

Reasons for e-cigarette use and perceptions of harm in Brazil: Findings from the ITC Brazil Wave 2 (2012-13) and 3 (2016-17) Surveys

Cristina Perez¹, Tania Cavalcante^{3,4}, Felipe Mendes^{3,4}, Andre Szklo⁴, Geoffrey T. Fong^{2,5}, Lorraine Craig²,Mi Yan², Grace Li²

International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project

Control ¹Formerly at Fundacão do Câncer, ²University of Waterloo, ³Executive Secretariat of National Commission for Implementing oject WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, ⁴Brazilian National Cancer Institute, ⁵Ontario Institute for Cancer Research

BACKGROUND

- In Brazil, the sale, import, and advertising of e-cigarettes (ECs) has been banned since August 2009.
- Although the prevalence of ever use of ECs among Brazilian smokers is low (20% of smokers in 2016-17), the 5th lowest of 21 ITC countries, ITC data shows an upward trend in ever use between 2012 and 2017.
- Little is known about the reasons why Brazilian smokers try or use e-cigarettes (ECs) and how they perceive the harmfulness of these products compared to regular

OBJECTIVES

- To identify reasons for using ECs among smokers who reported ever using ECs in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Porto Alegre in 2016-17.
- To measure changes in Brazilian smokers' perceptions of harms of ECs compared to harms of smoking regular cigarettes between 2012-13 and 2016-17.

METHODS AND MEASURES

DESIGN: Data were analyzed from Waves 2 (2012-13) and 3 (2016-17) of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Brazil Survey, a longitudinal cohort survey of representative samples of approximately 1200 adult smokers and 600 non-smokers (N=1826) in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Porto Alegre.

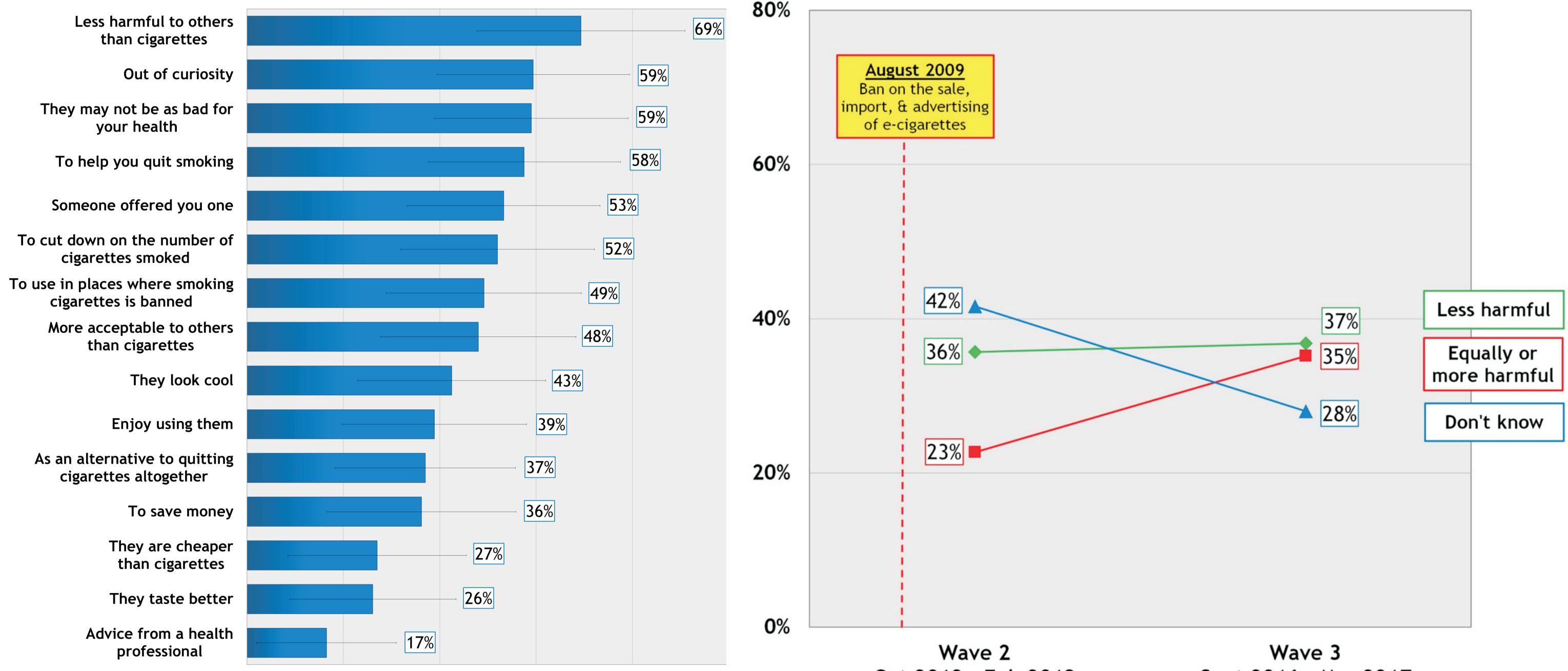
MEASURES: Reasons for EC use was measured at Wave 3 among smokers who reported currently using EC daily, weekly, monthly, and less than monthly (n=48). Users were asked *"Which of the following are reasons for your use of ECs or vaping devices"*. A list 15 possible reasons were provided (see Figure 1). Response options were *"Yes", "No", "Refused", "Don't know*".

Perception of the harm of ECs compared to regular cigarettes was measured at Waves 2 and 3 by asking smokers who had ever heard of ECs (n=392 at Wave 2; N=859 at Wave 3) "Do you think electronic cigarettes are more harmful than regular cigarettes, less harmful, or are they equally harmful to health?"

ANALYSES: Multivariable logistic regression analyses (GEE) adjusted for sex, age, smoking status, and time-in-sample were conducted to test for differences in beliefs about the harmfulness of ECs at Waves 2 and 3.

Figure 1. Percentage of smokers who reported various reasons for using ecigarettes at Wave 3

Figure 2. Percentage of smokers who believe that e-cigarettes are less harmful or equally/more harmful than regular cigarettes, by wave



RESULTS

 0%
 20%
 40%
 60%
 80%
 10

Oct 2012 - Feb 2013

Sept 2016 - Mar 2017

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Smokers who currently use ECs most commonly use them to reduce harm to others (69%), to reduce harm to their own health (59%), and to help them to quit smoking (58%) (see Figure 1).
- More smokers now have an opinion about the relative harmfulness of ECs. Between 2012-13 and 2016-17, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of smokers who "don't know" about the relative harmfulness of ECs (42% to 28%; p<.001). A greater percentage of smokers now incorrectly believe that ECs are equally or more harmful than cigarettes (23% to 35%; p<.001) (see Figure 2).
- Evidence to date demonstrates that ECs are less harmful than cigarettes, but there is ongoing debate about whether ECs can play a role in harm reduction and what kind of regulatory measures are most beneficial.





All authors declare no conflict of interests

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