



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Talking about vaping: WA young people's views and experiences of e-cigarettes

**Key findings from the WA Commissioner for Children and Young
People's 'Talking about vaping' survey 2023**

Acknowledgement of Country

The Commissioner for Children and Young People proudly acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across Western Australia and acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation upon whose lands the Commissioner's office is located. She recognises the continuing connection to culture, lands, skies and waters, families and communities for all Aboriginal peoples.

The Commissioner and her team also pay their respects to all Elders, past, and present and emerging leaders. They recognise the knowledge, insights and capabilities of Aboriginal people, and pay respect to Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

A note about language

Prior to colonisation Aboriginal people primarily communicated through oral use of language, were well versed in multiple languages to converse with surrounding groups for different contexts and responsibilities dependant on where you were located. Seasonal movement was quite common for hunting, gathering and other related responsibilities and language was often expressed through various forms of art, dance, songs and storytelling. The written form of language arose from the interpretation of Aboriginal words were captured by historical documentation and non-Aboriginal linguists who relied on western interpretation of sounds. This then created various forms of spelling of Aboriginal words which can differ and are often accepted and recognised. For example, Noongar, Nyungar, Noongah.

For the purposes of this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises Torres Strait Islanders who live in Western Australia. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, though similarities do exist.

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Photographs of children and young people

All photographs featured in this report are of Western Australian children and young people and have been taken by or for the Commissioner for Children and Young People's office. All children and young people and their parents/guardians have consented to their use.

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Message from the Commissioner

The emergence of e-cigarettes, commonly known as 'vapes', has sparked concern among public health experts, schools, parents, and young people across Australia in recent years. The recent emergence of these products means their safety and long-term health impacts are still being tested. While clinical and other robust research is being undertaken to develop appropriate controls on the ingredients, packaging, labelling, and access pathways of these products, they have become problematic, especially for young people, who are more susceptible than adults to the known health risks of 'vaping'.



With growing public concern and very few studies asking Western Australian (WA) young people for their views and experiences of vaping, my office undertook the 'Talking about vaping' survey in May 2023. The survey invited anyone in WA aged between 12 and 18 years to participate in an anonymous, online questionnaire asking them what they think about 'vapes' and 'vaping'.

We asked participants to tell us what they think makes these products appealing to young people, how they think young people access these products, any worries or concerns they have about 'vapes' or 'vaping', and the kinds of information and supports they would like from adults.

We received an overwhelming response to the survey, with a total of 3,303 eligible participants, making this the largest qualitative research conducted with WA young people on the topic of e-cigarettes ('vapes'/vaping').

I am pleased to be able to present key findings from this survey, with a follow-up report anticipated for release in the coming months. I hope these early results are informative and help you to better support young people in avoiding or overcoming the significant harms posed by these products.

Jacqueline McGowan-Jones

Commissioner for Children and Young People

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Introduction

With growing public concern around young people's use of e-cigarettes ('vapes') and little WA-based research conducted with young people on this topic, it was considered timely and appropriate to ask WA young people for their views and experiences of 'vapes' and 'vaping'.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People's 'Talking about vaping' survey was a state-wide anonymous online survey, open to anyone in WA aged between 12 and 18 years, for a period of five weeks from May to June 2023.

The survey asked standard demographic questions and several open-text questions on the topic of 'vapes' and 'vaping', including what makes these products appealing to young people, where and how young people usually get them, any worries or concerns young people may have about 'vapes' or 'vaping', and the kinds of supports they would like from adults to manage these concerns.

The survey responses have been carefully analysed into common themes, which are presented in this report.

It is hoped that these survey findings are informative and helpful for developing resources, policies and practices that can better support young people to understand the significant risks and harms associated with these products, and help them avoid, reduce or stop their use of e-cigarettes.

Background

Role of the Commissioner

The Commissioner for Children and Young People has an important statutory role to monitor and review written laws, draft laws, policies, practices and services affecting the wellbeing of children and young people under 18 years of age. She has a statutory duty to regularly consult with children and young people about issues that affect them and to promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives. She also has responsibility to encourage government and non-government agencies to seek the participation of children and young people in their work.

More information about the Commissioner and the work of her office is available from: www.ccp.wa.gov.au.

The 'Talking about vaping' survey

The 'Talking about vaping' survey (the survey) was developed by the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People to address gaps in what is known about WA young people's views and experiences of e-cigarettes ('vapes'). This anonymous online survey was not representative of WA young people but was open to anyone in WA, aged 12 to 18 years.

With the support of key stakeholders, the survey reached over 3,000 young people from every region in WA and the responses of 3,303 young people have been included in data analyses.

Data collected included key demographic information, including age, gender, region, school type, languages spoken at home, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status. Participants were also asked if they identified in any other way (eg., living with a long-term health condition, neurodivergence) and could choose multiple response options from a drop-down menu or could describe themselves in open-text fields.

Open-text questions on the topic of 'vapes' and 'vaping' were asked to allow participants to share as little or as much as they liked, in their own words.



Profile of participants

Most participants (71.5%) lived in the Perth metropolitan region at the time of the survey, with much smaller proportions of participants hailing from other regions of WA, including 428 participants living in the South West, 225 in the Wheatbelt, and the remainder living in the Pilbara, Mid West, Goldfields-Esperance, Kimberley and Gascoyne regions.

The eligible age range of participants was 12-18 years. Considerably more individuals at the younger end of this range participated than older ones, including 2,042 young people aged 12-14 years; 888 young people aged 15-16 years, and 373 young people aged 17-18 years.

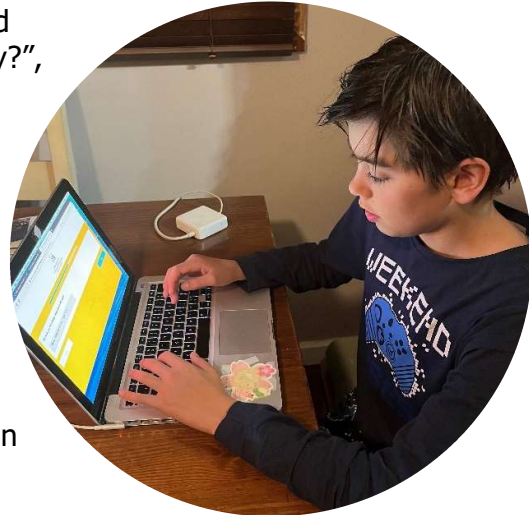
Almost three-quarters of participants (74.4%) reported attending a public school. Six hundred and seventy-four participants (20.4%) indicated they attend a private school, while a further eighty-six (2.6%) and seventy-eight (2.4%) reported, respectively, that they are unsure, or do not go to school.

One hundred and seventy participants (5.1%) identified as Aboriginal and twenty-one participants (0.6%) identified as Torres Strait Islander. Forty-eight participants (1.5%) identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Participants were asked "How do you describe yourself?" and could select either "Male", "Female", or "In another way", and were given an open-text field to elaborate their answer if they wished. Just over half of participants (52.6%) identified as female, two-fifths (40.5%) as male, and 6.5% identified their gender 'in another way'. Those who identified 'in another way' described their gender identity in various ways, including non-binary, gender fluid, demi-girl, demi-boy, bigender, queer and genderqueer. Some respondents who provided an open-text response to this question chose not to describe their gender but other personal characteristics, such as their sexuality or certain medical conditions.

In a follow-up question, participants were asked “Have you always described yourself in this way?”, with the response options “Yes”, “No” and “I’d prefer not to say”. One hundred and twenty-seven participants (3.8%) said they had not always described their gender this way, and one hundred and sixty-nine (5.1%) indicated they would prefer not to say.

Three hundred and two participants (9.1%) said they identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD). Two hundred and twenty participants (6.7%) spoke a language other than English at home, including Mandarin, German, Spanish, Japanese and Tagalog/Filipino.



Around one in eight (12.2%) participants identified as LGBTQIA+SB.¹

Participants were also asked if they identified in any other way and could choose multiple response options. One hundred and sixty-one participants (4.9%) identified as a person with a disability; one hundred and twenty-seven (3.8%) identified as having a long-term physical health condition; two hundred and twenty-three (7.7%) identified as neurodivergent; four hundred and forty-eight (13.6%) indicated they were living with a mental health condition; and one hundred and sixty-seven (5.1%) stated that they identify in another way.

Data collection, analysis and reporting

The data collection period was from 1 May 2023 to 5 June 2023. In that period, over 4,000 young people responded to the survey, however, not all these respondents were eligible to participate due to their age. Further assessment and data cleaning produced a total of 3,303 eligible participant responses, which have been used in an inductive thematic content analysis. Demographic questions were not thematically analysed but all open-text question responses were carefully read and analysed by the Commissioner’s research staff using NVIVO data analytics software.

This interim report is based on the results of the thematic data analysis, and presents key themes that emerged from responses, as well as direct quotes from participants. The quotes are unedited to ensure the voice of the young person is authentically presented. Editing has only been done where necessary for clarity, understanding or for confidentiality. In these instances, any changes or omissions are marked with square brackets or an ellipsis (...).

It is also important to note that across all of the open-text survey questions, a high proportion of participants answered “I don’t know”, “I’m not sure”, or “Prefer not to say”. Although these responses were coded and included in data analysis, they have not been reported as part of the ‘most common’ responses for each question. This finding may suggest that many young people feel they do not have ‘the answers’.

A follow-up report presenting an analysis of results, disaggregated by participants’ vaping status, is anticipated for release in the coming months.

Key findings

Smoking and vaping status of participants

Although prevalence data for the smoking and 'vaping' status of participants was beyond the scope of the survey,² respondents were asked to choose the statement that best describes their smoking and/or 'vaping' status, as this was considered an important aspect of the extent a young person might be impacted by these products.

Table 1 and Table 2 show the proportion of respondents, by smoking and 'vaping' status, respectively.³

Table 1. Proportion of survey respondents, by smoking status

Survey response option (as it appeared in the survey)	Number of participants who selected this response option
I have never tried smoking (not even a few puffs)	2497
I have tried smoking (even just a few puffs)	275
I smoke every now and then	100
I smoke every day	126
I smoke most days	19
I quit smoking	40
Prefer not to say	127

Table 2. Proportion of survey respondents, by 'vaping' status

Survey response option (as it appeared in the survey)	Number of participants who selected this response option
I have never tried vaping (not even a few puffs)	2121
I have tried vaping (even just a few puffs)	431
I vape every now and then	151
I vape every day	221
I vape most days	77
I quit vaping	68
Prefer not to say	126

Most participants reported they have "never tried" smoking or 'vaping' (not even a few puffs). Results also show however, that of the participants who have 'ever tried' smoking or 'vaping' (even just a few puffs), 'vaping' was more common among respondents than smoking.

Almost fifty per cent more young people reported they have 'ever tried' 'vaping' compared to those who have 'ever tried' smoking, and four times as many young people reported they 'vape' "most days", compared to those who reported they smoke "most days". Similarly, more young people said they 'vape' "every day" or "every now and then" compared to those who said they smoke "every day" or "every now and then".

Participants who indicated they had 'ever tried' smoking and 'ever tried' 'vaping', were also asked which they had tried first, smoking or 'vaping'. For this question, participants were also given the response options, "Does not apply to me", "Prefer not to say" and "I don't know".

Overall, a higher proportion of 'ever' users reported they 'vaped' before they tried smoking, as shown in Table 3, below.³ These results are consistent with other research showing that more than half of young people in New South Wales (aged 14 to 17 years), who had 'ever vaped' had never smoked before they tried 'vaping'.⁴

Table 3. Proportion of participants who have tried smoking and 'vaping'

Survey response option (as it appeared in the survey)	Number of participants who selected this response option
Does not apply to me	2212
I vaped before I tried smoking	345
I smoked before I tried vaping	226
Prefer not to say	136
I don't know	128

What makes 'vaping' appealing to young people?

Research indicates that e-cigarettes are promoted in ways that appeal to young people, including on social media platforms that are popular among young people,⁵ and by using confectionary flavours, appealing product names and bright, colourful labels or packaging,⁶ which are seldom accompanied by health warnings.⁷

Broadly consistent with previous research,^{5,6,7,8} results from the survey indicate that there are several factors that make 'vapes' appealing to young people, including (from most common to least common response):

- the taste or flavour
- a perception that 'vapes' and/or 'vaping' is "cool"
- peer pressure and exposure to others 'vaping'
- the colours
- the addictive nature of 'vapes' (the nicotine)
- 'vapes'/'vaping' help with stress-relief
- 'vapes' are easy to access and/or hide
- a perception that 'vapes' are nicer or safer than cigarettes
- 'vaping' is fun, thrilling, gets attention, or is a way to rebel
- 'vaping' smells nice
- the marketing, advertising and/or promotion of these products
- young people are curious and experimenting.

In their own words, participants said:

"Because they have made so many flavors that appeals to kids so [they] want to try and if they do, they will think it tastes good so they would want more."
(Male, 12 years-old, has never vaped)

"The flavours and it made me feel I looked cool and fit in." (16 year-old, male, has quit vaping)

"...its the same reason cruisers are the most popular drink for younger people, it fruity and reminds us of the treats from when we are younger and

its easier to forgot the negatives attached to it..." (18 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"Peer pressure - all their friends vaping makes people want to vape too. Also, the flavours and colours which make it seem almost like candy." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"People thinking it's cool cause everyone does it and that it is vapour that comes out so the try it and keep doing it then get addicted to the nicotine." (14 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"People find forbidden things more alluring, especially when everyone else is doing it. It's not necessarily because they like vaping or smoking, it's more because they want to do what others are doing and rebel against authority." (18 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"We think it's cool but then we get addicted so we [can't] stop but then we realise it's not cool." (14 year-old, female, has quit vaping)

"it's concealed, tastes very good, and you don't have to light it. you can't tell from the smell of you have vaped, but if you smoke it's a very distinctive strong smell." (17 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

"It doesn't cost as much as smoking, doesn't smell bad, and in orders of magnitude safer for my health than smoking. My parents smoke, cigarettes are always accessible but i don't want to be a smoker." (17 year-old, male, vapes every day)

"The accessibility of it, as well as the perceived "safety" of vaping when compared to that of smoking tobacco or other drugs." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"The trends on social media influence the younger generations to try it. It also dosen't help when there are advertisements around on social media platforms and on shop windows." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"The way that vapes are packaged and the flavours vape companies are producing, it's very targeted towards kids. It's also about how everyones doing it, kids get involved in trying to fit in and try it then boom, they're addicted and spending \$35-\$40 every week on them." (14 year-old, female, has quit vaping)

"Vaping is appealing to young people because of how easy it is to get by lying about age and the colours are appealing with a little surfer dude on the Cape. The flavours are Mangi burst or strawberry punch or unicorn appealing to young teens, this product was designed to help you quit smoking and they should be plain flavours with no logos or colours with no designs." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Young people's access to 'vapes'

Although Australia has taken a precautionary approach to e-cigarettes,⁹ and controls access pathways through various state and federal legislation,¹⁰ evidence suggests that young people can easily circumvent official channels to access 'vapes' illegally.⁴ This is concerning because a growing body of evidence shows that for non-smokers, e-cigarettes confer no health benefits and are harmful to health overall.¹¹

For young people, the health risks of 'vaping' are amplified by their developmental vulnerability. Young people's brains and bodies are still developing, making them more susceptible than adults to the effects of some chemicals commonly found in 'vapes', particularly nicotine, which is highly addictive.^{12,13,14} Health risks for young people who 'vape' include:

- smoking uptake, which puts them at risk of the extreme harms caused by tobacco smoking¹¹
- damage to the developing brain¹⁵
- dependence (adolescents who are exposed to nicotine may become dependent more rapidly and at lower doses than adults)¹⁶
- about double the likelihood of relapse to smoking in ex-smokers¹¹
- increased likelihood of prolongation of smoking for dual users (ie., people who smoke and 'vape'), noting that the health impacts of dual use are not yet known.¹¹

While the safety and health impacts of e-cigarettes are still being tested, young people are accessing and using them. Results from the survey confirm that, despite some regulatory controls, these products are easy for young people to access, as shown in Table 4.³

Table 4. Young people's perceptions of ease of access to 'vapes'

Response option to survey question: "How easy do you think it is for someone your age to get a vape?"	Number of participants who selected this response option
Yes, pretty easy	1168
Yes, super easy	1146
I don't know/I'm not sure	678
No, it's not easy at all	140
Prefer not to say	45

Participants were also asked, "Where do you think young people usually get vapes?" The most common response to this question was, 'friends' or 'friends of friends', followed by 'dealers' or 'suppliers', and 'online' through various channels, including social networking platforms such as Snapchat, Facebook (Marketplace), Instagram and Telegram.

"From dealers that's where I get mine, friends of friends." (14 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"Most can get them through "a friend of a friend" - most know someone who knows someone with access to vapes. People with access to vapes often advertise them on Snapchat. Vapes are also still sold in some corner stores." (18 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"From stores selling them illegally or through people on social media who will meet up and buy. Usually on marketplace or Snapchat." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"maybe through their friends. heaps of people sell it on their snapchat stories." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

Consistent with the responses presented in Table 4, the next most common response to this question was that 'vapes' are available "everywhere" from "other people" and that it is very easy for a young person to get one.

"They seem to be everywhere, people have their own supplier and share them around." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It won't stop, more and more people are doing it and at younger ages. They are way to easily accessible." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

Similarly high proportions of participants reported that young people usually get 'vapes' 'at school' or 'from other students', or from 'vape' or 'smoke shops' that do not verify the age of buyers. Another commonly reported source was family members, including parents or older siblings.

"From other students in schools who has contacts who can get them for them like siblings/ older friends. Or walk in to a shop that sells and will easily give them to them to make money without asking for [ID] or checking that it's actually theirs, not a fake or shared ID, from their friend." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I was able to walk into multiple stores around perth and buy my own at 15, I was also able to find people my age and younger at school or work that were selling." (16 year-old, male, has quit vaping)

"From friends or vape shops, I'm not sure, never tried to buy one." (16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"From Vape stores in the city where they don't check ID's and also from people in my year group at school that look older and sell them to younger people." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

Worries or concerns young people have about 'vapes' and 'vaping'

Few studies have been conducted with Australian young people about whether they have any worries or concerns about 'vapes' and/or 'vaping'. In 2022, the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People conducted a state-wide survey with South Australian young people aged 13 to 19 years on the topic of 'vaping'.¹⁷ Nine hundred and fifty young people took part in that survey and most of them expressed concerns about how easy it is to access 'vapes' (without legal ramifications for the seller or user), and how addictive the products are (or can be).

For participants in the current survey, by far the most worrying or concerning aspect of 'vapes' or 'vaping' is the impact it has on the health of the user, as well as the people around them, through 'secondhand smoke' (e-cigarette aerosol). Within this, it was very common for participants to be worried or concerned about 'vapes' damaging the lungs, causing cancer and/or premature death. Participants also often expressed concern about the health of friends, family or 'people who vape'. These concerns arose for many participants, regardless of whether they had 'vaped' or not.

"Is there anything that doesn't concern me about vaping? It's so horrible for your health and the increase in it lately is astounding, popcorn lung is the most scary." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"It doesn't just affect you physically (lungs out of breath etc) it affects you mentally as well." (14 year-old, male, vapes every now and then)

"Uh, all the health problems? AND SECOND HAND SMOKING. I swear I inhale so much in the school bathroom it's sickening." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"The long-term effects of vaping (e.g. lung cancer, etc.), the effect of vaping to others around them (secondary inhalation) can also be fatal." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I was super nervous about getting popcorn lung and towards the end of when I was vaping, cancer." (16 year-old, male, has quit vaping)

"It will kill you or damage you long term like it has damaged me." (17 year-old, male, has quit vaping but used to vape daily)

"the health issues it causes; i've had several family members who were smokers/e-cig users die of cancer/lung problems, and feel there'll be an increase in diagnoses of these because of vaping." (18 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"People can die in the same way as if someone were to smoke. It affects the lungs, the same way smoking works." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

Some participants talked about the negative health impacts of 'vaping' as a deterrent to starting or continuing to 'vape'. Others could not understand why people 'vape' when it is so unhealthy and harmful.

"it can kill you quickly which is why i tried like 3 times then decided not to."
(12 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

"As a sportsman myself, vaping has got to be the most stupid thing ever. I've read it decreases your lung capacity and hurts you in horrible ways in the long term. As a swimmer and cricketer, it is important that I stay clear from this." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I don't understand why people want to die before they get old by putting illegal and unhealthy chemicals in there body!!" (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I am concerned about the fact that not many people realise that they are addicted or how much it harms you." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

The next most reported concern among participants was that 'vaping' affects others. Many participants talked about feeling uncomfortable, annoyed, scared or unsafe going into school or public toilets where other students or people 'vape'. Common negative experiences included having smoke (e-cigarette aerosol) blown into their face and/or having to hold their breath to avoid passive inhalation, being offered or peer pressured to 'vape', and their freedoms being restricted by rules designed to catch people 'vaping' at school.

"in public schools during recess and lunch I cannot go to the bathroom as there are large groups crowding the toilets not allowing me to go in and end up feeling uncomfortable. they leave their dead vapes in the toilets. They vape in the bus and purposely blow smoke into your face." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"that people do it very often and that they do it in public places and private (bathrooms) which make me uncomfortable." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"The only problem I have with others doing it is that it makes younger people feel unsafe when entering school bathrooms." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"the harm that it causes the other people who don't vape when people who do continue to do it in an enclosed space and peer pressure." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It is to common at school (BCC) to finally find non-vandalized toilets but then find people vaping there and that whenever I go to the toilet I have to hold in my breath." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"There are always older kids in school who vape and sometimes it can be a little bit scary. Sometimes they even offer you a vape." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I literally hate the idea of walking into a school bathroom and seeing students vape. The bathroom is supposed to serve its particular purpose, and it's annoying to me that people are taking advantage of that purpose just to vape." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It's disgusting. People are doing it in places that should be safe for everyone and it makes others uncomfortable (especially at school)." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"People using up the bathrooms to vape and then the smells affect other people who don't want to vape or people who quit and don't want to get back into it." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Yes. Especially on the school buses where there are little children that are too scared to stand up for themselves and they have no other choice but to breathe in the fumes." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Yes... if someone does get hurt from vaping, every student will be checked and you could get blamed or framed." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"Just the long term issues that can affect those people that they either don't know about or disregard. That and the fact that we lose privileges like being able to go to the toilet without supervision and approval because people can't stop vaping." (16 year-old male, has tried vaping)

Several participants were worried about the increased risk of health problems for people with asthma who are exposed to 'secondhand smoke' (e-cigarette aerosol).

"It's harming them but then also harming me and I have asthma." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"Yes as i have really bad asthma and could die." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"yes to many people are dieing and it needs to stop because when you vape or smoke it go out into the atmosphere and people around you especially the one with asthma struggle to breath and kills other people not just you." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Confirming results from other Australian research,^{17,18,19} another commonly reported concern is that 'vaping' is addictive and very difficult to stop once you start. For some, addiction was concerning because it manifested in antisocial behaviour.

"I feel that even when some vapes do not contain nicotine, the ones that do have negative side effects other than making a constant user addicted, such as hindering an adolescent brain to fully develop." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"they are mad addictive and the nic withdrawals change people." (16 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

"yes indeed, it is destroying some people in my year and turning them different. it has also impacted me because people are being more aggressive and less kind." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

Other participants were mainly concerned or worried that 'vaping' is "so common" among young people, including their friends or peers, family or loved ones, and people who are younger than them. This finding is consistent with previous qualitative research conducted with Australian young people.^{18,19}

"Mainly for young people as there still growing and it can have a negative impact on there body/health as a whole. The main thing that worries me is people who have only just started high school or not even started high school are vaping." (18 year-old, male, vapes every day)

"The smoke coming onto my face, also my last concern is my dad vaping, I just want him to stop. He promised he would stop by the end of 2022, he did stop for like 1 to 2 months, but then he kept going=." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I'm worried that I'm going to lose my friends young due to health problems caused by vaping." (16 year-old, female, has not tried vaping)

"i see people my age already experiencing lung problems like being out of breath, coughing and having to go on puffers." (17 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

Top five things young people wish their peers knew about 'vaping'

Previous qualitative research with Australian young people indicates that they are aware that 'vapes'/'vaping' is "bad for you" and addictive,¹⁸ but many are unsure 'how bad it really is'.^{17,18,19} To expand on these findings, participants in the current survey were asked, "What do you wish people your age knew about vaping?"

Health harms

Overwhelmingly, participants said they wish their peers knew about the health risks, harms and 'side effects' of 'vaping', both now and into the future. Damage to the lungs and developing cancer were the most commonly cited health risks that participants want their peers to know about. Participants also want their peers to know that 'vaping' is just as risky and harmful as smoking.

"i wish people knew what could happen to them if they keep going and what it is not only doing to their lungs but also their brains." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"They already know its bad for you but I wish they knew how bad it really is and the life long impacts." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"You can start getting pains in your chest and it's annoying if you play sport." (17 year-old, female, has quit vaping)

"That it will ruin your lungs and prevent you from doing simple things such as being able to breathe properly and even walk without struggling to breathe." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"how excruciatingly bad it is for your health in the grand scheme of things and how bad it is for your lungs and you are exposing yourself to many different cancers." (16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"EVALI: Emphysema, lipid pneumonia, bronchiolitis etc." (16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"That its actually bad for you and its flavoured lung cancer and they should stay away from it." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I wish they knew that they could get diagnosed with severe lung conditions or cancer, and that they could get suspended or expelled from their school, and also that it is NOT better than smoking." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

Long-term consequences and premature death

Closely related to this, the second most common response was that young people wish their peers understood that 'vaping' has irreversible long-term impacts on health, and that it can, or will, "kill you" and/or lead to premature death. Others talked about how 'vaping' negatively impacts relationships and 'your future'.

"How it affects your everyday life for the worse (usually people see the short-term effects of them and not actually think ahead)." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"That it can kill. Anything like this does not care about what you think or feel. Once it takes effect in your lungs, it can still cause damage." (17 year-old, young person identifies 'in another way', has never tried vaping)

"that even if you stop vaping for like 5 years you can still get problems with your lungs and stuff." (14 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"their lungs get ruined and they'll probably die a lot earlier than most people." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"That its worse than smoking and it really really bad for your body long term physically and mentally." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"It can kill you, cause long term issues, put you in hospital and can effect many future decisions such as jobs or sporting careers." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That vaping harms emotional and physical health + relationships with family members, friends, etc. And it's also illegal to sell them to minors..." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It is harmful and definitely is not better then smoking, it is toxic and will bring you an early death." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

'Vaping' is "not cool"

Many participants said they want their peers to know that 'vaping' is not cool, or not as cool as some people think. Many respondents described the negative social image of young people who 'vape'.

"... No one thinks that vaping is cool. It's actually embarrassing." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That you don't look cool and it honestly does damage your health whether you believe it or not." (16 year-old, male, "tried vaping once and hated it")

You don't need to vape to fit in, to be cool. If the people around you don't accept you for you, then it's clear that they're only using you to see what you would do just to fit in. Vaping isn't cool, especially not for your body. You can die from vaping. Wasting your life away with vaping isn't worth impressing some people. Don't vape please. It affects others as well, and you could lose your closest friends to vaping or because they have to inhale your vape."

(12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"How foolish and brainless they are for wasting their lives on a stupid container filled with poisonous flavoured air which can destroy their life. They never seem to learn their lesson nor listen to any teachers or parents. They only live for themselves and never focus on the consequences. Especially since we're going to graduate soon as well." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"The 'benefits' (such as seeming 'cool') aren't worth the long term consequences and damage on the lungs, etc." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"they look like douchbags and not good 4 health." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That it's horrible for you, and doesn't make you cool, just disgusting." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"You don't look cool doing it, in fact you look like an idiot for wasting money on an e-cig. Makes people talk about you behind their back. It can cause popcorn lungs, breathing problems, cancer, shorten ur lifespan." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"A. It's stupid and horrible for your health. If that doesn't work: B. Everyone makes fun of you for going to the toilets in groups, vaping, coming out and washing out your mouth at the water fountain. Every time. It looks stupid." (15 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I wish they all knew how much money and time and effort they're wasting on them. I wish they knew the horrible effects it has on their body but also that it turns them into horrible people." (16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"Vaping doesn't make you better than everyone else, it probably makes people think less of you." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

'Vaping' is highly addictive and hard to stop once you start

Many participants would like their peers to know that 'vapes'/'vaping' is very addictive and very hard to stop once you start. This finding is consistent with other qualitative research conducted with Australian young people.^{17,18,19}

"...It is extremely dangerous and you shouldn't try it, even just a few puffs. You may think you won't get addicted but there is a lot of nicotine in them." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It isn't good for you, all that will happen is that you will become addicted which will subsequently severely impact your future." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That it's so bad for you and it's so easy to get addicted. Like even with one puff you can become so addicted and crave it everyday." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"We know a lot more than people think, we are aware of the health disadvantages that come with it. It is just an addictive substance, and I wish people knew how truly addicting it is." (17 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"I wish they knew that vaping isn't something they won't be affected by if they just take one puff, and instead chances are they will get addicted and the other harms of vaping will then damage their health. Apparently some people also think vaping is not as dangerous as smoking, and I wish they knew that this isn't necessarily true. Basically I wish people my age knew that the risks of vaping are much higher than the benefit of hanging out with their friends who vape."

(13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That it is extremely harmful and that the nicotine in vapes is sooo addictive that it's almost like once you start it is very hard to stop." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It can be just as harmful as smoking, especially vapes containing nicotine, as dependency and nicotine addictions can still form." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Closely related to the theme of 'addiction', and reported by an equally high proportion of participants, is that young people wish their peers knew how much they would regret ever trying a 'vape'.

"I wish that they knew and didn't try it unlike me. I wish I didn't [ever have] that first hit someday." (14 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"don't do it at all it's addicting ur going to regret it." (15 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"It will hurt you so badly just as it hurt me." (17 year-old, male, "quit but used to vape every day")

"it's really bad for your health and you will regret [it] when you are older." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It's bad for your lungs and can give you further problems in life. Trust me you should never try smoking, vaping, e-cigarettes or anything else out there like that." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I wish people knew that vaping can damage your life span and there are others ways to release stress other than just vaping. Vaping can probably damage your lungs and there's literally no point because at the end, they're gonna regret it." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"that it still hurts you and doesn't make you cool and that when you get older the damage it does to your lungs is irreversible and you will regret it so much because it can take lots of years away from you and with your friends and family and your family and friends lives will never be the same when they lose you." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

The chemicals in 'vapes'

Similar to the importance young people placed on knowing about nicotine addiction, many respondents said it is important for their peers to know more about the chemicals in 'vapes', especially because products are not labelled well. Other young people want their peers to know about the risk of devices exploding and causing injury.

"That it's so harmful and they are consuming so many chemicals." (18 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That there are chemicals that are in it and no one knows what it does." (14 year-old, male, undisclosed vaping status)

"That it is really harmful and worse than smoking because you don't always know what's in a vape." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"One thing I would like young vapers to know is that there are better ways of satisfying yourself than infusing your lungs with battery acid and rat poison. There is more to life than deciding which flavour of smoke you want to inhale next. I also wish they knew about how much danger they are putting themselves in. Not just on their lungs and health but the danger of their vapes exploding. On multiple occasions people have had their vapes explode in their pockets or face causing serious damage and harm. These injuries usually happen when a vape has been reused or recharged, which is often what has been done to the vapes being sold to young school kids."

(17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"It is horrible and VERY bad for you...It can effect your mental and physical health. And your just breathing in fly spray and weedkiller, also nail polish remover." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"A lot of people think it won't do anything to them but if your breathing in chemicals and nicotine it will end up having a bad effect on you." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I feel people need to be aware what is in vapes because most vapes that have nicotine in them, it is not labelled on the ingredients list." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"... I also [wish] it was easier to tell what vapes have nicotine and what ones don't. I'd prefer to use the non nicotine ones but sometimes they're mislabelled because they're not regulated well yet." (18 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"how harmful it can be for your pets if you vape inside, they will lick up the liquid vapour and ingest many chemicals including lead, acetone and various other things not found in traditional cigarettes." (16 year-old female, vapes every now and then)

"That it causes Cancer and that they explode sometimes and a lot of young people die from vapes." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Vaping can make you really sick and you can become easily addicted. Vapes can also explode which can cause great dangers to yourself." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"there is a chance it can blow up there is no filter on it so all the poison and toxins go fully into you and straight to your lungs." (16 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

Top five things young people wish adults knew about 'vaping'

Previous research with WA young people indicates they would like adults to know that 'vapes' are easily accessible and addictive, that there are many reasons for use, including curiosity/experimentation, stress relief, to 'fit in', rebel, be social or 'cool', and misunderstanding or not knowing the risks.¹⁸ Almost two-thirds of young people (60.6%) in a 2022 South Australian survey,¹⁷ reported they would like schools to teach young people about e-cigarettes, including information about health impacts and risks, legality, financial costs, and advice about avoiding uptake or stopping use. Participants in that survey also reported wanting more focus from adults on the people who supply these products to children, and less punitive measures on users under 18 years of age.

It's bad for health

Similar to previous results, the most important thing participants in the current survey wish adults knew about 'vaping' is that "it's bad" for your physical health (particularly your lungs), your mental health, and that it can, or will, "kill you". Within this, many participants commented that 'vaping' is "not cool" and is not safer or better than smoking.

"To realise how bad it is for mental health." (12 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"that it is extremely bad for you especially when your mind is still growing."
(12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"that their brain hasn't fully developed and it could impact them greatly." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"IT KILLS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping, 1610)

"It's disgusting Not healthy NOT cool Kills you." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I wish adults knew that it's not much better than smoking and I wish that young people knew that it would cause them bad health." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That it is an equivalent of smoking cigarettes and is still VERY bad for you."
(14 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

Adults need to take responsibility to stop 'vaping' and help young people avoid it

The next most reported response was that young people wish adults knew whether their own child 'vapes'. Many participants want adults to be 'more aware of the signs', and to 'take responsibility' to put a stop to children 'vaping'.

"That you need to watch your kids and anything they are doing because you never know." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"they should be a parent and actually do their role and don't let them vape."
(16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"... I wish that some adults knew children were doing it- their child might be vaping even!" (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"They could be more observant and understanding. they should know what vapes look like and the characteristics one takes on after vaping so they can spot it in their child." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"... parents should stop giving kids money to buy them." (18 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Not to sell them to young people it's horrible for your lungs." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I wish they knew to not give vapes to younger people and tell them off for doing it." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"You should not under any circumstances give them vapes and take it off of them to prevent any damage to their health." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I wish adults knew that vapes need to be kept away from kids our age and to try prevent [their] kids from being around people who participate in vaping." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I wish adults knew more about how to detect that their child is vaping or identify things like packaging. Also I think teachers should maybe check bathrooms around schools regularly, because in my own experience every

time I've gone through my school there has been at least one toilet with people vaping, even during class time." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

Others said they wish adults knew how to 'talk to kids' about 'vapes'/'vaping', and to listen to what young people have to say instead of getting angry.

"Most of them are trying to fit in talk to your kid don't scream at them have a heart felt chat with them and help them out with there addiction, screaming will only make them want too rebel against you because they are teenagers." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"That they talk to their kids about the risk of it." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"That there's a chance their kid might vape, and that they should talk to them about vaping." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That kids are victims of their circumstances, misinformation or no information leads to issues in life, adults need to communicate with young people more and make a more active effort to be involved and interested in us." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"What [I wish] adults knew about vaping and young people is that it can destroy your health, young people should be educated about these and parents should speak to their children." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Many respondents also said they would like adults to 'be better role models', and to not 'vape' or smoke cigarettes themselves.

"That it's really bad for you and it's bad role modeling." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"adults doing it can influence young people and it can ruin the rest of your life for young people." (14 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

"I honestly feel parents who children are smoking are horrible role models and are a horrible reason to be considered a parent. Why risk your child's entire future just because they "enjoy it"?! I wished parents were more caring about their kids and what they are being involved with." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I wish that adults took action and realise that them vaping can influence their child beginning to vape because they think it's okay." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Take care of teenagers and teach them the dangers of vaping. Especially do not vape or smoke, otherwise your children can copy you to do the same thing." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"kids reflect on their parents they would probably vape if their parents do." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"that having a vape could influence their kids into vaping and gives them easy access to a vape." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"You're ruining their lives. As an adult you should be an example for these children and if they ask for a vape or to vape, you need to say no." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

'Vaping' among young people is "more common than you think"

A high proportion of participants said they want adults to know that 'vaping' is "way more common than you think" and that many young people do it or have tried, including 'your own kids'. Many of these respondents referred to how easy it is to sneak or hide 'vapes', and to do it "behind your back" or "under your nose".

"it happens more than they realise and everyone is exposed to vapes at least once in their life (in the school bathrooms etc)." (17 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"Parents can't stop their children from doing it if they're in the wrong crowd + the most unexpected people do it." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"that lots of their kids probably vape without their parents knowing." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Kids hide them, we buy them for \$20 or more. They don't know who we really are." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"How many people actually vape and how bad it is for kids and their development." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"that more children do it than what they realise and even if they think that their children don't it is more than likely that they do and is ruining their health." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I wish adults realised how common it is for their children to vape. They may think their child is well behaved but chances are they have a vape or two in their pocket or drawers." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"How it can be anywhere, and easy to hide. Their children could be vaping while the parents don't know about it." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"your child probably does it under your nose. Be aware how they look like. Monitor their friends and or friend groups." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Many children can hide it easily, and parents may think "nah it's not possible for my child to vape" when they are." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

There are many reasons a young person might 'vape'

Many participants said they want adults to understand there are many reasons that young people might 'vape', with the most reported reasons being peer pressure and/or a desire to 'fit in' or be 'cool', followed by addiction. These results are consistent with other Australian evidence showing that young people experience significant peer pressure to try 'vaping' and find it difficult to say 'no', or quit once they start.^{17,18,19}

"They [know] more about vaping but they need to know how to deal with the real problems for the children and why they start vaping. And they need to know that if the kids don't feel comfortable discussing their problems with their parents that's ok because they can still talk to others and eventually work things out." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"That telling your kids that it's bad for you isn't good enough. Because they don't care, children especially high school kids just wanna fit in. They don't care about anything else other than to fit in with the other kids at school." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"i don't know not all young people do it just because they want to rebel like the first few times i did it it was because i got forced to then i just started doing it and got addicted." (17 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"that they do it because 1. they think its cool or 2. they do it because they need distractions." (16 year-old, female, vapes every now and then)

"That alot of the time it isn't something we do to seem 'cool', and in reality alot of people are addicted and can't stop." (15 year-old, male, vapes every day)

"well we only like the feeling and effects of it but we didn't know till to late how addictive it is." (16 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

"To all the parents, guardians and adults, you need to be aware of the group of friends that your child hangs around. It's terribly easy to become influenced around them since they just want to fit in therefore that's what gets them into trouble, along with doing other bad stuff." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That their children are buying vapes and what them and their peers are peer pressuring their children to try and/or get vapes." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"They are going to try and/or do these activities through curiosity and/or peer pressure regardless of what you say." (17 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"Parents should be aware of the pressure their young children face when it comes to vaping and have a serious conversation with them to deny if ever, they are offered." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"How easy they are to get, how much crap you get for not doing it." (13 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

"I wish they also understood that sometimes it isn't the kids fault, peer pressure is a really big thing especially when it comes to vaping." (14 year-old, female, has quit vaping)

"They can't just stop if you tell them to, it needs to be harder to get and for social dynamics to change, make it so that people don't feel the need to have to copy what others do to be accepted." (16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Participants also think adults should know that another key reason young people might 'vape' is to help cope with stress and other challenges.

"a lot of kids do it and maybe the problem lies with the stress put on them by adults and maybe there are more underlying issues that we need to fix.....just a thought." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"how many people do it and how many people are truly going through something (depression, anxiety, problems at home, etc) and they won't reach out for help even if offered." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"some kids vape to escape their problems instead of seeking professional help." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Some are idiots that do it to be cool like the 12 year olds that have never smoked but people like me do it to not smoke cigarettes and cope with mental health issues." (16 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"that they shouldn't be so hard on them if there doing it because there stressed but if there doing it for other purposes then they should be in trouble." (16 year-old, male, vapes every now and then)

"that not everybody vapes to impress people, some people vape to ease emotions or purely out of addiction." (17 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"That when young people vape we know the side effects we just do not care as most people that vape either have mental health issues or are already addicted." (15 year-old, female, vapes every day)

More education, information and warnings are needed

The fifth most important thing participants said they wish adults knew about 'vaping' is that more education, information and warnings are needed, for young people and adults alike. The information participants reported most wanting to receive is information from trustworthy adults about the consequences, impacts and effects of 'vaping'.

"adults need to know just as much as young people about vaping because they are the ones that need to actively stop vaping in there children and friends" (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"That their kids will probably try vaping at least once on their life, but to try and warn them of the dangers associated with this. (but at the same time not be overbearing because their kids will probably experiment and need to decide for themselves that it's not good for them)." (16 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"That their kids are/aren't doing it. Just want them to be educated about it so can educate kids." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"It's going to happen if they like it or not, just educate the young generations on how its bad and the older generations as its becoming a part of our everyday lives." (17 year-old female, has tried vaping)

"I wish adults like parents mostly should teach their kids why vaping is not good for the mental health state and that it can give young people cancer." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"What adults knew about vaping and young people is that it can destroy your health, young people should be educated about these and parents should speak to their children." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"Looking to find and punish vapers in schools isn't going to help as much as educating about the risks and targeting the issue at its source will." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"To encourage young people to seek help if they are addicted and that the education behind vaping has to increase." (18 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

Supports that young people want from adults

With little previous research about the kinds of supports WA young people would like from adults if they were worried or concerned about 'vapes' or 'vaping', it was important to capture participants' views. Participants were asked, "If you were concerned about vaping, what support would you want from adults?"

The most common responses were evenly distributed across four interrelated themes, including (from most common to least common response), wanting adults to:

- help young people quit or not start
- implement bans, restrictions or other action to stop 'vaping'
- provide information, education or advice to help young people avoid or stop 'vaping'
- be understanding and open, not punitive, angry, or judgemental towards young people who 'vape'.

Help young people quit or not start

A high proportion of participants said that if they were concerned about 'vaping', they would want help from adults to stop or never start 'vaping'. In particular, they want adults to provide "addiction support" to help them quit and/or tools to combat peer pressure.

"i would just want them to help me quit and not get angry at me." (17 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"To intervene and treat it with rehabilitative services, it is an addictive substance and withdrawal is very real." (18 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"Not being told i am a disappointment and getting a routine to help stop." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I would want them to understand that vaping is just like any other addiction, people want to stop but just can't, they get agitated when they can't hit a vape every 10 minutes. Adults should not only understand this but find ways

to support them whether it's slow progression of less vaping or even finding counselling." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"i would ask my parents for support and to know how to avoid it when i see people vaping." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Talking to them on how to deal with people vaping and how to avoid being a victim of it." (16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"something to help me protect myself from the temptation of it." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"If someone asked me if I would like to try a vape I would want advice from them on what to say." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Education about the health risks and what to do under peer pressure circumstances." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"that you shouldnt do it and how to say no to people who want you to try". (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"I would want some sort of reassurance that I don't have to vape and that it's okay not to." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Supporting them and saying its ok to not be following everything other people do." (16 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Implement bans, restrictions or other action to stop 'vaping'

Many participants said they want adults to implement more rules to prevent or stop 'vaping', especially banning or restricting the production, promotion and/or sale or supply of 'vapes' to young people.

"Them to crack down on places that sell them to underage kids." (15 year old, identifies 'in another way', has never tried vaping)

"Stopping vape resellers or shutting down vape stores all together." (14 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"Help get kids off vapes and arrest the losers selling them." (14 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"state or nationwide ban." (15 year-old, male, has tried vaping)

"to ban vapes/cigarettes." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"Making it illegal would be a good first step." (15 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"not giving young people any access to vapes and banning smoking overall so that nobody needs vapes to quit smoking." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"For them not to sell or promote them to people my age." (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"People need to stop making it available and appealing to kids...." (16 year-old, identifies 'in another way', has tried vaping)

"harder to get vapes, make them more expensive, make them less harmful." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"To cut down on shipping them in and who they're being shipped to." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"To actually stop instead of hinting at stopping it. I.e, stop giving talks about vaping and actually go to hotspots and prevent deals." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Provide information, education or advice to help young people avoid or stop 'vaping'

Another common support that participants want from adults is the provision of information, education or advice about the risks and consequence of 'vaping'. Some participants want information to be given to them directly, while others want adults to tell them where to find reliable information and facts about 'vaping'.

"If I was vaping myself I would want adults to support me with resources to help me stop, such as the information on why vaping is a bad idea and anything else to help me quit. ..." (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"More education on the consequences of vaping and having open discussions about quitting." (17 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

"More education about vaping, mainly directed toward the "eshays" and popular students who do vape. They don't understand the consequences and only laugh about it. You could even possibly bring in a person who has suffered from lung cancer by smoking or vaping, or just any diseases that are caused by vaping/smoking." (15 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"no anger just support to quit and educate themselves to be able to educate us." (17 year-old, female, has quit vaping)

"I would want adults to inform teens about the risks of vaping but not in a corny dumb way because then it makes teens less likely to listen." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"A clear way to find information about it and a place to answer my questions." (15 year-old, identifies 'in another way', has never tried vaping)

"to make sure they hear the same thing ppl who smoke cigarettes do and see potential side affects and get told its addictive and bad for them. maybe make the packaging bad like the smokers lungs ones." (17 year-old, identifies 'in another way', has tried vaping)

Be understanding and open, not punitive, angry, or judgemental towards young people who 'vape'

A recurrent theme throughout responses to this question is that young people want adults to be more understanding towards young people who 'vape'. Many participants said it is important for adults to understand and address the underlying reasons that a young person might 'vape'. Many also commented that getting angry,

imposing punishment, or being judgemental is not helpful and could make the problem worse.

"Understanding and concern. Many parents and schools see vaping at face value and only punish those guilty of it without bothering to understand the compounding issues, like peer pressure, addiction, or insecurity. Glossing over these factors and going straight to punishment is a short term solution to a long term issue." (18 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"More understanding about why we actually have the vape, and less about the fact that we have one." (15 year-old, male, vapes every day)

"I would want to be able to have a safe conversation with a trusted adult without them judging the person I am talking about." (12 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I would not want them to shame me as we would already know it is a bad thing. And support to stop vaping." (15 year-old, female, vapes every day)

"I would want adults such as my parents and teachers to support me while I heal myself and stop using vapes. I would want to feel supported and unpressured; able to do things in my own time; while still being encouraged to stop vaping." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"If I was concerned about vaping, I would want my mental health supported by my parents and other trustworthy adults." (14 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"maybe more understanding since most people probably do it due to underlying reasons (i.e. stress and peer pressure). as much as they should face consequences, don't approach the situation aggressively to begin with." (17 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I would want to know that adults would not judge me and that I could freely talk to and confide in them. Instead of getting in trouble, I would want to be supported and educated." (18 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"An adult you could tell and they wouldn't get mad or upset with you, instead they should help you find a way to stop and support you." (13 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"Addiction support as opposed to punishment." (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

"To not just take their vapes because majority are addicted to it and will become aggressive, but to encourage them to slowly reduce the amount they use." (16 year-old, female, has never tried vaping)

"I would like if they had help either at or outside of school for helping students quit." (14 year-old, female, has quit vaping)

"its really hard cause in school if you complain about other people you both get in trouble and basically if you consider the kid as a drug user, they're not going to be really happy about you sending them to vape anonymous. With all seriousness though, there should probably just be an anonymous report

system with some very small/valueless incentive to cut down on vaping.” (17 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

“therapy and help to stop vaping across schools.” (16 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

“I want a mentor to come and speak at all schools.” (13 year-old, female, has tried vaping)

“to talk about it, to help me find ways to help my friends or family to stop using it and to make sure that adults keep it away from me when I am in the community or at their houses.” (13 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

“I dont have any addictions, so I cant put myself in that position for sure, but I know what its like to desperately need support. Trust is the biggest thing. Kids rememeber everything. And we over think too. If you lose our trust or make us believe for a second that you arent trustworthy or have bad intentions - its impossible for us to feel safe or supported. Personally, I just wish there was a trustworthy adult in my life. Someone who doesnt act like they know better or pretend they care just to get me to stop doing what they dont like. Maybe if you want to help young people, other (qualified) young people are the best way to go. The relationship between young teens and adults, from my experience, is always messy. I feel like it would be easier to get support from someone who understands me, someone who is closer to my age and knows trends and knows what its like - not someone who is programmed from a textbook just to legally be qualified to give me "advice" that doesnt even help.” (12 year-old, male, has never tried vaping)

Conclusion

Young people’s use of e-cigarettes (‘vapes’) is a concern for parents, schools, clinicians, public health advocates and young people themselves.

The Commissioner’s ‘Talking about vaping’ survey gave WA young people an important and unique opportunity to share their thoughts on this topic. The volume and quality of responses confirm that ‘vaping’ is an issue for many young people, but one that can be addressed with some key actions and supports from adults.

It is hoped that the findings and themes presented in this report kick-start valuable conversations about ways to better support young people to understand and avoid the risks of using these harmful products.

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