cigarettes between 2014 and 2015 came almost entirely from ex-smokers. The proportion of ex-smokers using electronic cigarettes rose from 4.5% in 2014 to 6.7% in 2015.

Smokers and ex-smokers give a number of reasons for using, or having tried electronic cigarettes. Among those who no longer use electronic cigarettes nearly half (45%) say they used them 'just to give it a try'.

Among current vapers, the principal reasons given by ex-smokers are “to help me stop smoking entirely” (61%) and “to help me keep off tobacco” (53%). The principal reasons given by current vapers who still smoking are to “to help me reduce the amount of tobacco I smoke, but not stop completely” (43%) and “help me stop smoking entirely” (41%).

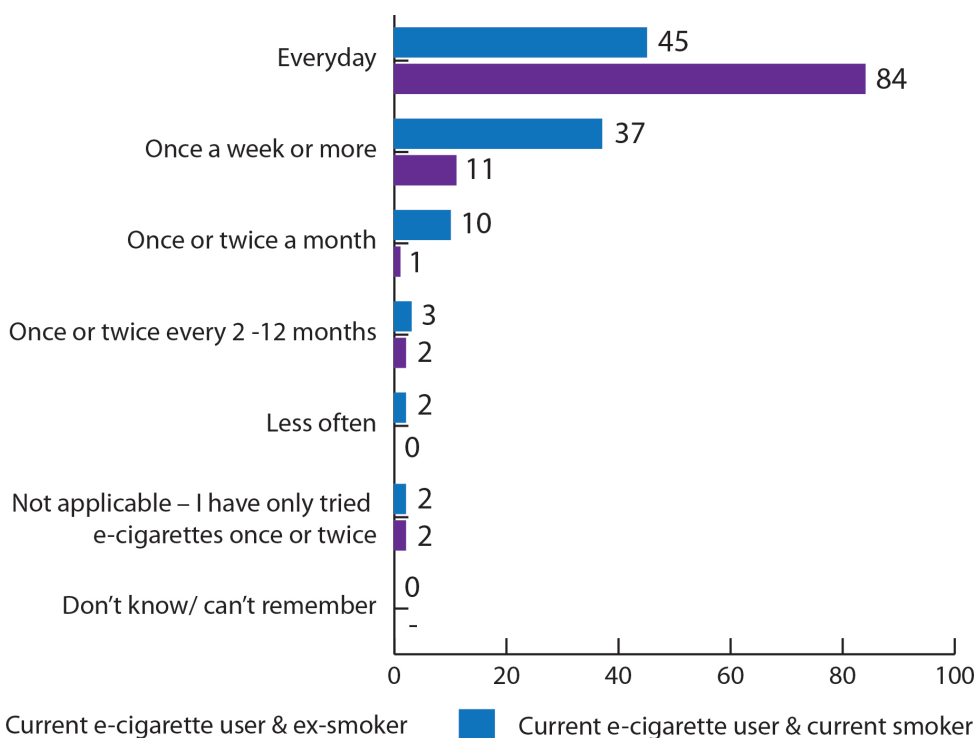
### Reasons for using an electronic cigarette among current vapers (2015)



Unweighted base: GB adult current e-cig user and current smoker (n=366), GB adult current ecig user and ex-smoker (n=239)

In 2015 we asked for the first time how often people vaped. Ex-smokers are much more likely to be using products everyday compared to smokers (84% compared to 45%).

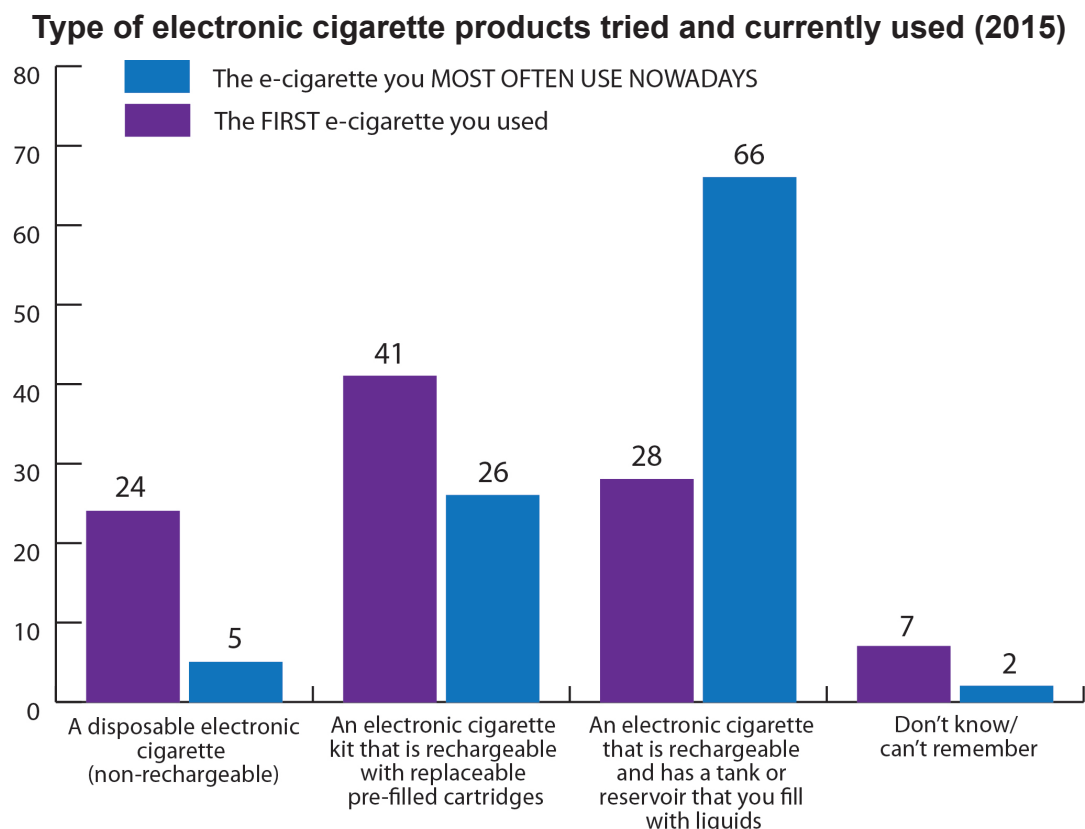
### Frequency of use among current smokers



Unweighted base: GB adult current e-cig user and current smoker (n=366), GB adult current ecig user and ex-smoker (n=239)

## Types of products people are using

Most electronic cigarette users (or “vapers”) use a rechargeable product with either replaceable, pre-filled cartridges or a reservoir/tank. Only 5 per cent of electronic cigarette users use disposable products although nearly a quarter (24 per cent) report that the first electronic cigarette they tried was a disposable brand. The most popular products that people are currently using are refillable devices with two thirds (66 per cent) of current users choosing this type of product.



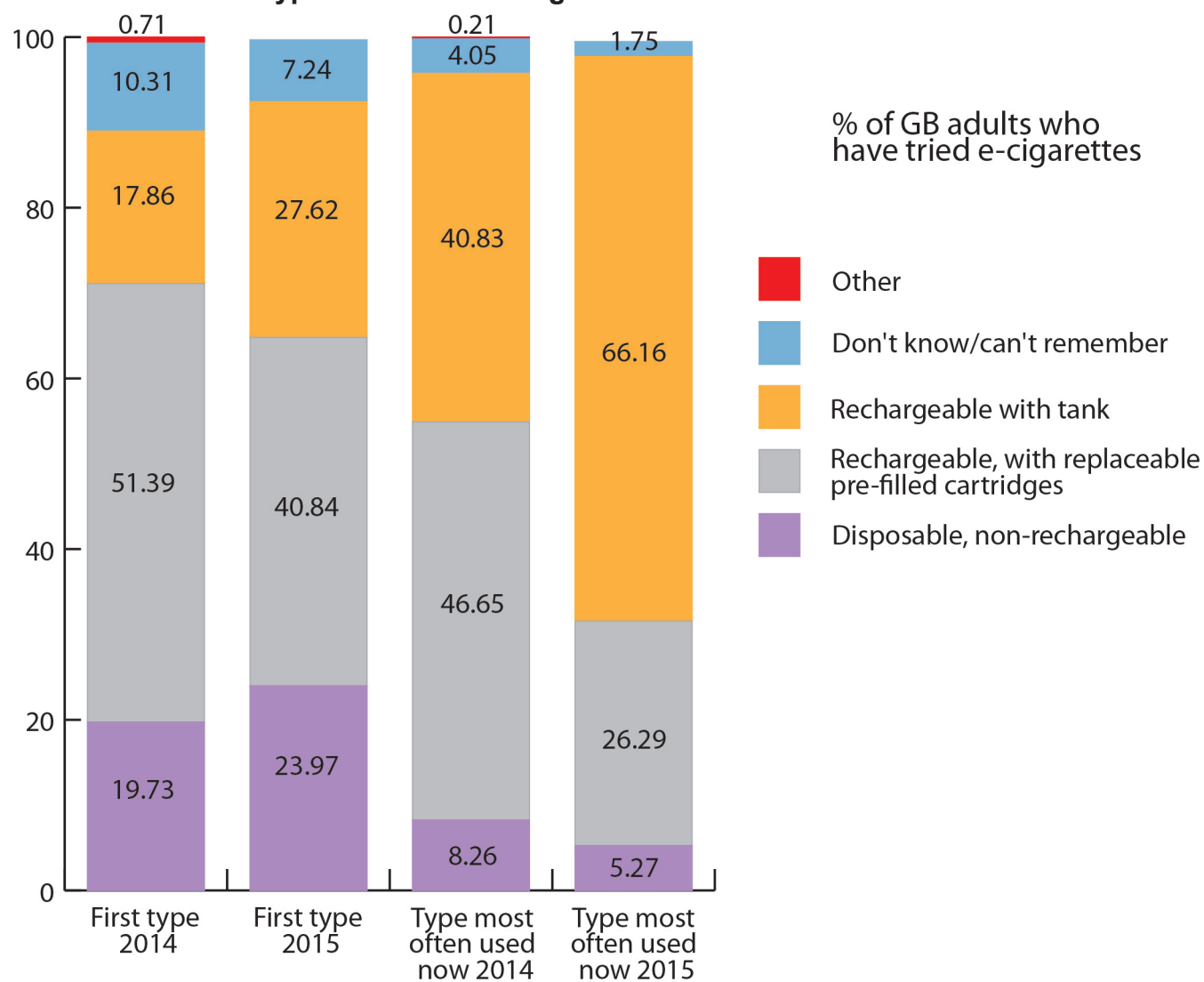
Unweighted base: GB adults who reported having tried e-cigarettes (n=1855) and still use them (n=614)

There is some variation in type of product used between current and ex-smokers who vape.

- More current smokers use a rechargeable kit with replaceable pre-filled cartridges than ex-smokers (31% compared to 20%).
- Current smokers are also more likely to use a disposable brand than ex-smokers (7% compared to only 2%).
- Ex-smokers favour a rechargeable product with a reservoir or tank (76% compared to 61% of current smokers).

Over the last year there has been a shift in the types of products which people are using. In 2014 rechargeable and disposable products that had a replaceable pre-filled cartridge were more popular but in 2015 refillable tank devices are being much more widely used.

**Types of electronic cigarettes used in 2014 and 2015**

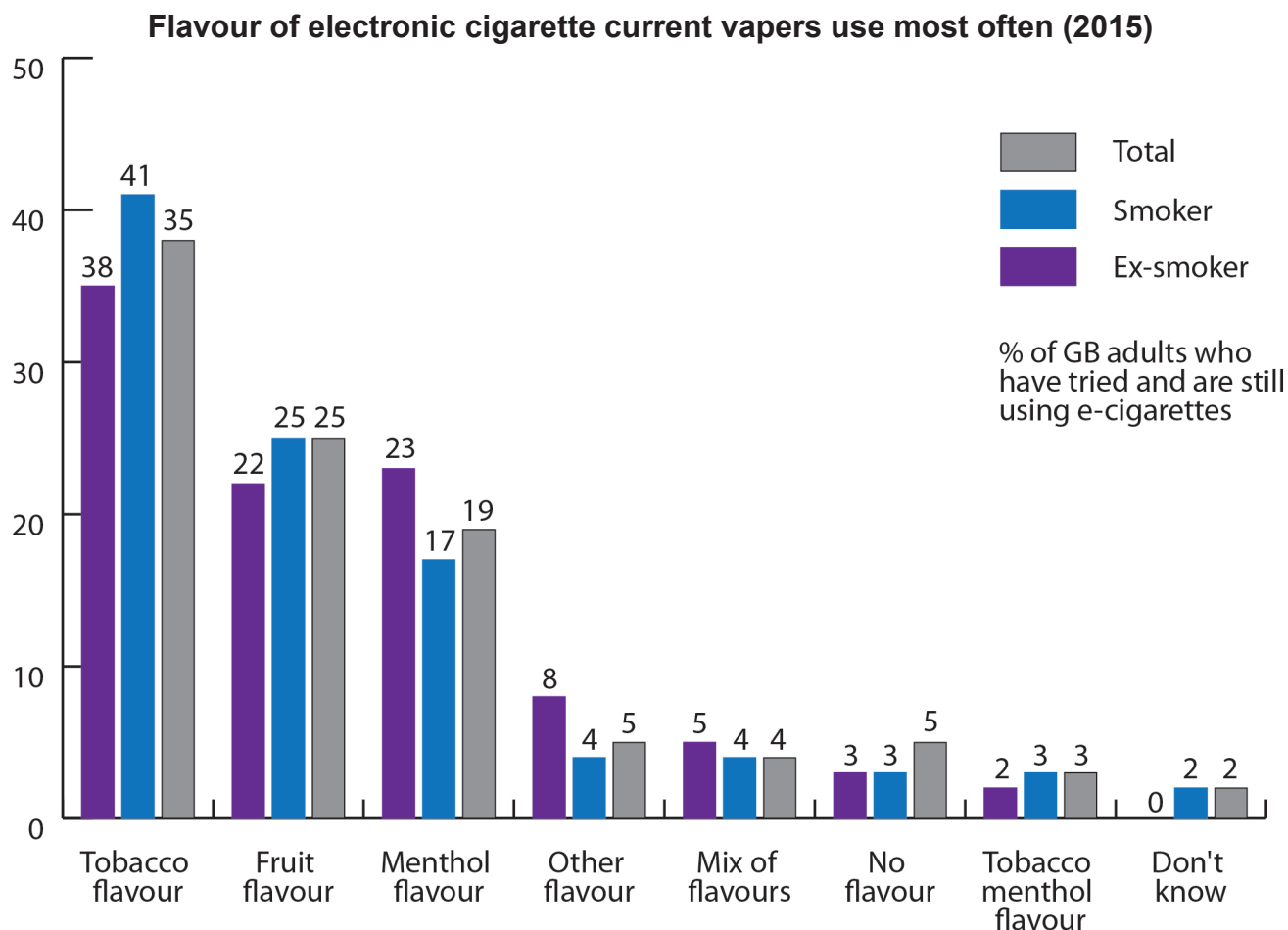


Unweighted base: First type: % of GB adults who have tried e-cigarettes 2014 n=1337, 2015 n=1855. Most used now: % of GB adults who have tried e-cigarettes and are still using them 2014 n=498, 2015 n=614

## The flavours people are using

In 2015 we asked users for the first time whether the product they were using contained nicotine. The vast majority of current electronic cigarette users say their products contain nicotine (88%).

In 2015 we asked for the first time users about the types of flavours they use in their electronic cigarettes. There were differences in the types of flavour used between smokers and ex-smokers. Current smokers were more likely to be using tobacco flavours than ex-smokers (41% compared to 35%). Very few people were using products with no flavours (5% of both ex and current smokers).

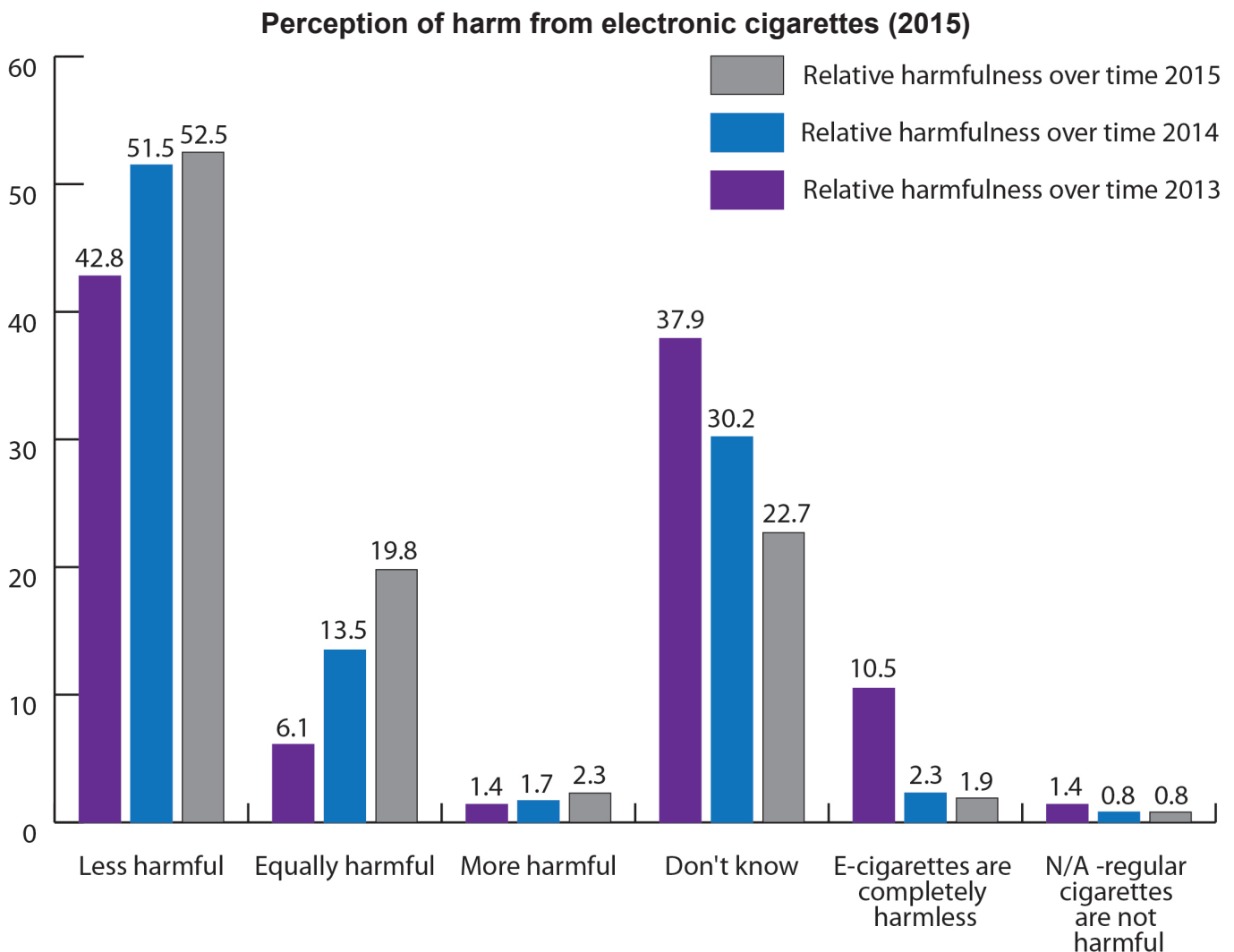


Unweighted base: GB adult current e-cig users and smokers (n=366) GB adult current e-cig users and ex-smokers (n=239)

## Perceptions of harm

Between 2013 and 2015 there has been a change in the perception of harm from electronic cigarettes:

- A decrease in the number of people who don't know whether an electronic cigarette is more or less harmful than a regular cigarette (from 38% in 2013 to 23% in 2015)
- An increase in the number of people who accurately think electronic cigarettes are less harmful (from 43% in 2013 to 52% in 2015)
- A decline among those who think they are completely harmless (from 10% in 2013 to 2% in 2015).
- However, at the same time the number of people who wrongly think they are as harmful has increased (from 6% to 20%).



Unweighted base: GB adults who have heard of electronic cigarettes (2013 n=8936; 2014 n=11307; 2015 n=11340)

For further information about electronic cigarettes, please see the [Regulating nicotine products page](#) on the ASH Website.

## References

- 1 Total sample size was 12,597 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17th and 22nd March 2010. All surveys were carried out online. All figures have been weighted and are representative of GB adults (aged 18+) or children (11 to 18) as appropriate.
- 2 Total sample size was 12,436 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 27th February and 16th March 2012. All figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).
- 3 Total sample size was 12,171 GB adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st and 19th February 2013. All surveys were carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB Adults (aged 18+)
- 4 Total sample size was 12,269. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th and 14th March 2014. All surveys were carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB Adults (aged 18+).
- 5 Total sample size was 12,055. Fieldwork was undertaken between 26th February and 12th March 2015. All surveys were carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB Adults (aged 18+).
- 6 Total sample size was 2,178 children aged 11 to 18. Fieldwork was undertaken 21st - 28th March 2013.
- 7 Total sample size was 2,068 children aged 11 to 18. Fieldwork was undertaken 21st March – 1st April 2014.
- 8 Methodology: Calculations are by ASH and King's College London. We applied the proportions of e-cigarette use by smoking status in the 2015 YouGov survey to the most recent available ONS mid-year GB population estimates (2012).
- 9 Methodology: Calculations are by ASH. This was done by applying the proportions of e-cigarette use by smoking status in the 2014 YouGov survey to the most recent available ONS mid-year GB population estimates (2012)