

Majority of European Vapers Are Former Smokers: E-Cigarettes Offer Significant Harm Reduction Potential

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Brussels, 28 May 2025 — In the lead-up to World No Tobacco Day 2025 on 31 May, the *Independent European Vape Alliance* (IEVA) highlights compelling evidence that the majority of e-cigarette users in Europe are former smokers. This underscores the important role that vaping can play in tobacco harm reduction and as a tool to support smoking cessation.

According to the *Special Eurobarometer survey*, only 3% of current e-cigarette users in the EU are individuals who have never smoked. [1] A separate study published in the *Journal of Epidemiology* (2023) further confirms this: among over 12,000 participants across 12 EU countries, only 0.4% of never smokers reported ever trying an e-cigarette. [2] This confirms that vaping is not attracting non-smokers at a meaningful level, but rather serving as a tool for adult smokers seeking alternatives.

The health benefits of switching from combustible cigarettes to e-cigarettes are significant. According to a recent *Cochrane review*, nicotine-containing e-cigarettes are more effective than traditional nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) in helping individuals quit smoking. The review found that for every 100 people using nicotine e-cigarettes to stop smoking, 8 to 10 might successfully quit, compared to only 6 of 100 using NRTs. [3]

Dr. Nicola Lindson, University Research Lecturer at the *University of Oxford* and Managing Editor of the *Cochrane Tobacco Addiction Group*, stated: “E-cigarettes do not burn tobacco; and as such they do not expose users to the same complex mix of chemicals that cause diseases in people smoking conventional cigarettes. E-cigarettes are not risk-free, and shouldn’t be used by people who don’t smoke or aren’t at risk of smoking. However, evidence shows that nicotine e-cigarettes carry only a small fraction of the risk of smoking.” [4]

Despite this, public perception often misrepresents the relative risks of vaping. A study conducted in six European countries, involving individuals who had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and smoked at least monthly, found that 62% perceived e-cigarettes as equally or more harmful than cigarettes, while only 28% perceived them as less harmful. [5]

This widespread misperception persists despite the scientific consensus that vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking. In fact, Public Health England has concluded that e-cigarettes are at least 95% less harmful than combustible tobacco products — a finding supported by multiple independent reviews conducted since 2015. [6]

IEVA urges policymakers to recognize the potential of e-cigarettes in reducing smoking rates across Europe. By providing accurate information and integrating vaping into public health strategies, governments can empower smokers to make informed choices that could lead to significant health improvements.

“Millions of smokers in Europe deserve to know that switching to vaping can significantly reduce their health risks,” said Dustin Dahlmann, President of IEVA. “Policymakers have a responsibility to communicate this harm reduction potential clearly and objectively.”

Sources:

[1] “Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes”, Eurobarometer 2017 [Link](#)

[2] “Electronic Cigarette Use in 12 European Countries: Results From the TackSHS Survey” *Journal of Epidemiology* 2023 [Link](#)

[3] “Can electronic cigarettes help people stop smoking, and do they have any unwanted effects when used for this purpose?” *Cochrane Review* 2025 [Link](#)

[4] “Latest Cochrane Review finds high certainty evidence that nicotine e-cigarettes are more effective than traditional nicotine-replacement therapy (NRT) in helping people quit smoking” *Cochrane Review* 2022 [Link](#)

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[5] "European adult smokers' perceptions of the harmfulness of e-cigarettes relative to combustible cigarettes" European Journal of Public Health 2020 [Link](#)

[6] "PHE publishes independent expert e-cigarettes evidence review" Press release 2018 [Link](#)

About IEVA

The Independent European Vape Alliance (IEVA) is the only pan-European association aimed at uniting national associations, companies, manufacturers and wholesalers in the vaping industry and providing them with responsible representation at the European level. IEVA's founding principle is to contribute to harm reduction and public health. E-cigarettes have a significant positive impact and should be recognized as a harm reduction tool because vaping is not smoking.

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