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Vaping in Ontario: Preliminary Findings from RECIG-WP

Background

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) is conducting research on electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and waterpipe (RECIG-WP) to advance knowledge and understanding of product availability and marketing, trends in product use and co-use. In this newsletter, we highlight four current research initiatives.

E-Cigarette Point-of-Sale Study

The current availability and marketing of electronic cigarettes and related products needs to be understood in advance of potential legislation. [Bill S-5, an Act to amend the Tobacco Act and Non-smokers' Health Act](#), is under review and proposes to regulate the sale and supply of vaping products in Canada.

From August to October 2017, 50 retail observations of e-cigarette and waterpipe product availability and marketing were conducted across five different cities in Ontario: Toronto, Sudbury, Ottawa, Hamilton and London. We collected 10 observations in each of these cities including:

- 5 vape shops
- 3 convenience stores
- 1 tobacconist
- 1 head shop

We also conducted semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of sales representatives in the four store types in each city.

Key Findings

- E-cigarettes are widely available in Ontario, with product variation by store type
- IQOS is a heat-not-burn product introduced in Ontario in April 2017 – 10% of recent smokers were aware of this product
- Top searches for e-cigarettes are for purchase intentions and how-to information



Key Findings:

- 87% of convenience stores were selling e-cigarette products– predominantly disposable or rechargeable devices
- Head shops carried a range of devices; however, more than 2 in 3 shops did not carry any e-liquids
- Tobacconists had a wide range of products for sale including tobacco, e-cigarettes and e-liquid, and waterpipe. All tobacconists sold e-liquids, including nicotine-containing products
- All vape shops sold refillable devices and a wide selection of e-liquid; almost 2 in 3 also had rechargeable devices whereas less than one quarter sold disposable products. Vape stores catered both to customers looking to quit smoking cigarettes and those who vape for fun (i.e., vaping hobbyists)

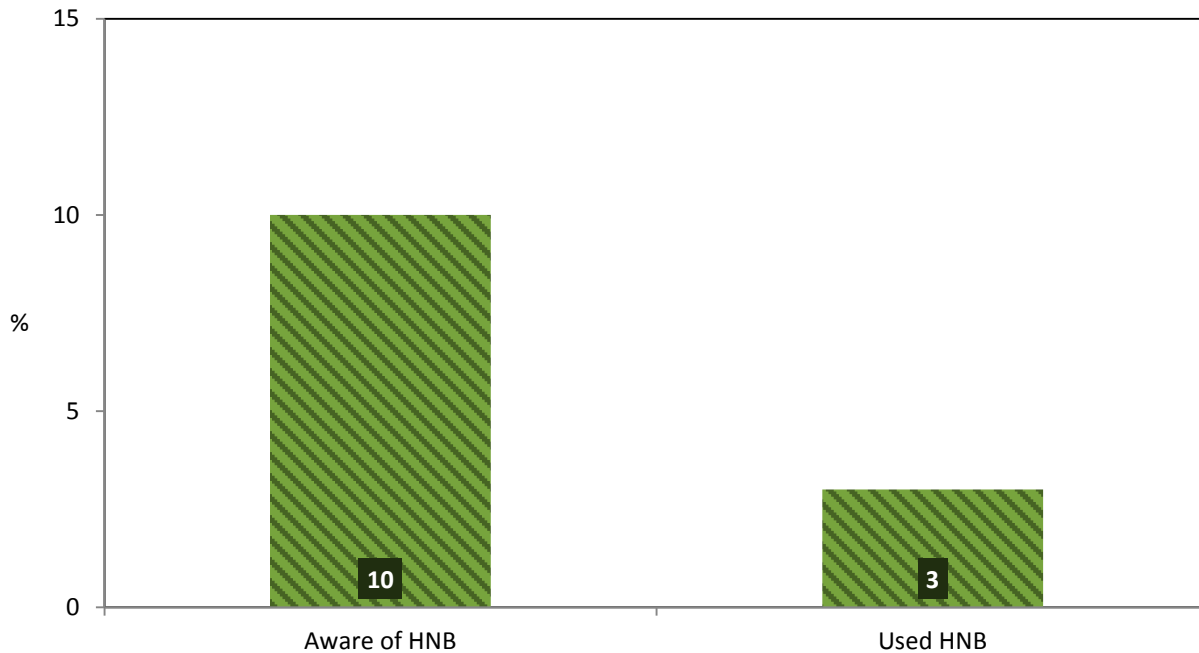


Awareness and Use of Heat-not-Burn Products

Heat-not-burn (HNB) products heat tobacco cigarettes to a lower temperature than regular cigarettes to produce a nicotine vapour. These products are marketed by the tobacco industry as reduced-risk products and were introduced in Ontario in April 2017 as IQOS by Phillip Morris International. With a need to understand awareness, use and perceptions of these products, we conducted a cross-sectional survey of recent smokers from an ongoing panel of Ontario smokers (n=727). We found that 10% of respondents were aware of HNB products, and 3% have ever used them (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Awareness and Use of Heat-not-Burn Products among Recent Smokers in Ontario



Full data table for this graph provided in Table 1 at the end of this document.

Media Analysis

OTRU is conducting an analysis of e-cigarette-related Google searches (e.g., e-cigarette, vaping, etc.), classifying the top 1000 search results into topic areas. Subsequent work will plot these key topic area searches over time. A preliminary assessment of the top 1000 searches indicates the following categories are the most prominent:

- Purchase intent (e.g., retailers, e-juice flavours)
- How-to information (e.g., how to vape, blow rings)
- Vaping cannabis
- Health-related searches about vaping



Youth and Young Adult Panel Study

OTRU has designed a Youth and Young Adult study to assess knowledge and experiences with vaping over time. Participants will be recruited from multiple sources including social media—Google, Facebook and Reddit—and participants from the Leave the Pack Behind initiative. Participants will be followed up approximately every 6 months over an 18-month period. Recruitment will begin in February 2018.

These current initiatives, along with future initiatives for RECIG-WP, will provide research and evidence for effective policies and programs that protect and promote the health of Ontarians.

Authors: Lori Diemert, Robert Schwartz, and Shawn O'Connor

Table 1: Awareness and Use of Heat-not-Burn Products among Recent Smokers in Ontario

	Percent
Aware of HNB	10
Used HNB	3

Note: Data table is for Figure 1.