**E-cigarettes, a 'roadblock' to youth smoking**

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Is it a good idea to get in on the vaping trend? According to a new study, e-cigarettes are playing an important role in reducing the likelihood of young people smoking, in many cases acting as a "roadblock" to combustible tobacco.   
  
In detailed qualitative interviews with young people aged 16 to 25 across Scotland and England, the majority of participants viewed e-cigarettes as having reduced - not increased - the possibility of both themselves and other people smoking.   
  
"There was very little indication amongst the young people interviewed that e-cigarettes were resulting in an increased likelihood of young people smoking," said lead author Dr Neil McKeganey. "In fact the majority we interviewed, including those who were vaping, perceived smoking in very negative terms and saw vaping as being entirely different to smoking."   
  
During one interview, an eighteen year-old commented: "I think vaping is having an effect on smoking cigarettes in that it's taking away from it. People are moving off cigarettes and moving onto vaping." Another said: "I think if vaping becomes more common, then smoking is going to become more uncommon because it's the aspect of quitting. I think vaping will replace smoking".   
  
Importantly, the overwhelming majority of participants - who collectively represented current and former smokers, non-smokers, and e-cigarette users - viewed tobacco as 'extremely harmful' and believed e-cigarettes offered smokers an alternative.   
  
Many also said that they thought "vaping will make smoking decline."   
  
Asked whether the opposite might happen; that e-cigarettes might actually lead to smoking, one nineteen year-old said: "I think it's usually people who are trying to stop smoking who vape. I mean there is the odd person who does it because it's cool and that might influence them to want to try smoking, but I think on the whole it's the other way round. It's people vaping who have given up smoking."   
  
Despite the acute awareness of the harms of tobacco however, it was evident that some young people remain confused about e-cigarettes and whether or not they are similarly harmful. Some mentioned they had seen media coverage reporting that e-cigarettes "are just as bad" as smoking and, as a result, they were uncertain and reluctant about using the devices.   
  
"While it is encouraging to see that young people appear to be quite clear about the role of e-cigarettes in society (devices used by smokers who are trying to - or already have - quit tobacco)," said McKeganey "It's more concerning, particularly for the young people who currently smoke, that inaccurate perceptions of e-cigarettes could result in the persistent use of combustible tobacco irrespective of the fact that Public Health England has concluded vaping is 95 percent less harmful than conventional cigarettes."   
  
The study has been presented at the Global Forum on Nicotine.