



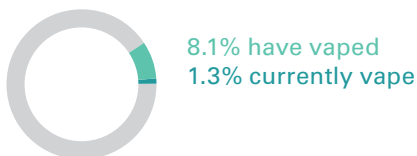
## Facts About Vapes (e-cigarettes) 3: Vaping in Australia

Data on the prevalence of vaping in Australia is limited. What we do know is that whilst vaping is on the increase, smoking tobacco is still more common than vaping. Despite increasing investment in novel nicotine products such as vapes, the mainstay of the tobacco industry's business has not changed. Addressing vaping is important but should not distract from tackling tobacco use.

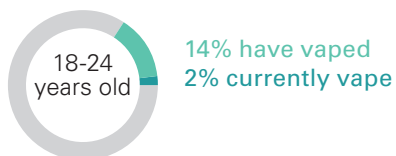
### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and vaping

According to analysis of the 2018/19 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 18 years and over who vape are more likely to be younger, male and living in non-remote areas:

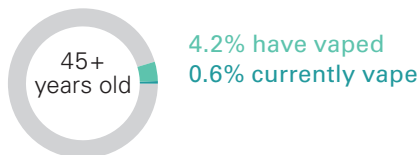
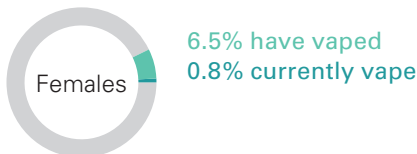
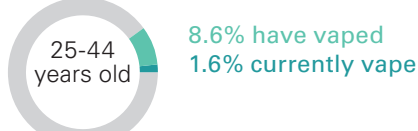
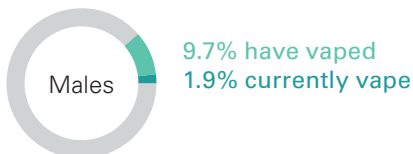
Less than one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults had ever vaped



Younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults were more likely to be current or ever vape users than older adults



Ever use and current use of vapes was slightly higher for males than females



Ever use was less than one in ten for both males and females. Current use was less than one in 50 for males and less than one in 100 for females.

Vaping was reported to be three to four times higher in major cities

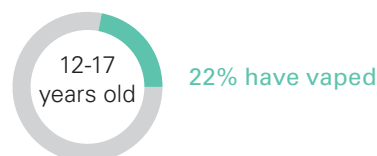
10% major cities  
8.7% regional areas  
2.6% remote areas



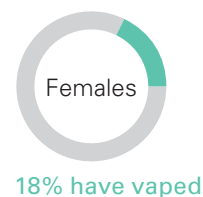
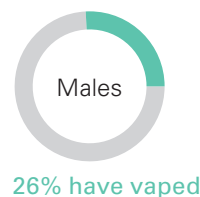
### Australian youth and vaping

Vapes are popular with Australian youth. According to data from ASSAD 2017<sup>2</sup>, vaping by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged 12-17 years is higher than vaping by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults:

Around one in five youths (22%) reported having ever vaped



Just over a quarter of males (26%) had vaped compared with less than one in five females (18%)





We have more information about vaping by all Australian youth than we do about vaping by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth specifically. The Generation Vape project<sup>3</sup> surveyed Australian youth living in NSW and found that of those who had ever vaped:

- favour disposable vapes (52%) and those known to contain nicotine (53%);
- find it easy to access vapes (77%);
- often did not purchase their own vape (70%), with friends commonly supplying them;
- if purchasing would buy from an individual selling vapes (49%) or a retail store (31%);
- rate flavour, price, ability to conceal the vape and vapour, relaxation, and the nicotine hit as important.

Vaping by youth is a concern because:

- nicotine in vapes is highly addictive and can lead to tobacco smoking;
- even vapes labelled as nicotine-free can contain some nicotine;
- nicotine might negatively affect adolescent brain development;
- all vapes contain toxic chemicals and so pose a potential harm to health.

**People who have never smoked but take up vaping, are three times more likely to start smoking tobacco and become regular users than people who don't vape.**

A review by ANU<sup>4</sup> found strong evidence that people who have never smoked but take up vaping, are three times more likely to start smoking tobacco and become regular users than people who don't vape.

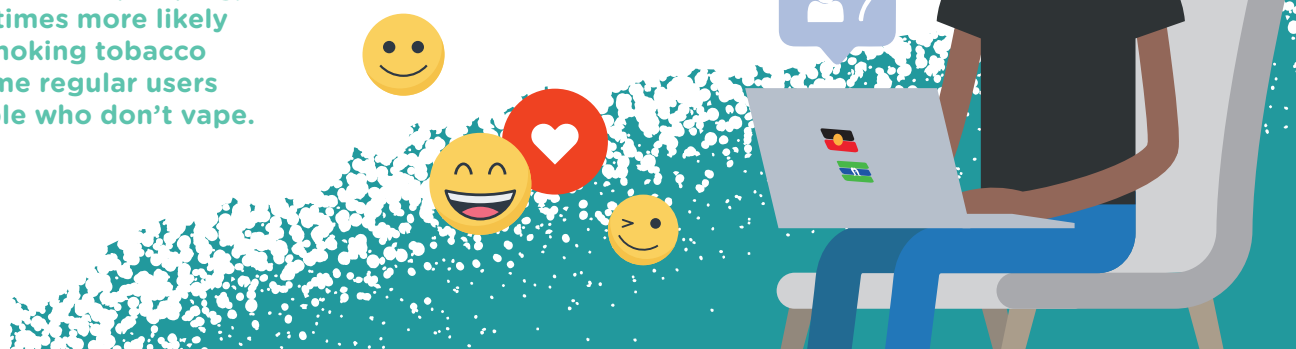
Youth often see vaping as cool and less harmful than smoking cigarettes. Vaping can be motivated by curiosity or peer pressure. Direct social marketing to youth is also a concern. Social media platforms have policies banning the advertising and private sale of vapes, however this is difficult to monitor and regulate. Vaping continues to be promoted as a safe recreational activity on social media platforms<sup>5</sup> inhabited by youth such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

Vaping has been observed at both primary and secondary schools in Australia<sup>6</sup>. School staff report that students vape right outside school, on sports fields and in school bathrooms. This has led to some Australian schools installing vape detectors in bathrooms. These may help deter vaping, but are not a complete solution. Anecdotal evidence suggests youth may use 'stealth' vaping<sup>7</sup> to vape in the classroom and to get past detectors. This includes choosing devices with low odour and low vapour or using techniques such as inhaling into clothing, or 'zero vaping' (zeroing) where the vape aerosol is drawn deep into the lungs and held there for a few seconds, ensuring that on the exhale there is no visible vapour cloud.

Teachers and other school staff<sup>8</sup> report that vaping has a negative effect on students':

- mood;
- behaviour;
- mental health;
- social interactions;
- sporting and academic performance.

Tackling vaping in school age children and youth is clearly important. Evidence from international Indigenous<sup>9</sup> research suggests that messaging should focus on sharing messages where youth will hear them (school, community, social media), acknowledge the link to the tobacco industry and colonialism, and build on the strength and resilience that comes from connection to family, culture, community, and traditional values.



1 [https://tacklingsmoking.org.au/key-resources/publications/40033/?title=A+review+of+evidence+on+the+prevalence+of+and+trends+in+cigarette+and+e-cigarette+use+by+Aboriginal+and+Torres+Strait+Islander+youth+and+adults&contentid=40033\\_1](https://tacklingsmoking.org.au/key-resources/publications/40033/?title=A+review+of+evidence+on+the+prevalence+of+and+trends+in+cigarette+and+e-cigarette+use+by+Aboriginal+and+Torres+Strait+Islander+youth+and+adults&contentid=40033_1)

2 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1753-6405.13299>

3 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1753-6405.13316>

4 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.5694/mja2.51890>

5 [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0376871620302775?casa\\_token=CKHx6fBaNFkAAAAA:VTpklUO8o774fqg7TsX-hyD5XzpegDfnKDJfGxY05pe5sEK4SEgcOvgradU20NvPfCem0LxU4F0x](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0376871620302775?casa_token=CKHx6fBaNFkAAAAA:VTpklUO8o774fqg7TsX-hyD5XzpegDfnKDJfGxY05pe5sEK4SEgcOvgradU20NvPfCem0LxU4F0x)

6 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1753-6405.13281>

7 <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/28/6/610>

8 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1753-6405.13281>

9 <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-13095-y>