

Office of the Advocate for
Children and Young People

acyp.

“Vaping can affect your whole life, not just your lungs”:

**Young people’s perspectives
on vaping in 2023**



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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and cultures. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

We would also like to acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the NSW community.

We also acknowledge the young people who participated in the development of this report for sharing their experiences. ACYP extends its gratitude and thanks to those young people.

If you or someone you know requires support, there is always hope and there is always help available. For support, contact Lifeline on **13 11 14** (at any time, 24/7) or visit lifeline.org.au and Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800** (at any time, 24/7).

For more information about quitting smoking cigarettes, go to Quitline: <https://www.icanquit.com.au/> or call **13 78 48**, or visit ReachOut: <https://au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-quit-smoking>. If you would like more information about e-cigarettes, go to Do you know what you're vaping? <https://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/prevention-and-screening/preventing-cancer/campaigns/vaping/do-you-know-what-you-re-vaping> or YourRoom: <https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/a-z-of-drugs/Pages/e-cigarettes.aspx>.

Key Findings and Recommendations

■ Key Findings

Perceptions of vaping

Young people who participated in consultations had diverse perceptions about vaping and vaping culture in schools.

- When asked what vaping was like at their school, the majority said vaping was common at their school, most popular with younger cohorts and started from year 7.
- Almost half of the young people ACYP consulted with had either tried vaping or were vaping¹.
- Acceptance of vaping as a habit was strongly influenced by their social circles and the social norms associated with their peer groups.
- The experience of vaping as both an individual and a social habit came out strongly.
- Despite the restrictions and laws on vapes, most young people know where to access vapes.
- Young people are willing to share vapes and will make a communal effort to hide or conceal locations of vapes.

Why young people choose to vape

Young people who participated in consultations identified the reasons why young people chose to vape was mainly associated with the social influence of a friend or peer.

- With vaping seen as a normalised behaviour in most schools, ACYP notes there was a common understanding that vaping could help a young person “fit in.”
- There was also a lack of understanding about the negative long-term health impacts and consequences of vaping. Some level of understanding of the health impacts was not a strong deterrent among vapers.
- The flavour, packaging and taste were seen as appealing to young people. Vaping was also seen as cost-effective.
- Young people shared the ability to relieve stress as a reason to vape and that some young people who tried it, then became addicted.
- Addiction was listed as the strongest deterrent they would use to convince a friend not to vape among vapers.

¹ACYP consulted with 116 young people who self-reported they either vaped or have tried a vape.

Why young people do not vape

Despite the potential health impacts not being a deterrent for some, young people who participated in consultations shared that this was the main reason young people provided about why young people would not vape.

- All focus groups mentioned the physical health impacts on the body including “black lung”, “cancer”, “breathing” issues. However, many young people were unable to articulate how and why vaping impacted them. Often, they would say there “isn’t enough research” or would refer to their knowledge of cigarettes when explaining the impacts of vapes.
- Prioritising opportunities to excel in sport was an important reason young people would choose not to vape.
- The fear of getting into trouble deterred some young people from vaping.
- Graphic imagery (i.e., vapes exploding in cars, graphic images) was mentioned to be a deterrent for some young people. Young people encouraged greater use of confronting images to discourage young people to vape.

Cessation supports

- Young people in consultations reported someone to talk to was the most important feature of supports to help a young person to quit vaping.
- Confidentiality and trust were key to this, as was any support being provided by a young person (under 35 years).
- After social supports, vapers were likely to suggest alternative activities (e.g., toys, hobbies) or substitutes (nicotine gum and spray) as most effective diversions from vaping. This was followed by greater regulation to ban or limit access to vapes.

- Some young people called for more education and awareness on the harms and addiction associated with vaping, most commonly non-vapers. While further education is likely an effective preventative measure for some, those who vape felt it was a minimum expectation but was not likely, in isolation, to change their behaviour.
- When testing their response to tools or services to support young people to stop vaping, the top three choices were in person support, app-based support and social media.
- Overall, vapers were slightly more likely to use an app.
- When asked, young people spoke passionately about how schools could respond to vaping, including that it starts with a conversation.

■ Regulatory context and ongoing work

Regulatory change

ACYP acknowledges the ongoing work of both the Commonwealth and State Governments to address vaping – particularly among young people – and notes there have been commitments at the Federal level that are still in the process of being implemented across states and territories².

This includes the recently concluded public consultation on the need for reforms to address potential limitations of the tobacco control framework and streamline existing regulation under the Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) Legislation 2023, as well as proposed regulations in relation to graphic health warnings and health promotion inserts that are scheduled for future consultation³.

ACYP also recognises the Federal Government's commitment to:

- Limit the use of appealing names that imply reduced harm and capture vapes in advertising restrictions⁴; and
- Implement new controls on e-cigarette importation, contents and packaging and commitment to work with States and Territories to address the black market for cigarettes³.

Public health messaging

There has also been significant investment in public health campaigns about vaping. ACYP acknowledges this is a priority for the State Government in NSW, with its continued investment in the *Do you know what you're vaping?* campaign and associated toolkit materials⁵, targeted to address vaping among young people.

ACYP also acknowledges the Federal Government's commitment in the 2023-2024 Budget to provide \$63.4 million over four years for national public health campaigns to prevent uptake and reduce smoking and vaping, including funding for a targeted youth campaign⁶. In addition, the National Tobacco Strategy 2023-2030 outlines actions related to public health campaigns and other communications mechanisms under Priority Area 2.

²The Hon. Mark Butler (2023) Media release 2 May 2023:

[*Taking action on smoking and vaping*](#)

³Australian Government Department of Health and

Aged Care (2023), [*Consultation Paper- Exposure Draft- Public Health \(Tobacco and Other Products\) Bill 2023 and Public Health \(Tobacco and Other Products\) Regulations 2023*](#)

⁴The Hon. Mark Butler (2023) Media release 13 September 2023:

[*New laws to fight tobacco and nicotine addiction*](#)

⁵NSW Health (2023) [*The facts about vaping*](#)

⁶Commonwealth of Australia (2023) [*Budget Paper No. 2: Budget Measures 2023-24*](#)

Vaping cessation supports

ACYP notes there has been a commitment from the Federal Government in the 2023-24 budget for funding towards Vaping Regulation Reform and Smoking Cessation Package, including \$29.5 million over 4 years to increase and enhance smoking and vaping cessation support⁵.

ACYP also notes the ongoing work of the Cancer Institute in managing the NSW Quitline and their collaboration with ACYP about understanding young people's preferences for support.

Promoting youth participation

ACYP has been collaborating with the NSW Ministry of Health and Cancer Institute to ensure young people's perspectives are at the centre of their ongoing work and acknowledges the investments they have made into research. In addition, the NSW Department of Education has sought the feedback of the NSW Youth Advisory Council as they developed classroom resources on vaping.

ACYP notes that concerns about confidentiality when accessing wellbeing support is a common theme across our consultations – particularly with school-based supports. In some cases, ACYP acknowledges this may be a degree of miscommunication between the practitioner and the young person about the limits of confidentiality. However, this indicates a need for greater clarity for young people to understand what aspects of their conversation will or will not be confidential.

ACYP also acknowledges the considerable time, resources and work that schools already dedicate to addressing vaping.

ACYP would be eager to participate in discussions about how high school students – particularly older students – might access support from school counsellors in line with their emerging capacity to consent in health contexts outside of a school environment.

Throughout the recommendations of this consultation report, ACYP has highlighted the need to co-design and evaluate resources and supports with young people and does so while acknowledging that existing public health campaigns have already been informed by research with young people.

ACYP's recommendation is that young people's voices drive the ongoing work to address vaping across NSW.

■ Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings of this consultation report, and ACYP notes that some align with ongoing work or commitments that have already been made by government, reinforcing the need for change. Further detail about this overlap can be found in the ‘Regulatory context and ongoing work’ section of this report.

	Recommendation	Responsibility
1.1	As proposed as new legislation at the time of drafting, the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care should expand existing legislation related to tobacco advertising, plain packaging and graphic health warnings to include e-cigarette products.	Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, working with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the NSW Ministry of Health.
1.2	The eSafety Commissioner should explore opportunities to prohibit advertising of e-cigarettes, if able to be classified as Class 2 material “inappropriate for children and young people under 18 years old” under the Online Safety Act 2021, on social media platforms.	The eSafety Commissioner.
1.3	Invest in NSW Health inspectors to continue existing enforcement work regarding the illegal sale of e-cigarettes in retail settings and online.	NSW Health Inspectors, in partnership with NSW Police, Australian Border Force.
1.4	Local councils should continue to invest in free and accessible recreation programs and spaces to provide young people with positive alternatives to engaging in vaping. This will also act as a diversion away from engaging in alcohol and other drugs, as well as promoting positive community engagement.	Local Councils across NSW.

Recommendations about messaging and public health campaigns

	Recommendation	Responsibility
2.1	Advertising campaigns should include a variety of different information points to remain fresh and equip young people with a deeper understanding of the health harms of vaping. ACYP welcomes the ongoing commitment to test advertising campaigns with young people.	NSW Ministry of Health, Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

Recommendations for those developing cessation supports for young people

	Recommendation	Responsibility
3.1	Supports for young people should be co-designed with, tested and evaluated by young people.	NSW Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Cancer Institute, Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.
3.2	Develop a suite of supports, rather than a single approach, to ensure more young people are able to find a support suitable for them.	NSW Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Cancer Institute, Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.
3.3	Develop an online tool and app with young people that provides factual information and provides supports for cessation.	NSW Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Cancer Institute, Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.
3.4	Teachers, school counsellors and student support officers should receive material and training about vaping and how to support and help students.	NSW Department of Education in collaboration with Ministry of Health and the Cancer Institute.
4.1	Universal provision of education about the specific health harms of vaping, should be co-designed with young people, and coupled with advice and referral to supports for both parents and young people.	NSW Department of Education, Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, Association of Independent Schools NSW and Catholic Schools NSW.
4.2	Department of Education, Australian Independent Schools NSW, and Catholic Schools NSW should not pursue the use of vape detectors as a method to reduce vaping in schools, given young people indicated they were not a useful approach to prevent young people from taking up vaping or to prevent them from vaping on school grounds.	NSW Department of Education, Association of Independent Schools NSW and Catholic Schools NSW.

■ What will ACYP commit to?

ACYP commits to:



5.1

Share the findings of this consultation with key stakeholders and discuss key recommendations with government agencies.



5.2

Provide opportunities for NSW Government agencies to engage with the NSW Youth Advisory Council around co-design of future vaping cessation tools, programs or information and awareness campaigns



5.3

Promote NSW Government sponsored media via relevant channels, provided they have been co-designed or informed by children and young people.



5.4

Where possible, support facilitation of communication between Ministry of Health and young people, such as in the event of forums related to young people's use of e-cigarettes or alcohol and other drugs.



5.5

Facilitate a conversation with NSW Department of Education and any other relevant bodies about how students can better understand consent and confidentiality arrangements when accessing school-based wellbeing support.

Introduction

Vaping use is on the rise, particularly for young people aged under 24 years⁷. Between 2016 – 2020, the proportion of 18–24-year-olds using e-cigarettes tripled to 27.2%⁸. The NSW Population Health Survey reported use of e-cigarettes was highest among persons aged 16–24 years, for both ever used (32.7%) and currently using (11.1%)⁹.

Despite the view commonly expressed to ACYP by young people that vapes are relatively harmless, the chemicals in vapes are often toxic, cancer-causing and unsafe for inhalation. Vapes contain the same harmful chemicals found in cleaning products, nail polish remover, weed killer and bug spray¹⁰.

As of October 2021, a prescription was required in order to purchase nicotine-containing vape products in Australia. Despite this, many over-the-counter nicotine-free products were found to contain nicotine when tested. They are being sold illegally and easily accessible online. Evidence finds nicotine in one vape can equal 50 cigarettes¹⁰.

Vapes are designed to appeal to young people through packaging and flavours. NSW Health notes that young people are a target demographic for tobacco companies looking for new customers, and that vapes are a newer method to get young people addicted to nicotine¹⁰. Viral online trends involving vapes have become increasingly popular and the rate of vaping amongst young people is steadily rising.

This is our opportunity to get it right. We cannot afford to play catch up with the evidence and risk another generation's health and future.



Change culture around vaping to stop people taking it up or to help quit.

Ban silly li'l vapes.



⁷ACYP notes a more accurate term for these devices is an 'e-cigarette'. ACYP has chosen to use the word 'vape' in conversations with young people and throughout this report as this is the term most young people use.

⁸Dawe, B., Howells, A., (2023) [Vaping and e-cigarette use on the rise among young people](#)

⁹Tobacco in Australia (2023) [Tobacco In Australia Ch 18: E-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine products. Prevalence of e-cigarette use](#)

¹⁰NSW Health (2022) [The facts about vaping – For young people](#)

■ Objectives

The primary purpose of ACYP's consultations was to understand:

- The reasons young people choose to vape or not to vape;
- What supports would help a young person if they were trying to stop vaping; and
- Young people's reactions to potential tools or services that would help them to stop vaping including: a website, app-based support, social media-based help page, digital peer support group, in-person peer support group or a telephone helpline.

To inform both discussions and analysis, ACYP sought to understand the perceptions young people have about vaping in their peer group, school and community. ACYP also sought to understand the reasons they think some young people would choose to vape and not vape.

This report includes comparisons between vapers and non-vapers. With vaping an alarmingly increasing trend among young people, it is important to capture what non-vapers think to ensure prevention strategies complement ongoing work to support vaping cessation.

During the course of consultations, the Federal Government announced a suite of changes to regulation, as well as funding for enforcement, education and support, to address vaping with a focus on young people². ACYP notes the implementation of those changes is ongoing and findings of this report indicate the need for that continued work.

¹NSW Parliamentary Committee for Children and Young People (2022) [2022 Review of the Children's Guardian and the Advocate for Children and Young People](#)

■ Background

In March 2022:

- The Ministry of Health (MoH) and Department of Education (DoE) launched the *Do You Know What You're Vaping?* Campaign, and
- The Advocate for Children and Young People, Ms Zoë Robinson, became a member of an inter-agency panel about vaping.

In the context of this campaign and work, the Advocate recommended the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) undertake consultations with young people about vaping. In October 2022, the Committee on Children and Young People, which oversees the work of ACYP, also recommended in its 2022 Review that ACYP should continue to consult on vaping and report back findings to the Committee as part of its next annual hearing¹¹.

Discussions with the NSW Ministry of Health (MoH), the Cancer Institute and the NSW Department of Education (DoE) identified an opportunity to understand more about what empowers young people to reject vaping, and what cessation tools and supports young people would find helpful and attractive.

ACYP acknowledges there are existing sources of research with young people in NSW on this topic, such as the GenVape study¹², work by academic institutions, and engagement conducted by Local Health Districts across NSW. ACYP welcomes the opportunity to complement and build on this work by reporting what young people have told us.

¹²Watts, C., Egger, S., Dessaix, A., Brooks, A., Jenkinson, E., Grogan, P., Freeman, B. (2022) [Vaping product access and use among 14–17-year-olds in New South Wales: a cross-sectional study](#)

■ Methodology

This report includes findings from a series of 25 focus groups facilitated by ACYP staff across nine schools between 15 May and 21 June 2023. Of the schools ACYP consulted in, four were in regional areas and five were in the Greater Sydney region. Six were government schools and three were non-government schools. ACYP consulted with 261 young people aged 13-18 years in face-to-face focus groups of between 4 – 15 young people.

During the focus groups, participants were also given individual booklets which included free text responses to questions about the best reason not to vape, supports and tools to stop vaping and advice for Government. Young people were also asked to rate five support tool options using a Likert scale from most likely to use to least likely before circling the best option in these booklets.

■ Recruitment


A key consideration of this consultation was the need to speak with a mix of young people with different levels of engagement in vaping behaviour. However, recruiting groups based on their vaping behaviour would have required young people to report whether they vaped prior to any rapport being built with ACYP staff. Additional barriers would include potentially disclosing their vaping behaviour to parents or other adults in their lives.

To address this, ACYP targeted mixed-ability PDHPE classroom groups of students in grades 9-10¹³. This ensured a roughly balanced mix of gender, cultural background, academic engagement and socio-economic background. Speaking with students in a PDHPE context at this grade level created a link between the content of the discussion and the content of lessons around vaping.

Young people engaged in group discussions and were provided with opportunities to give individual responses throughout to ensure all voices were captured. At the end of discussions, they were invited to provide further demographic information to capture the diversity of experiences represented.


Demographic details about the sample have been included below. ACYP notes this was not compulsory and that details are self-reported. Therefore, the summary below reflects the demographics of the 217 young people who completed the individual response booklets, of the 261 who participated. The remaining 44 young people did not fully complete this section.

Of the young people involved in this consultation who completed this section:

 **97** were female, **108** were male and **12** identified as transgender or another term.


40 spoke a language other than English at home.



 **28** identified as LGBTQIA+.

24 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



 **9** live with disability.

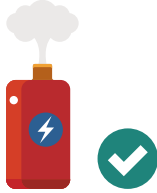
¹³In three high schools, students participated as part of their year 11 PDHPE class. In one of these high schools, year 12 students also participated.

In group discussions, young people did not need to disclose their personal vaping behaviour. In the anonymous, individual responses, young people were asked about their vaping behaviour, including whether they had tried to quit vaping.

Of the 217 young people who responded to this question:



120 reported that they had never vaped.



76 identified themselves as vapers¹⁴.



40 had tried vaping (less than 10 times)¹⁵.



Of the 76 who vape, 71 responded to the question about quitting:

27 or 52% currently or had previously tried to quit;

26 or 37% selected 'it does not apply' or left it blank;

7 or 10% plan to quit at some point.

One young person had no intention to quit.

Of the 40 who had tried vaping, 34 responded to the question about quitting:

4 or 12% currently or had previously tried to quit;

29 or 85% selected 'it does not apply' or left it blank;

One young person plans to quit at some point.



ACYP notes that while the sample was recruited to reflect the diversity of views and experiences among young people in NSW, this consultation was qualitative in nature. Where charts have been included throughout the report, figures should be understood in that context.

Schools were invited to have a member of their wellbeing team present for the discussion if they chose. To preserve participant's confidentiality and provide a safe space, teachers and school leaders were asked not to observe the discussions.

¹⁴ACYP will refer to young people who vape as vapers throughout this report. ACYP defined vapers as young people who selected one of five options in their booklets: I vape every day, I vape every week, I have vaped more than 10 times or regularly, I am trying to quit vaping and I used to vape (more than 10 times) but I have stopped and haven't vaped in the past month.

¹⁵ACYP define young people who had tried vaping as young people who selected "I have vaped a few times, but less than 10" in their booklets.

Consultation Findings

Perceptions about “vaping culture”

ACYP asked young people about the vaping culture within their school and community. Young people were also asked about their perceptions of young people who vape, and the general culture of vaping behaviour.

In most cases, young people reported that their school currently has or previously had an issue with young people vaping. When asked what their school is like when it comes to vaping, young people often expressed the view that large percentages of their school or more specifically their year group vape regularly. ACYP notes that vaping was largely normalised and considered common by the majority of young people.

“ *At least 85% of the school is doing it, everyone is doing it.* ”

ACYP acknowledges findings from the GenVape study led by the Cancer Council in Australia indicate that just 32% of young people aged 14-17 had tried vaping at least once¹². ACYP notes young people’s perceptions that the majority of their peers vape may indicate an over-estimation of their peers’ behaviour. It may also indicate that study findings should be considered a conservative figure in some schools. Whatever the figure of actual vaping behaviour, ACYP notes that the perception that the majority of their peers are vaping contributes to a culture that normalises the behaviour.

This belief that ‘everyone’ vapes was strongly held. Further research would be required to understand the impact of messaging.

Young people told us that vaping often starts from year 7 and is most popular amongst young people in year 9 (between the ages of 14 – 15). Young people shared that vaping was less common in older year groups.

“ *Some primary school kids are vaping, I know kids in year 6 and even some as young as in year 3 who have been caught vaping.* ”

Throughout the focus groups, it was reported that very few young people had not been exposed to vaping. The majority of young people participating either had a friend or a family relation who currently vapes or has tried vaping. While many young people labelled vaping as “common”, they also acknowledged most young people they know who vape would not vape in front of their parents for fear of being reprimanded.

In early discussions¹⁶, ACYP asked young people to describe, in their own words, a young person who vapes, and a young person who does not vape.

¹⁶This question was asked in the first four schools but was later removed in order to streamline the discussion guide given time constraints.

■ Perceptions about “vaping culture”

Overall, ACYP noted young people saw little difference in the attributes between the two groups. Many young people reported that both vapers and non-vapers “look just like everyone else” or “normal.” When describing someone who vapes, the most common identifying feature was that the young person thinks it is cool to vape. A few young people shared that vapers are more likely to be “lads.”

The most common response when describing someone who does not vape, was that these young people care about their health and are aware of the consequences of regular vaping. There was a common understanding across all schools that young people engaged in sport are often less likely to vape because they are more considerate of their physical health and aware of the negative impacts of vaping.

■ Vaping seen as a social habit

ACYP notes that it was clear that vaping was considered both an individual and group activity. Some young people explained that within their schools, young people work collectively to maintain safe and private locations to vape. These areas can include toilets, gymnasiums, sports fields or behind classroom buildings. Young people who vape are often willing to share the vapes with other young people. This was used to coordinate common locations to hide vapes for multiple young people to use in private and there is a conscious group effort to maintain a level of secrecy around the vaping culture of young people.

ACYP notes some young people were reluctant to participate in discussion during consultations. ACYP notes one contributing factor could be that young people feel speaking about vaping culture undermines this culture of group secrecy.

ACYP facilitators have a breadth of experience in consulting with young people about sensitive topics and we ensure young people understand participation is voluntary and can be paused or stopped at any time. Regardless of rapport with ACYP facilitators, some young people were unwilling to share details that would betray that group confidence.

There were a few exceptions to the perception that vaping is a social norm. In two schools where teachers mentioned vaping was an issue, there was also a strong counter-cultural group where young people did not vape and were strongly against it. This occurred where young people engaged in sport influenced the “norm”. Another example included one young person claiming personal responsibility for reporting their peers who vaped to their parents. Young people in these focus groups explained how their awareness of the harms of regular vaping and a desire to stay out of trouble, helped them make the decision not to vape.

■ How do young people access information about vaping

Many young people shared that they had not sought specific vaping information and supports themselves online. A small number of young people mentioned seeing the NSW Ministry of Health’s and the Cancer Institute’s “Do you know what you’re vaping?” campaign both online through Instagram and on buses in the city, while others appeared to reference aspects of the campaign, even if they had not directly named it.

■ Perceptions about “vaping culture”

However, in contrast to the promotion of factual information, many young people did speak about seeing vape sale ads; videos of people doing “tricks with vapes” which encouraged young people to vape as a fun activity. Photos of high-profile athletes vaping in uniform and in their personal capacity deepens the misconception that vaping as relatively harmless.

The few young people that reported seeking information relating to vaping said they found it extremely difficult and confusing. They reported there were a lot of mixed messages and a lack of consistent factual information online.

■ Access to vapes

Young people explained there are few barriers preventing them from obtaining vapes and could list several different methods to access vapes, regardless of whether they lived in a regional or metropolitan area. Methods included:

- Buying vapes from shops themselves or with the help of an older friend or family member;
- Buying from the internet, “Snapchat dealers” or other messaging platforms; and
- Using shared vapes between groups of friends, or less commonly, family.

Cost was rarely seen as a barrier to vaping however it was sometimes provided as a reason not to vape.

As noted in the methodology of this report, the NSW and Commonwealth Governments are in the process of implementing and enforcing recent changes to legislation to limit access to vaping products. At the time of consultation, ACYP notes it was already illegal for young people to purchase vapes from retailers in shops or online – whether or not those vapes were advertised as containing nicotine¹⁷.

This indicates a need for the ongoing enforcement work conducted by Authorised Officers in NSW Health and the NSW Police, as well as bans on importations enforced by the Australian Border Force.

¹⁷NSW Health (2023) [Information for retailers selling e-cigarettes](#)

Reasons some young people choose to vape: Initial thoughts

When asked generally about vaping culture in their school, ACYP noted vaping was seen as a social habit and easily accessible. Most young people were not accessing factual information about vaping. This is reflected in the reasons young people shared about why some young people choose to vape, in that:

- Vaping is normalised and peer pressure plays a role.
- There is a lack of understanding about the negative impacts of vaping.

The role of stress and addiction was only shared in relation to reasons some young people vape rather than vaping culture generally.

■ Vaping as a normalised behaviour and the role of peer pressure

Young people identified and discussed a range of factors and reasons why young people chose to vape. Among these reasons and in all 25 groups, the top response from young people was the influence of a friend, or group of friends / peers who vaped. They reported that in peer groups, if the role model or “cool kids” vape then often this would influence the others to participate, and make them feel as if they “fit in”. Some young people reported that they did not know why they vaped, they “just did” because it was there, and everyone was doing it.

Young people did not name “peer pressure” as much as “the need to look cool”. The common attitude that it was considered “cool”, and that peer pressure played a role was generally accepted and consistent across ACYP’s consultations, including in schools where vaping was less popular.



*They see others doing it,
so they do it to.*

*No one smokes cigarettes,
everyone vapes, it's cooler.*



ACYP notes the presence of an “alpha” culture, where young people displayed dominant or confident behaviour, was more commonly expressed in the regional schools ACYP consulted with. Some of the more confident young people in these groups expressed the view that deciding not to vape or experiencing the negative symptoms from vaping were a sign of weakness. ACYP acknowledges this can influence a young person’s decision to vape though it was rarely articulated in this way by young people directly. There was a perception by some of these open vapers that self-control and determination could help a young person avoid addiction and the negative impacts of regular vaping.



*Just have a puff,
don't be a cat.*



■ Reasons some young people choose to vape

Accessibility also played a significant role in the reasons why young people vape. The majority of young people shared vapes and noted that vapes can be easily purchased or accessed from peers, even if they do not access it themselves.



You can get them from anywhere.

You can just get them from people in school, from other people in your year, and they cost \$20.



There were also discussions in the groups about companies glamourising vapes to seem cool or fun, making them colourful and creating flavours that appeal to young people. Most focus groups noted that changing the appearance would make vaping less appealing.

■ Lack of understanding about the negative impacts of vaping

Young people discussed three components about the misconceptions of vaping including that some young people:

- Are not discouraged to vape by the associated health harms;
- Try vaping and become addicted; or
- Continue to vape as a form of stress relief.

Health impacts are not always enough of a deterrent for young people to vape

While there was a broad awareness vaping was not good for you, ACYP observed it was clear there was a lack of understanding about the negative impacts on vaping.

These observations included that:

- Young people agreed that there is an incorrect perception that vaping is relatively harmless among some young people. ACYP observed this was due in part to a superficial understanding of the health harms or chemical ingredients.
- While this was a deterrent for some, other young people presented as less concerned and not particularly convinced the negative harms are a reason not to vape.
- Young people assumed more would have been done to prevent vaping take up and accessibility if it was that bad for you.

Stress

Many young people shared that stress was a driver of vaping behaviour. In 20 of the focus groups young people discussed that stress at school and at home can trigger vape cravings and disclosed using vapes as a coping mechanism. While not explored in detail, discussions of stress included a range from academic pressure to more acute stressors associated with trauma.



Some people have issues, they have trauma, and it (vaping) helps them with their stress.



■ *Reasons some young people choose to vape*

Young people reported “feeling good”, calm, relaxed as a result, and, concerningly, noted that vapes can act as a form of escapism, and for some, a way of self-medicating to manage their distress. While some young people listed this as a key reason to vape, many others referred to this being used as an excuse.

In six of the groups, young people talked about experiencing a head spin or mentioned the ‘the feeling you get from it’ as the reason why they vaped. ACYP notes the significant opportunity to better support young people as they deal with stressful experiences in their lives to avoid them vaping as a way to cope.

“

*The feeling it gives you
is hard to describe.*

*That hit in the morning
hits different.*

”

Addiction

Young people hypothesized that, as a result of curiosity and lack of education, some young people who tried a vape socially could then develop a nicotine / vape addiction. Addiction was talked about in all of the group’s consultations as a reason young people may vape. Young people agreed that schools should acknowledge the fact that young people need supports to treat their addictions, and that this may require more specific, specialist supports.

“

Once you start, you can’t stop.

You don’t feel happy if you can’t vape.

”

Reasons some young people do not vape: Initial thoughts

Young people were asked why they think some people do not vape and shared the following reasons:

- Health harms;
- Impact on ability to play or perform in sport;
- Fear of addiction;
- The fear of getting in trouble by parents or their school. This was more prevalent in young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds where they voiced concerns about what family or community would say or do; and
- Graphic imagery or knowledge about what is in vapes as a deterrent.

Other less common reasons raised by young people included that vaping was a behaviour that was “not cool”. While cost was raised as a potential consideration by four focus groups, it was not seen as a significant barrier at the current level of cost. Vaping is viewed as a cost-effective alternative to cigarettes, i.e., worth spending \$20-50 on.

■ Physical health impacts

Most young people shared that they were aware of the physical health concerns that are associated with vaping. Namely, young people identified physical effects to their lungs, ‘black lung’, the potential inability to engage in future sports due to ongoing breathing issues and that it was generally bad for your body.

A few young people explained they had been told by peers, the media or found information themselves that vaping has similar impacts to your physical health as smoking does.

“

Vaping can affect your whole life, not just your lungs.

”

In a few groups, young people shared graphic images which showed what vaping does to your health stayed with them. The examples used included a vape exploding in a car and an image they had been shown in school indicating the ongoing impact on vaping on a person’s face and skin¹⁸. As explained in the later parts of this report, graphic images were often cited as a potentially effective deterrent for young people.

“

Smoking but with a battery.

”

¹⁸ACYP is not aware of the source of these materials, but notes that some young people gave this as an example that they felt resonated with them.

■ **Concerns for mental health and potential for addiction**

A few young people acknowledged vaping can poorly impact your mental health.

“ *It increases depression instead of decreasing depression.* ”

As part of the consultation, ACYP tested the impact of the following statement:

According to NSW Health, regular nicotine use makes stress and anxiety worse and can make you more susceptible to depressive symptoms. Most vapes contain nicotine, meaning the more you use vapes, the higher your risk of depression. After hearing that, would this change your views about vaping?

The majority of young people who responded shared that they either did not believe this to be true, or thought it was not enough of a reason not to vape.

ACYP attempted to understand the confusion between what the evidence explains compared with what young people think are the impacts however this was difficult to ascertain. Generally, young people also understood that the addictive qualities of vaping would have an ongoing impact on their overall mental health.

ACYP notes positive impacts on mental health, for example to decrease stress, was also provided as a reason people vape. Young people would often then discuss what “evidence” would be more effective, often citing graphic images or “dead Bryan” used on the back of cigarettes.

Most young people reflected they had a greater fear about their parents finding out they vaped and were more likely to tell their mum they were vaping, than their dad. This was mostly talked about in relation to seeking help to quit or for addiction.

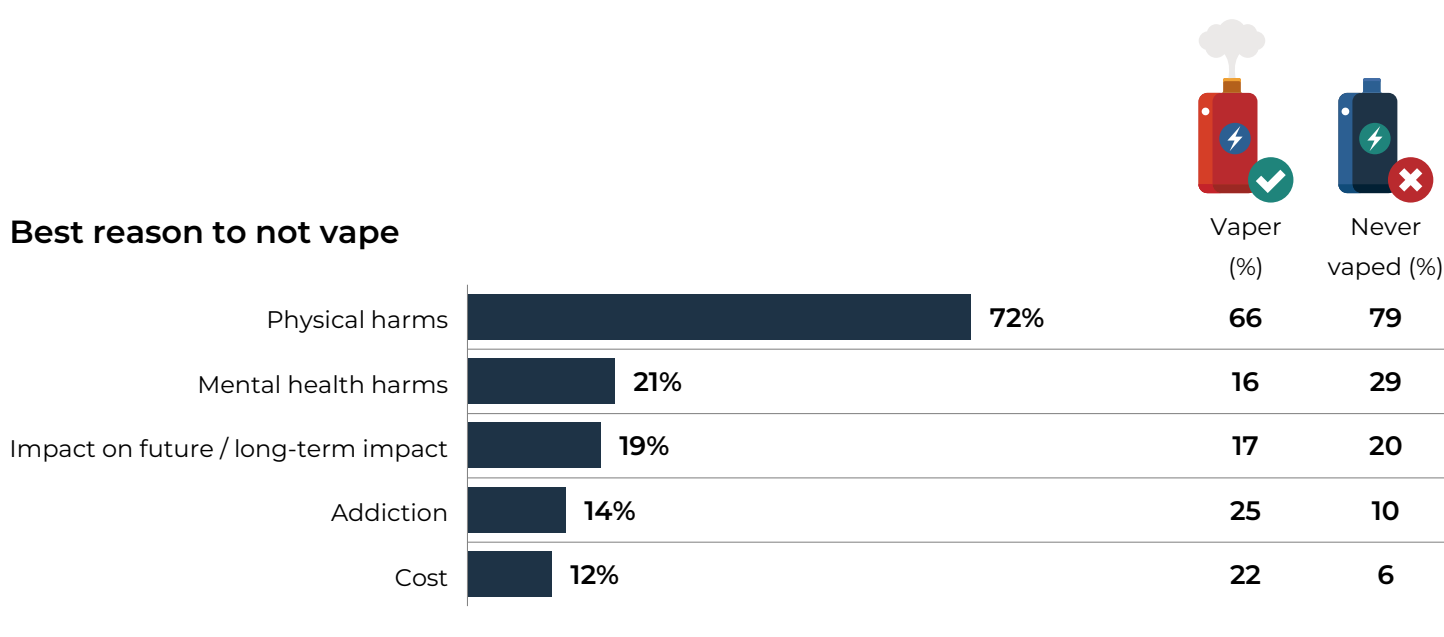
“

Don't kids start vaping to help with stress, so how does it cause it? It just sounds like they (the government) are trying to scare us.

”

The best reason not to vape

Young people were then asked to list the best reason they could give someone not to vape in their individual booklets. Reasons raised in focus groups mostly aligned with individual responses however the long-term consequences or impact on a young person's future was also listed as a key reason.



Q. Either from the list we made together or another idea, what do you think is the best reason you could give someone not to vape?

Base: Those who answered individual response question, n=217

ACYP notes that while the physical harms were the best reason listed by both vapers and never-vapers, young people who had never vaped were more likely to be convinced by both physical and mental health harms, and those who vape were more likely to mention both addiction and financial cost than their peers.

Vaping cessation support, tools and services

Overview

Young people were asked a series of questions about the support needed to change vaping behaviour, and perceptions of existing and proposed vaping cessation supports. Throughout the consultations, young people discussed a range of different services, supports and tools that could assist and support them, or other young people, to quit vaping.

Across the schools and consultations young people agreed and reported that all young people are different and that when looking at cessation supports:



*It's not a
one-size-fits-all.*



Their circumstances, age, friendship groups, family relationships, school life, and their current use and understanding of information and support channels will determine where they might seek and access support to quit vaping.

In the context of discussing potential support channels, focus groups shared that many young people do not understand, know about, or are not convinced by the negative effects of vaping. This is compounded by a common “do not care attitude” to giving up vaping.

This same attitude was sometimes reflected in a young person's reluctance to speak about vaping. While they would agree vaping was an important issue and the cessation tools were important, they were not eager to explore cessation supports in detail. ACYP acknowledges facilitating these discussions in a school setting could contribute to this. With the majority of young people reporting vaping use is widespread, ACYP notes it is difficult to determine the role peer influence and / or the fear of being judged or isolated plays in this reluctance.

Barriers and challenges to accessing supports to quit

Young people identified several barriers and challenges they face in accessing support, which included:

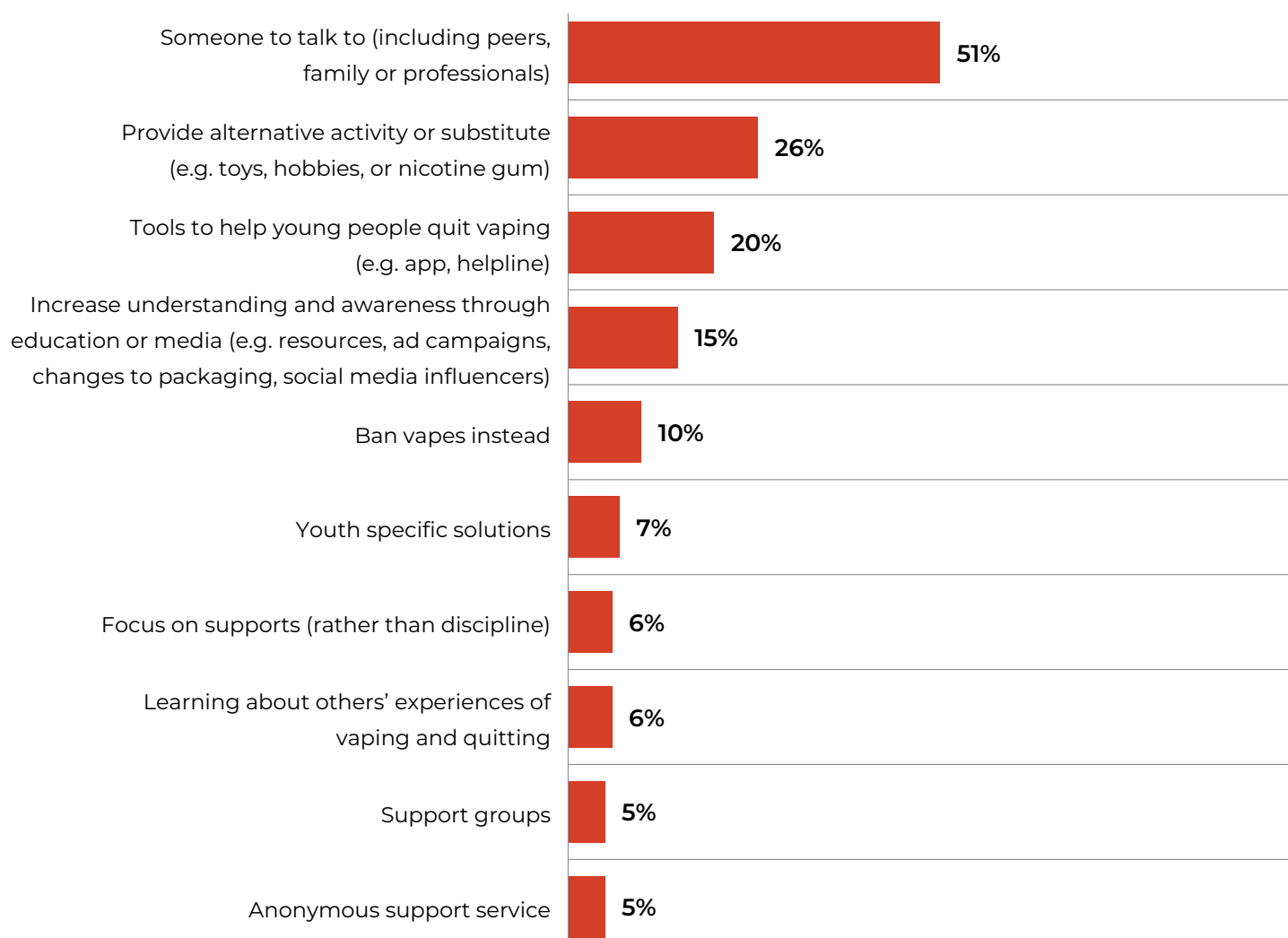
- Fear of being left out or isolated by friends or friendship groups;
- Being unaware or disbelieving of the harmful impacts associated with vaping;
- Lack of trust in adults and concerns that conversations will not be confidential;
- Fear of getting in trouble from parents, teachers, or school if they admit to vaping and needing support;
- Discomfort in discussing sensitive issues;
- Shame and feeling embarrassed;
- A lack of knowledge or understanding of services and supports available; and
- A lack of positive role models who have successfully quit or do not vape.

■ Supports for young people to stop vaping: Unprompted

In group discussions and in the individual response booklets, ACYP asked young people about the supports, tools, or services they felt would help young people to stop vaping.

Some young people responded with what they think should be offered in a more general way (e.g., someone to talk to) while others described the qualities of a service (e.g., anonymous, online).

Supports to help a young person trying to stop vaping (%)



Q. What supports, tools or services do you think would help a young person if they were trying to stop vaping but found it difficult?

Base: Those who answered individual response question, n=188

Providing someone to talk to

Young people agreed that talking to someone was often the first step in seeking support and getting help to stop vaping and more than half raised this in their individual responses.

“ *If young people want to quit, it's hard, because you have to do it alone, you can't go to your parents or teachers to talk about it.* ”

In group discussions, all young people agreed talking to someone and having an open conversation about their vaping use and what is going on in their lives would be a positive first step. ACYP notes young people were more likely to default to thinking about what ACYP would term as “social supports” rather than tools and quit helplines. Young people discussed a wide range of people that they believed they would reach out to, depending on their relationship with the person and level of trust, including:

- Friends or peers;
- Family members, parents, or guardians;
- A teacher (who they trust);
- A mentor or positive role model;
- A school counsellor or student support officer;
- Youth workers; and
- Health professionals.

“ *Remove judgement to encourage young people to come forward and seek help.* ”

Across the consultations, young people noted that having someone trustworthy and non-judgemental to talk to was essential. Confidentiality and trust were key in regards to how they would seek help.

Young people discussed that some young people do not have supportive families or positive role models. Young people noted these young people could often feel isolated about the lack of options they have to discuss issues affecting them. Equally, the majority of focus groups noted that some young people may not reach out to their families due to fear of getting in trouble.

Changing circumstances, providing an alternative or substitute activity

In the individual booklets, a quarter of young people – including more than a third of those who vape – listed alternatives such as:

- Access to Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) such as nicotine gum or spray;
- Substitute activities like fidget toys, breathing exercises, drinking water; and
- Other hobbies such as sport could help a young person to stop vaping.

Young people in seven of the focus group consultations particularly raised the important role for these in cessation for those young people who are already addicted to vaping.

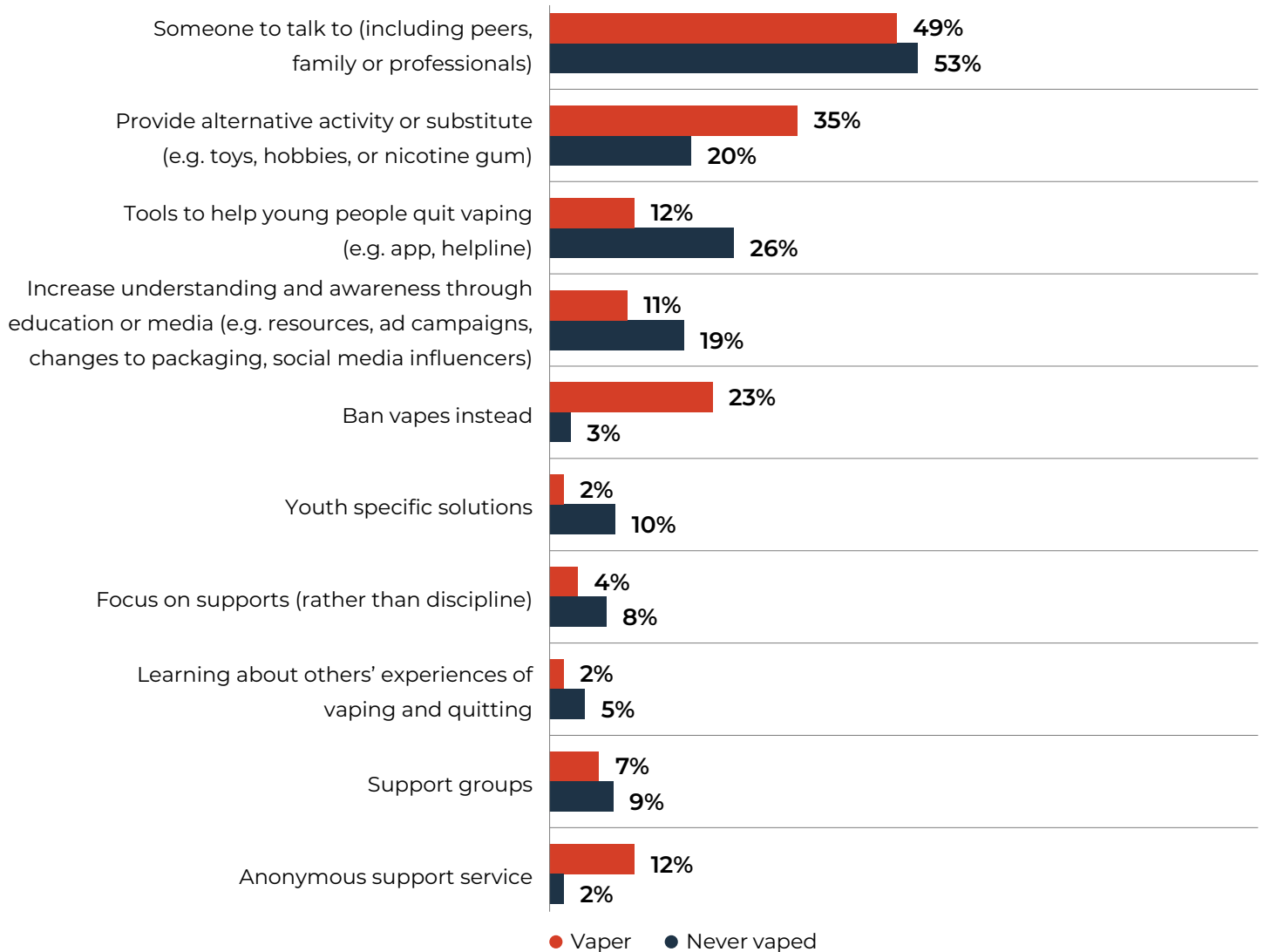
Some focus groups also talked about the importance of promoting positive health and wellbeing as part of any educational workshops. Young people suggested this include providing young people with information about:

- Alternative activities like fidget toys and sports that can promote natural endorphins rather than fabricated “happy chemicals”; and
- Stress-relief behaviours and practices including tips and tools on how to manage stress.

Perspectives differ according to self-reported vaping status

While having someone to talk to was the most frequently mentioned suggestion, regardless of vaping status, there was some nuance on the other preferred options depending on an individual's self-reported vaping status.

Supports to help a young person trying to stop vaping by vaping status (%)



Q. What supports, tools or services do you think would help a young person if they were trying to stop vaping but found it difficult?
 Base: Those who answered individual response question, Vaper: n=57, Never vaped: n=103

Those who vape mentioned alternative activities or substitutes and the need to ban vapes more frequently than other supports. They were also more likely to mention the need for a service to be anonymous. By contrast, those who had never vaped were more focused than their peers on different support tools and the need to increase understanding and awareness.

This suggests that those who do not vape are more likely to believe that tools will be effective, and more information will act as a deterrent for vaping behaviour. Alongside the agreed need for a support person to speak with, those who do vape are more likely to seek tangible intervention, such as alternatives or limiting their own ability to access vapes through bans.

Limiting access to vapes

All young people agreed and reiterated on numerous occasions that stopping the sale of vapes is fundamental to reducing vaping amongst young people. Easy access to vapes encourages young people to start, and also discourages them from quitting, reporting them as being “everywhere”.

There is an understanding among some young people, especially those that openly admit to vaping, that the lack of regulation implies vaping use is not harmful. Young people also acknowledged that, while cost is not currently a significant barrier, raising the cost of vapes could deter young people from vaping.

Increase the cost to \$150–\$200.”

Making them expensive so young people can't get them.

ACYP acknowledges that regulatory changes and enforcement activities are currently underway to limit access to vaping through changes to import laws, packaging and retail sales². We also note that while this includes an increase to the tobacco excise, regulation making the sale of vapes illegal would be a barrier to government intervening with additional taxes to inflate the cost of vapes themselves.

Young people spoke about using social media and influencers, or other people that young people relate to and connect with, to deliver education messaging around the dangers and negative impacts of vaping use. A few young people noted banning vaping by influencers on social media would prevent this being another factor that encourages young people. Young people also saw themselves as playing an important role in developing the messaging.

There should be influencers and famous people should be talking about being anti-vaping. It might not work for some but a lot of young people do look up to influencers so they would at least see it.

Online and confidential supports

The idea of being able to talk to someone anonymously, online, through a chat function was identified as being extremely helpful and accessible to young people and could act as a key entry point for future access to personalised support. Young people wanted to speak with a real person to ask questions, dispel myths, get advice, tips, and tools to reduce and stop vaping.

While many young people recognise the need for personal connection in seeking support, there are some significant barriers to seeking help for the first time including; feeling awkward, fear of getting in trouble and consequences from their parents or school.

Technology is key for our generation.

The role of schools to support cessation

Young people were asked about their views of their school's current response when a student is caught vaping.

Most young people agreed there should be a focus on supports, supported by initial conversations when a student was caught or disclosed, they were vaping. Young people who shared their school issued an automatic suspension were more likely to share their preference for an alternative approach. ACYP understands the purpose of suspension is not to punish a behaviour but to allow the school time to plan and prepare for the students' successful re-engagement at school as referenced¹⁹.

Across all schools, young people reported that, the focus was on punishment within school, calling for schools to provide supports to young people that vape.

“

*Instead of suspending us,
help us quit.*

*Stop the threats, and give them
support. Threats don't do shit.*

*School don't care, they just
want to look good.*”

When asked if vaping detectors would be effective in decreasing vaping use at schools, the majority of young people did not think this would work as they “can just find somewhere else.”

The quality of interactions and relationships between young people and teachers was one of the main issues raised. They recognised that building relationships with teachers and workers at school was critical to be able to discuss private information. Young people want teachers to have an understanding about students' backgrounds and life circumstances so they can take these into account if a student is struggling or in trouble, and offer support, rather than punishment. Some young people raised concerns about the lack of confidentiality they experienced when teachers or school counsellors reported conversations to their parents.

Young people across all groups agreed that there should be external services available for young people to access in schools that do not report back to schools. Young people explained these services should be a safe space to talk openly about issues affecting them. Young people suggested having workers with lived experience of vaping, or younger aged people that they can relate to and feel comfortable and safe to be open and honest with.

“

*Having younger workers with
lived experience of vaping
– or aged 20-30 to provide
programs and support.*”

¹⁹NSW Department of Education (2022)

[Student Behaviour Procedures Kindergarten to Year 12:
Implementation document for the Student Behaviour Policy](#)

Some young people also noted that it can take time to be able to build rapport and feel confident enough to raise concerns and tackle issues with a support person.

While young people were broadly aware that there were health harms associated with vaping, some reported having limited detailed education about the specific health impacts. They spoke about learning some information at school or on social media, but overall young people reported that the vaping education they received through PDHPE in school was not relatable, as they found the content “boring” and left them feeling as if they did not learn anything. More could be done to unpack how information could be delivered in an engaging and relevant way.

While many young people expressed some scepticism about the evidence reporting the harmful effects of vaping, generally young people agreed that learning about vaping was essential as a deterrent. Some felt having a better understanding about the health impacts of vaping can be a powerful way to change vaping behaviour.

Participants suggested that vaping education and awareness should be delivered by those with lived experience of vaping, younger aged people (under 35 years), or at least someone that they can relate to and explain things in youth-friendly language.

In a few of the groups they also noted that young people need to know more about vaping and learn from a young age, such as from Year 7, given some young people report vaping commences from this age. Young people agreed factual information that is easy to understand would be most effective. Young people also reported that learning about where to get help, and tools or tips to quit if they were already vaping would be helpful.

Students and teachers at one school spoke to the example where Azelene Williams delivered a ‘Vaping Clearing the Air Lived Experience’ presentation on the dangers of vaping²⁰. The presentation included factual health information and used graphic images of injuries sustained from vaping, case studies of people that had been hospitalised because of the impact on their breathing habits and other health consequences. Students shared it also detailed the effects on your brain, and your appearance, such as skin, which young people found concerning and confronting. Young people explained they had not previously considered these impacts.

In one group of young people who later reported they were not vapers, reactions to graphic imagery and the health harms detailed in the workshop were strong and these young people indicated this had influenced the way they thought about vaping. Another group at the same school had more students who admitted to vaping, and this group were less convinced by the health harms information provided in the workshop.

Greater education and awareness of health harms is essential information for young people to have, however, it is more likely to act as a preventative tool rather than as a reason to quit vaping after already having started.

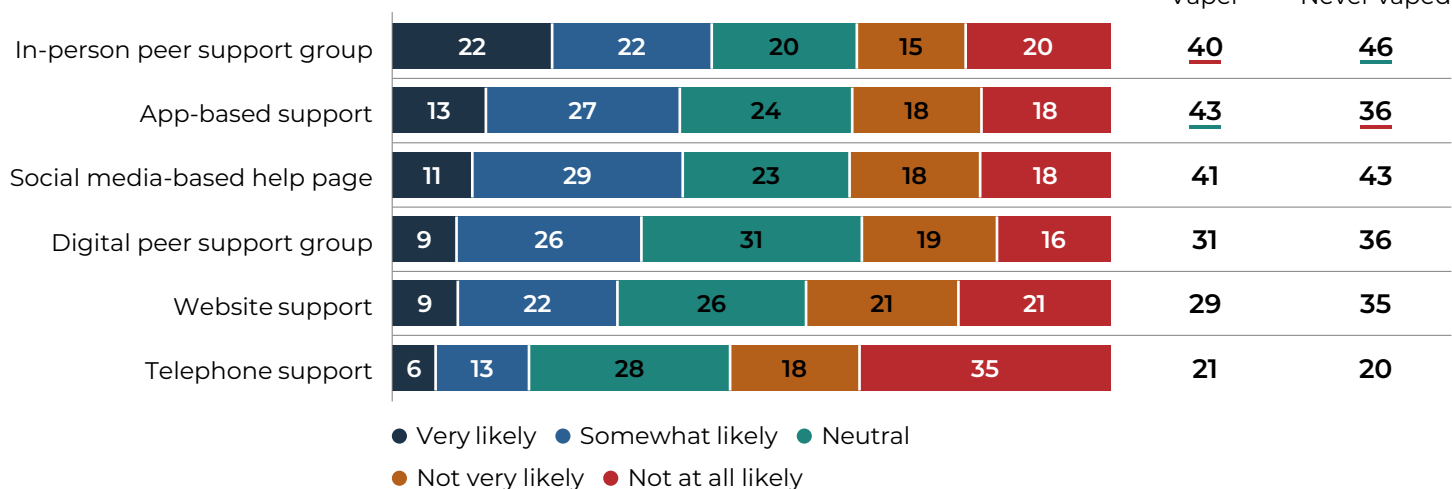
²⁰Azelene Williams’ [*‘Vaping Clearing the Air’ Program*](#)

Young people rate possible supports and tools

Young people were asked to provide feedback on six support options in discussions and in individual response booklets including:

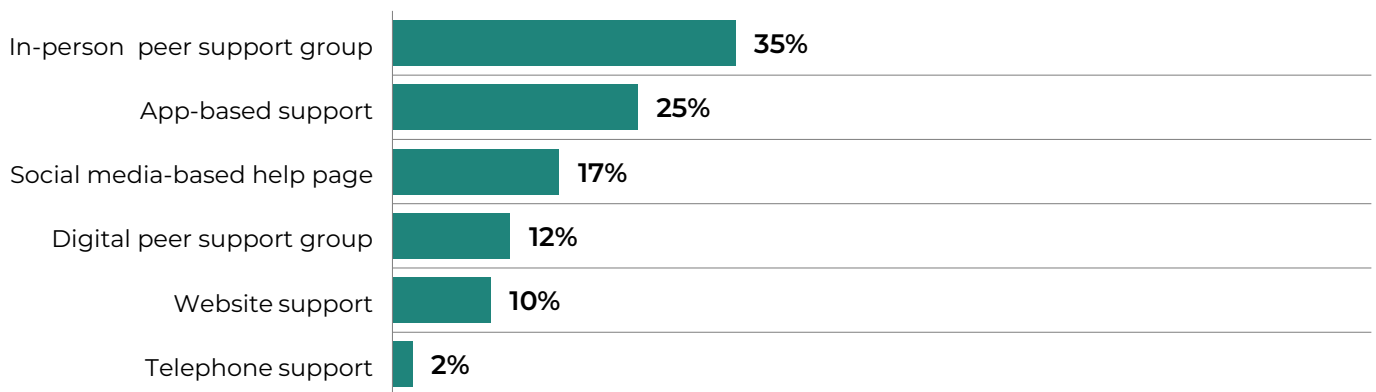
- The likelihood they would use that particular support; and
- Which of the six ideas they believed would be most helpful to young people.

Likelihood to use cessation tools (%)

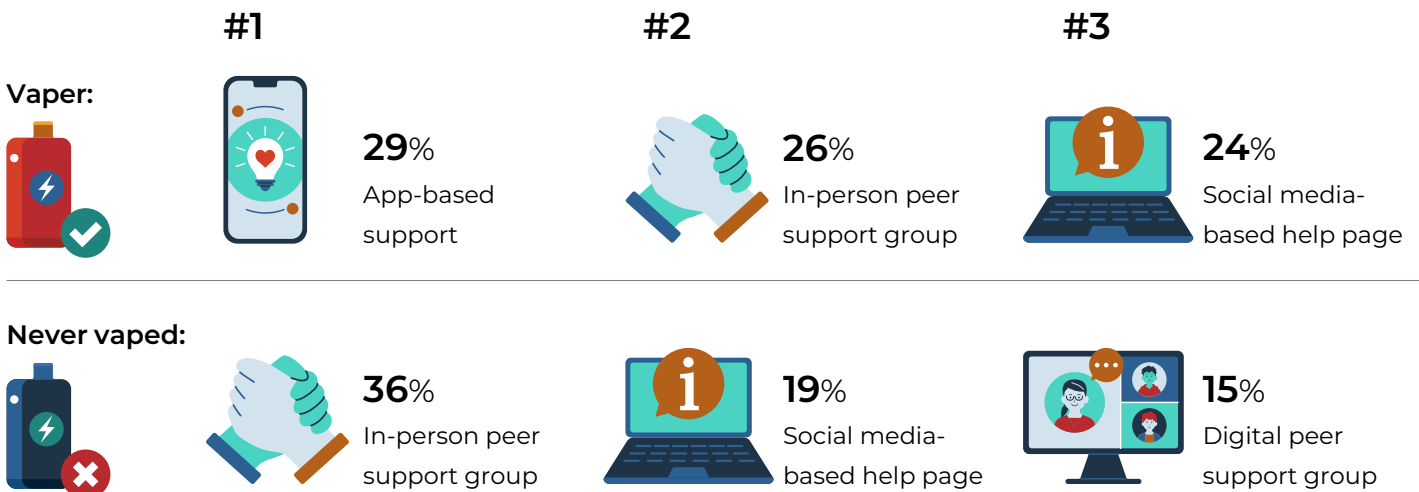


Q. Please rate the different supports in terms of how likely you would be to use it if you were someone who was trying to stop vaping?
 Base: Those who answered individual response questions, n=233

Best idea to support young people to stop vaping (%)



Top three ideas to support young people to stop vaping



Q. After rating, circle which idea you think is best. Base: Those who answered individual response question n=129

In discussions, young people agreed the top three choices were in-person support, app-based support, and social media.

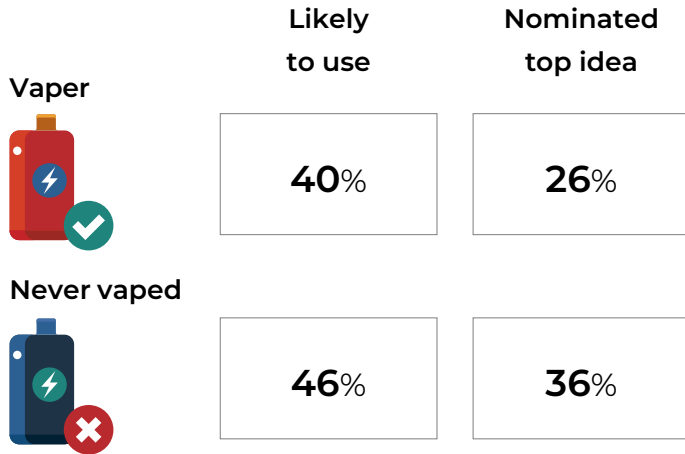
At an overall level, young people reported an in-person peer support group was the support they were most likely use (44% reported they were somewhat or very likely to use it) and it ranked it as the most preferred option overall (35%).

However, there was some variation between those who vape compared to those who do not. Those who vape were most likely to use an app (43%) and were more likely to indicate this was their preferred option overall (29%). Those who do not vape were most likely to use an in-person peer support group (46%) and more likely to rate this as their preferred option (36%).

ACYP notes this difference may account for the fact many young people raised the fear of judgement or awkwardness in relation to accessing face-to-face support which is somewhat removed through an app and social media.



■ In-person supports



Many young people agreed that in-person support was their preferred option, including a third of non-vapers and a quarter of vapers, though vapers were slightly more likely to prefer apps or social media supports.

Young people who preferred in-person supports indicated that they needed to be accessible in school and in community. As noted elsewhere in this report, a key element of accessibility is whether the service is confidential and whether young people can access this without their parents' or carers' knowledge.

There were mixed views about how to ensure accessibility for in-person supports, with some recommending community-based programs and others recommending a group run by an external organisation but hosted on school grounds.



We need programs outside of school.



Participants recommended these programs should be run in safe spaces for young people in a comfortable, youth-friendly environment. Regardless of location, even if in a school setting, young people were adamant they should be able to access these services confidentially. Ensuring this will help young people to feel relaxed and confident in speaking honestly and openly about their vaping use and issues in their lives.

Young people agreed youth specific services and younger aged workers, which they roughly defined as under 35 years, were best placed to provide these supports to individuals seeking help.

It was important to the young people that these support groups were youth specific, and adults should not be able to attend. Small groups of similar ages were favoured. Young people suggested having workers with lived experience of vaping, or younger aged people who they can relate to. They also agreed that the group leader of the support group should provide help and feedback and help the young people set goals and identify wrap around support if required.

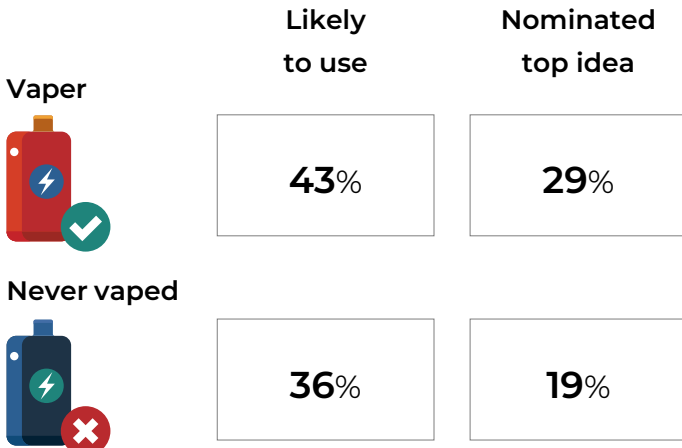


I want someone that doesn't know me, but knows how to help me.





■ App supports



Having a youth-friendly app which was easy to navigate and had information that is easy to understand was identified as being a helpful tool for young people and was a preferred option for almost a third of vapers and those who had tried vaping. The ability to access the support at any time, in any location in a confidential way made an app an attractive option, particularly for those who vape.

Young people felt an app should have a range of tools and functions available for different users to engage in different ways, including:

- Access to factual information relating to your health and mental health;
- Chat function (with a real person);
- Real life case studies and graphic stories / images;
- Videos, reels and TikToks with young people sharing their experiences;
- Tracking and notifications on progress, money saved or 'gamification' of the app;
- Pop ups with motivational messages; and
- Notifications with tips and facts.

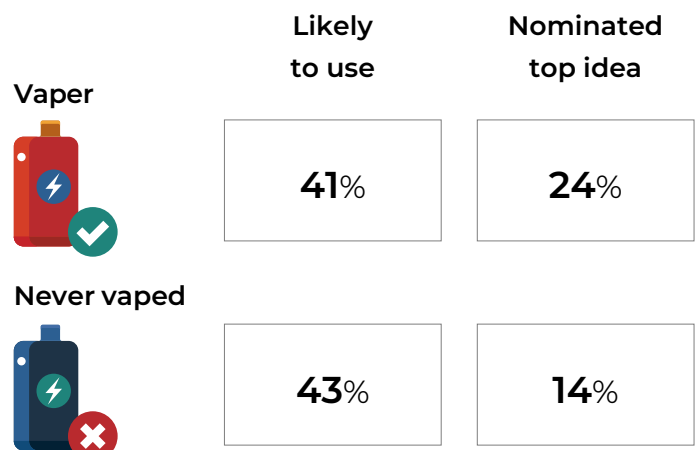
Young people acknowledged there may be some challenges with an app including having to download the app, and then use data to engage with it, excluding young people who do not have access to technology and / or limited data.

Others also mentioned that there was no accountability with an app and that people may use the functions for a few days then not continue. Some felt that tracking capability should be customisable with the ability to work towards a goal set by the user, for example, saving money towards a big purchase.

Across all web-based supports, young people felt it was important to link to other supports and resources where available.



■ Social media



Young people discussed and recognised the important role social media played in young people's lives. However, they noted social media was used to promote and provide access to information and services rather than directly provide support for young people.

Groups across schools spoke about the lack of awareness of websites and support available. A few groups strongly recommended that there should be more effort through paid advertising on social media to make young people aware that these websites exist. Instagram reels or stories, Snapchat, and Tik Tok were all identified as great ways to get information to young people. These suggested promotions should be led by role models, sporting stars, celebrities, and influencers for maximum impact, and would be far more effective than from health departments. However, they should point to reliable, government websites with important information.

“ Instagram reels and stories are a great way to get information out to young people. ”

Some young people mentioned that promotions and campaigns on social media should include tragic and confronting stories of vaping that are powerful in changing young people’s perceptions of vaping and the associated harms.



■ Digital peer support group

	Likely to use	Nominated top idea
Vaper 	31%	9%
Never vaped 	36%	15%

There were mixed opinions on the digital peer support as many believed that this was something young people would not access due it being uncomfortable or not appealing to young people. ACYP notes this was not discussed in as much detail as other supports due to participants’ relative disengagement.



■ Websites

	Likely to use	Nominated top idea
Vaper 	29%	9%
Never vaped 	35%	14%

Seeking information through a youth friendly website was seen by some young people as a first step in trying to access factual information to further their knowledge and understanding of the harms and access other supports. While it was not the most popular support tool, young people acknowledged this was a helpful alternative option where many young people may not feel confident or comfortable in talking to someone or accessing in person support.

■ **Young people rating possible supports and tools to stop vaping**

Ideally, a website would include links to all of the possible cessation supports and tools that were available, and that young people could access both anonymously online and face to face in their local area.

“ Website needs interactive tools and list places to get other support in the community. ”

Young people also highlighted that having a range of different tools and functions on the website would again be helpful, including real life stories and examples of harmful vaping use, as well as tips and resources to help young people quit. Having a live chat function was identified as being helpful.

“ Having a website but also a chat function to talk to a real person and not a robot chat. ”



■ **Telephone support**

	Likely to use	Nominated top idea
Vaper 	21%	3%
Never vaped 	20%	1%

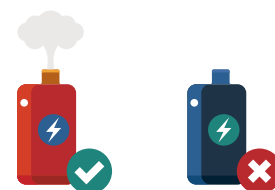
While a small group of young people – almost all non-vapers – raised telephone support unprompted as a potential support mechanism, when presented alongside other support types, this was the least popular.

Most students across all schools agreed that telephone support would be unpopular with young people as generally they do not speak to people on the phone.

“ It’s just weird speaking to someone on the phone. ”

Young people's final advice for Government

Young people were asked to include any final advice to Ministry of Health and other government departments about how they can support young people to stop vaping or prevent them from taking it up.



Top advice for the NSW Ministry of Health (%)

		Vaper (%)	Never vaped (%)
Government should take action to address vaping (e.g. regulation, increasing cost, regulating packaging)	49%	47	49
Focus on support for young people (including a focus on support instead of punishment)	31%	41	25
Improve awareness and understanding (through education, media and ensuring messaging is engaging)	23%	8	33

Q. What advice do you have for the Ministry of Health and other Government departments about how they can support young people to stop vaping or prevent them from taking up vaping? Base: Those who answered individual response question, n=175

Around half of young people recommended that the government take action to address vaping in one way or another, whether by:

- limiting access to vapes;
- banning them;
- increasing their cost; or
- changing packaging to reflect cigarette regulations.

Those who vape were more likely than their peers to comment on the need to provide support for young people and focus less on punishment. In comparison, those who had not vaped were more likely to re-iterate the importance of communicating health harms as a deterrent for vaping behaviour.

ACYP appreciates the sentiments young people expressed throughout these consultations and notes that governments, business, and community should bear the responsibility to take action. Young people are not simply faced with a choice of whether to vape. In addition to a host of social pressures and norms, young people have been subject to a targeted campaign, marketing a previously unregulated product, which then became so accessible that it felt ubiquitous.

ACYP welcomes the opportunity to work alongside State and Federal Governments, as well as the business and community sector, to take action on behalf of young people – both to prevent the uptake of vaping behaviour as well as to support those young people who have already found themselves addicted.



“

The government could reduce the amount of vapes which could also impact the number of people vaping.

”



“

You don't have to vape to fit in, people should like you for who you are.

”



“

Stop trying to cut off the problem and address ways to support a solution, prove that young people can trust it.

”

Full List of Citations

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Report:

***“Vaping can affect your whole life, not just
your lungs”***: *Young people’s perspectives
on vaping in 2023*

Date:

September 2023



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