

Results of the ETINCEL - OFDT electronic cigarette survey

Prevalence, purchase and use behaviours, reasons for using electronic cigarettes

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This document reiterates the key points of memorandum 2014-01 on the results of the ETINCEL-OFDT survey published in February 2014.



PRESENTATION OF THE SURVEY

While electronic cigarette use seems to be rising sharply in France since 2012, data on the prevalence and modalities of electronic cigarette use are still fragmented. Heavily involved in observing tobacco-related issues, the OFDT wanted to rapidly provide the public authorities and interested professionals with a reliable, initial estimate on the extent of the phenomenon. A survey on electronic cigarettes was conducted in late 2013, a period during which sales of tobacco by the French tobacconist's network and sales of treatments to help quit tobacco use were dropping.

This survey, called ETINCEL-OFDT (telephone survey for information about electronic cigarette) was conducted from 12 to 18 November 2013 among a sample of 2,052 individuals aged 15 to 75 years living in Metropolitan France (excluding Corsica). The survey was conducted using a database of randomised land lines stratified by region and community category. The sample selected from this database was created using the quota sampling method (gender, age category and SPC) and was called and interviewed over a one-week period. The results were weighted with the latest INSEE data.

ONE IN FIVE FRENCH PEOPLE HAVE TRIED AN ELECTRONIC CIGARETTE

In late 2013, 18% of the people surveyed, or 8 to 9 million individuals, stated having used an electronic cigarette at least once. This is 2.5 times the number seen in March 2012 (7%)¹. More men (22% vs. 15% of women) and young people (31% of people aged 15-24 vs. 20% of 35-44 years old and 9% of 55-64 years old) stated this lifetime electronic cigarette use. Nearly all of these lifetime users were (tobacco) smokers (75%) or former (tobacco) smokers (16%)².

1. Cf. TNS Opinion & Social, Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco, Special Eurobarometer 385, Brussels, European Commission, 2012, 167 p.

2. 9% of lifetime users had never smoked tobacco, or only once or twice to try it.

ONE IN 15 INDIVIDUALS STATED LAST MONTH USE

Six percent (6%) of French people, or one third of the 18% lifetime users, had engaged in last month use (recent use) of an electronic cigarette. Although certain lifetime users stated having never or almost never smoked tobacco, all recent vapers are or were smokers. They use the electronic cigarette mainly to try quitting (51%) or reducing their tobacco use (11.5%)³. In contrast with lifetime use, which is seen more frequently in men, recent (and daily) electronic cigarette use does not differ with gender.

Three-quarters (76%) of last month vapers began using an electronic cigarette less than six months prior to the survey, i.e. starting in April or May 2013. Only 13% had begun their use over a year ago.

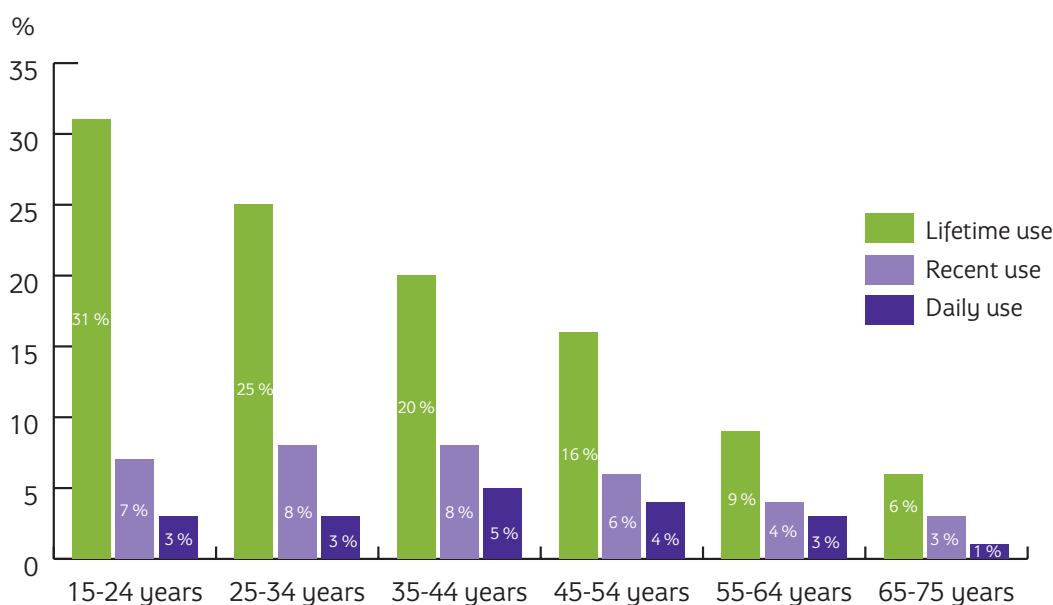
Over 90% of recent vapers used a nicotine-containing liquid or refill. Four in ten vapers chose a dose of 7 to 12 mg/ml, while three in ten used a lower dose (1 to 6 mg/ml) and the same number chose a higher dose (12 to 20 mg/ml). Over half of vapers bought their electronic cigarette and refills in a speciality store, while nearly 25% bought it from a tobacconist's and 9% on the Internet.

OVER 3% OF FRENCH PEOPLE VAPE DAILY

More than half (54%) of recent electronic cigarette users, or 3.3% of all French people (1.1 to 1.9 million people), used their electronic cigarette daily: 67% were smokers and 33% were former smokers.

Although a relatively high number of young people aged 15 to 34 had tried an electronic cigarette, they rarely seem to become regular users: only 10% of lifetime users in this age group used daily (see Figure 1). However, older French people were less frequently lifetime users but more often became daily users once they had tried it (26% of people aged 50 to 75 years stating that they had tried an electronic cigarette vaped every day). Lifetime use by older French people is undoubtedly less related to curiosity than to their smoking history and their need to find a solution to their addiction.

Figure 1: Proportion of lifetime users, recent users and daily users of electronic cigarettes by age group



Source: ETINCEL-OFDT survey (November 2013)

3. Other users explained that they wished to replace tobacco use with electronic cigarette use, reduce health risks, limit the unpleasantness related to tobacco use, reduce their expenditures and be able to vape everywhere.

People who use only an electronic cigarette represented 1.3% of people surveyed and one third of daily users. A large majority of the latter alternate between vaping and smoking but, nevertheless, 62% of them "mostly vape and sometimes smoke tobacco".

Of the low proportion of people surveyed who were former smokers and recent electronic cigarette users (1.2%), 84% believed that they managed to completely stop smoking tobacco by vaping an electronic cigarette.

CONCLUSION

In late 2013, the large majority of French people (88%) were familiar with electronic cigarettes. Of these people, 8 to 9 million were lifetime electronic cigarette users who were more frequently young and tobacco smokers. Over 3% of the French population use an electronic cigarette on a daily basis. They tend to be over the age of 35 and wish to reduce their tobacco use or stop smoking.

Although 9% of lifetime electronic cigarette users stated that they had never or almost never smoked tobacco, all regular vapers are or were smokers; subsequently, electronic cigarettes seem to represent, at least for now, a solution for quitting tobacco use rather than a "starting point" for smoking.

The phenomenon is spreading rapidly. Other surveys should be conducted to support these results and follow trends in use in the future.