

# Children & Young People's Vaping Report



# Contents

<b>Introduction to Healthwatch Blackpool</b> .....	4
<b>Methodology</b> .....	5
<b>Young person's feedback</b> .....	6
Survey spotlight .....	8
Children and young people's survey feedback .....	10
Young person's demographics .....	32
<b>Children and young people's focus group feedback</b> .....	34
Focus group spotlights .....	34
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools and colleges .....	35
Supported accommodation for young people, aged 16-18 years .....	39
Youth groups .....	42
Primary schools .....	48
Additional educational provisions .....	52
Higher education .....	63
Third sector organisations .....	67
<b>Teacher &amp; professionals feedback</b> .....	72
Survey spotlight .....	72
Teachers/professional feedback .....	74
Teachers/professional demographics .....	84
<b>Parent &amp; carer feedback</b> .....	86
Survey spotlight .....	88
Parent/carers feedback .....	90
Parent/carers demographics .....	100
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	104



# Introduction to Healthwatch Blackpool

Healthwatch was established in April 2013 as part of the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act (2012). Healthwatch Blackpool is the independent consumer voice for health and social care, listening to the views of local people on issues that matter. Our ultimate aim is to ensure that local people have a voice, acting on feedback and driving change.

## Our approach

- Listening to people and making sure local people's voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation, especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing people's experiences to learn, understand and improve health and care.
- Acting on feedback to drive change.
- Partnering with the Government, health and care services and the third sector to make care better, whilst retaining our independence.

## THANK YOU

Healthwatch Blackpool would like to say a huge thank you to all the people who chose to take part in our survey and focus groups. We are also incredibly grateful to all organisations for their invaluable assistance and for helping to make this possible.

## Introduction to the project

Healthwatch Blackpool have been commissioned by Public Health Blackpool to conduct a comprehensive engagement exercise, to better understand e-cigarette and vaping behaviours amongst the population. Specific attention was given to:

- Young people
- Teachers and professionals
- Parent and carers

## What do we know?

Blackpool is one of the most deprived areas of England. Historic studies suggest that in areas

of deprivation, people are more than four times more likely to smoke than less deprived areas<sup>1</sup>. Along with this, we are also aware that the proportion of children who have smoked has declined significantly over the last 25 years<sup>2</sup>.

## The rise of e-cigarettes and vapes

Across Blackpool, there has been an increasing level of concern about the use of e-cigarettes and vapes amongst children and young people. A national survey carried out by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) in 2022 found<sup>3</sup>:

- Vaping prevalence (including occasional and regular vaping) was 8.6% in 2022, compared with 4% in 2021 and 4.8% in 2020.
- There is an increase in 11-17 year olds who have ever used a vape, 11.2% in 2021 up to 15.8% in 2022.
- 7% of 11-17 year olds were vaping currently, compared to 3.3% in 2021.

Within Blackpool, a survey carried out Supporting the Health and Well-being of Young people in Blackpool (SHEU) in 2019 found<sup>4</sup>:

- 47% of pupils, aged 12-15 years old, reported that they had used an electronic cigarette/vape. 17% said that they use an e-cigarette regularly (at least once a week). 32% of pupils said they tried vaping first (or have only tried vaping), before smoking cigarettes.
- 50% of students, aged 16-17 years old, reported that they had used an electronic cigarette/vape. 12% said that they use an e-cigarette regularly (at least once a week). 35% of pupils said they tried vaping first (or have only tried vaping), before smoking cigarettes.

Healthwatch Blackpool have engaged across the town to examine the current position of vaping in the area, hoping to better understand prevalence rates, reasons for use and potential health impacts. Our aim is to highlight the views and experiences of children and young people, their families, and professionals who work with children and young people.

We hope that the contents of this report provide a valuable insight into vaping in Blackpool. We aim to shine a spotlight on awareness and usage, attitudes and why, access, safety and availability. We want to evidence the potential implications for public health and policy.

## Objectives

- To conduct a survey identifying key themes surrounding e-cigarettes and vaping, with a clear and representative sample across Blackpool.
- To conduct face-to-face focus groups inclusively across Blackpool, to allow young people with an opportunity to provide feedback.

# Methodology

## Design

Healthwatch Blackpool attended regular steering group meetings with key partners from Public Health Blackpool. Priorities for this project were established through discussions, and it was felt that a mixed-methods design was most appropriate.

Our engagement consisted of two primary methods: a survey with both quantitative and qualitative feedback, plus focus groups. The survey was designed to collect information on vaping habits, perceptions and experiences, benchmarked against our aims. The focus groups were designed to provide a more in-depth understanding of participant's experiences with vaping, as well as to explore themes that emerged from the survey data.

## Procedure

Between November 2022 and March 2023, Healthwatch Blackpool engaged with young people, professionals, parents and carers across the town. We were successful in gaining

- To identify common themes and trends in relation to e-cigarettes and vaping among young people.
- To ensure that young people, parents, carers and key stakeholders are listened to and their views captured.

<sup>1</sup>Office of National Statistics (ONS) (2018) Likelihood of smoking four times higher in England's most deprived areas than least deprived (Accessed 19th March 2023).

<sup>2</sup>NHS Digital (2018) Smoking, Drinking and Drug use amongst Young People in England (Accessed 19th March 2023)

<sup>3</sup>Action on smoking and health (ASH) (2022) Use of e-cigarettes (vapes) among young people in Great Britain (Accessed 19th March 2023)

<sup>4</sup>Supporting the Health and Well-being of Young people in Blackpool (SHEU) 2019 (Accessed 19th March 2023)

feedback from 7 out of 8 mainstream high schools, colleges, primary schools, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools and alternative education provisions.

Along with this, we engaged with an additional 24 organisations who agreed to support this work. Healthwatch Blackpool carried out 25 focus groups directly with young people. We attended school assemblies, worked in partnership with the PCSO team and also local school nurses.

Our survey was available online. We shared with key stakeholders and also printed posters with QR codes.

Finally, Youthwatch volunteers shared the survey amongst peers, as well as using social media to help reach other young people. We readily endorsed the survey on Healthwatch Blackpool social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.

## Limitations

The data collected from the survey relies on self-reported measures which may be subject to social desirability bias. Many young people completed the survey in an educational setting, which may have been subject to peer pressure and dishonesty.



# Young person's feedback

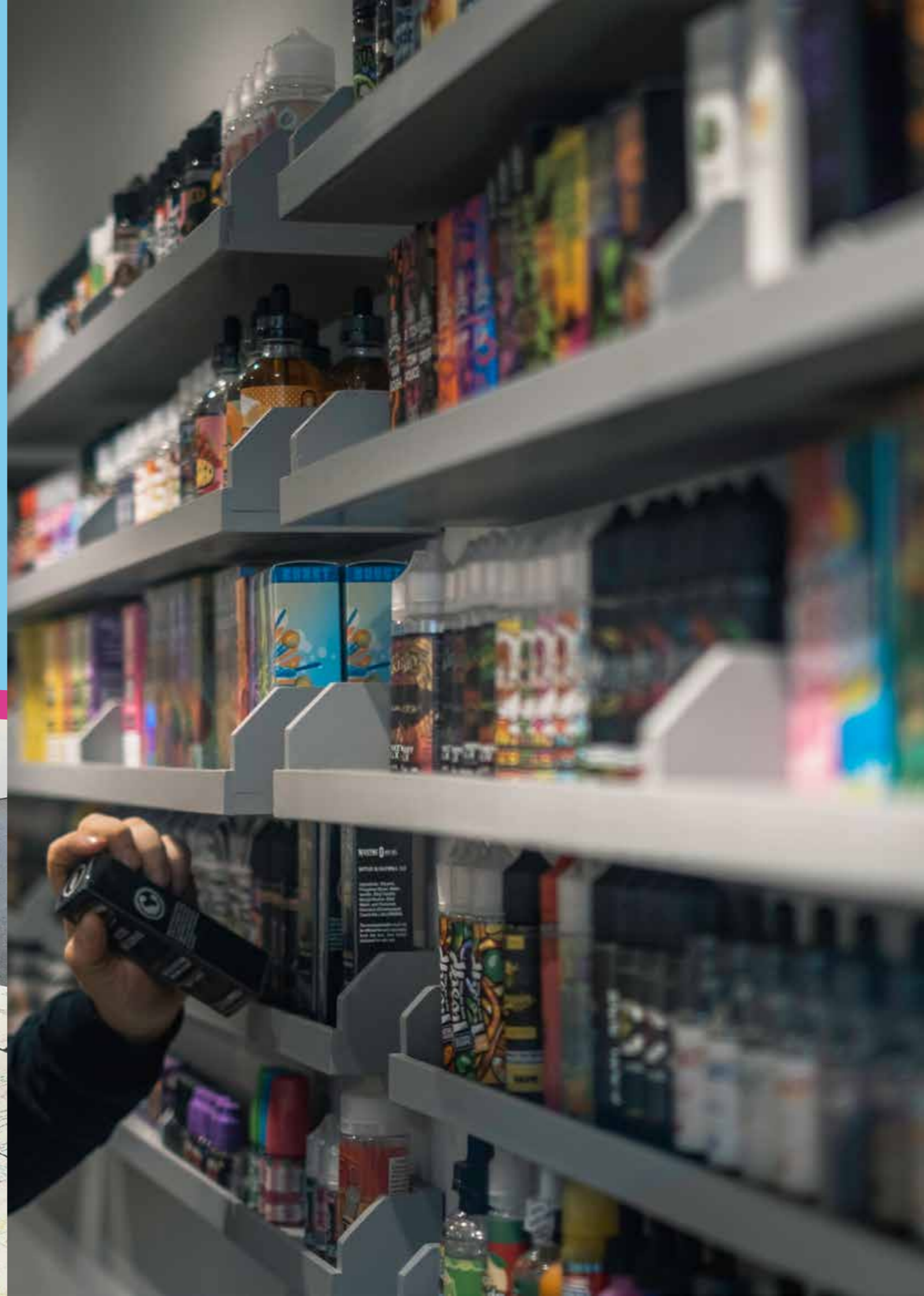
Healthwatch Blackpool have collected feedback from 4170 local children and young people on the topic of e-cigarettes and vaping in Blackpool, through our survey and focus groups.

We are incredibly grateful to all of the people that chose to take part in conversations and support our survey. The insight gained has been invaluable and has been used together to formulate our conclusions.

3532 children and young people, predominantly aged between 10-24, participated in our survey.

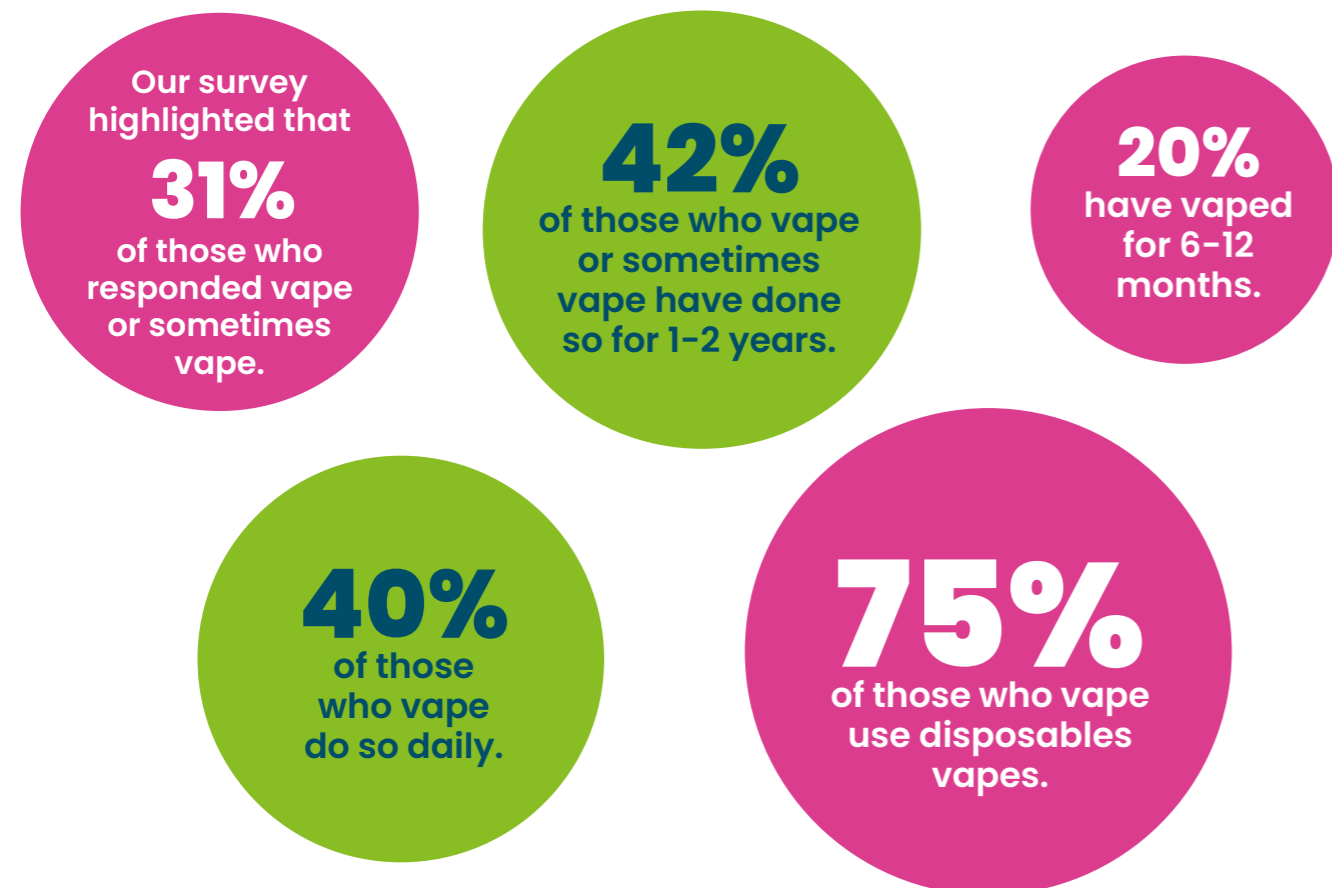
**3532** children and young people participated in our survey.

Feedback from **4170** local children and young people.

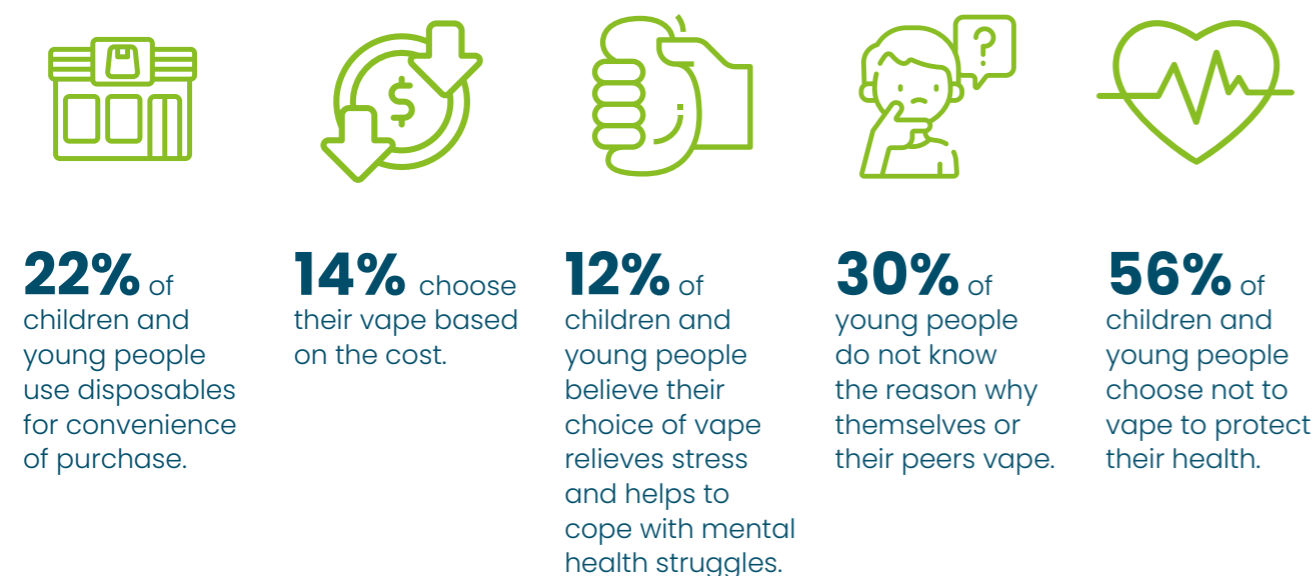


# Survey Spotlight

## Awareness and usage



## Attitudes and why



**15%** of children and young people have smoked cigarettes before vaping.



**9%** of children and young people now smoke cigarettes as a result of vaping.



**27%** of those who vape believe they have vaped THC oil.



**65%** of children and young people prefer fruity flavoured vapes.

## Access, safety and availability

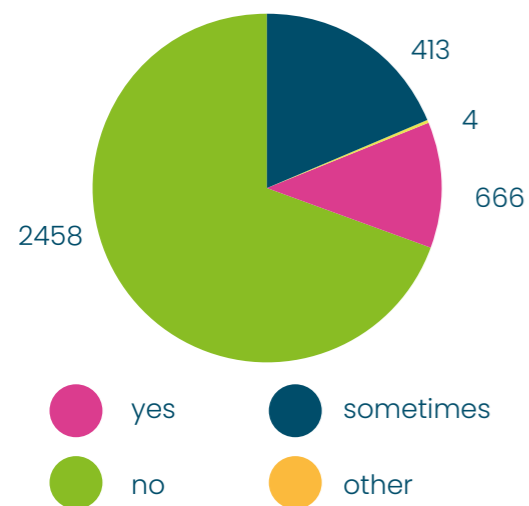
- **27%** of children and young people buy vapes from corner shops and newsagents.
- **36%** of children and young people are given vapes by friends.
- **14%** are bought vapes by family members.
- **57%** of children and young people do not read the packaging of vapes.
- **46%** of children and young people are not worried about the long term health consequences of vaping.
- **32%** of children and young people believe vaping is very unsafe.
- **35%** of children and young people think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes.
- **52%** of children and young people did not know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal.
- **55%** of young people's parents/carers vape or smoke.
- **56%** of children and young people think social media and advertising promotes vaping.
- **45%** of children and young people use social media to find information relating to vaping.
- **52%** of children and young people would benefit from further education on vaping.



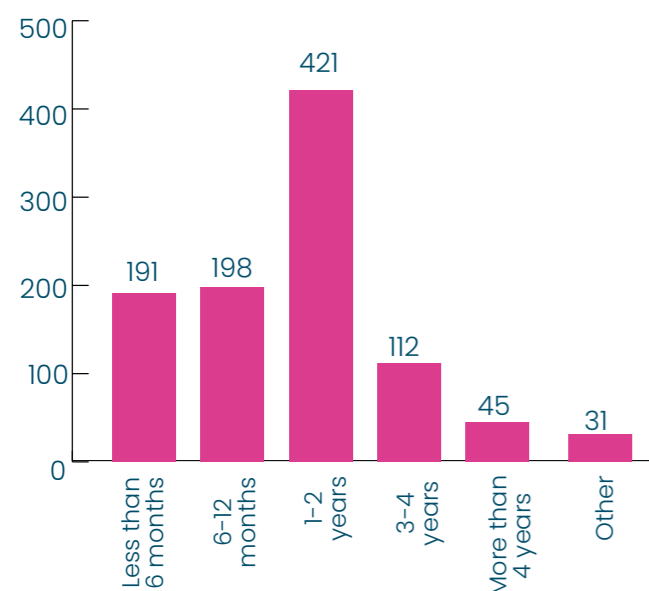


# Children and young people's survey feedback

## Do you vape or use e-cigarettes?

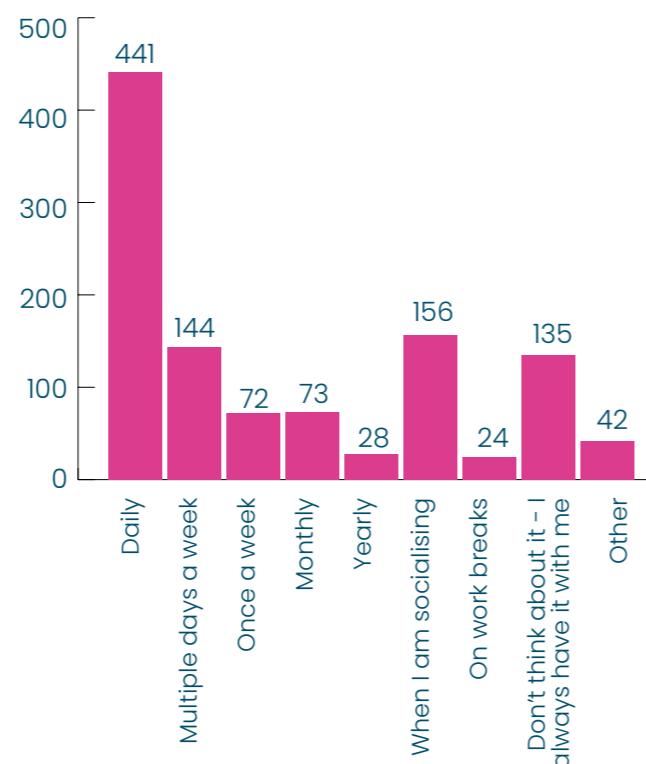


## How long have you vaped for?



31 young people responded "other" and further comments included "tried it and then stopped", "never owned one", "9, nearly 10 years addicted to nicotine" and "I have been smoking since I was 13, started vaping when I was about 15ish to attempt to stop smoking."

## How often do you vape?



42 young people selected "other" and further feedback included "Between classes I can't get enough", "depends when I have it", "every second of the day" and "if people offer me one."



## If you selected daily, how many times a day do you vape?

The most frequent response, given by 36% of young people, when asked how many times a day they vape was "a lot" and "all the time", with 18 of these young people stating they use "one vape a day" or "600+ puffs".

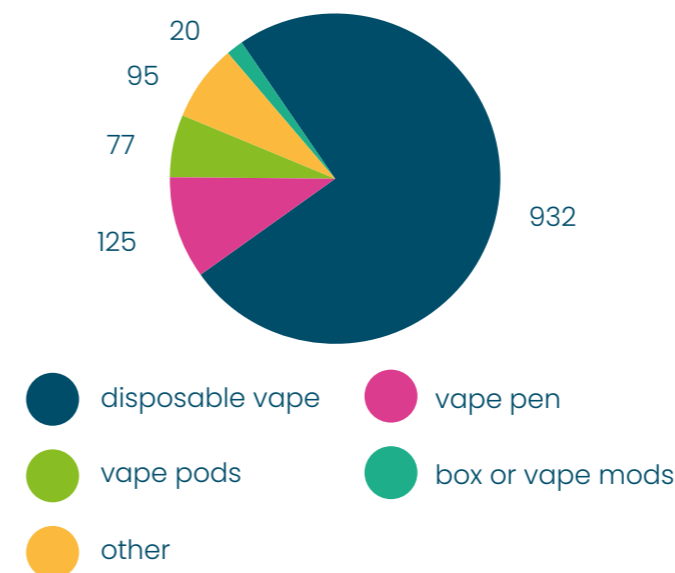
Furthermore, 24 young people stated that they vape as and when required. Specific reference was made to stress levels, social context and boredom.

56 young people believe that they vape between 0-20 times a day.

- "Very often, before and after sleeping and throughout the day."
- "Most free moments."
- "As often as I can."
- "All day everyday."
- "I go through a disposable vape with 600 puffs a day.. so all the time."
- The second most common response, put forward by 100 young people, when asked how many times a day they vape was "don't know" with an additional 33 young people stating "a bit".
- "Idk, no one counts that."
- "No idea, I don't pay attention."
- "Whenever I have the urge to or boredom."
- "When I'm with my mates."
- "When I'm stressed."
- Moreover, a further 62 young people stated they vape 21-500 times a day.
- "After school my mates have them so probably like 30-40 puffs."
- "70 maybe, if not more."
- "400-500 puffs a day."
- "100-400 drags a day."



## What type of vape do you use? Please select any that apply to you:



## Please tell us why you use this type of vape:

The primary motivation for young people's choice of vape, with **23% of responses**, was the taste and feeling of inhalation. There was a particular emphasis on the range of flavours and the sensation on the back of the throat.

- "I like having a variety of flavours."
- "Less harsh tastes nicer."
- "I really use it for the flavour."
- "Tastes nicer than others and is smoother."

Another common reason put forward by young people was the convenience of buying, using and then discarding a disposable vape, with this being mentioned **189 times**. Young people stated that they find them easier to access in the first instance, as well as then finding this type of vape more straightforward to use. When the vape has no puffs remaining, young people find throwing away a disposable vape convenient.

- "They are the easiest to get hold of."
- "Easy and convenient, don't have to charge it."
- "Because you can throw them in the bin after."
- "Easiest to access/buy and easier to use."

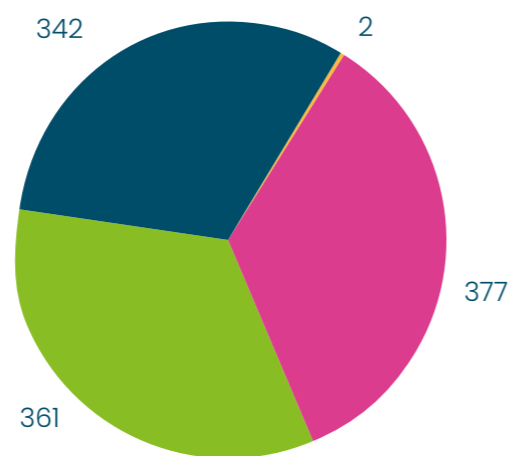
In addition, **117 young people** choose a vape based on cost, opting for the cheapest option that is affordable for them. Some young people acknowledge that re-usable vapes are cheaper in the long-term and so choose to use this type of vape, whereas other young people cannot afford the initial cost of a re-usable vape.

- "Box mod because the liquid is cheaper."
- "I can't afford a re-usable vape."
- "It is cheaper than the disposable vapes."
- "Less expensive to buy than an actual vape." If you use a proper vape you also have to buy the liquid to fill them."

**105 young people** believe their choice of vape helps to relieve stress, calm them down and cope with any mental health struggles they are experiencing.

- "Because it calms me down, I have anger issues."
- "Calms my nervousness and relaxes my muscles."
- "To take my mind off things that are annoying me."
- "To stop me stressing, it helps me stay calm."
- "To drown out the voices."

### Do you think it would be easy to stop vaping?



- yes
- depends
- no
- other

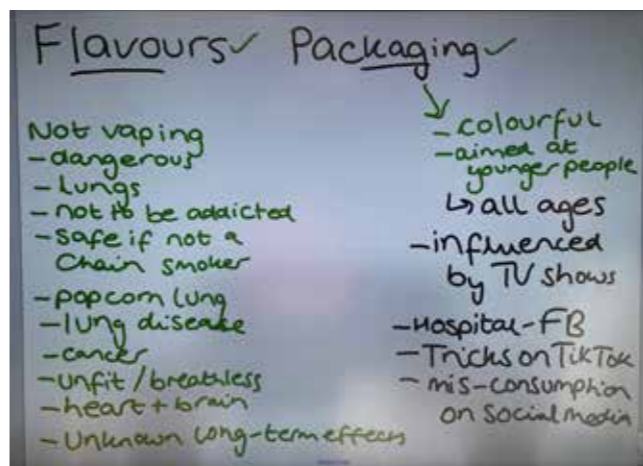
### If you answered no or depends, why is this?

The most frequent answer, given by **299 young people**, as to why they would struggle to stop vaping was addiction. Young people recognised a dependency for vapes due to these containing nicotine, with an emphasis on vaping being habitual over several years.

- "Because I have been doing it for so long. It is hard to stop (addictive)."
- "Because it is nicotine which is addictive."
- "I've become addicted I am trying but as days pass it feels stupid not having it in my pocket so I buy another one."
- "It's very easy to get addicted to, the feeling of it and the nicotine in them. Also the social aspect of vaping, wanting to be involved."
- "I've been doing it for so long, it's become a part of my routine."

The second most common response, put forward by **46 young people**, was the recognition that vaping acts as a stress release, helping to relieve anxiety. Young people stated that they find vaping calming and is often used as a coping mechanism.

- "Because it calms my nerves down."
- "It's helpful for sleep and mental health so I would struggle to stop."
- "It is a helpful stress relief, so I can go long without it but need it when I'm stressed."
- "Helps anxiety."
- "Helps to relieve stress and anger."



In addition, **30 young people** stated they do not know why they would struggle to stop vaping.

- "I don't know you just can't."

**19 young people** believe they would struggle to stop vaping because they enjoy it and would not want to stop.

- "Because I enjoy it."
- "Because I like doing it and it helps me."
- "Because I like it."

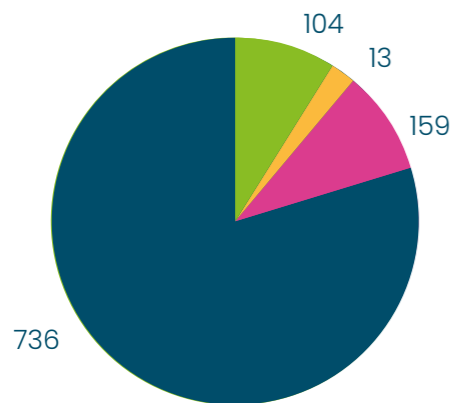
Furthermore, **18 young people** acknowledged it would be difficult to stop vaping due to the social element and popularity of this.

- "Because everyone else does it 'n that."
- "Because your friends still might vape and it can be hard to stop."
- "I think that it is incredibly normalised, you can hardly go anywhere without seeing someone vaping and so it would be hard to give up without having the urge around me."

Finally, **15 young people** stated they would struggle to stop vaping due to the taste and flavours.

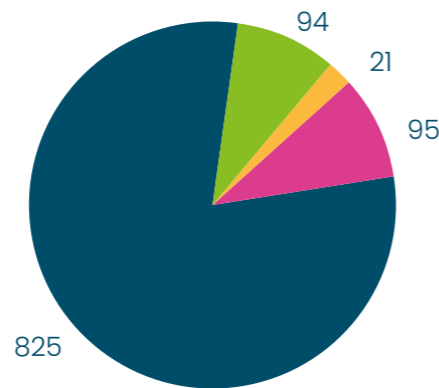
- "Because it tastes nice and is easy to use."
- "Because it's yummy."
- "Because the flavours."

### Did you smoke cigarettes before you vaped?



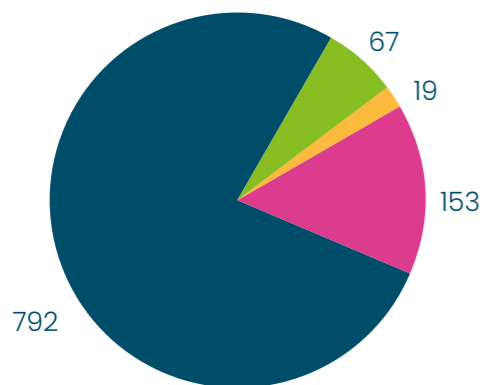
13 young people selected "other" with further comments including "like twice" and "I've tried them here and there".

### Have you started smoking cigarettes since you started vaping?



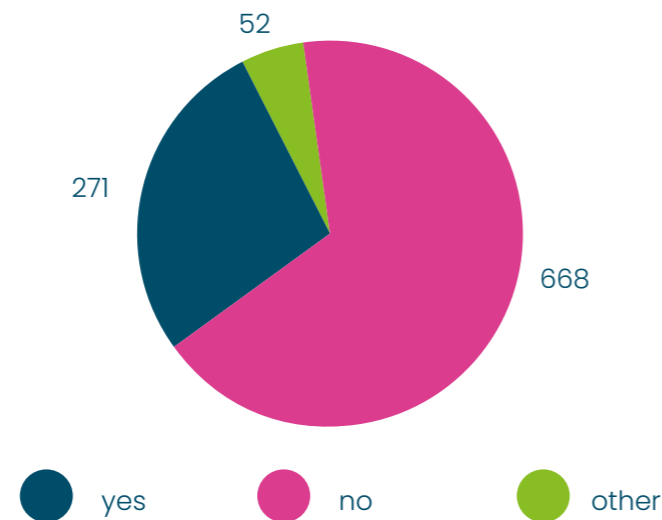
21 young people answered "other" with further comments such as "when stressed I will smoke both", "when drunk" and "odd occasions".

### Do you vape to stop yourself from smoking cigarettes?



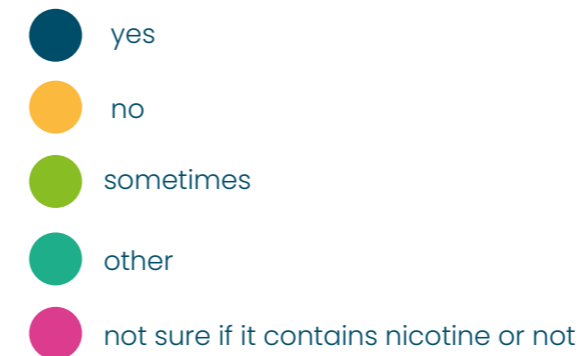
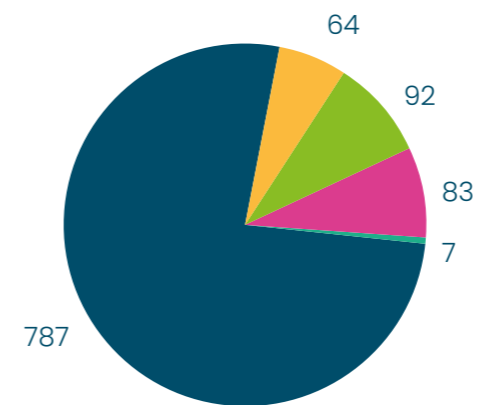
19 young people chose "other" and provided further feedback such as "I do both", "I gave one a go" and "smoke both".

### Have you ever vaped tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) oil or believe you have?

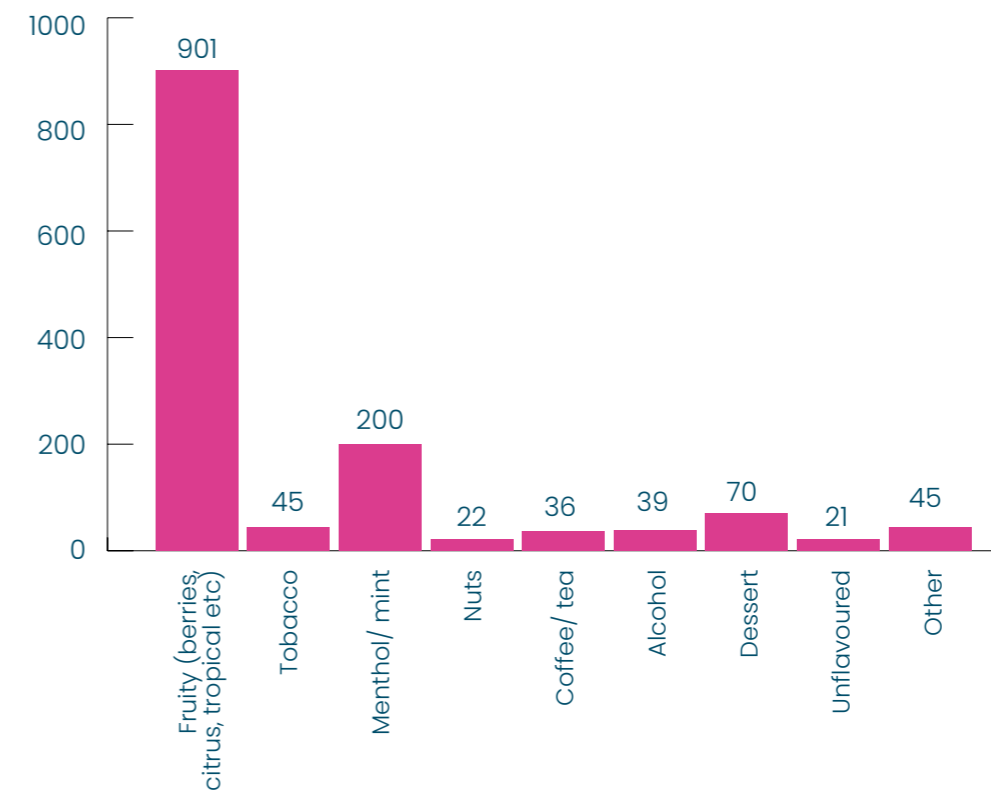


\* It is important to note that it is unclear whether young people are aware of the differences between THC and CBD, and which is contained within vapes they use.

### Do you use vapes containing nicotine?



### What flavour vape is preferential for you?



45 young people selected "other" and further comments revealed additional flavours including "Prime", "blue razz", "THC" and "apple cherry blast". Other comments included "any flavours" and "whatever my friends have".



## Where do you get your money from to pay for vapes?

The most common source of money to pay for vapes, with **32% of young people** citing this, is from employment, whether that be full-time or part-time, alongside education.

- "I have a job and pay for them myself."
- "My own earned money."
- "I babysit."

Following this, **161 young people** mentioned getting money from family members in order to pay for vapes. In some cases, the family members are unaware of what the young person is spending the money on, or believe this is going to be spent on other items, such as food. On other occasions, younger members of the family, such as siblings or cousins, are sharing their vapes or buying them for the young person.

- "My Grandad, but he does not know I vape."
- "Parents – they know I am addicted."
- "My cousin gets me them. I use money from my parents."
- "Mum and Dad get them for me."
- Lunch money."
- "My brother gets me them or shares them with me."
- "In addition, 113 young people use their pocket money, or gifted money from occasions, to purchase vapes."
- "Doing jobs at home to get pocket money."
- "Got my own money from birthdays."
- I used to use Christmas/birthday money."

**92 young people** receive vapes from their friends, or borrow the vape that their friend is using. Some people are given vapes by friends, whereas others pay for them.

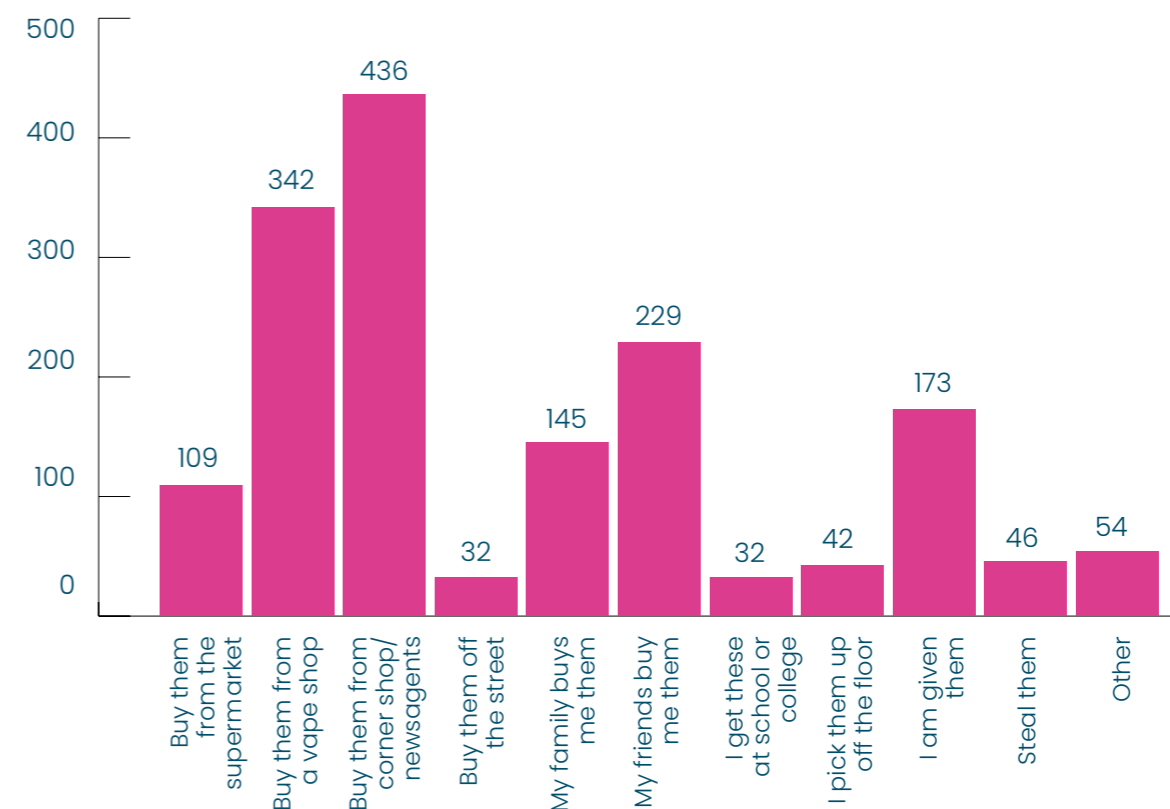
- "I don't buy my own I use my friends."
- "Get them off a friend for free."
- "I get them off my mates or puff off their vapes."
- "Friends let me buy theirs."

As well as the above themes, **33 responses from young people** related to means of accessing money for vapes that are either illegal, or would generally be perceived as unacceptable.

- "Drug dealing."
- "Selling myself to older men."
- "Steal money from Mum and Dad."
- "Find them on the floor."
- "Child benefit money."



## Where do you buy/receive vapes?



## If you are given vapes, who gives you these and why?

When asked who gives you vapes, **36% of young people** stated they are most frequently given vapes by their friends. When asked why, specific reference was made to young people being given vapes when their friends do not like the flavour, alongside these being given for social reasons or to support friend's mental health.

- "Before turning 18, my friends might give me them because they would buy them."
- "Friends when they don't like the flavour or just being nice."
- "Mates when socialising."
- "My friends because I'm addicted."
- "My mate because she did it and she pressured me to try it."
- "My mates because they understand my depression."

In addition, **78 young people** specified that they are given vapes by family members, with parents and siblings being mentioned frequently. When asked why, reasons included parental awareness that the young person is addicted, to help manage stress and a lenient attitude due to the family member smoking or vaping themselves.

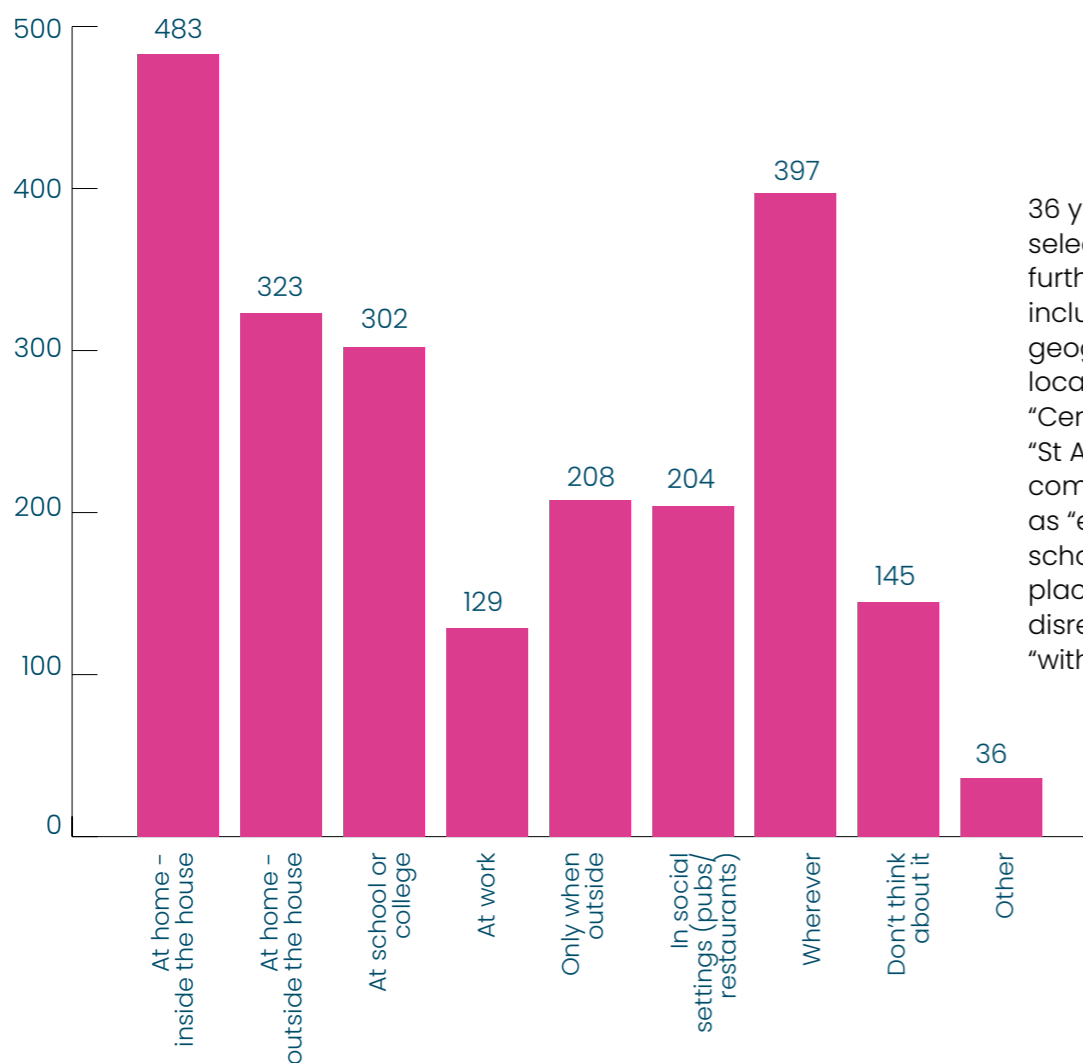
- "Family buy me them as they would rather know and me not smoke cigarettes."
- "My mum because she knows that I do need them."
- "My sister buys them for me sometimes when she buys her own."
- "My mum to calm me down."
- "My mum so she will have me stop asking her."
- "My mum smokes, if she's buying cigarettes she will buy me a vape, this goes both ways."

Although they have paid for the vape and not been given this, **54 young people** noted they receive vapes from the shop or their "bossman". Specific reference was made to shop keepers feeding their family and requiring regular business in order to do this.

- "A shop who sells them to kids/teens. They don't care."
- "The person in the shop."
- "The worker because he wants money."
- "Bossman needs to feed his family."

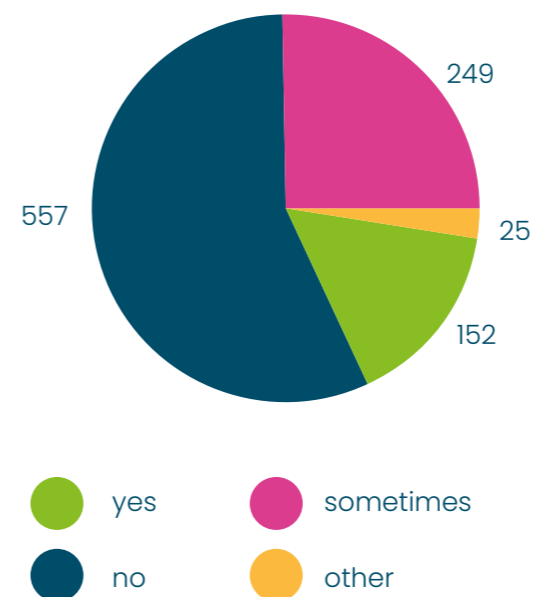


### Where do you vape?



36 young people selected "other" and further feedback included specific geographical locations such as "Central Drive" and "St Annes", and other comments such as "everywhere but school/transport/ places where it's disrespectful" and "with my friends".

### Do you read the packaging when opening a vape?



In contrast to this, **291 young people** answered yes when asked if they worry about the long-term health consequences of vaping. Specific reference was given to the unknown health risks, with young people using this as motivation to try and quit.

- "Yes which is why I'm quitting."
- "Yes so I don't do it often and have learnt to say no."
- "We don't know what kind of chemicals are in this damn thing and I want to know what the effects on the body are."
- "It has been made aware that the consequences are unknown so due to that I have slowed down."
- "Yes that's why I barely ever do it."

### Do you ever worry about the long-term health consequences of vaping?

The most common answer, given by **430 young people**, when asked if they were worried about the long-term health consequences of vaping was no, with an additional 48 young people stating "not really". Of the 430 young people who answered no, **15 of these individuals** deemed this not to be an issue, as the frequency in which they vape was too low to contribute to health consequences. In addition, **5 of the 430 young people** felt vaping was not a detriment to their health as they did not feel addicted.

- "I don't vape enough to worry."
- "Nope and I don't care."
- "Not arsed."
- "No if I die I die, it's only my fault."
- "No don't really care but will probably bite me in the arse later."
- "Not really, I don't care what happens to me."

In addition, **127 young people** said they worry about the risks **"sometimes"**. There was an emphasis from young people for short term gain rather than considering long-term risk.

- "I think about them sometimes but honestly I'm past caring."
- "Sometimes but right now I'm more bothered if some peach lemonade is in my mouth."
- "When I get a sharp pain when I breathe in yes so I stop for a few mins then get on with my life as usual."
- "Sometimes yes but I think you need to live life."
- "Sometimes, that's why I don't do it ALL the time."

Finally, **8 young people** stated they do not know in response to this question.





## What are your/peers reasons for vaping?

**30% of young people** do not know the reason why themselves or their peers vape, or do not know anyone who vapes.



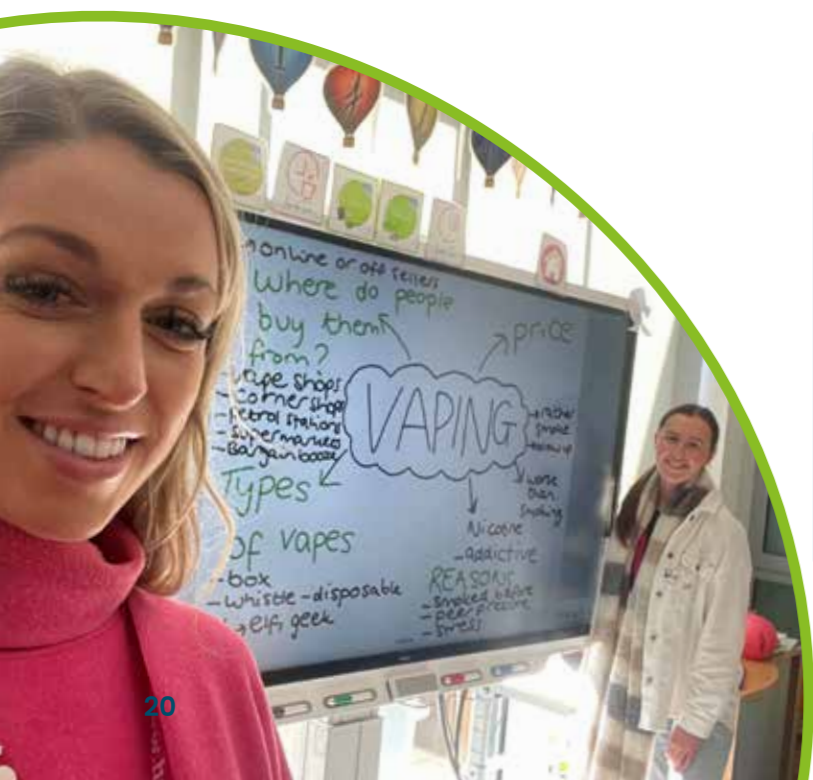
- "No one knows everyone just does it."
- "I don't interact with people who vape."
- "I don't know, why not I guess."
- "I don't know, I just started once because my sibling had one."
- "I've been walking home and seen year 9s/11s vaping but I'm not sure why."
- "Vaping for no reason."
- "I don't know because they want to."

The leading reason for vaping, put forward by **547 young people**, was to relieve stress and improve mental health. It is clear from feedback that stress is a key influence on young people choosing to vape, and that vaping acts as a coping mechanism. Specific mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, were mentioned. Similarly, young people are aware of some people choosing to vape in order to suppress hunger or to reduce feelings of anger.

- "At first to calm down from stress. Now it's kinda because if I don't I get more stressed."
- "Coping mechanisms instead of self harm."
- "Depression, anxiety... it makes you actually feel alive."
- "Only way to escape reality."
- "I do it as it feels like I can de-stress after a long day. I know someone who does it for diet so she vapes instead of eating more food."
- "I get really mad and use only when I'm mad."
- "I mainly use them when having a panic attack to calm down."
- "It stops me from feeling nervous or stressed out especially during exam times or other stressful things."
- "To stop me from hurting myself."

Following this, **395 young people** stated a reason for vaping is to appear cool or because they believe the vape itself is cool. Some people pointed out that their peers perform tricks when vaping to enhance their appearance.

- "Because they think it's cool and makes them look good."
- "Cool tricks."
- "I assume they do it to act hard and make them look older."
- "For them to look cool/show off."
- "I think my peers think it is cool and makes them look older."
- "Other adults do it, they think it's cool."



In addition, **351 young people** referred to peer pressure and wanting to conform to social norms, particularly as vaping appears to be a current trend. Some people believe vaping will increase their popularity, or will impress their peers. Others wish to fit in with those around them, and so choose to vape when in this social context.

- "Feels good to be like everyone else."
- "Social pressure - wanting to fit in and not be the odd one out."
- "To impress someone else. Peer pressure."
- "Being forced to do it."
- "I think it's because it's popular amongst other students."
- "Pressure to fit in with other people."
- "So they're not left out with their friends."
- "Peer pressure... get people to like them."

Another reason young people and their peers are vaping, mentioned in **295 responses**, was because they are addicted. The contributing factors to the addiction were suggested as the nicotine content in vapes, the habitual nature of the behaviour and starting to vape at a young age.

- "Because they get addicted and you want it so you don't stop."
- "Got into it young."
- "A difficult habit to break."
- "I started young and didn't realise that I was addicted."
- "Nicotine dependency."
- "The only reason it to run away from the uncomfortable feeling of not vaping (withdrawal), it's not that enjoyable anymore."
- "Wanted to try it and ended up addicted."

Furthermore, young people choose to vape as a result of seeking enjoyment and alleviating boredom. This was referenced on **237 occasions**, with the action and subsequent feeling being a source of pleasure and fun for young people.

- "Because I'm bored."
- "Cos it is fun and energising."
- "For the buzz."
- "We like it and it's something to do."
- "My sister says she doesn't care but it feels good."

Similarly, **173 young people** specifically enjoy the taste and flavours of vapes.

- "Because they taste nice - flavoured air."
- "It tastes and feels nice it makes my heart beat faster."
- "Nice fruity appealing flavours."
- "They think it tastes nice and funky fresh."

Another motive for vaping, suggested by **102 young people**, was to quit smoking cigarettes, or as a healthier alternative. There is a clear distinction between some people transitioning from cigarettes to vapes, and others vaping as it is perceived as being better than smoking cigarettes.

- "Didn't like the idea of getting addicted to cigarettes, they know vaping isn't good for them but would rather that than cigarettes."
- "I originally started to stop smoking which worked."
- "My mum/dad do to quit cigarettes."
- "Stops us from smoking."
- "They think it is safer than smoking."

## What are your/peers reasons for not vaping?

The most frequent response, given by **59% of young people**, as to why they do not vape was due to this being perceived as being unhealthy and bad for you. Within this, 170 young people made direct reference to specific chronic illnesses, such as the risk of cancer increasing as a consequence of vaping, alongside the impact this could have upon young people who are asthmatic.

- "Cause u can get cancer."
- "My reason for not vaping is I have asthma and it is bad for you."
- "It destroys your lungs and is very unhealthy."
- "Vaping kills your lungs and destroys your immune system."
- "Because of my health and I know it's not good for my health and I hate it."
- "I think it is an unhealthy habit with lots of unknown health implications."

Following this, **394 young people** stated they do not vape because they do not want to, do not like it and deem this unpleasant. In addition, **300 young people** answered I do not know when asked reasons for not vaping.

- "I don't see the point of it."
- "I don't vape because I have no interest in it or reason to do it."
- "It's disgusting, expensive and really bad for you."
- "It's dirty and don't see the point of it."
- "It is disgusting and affects your health."

Furthermore, another reason for not vaping, stated by **153 young people**, was that they do not want to become addicted or they already are addicted.



- "I don't want to get addicted to nicotine."
- "I don't want to be addicted and waste money on vapes. Also I think they are gross and annoying."
- "It is very gross and an unhealthy addiction."
- "Some people don't wanna rely on something to keep em calm or not stressed."

In addition, **113 young people** noted that they do not wish to vape as they deem this to be dangerous and unsafe, specifically referencing unknown chemicals.

- "Because you don't know what's in it."
- "I know that it is very unsafe and could make you ill."
- "It's dangerous, unhealthy mentally and physically can lead to so many problems eg lung cancers/ infections/infertile. Addictive, breathless. They have not been tested like cigarettes have, they don't know what they are inhaling."
- "Bad unknown chemicals."
- "It's unsafe and we don't know the consequences."
- "You know it is dangerous, you don't know what's in the liquid."

Further to this, **110 young people** made reference to the cost of vaping, noting these are expensive and often deemed a waste of money.

**43 young people** noted that they choose not to vape because they are underage and acknowledge this is illegal.

- "Because it's illegal to buy them at our age."
- "It's unhealthy and I'm underage so it's illegal."
- "Cause it's literally illegal?"

In addition to this, **20 young people** stated they do not vape as they do not like the taste and the smell of this.

- "Because it tastes horrible and it's dangerous."
- "Don't like the taste."
- "I don't like the smell of it."
- "I don't like the smell, bad for health just the idea of it isn't appealing to me."

**12 young people** made reference to religion and culture when asked why they do not vape.

- "Because we are religious."
- "Culture, family disapproval."
- "I am Christian and I am not allowed."
- "I just don't want to because of my health and religion."

Finally, **6 young people** made reference to the impact vaping may have on the environment.

- "Because it's bad for the environment."
- "Bad for you/ waste of money. I also think they are bad for the environment as they go into landfill."
- "Because it is not good for you or the environment."

- "Because it's expensive and pointless."
- "I don't see the point in vaping, it's too expensive/waste of money."
- "It is bad for you and costs a lot of money in the long run."
- "Never had an urge and do not see any benefit with it. Costs a lot of money and is just pointless."
- "Unhealthy & expensive addiction."

Additionally, **58 young people** made reference to parental influence as a reason for not vaping. They noted the fear around being penalised if caught, alongside not being allowed.

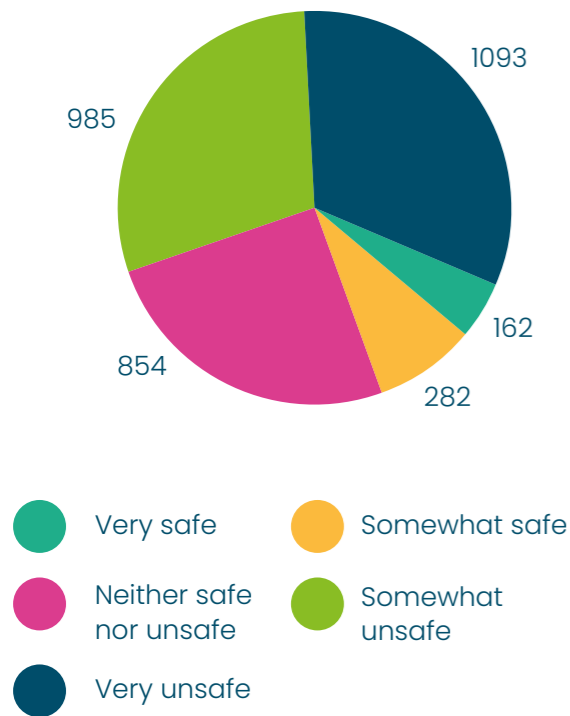
- "I'm a kid and my parents say I shouldn't."
- "Because of strict parents and not having enough money."
- "I'm still a kid and my mum won't let me."
- "Scared of parents finding out."
- "Don't want to get caught."

**56 young people** stated that they choose not to vape as they do not wish to impact their athletic performance negatively. Specific reference was made to individual sports and the risk vaping could have upon their ability to perform successfully.

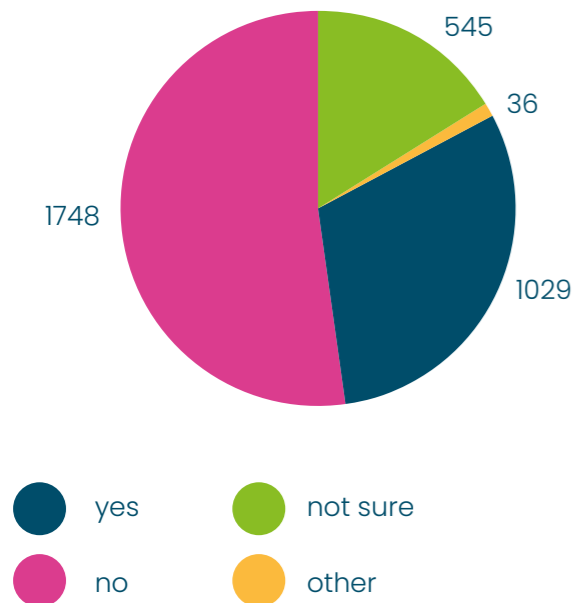
- "I do sports and I think it's disgusting."
- "I don't do it because it's bad and I don't get vaping as I'm an athlete. It's boring to me."
- "I'm a dancer so I don't."
- "I want to be a footballer so need my lungs."
- "To stay fit coz I have a boxing fight."



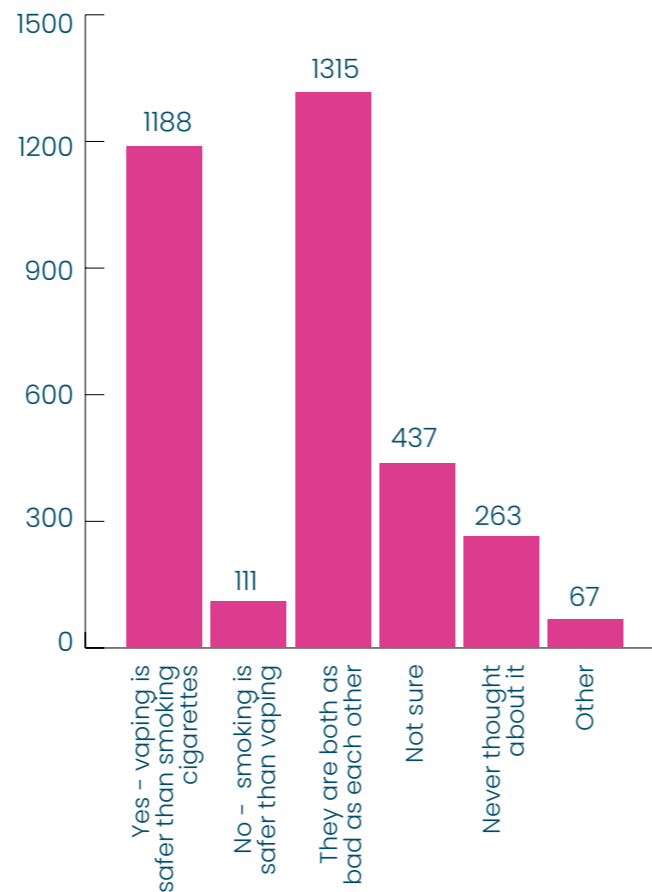
### How safe do you feel vaping is?



### Did you know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal?



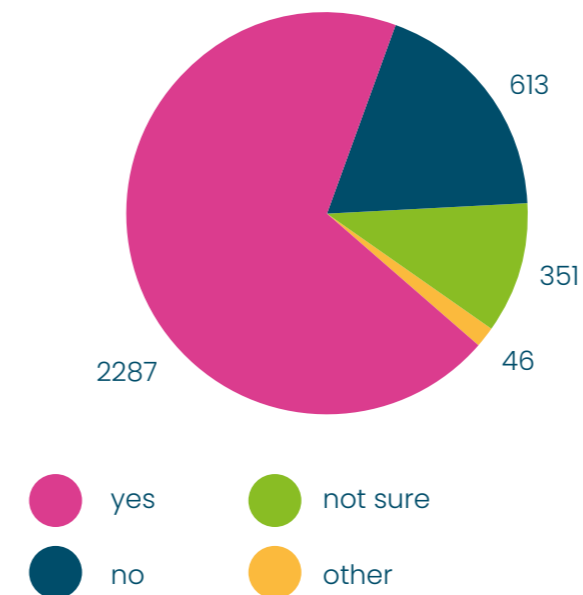
### Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?



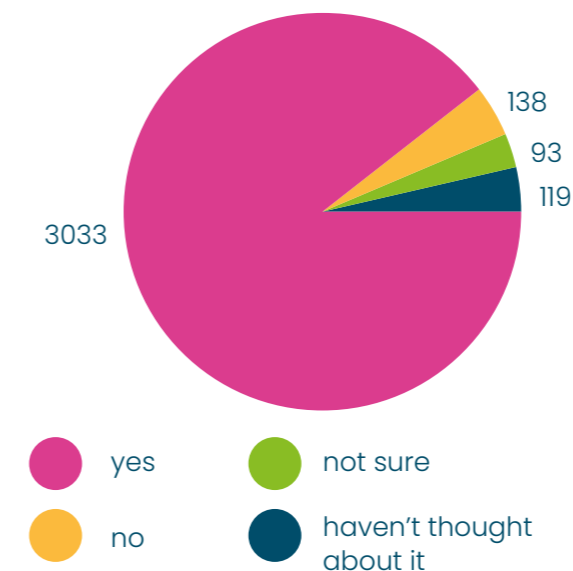
67 young people selected "other" with further comments including:

- "Both just as bad, but considering the fact that a vape is full of unknown chemicals mixed to make a certain flavour and sent from corrupt manufacturers in China to be sold at such a cheap price whilst still making profit, it's not surprising."
- "I think vaping is more addictive due to the faster time for nicotine to hit your system than cigarettes, I feel vaping is better physically but worse mentally."
- "Disposables are worse than cigarettes but normal vapes are better."

### Did you know it is illegal for retailers to sell vapes to under 18's and that you can confidentially report underage sales to Blackpool Council trading standards on 01253 478375, or you can email tradingstandards@blackpool.gov.uk?



### Do you know some vapes contain nicotine?



### Do you understand what nicotine is and the effects it has? Please write what you believe this to be:

Overall, young people's understanding of nicotine and the effect it has on the body appears to be reasonable. There were **503 young people** who stated they do not know or are unsure. **284 responses** cited "yes", but no explanation was given as to what they believe nicotine to be.

The most popular explanation given, by **44% of young people**, is that nicotine is addictive and so makes you want more, which results in the formation of a habit that is difficult to stop.

- "Addictive substance that makes you crave it."
- "An addictive substance added to cigarettes/vaping products to make users keep buying them."
- "I know it's an addictive thing but don't know what else it can do."
- "It is a harmful addictive substance that gives you lung cancer."

Furthermore, **756 responses** described nicotine as having negative effects on health, with many young people stating it is "bad for you." Within this, possible health implications on specific organs were discussed, with **383 young people** noting nicotine having a negative effect on lungs, and **61** citing an impact on the brain/head.

- "Bad for your lungs - when you withdraw you have headaches, your diet and hunger cues get messed up."
- "Problems with reproductive organs, brain shrinkage, lung cancer and popcorn lung."

- "I know that nicotine can cause you to have higher blood pressure and increase your chances of having a heart attack."
- "Addiction, yellow nails and teeth, tar in lungs."
- When considering what nicotine is, 650 young people believe it to be a "drug", "chemical" or "substance."
- "Nicotine is a chemical which makes your body/mind want more of the nicotine even though it can be harmful, it relieves stress and if someone hadn't had it in a long time then a person can get snappy."
- "A legal substance which is addictive and has some positive effects to the body. However, due to nicotine being mixed with the toxins in cigarettes and vapes, this makes an uneducated person believe nicotine is the bad thing."
- "A drug which alters your brain to make you need more of it, and you get withdrawals when you try to quit it."

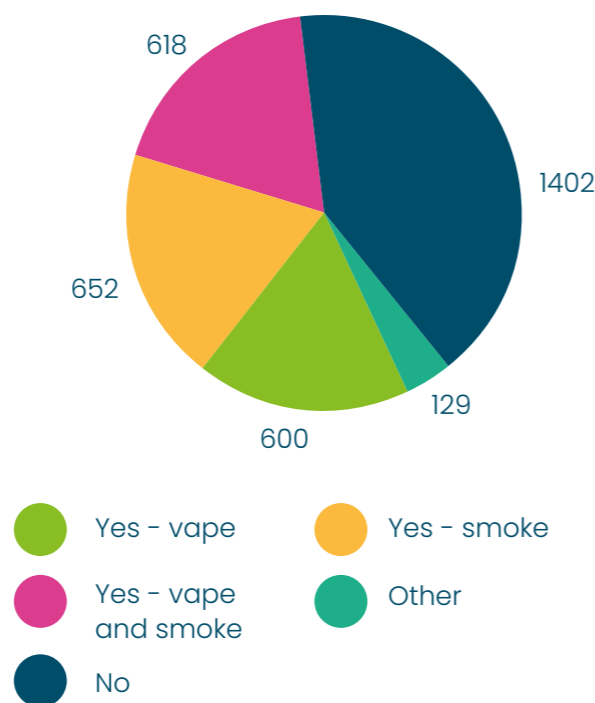
The effects of nicotine were described by **91 young people** as a rush that creates a pleasant feeling, with some referencing dopamine.

- "Rush of dopamine and niccy rush."
- "Nicotine rush. Get dizzy. Feel sick."
- "It stimulates your brain to feel nice."

Others feel nicotine provides a calming effect and helps to relieve stress, referenced in **66 responses**.

- "Makes me feel pleasure and relaxed."
- "It has a calming effect on the brain."
- "Nicotine helps block out the thoughts in my head for a few seconds this is why I do it."

## Do your parents/carers vape or smoke cigarettes?



## If you answered yes, where do your parents/carers smoke or vape? e.g. at home, when out socialising

For those young people who stated that their parents/carers vape or smoke cigarettes, the most frequent response given as to where they do this was at "home", cited by **43% of young people**.

- "At home always."
- "At home mostly when drunk."
- "At home mostly when they are stressed."
- "When socialising and in the bedroom."

Furthermore, **484 young people** noted that their parents/carers smoke or vape when "outside" generically. Specific reference was made to public places with parents/carers often doing this when socialising with friends.

- "My mum sometimes vapes when she goes on a nights out."
- "When out socialising."
- "Outside, when out socialising, with friends."
- "At home and in public."
- "In their house and outside in pubs."

In addition, **368 young people** stated that their parents/carers vape and smoke everywhere or all of the time.

- "Every legal place."
- "Everywhere, they're an adult can do what they want."
- "Everywhere, home, socialising, football games."
- "My dad vapes all the time anywhere."
- "Papa vapes all the time, whenever or wherever."
- "Practically anywhere where it's allowed."

In contrast, **304 young people** stated that their parents/carers vape "outside" within the home environment, choosing to do this either in the back garden, outside the back door or inside the house with ventilation. It is worth noting the discrepancy between smoking and vaping, with young people identifying that parent/carers who smoke tend to do this outside, whereas vaping takes place inside the house.

- "At home outside in the garden."
- "At the back door."
- "Outside for fags but inside for vaping."
- "At home in either a vented room and mostly outside."
- "Dad goes outside and has a ciggy or vape inside sometimes."

**81 young people** made direct reference to their parents/carers vaping or smoking away from themselves and younger siblings, often choosing to do this in a separate room.

- "Never around me if she does."
- "They don't do it in front of the kids."
- "When at home in the back garden because I have younger siblings."
- "At home but never in the house because they don't want me to breathe it in."
- "My dad smokes everywhere we go. However, he will step aside from the pathway, group of people, the house, etc. because he knows I have asthma."

**34 young people** stated that their parents/carers vape or smoke when at work.

- "Mum smokes outside/ break at work."
- "My dad does it in the backyard and my mum smokes in the kitchen at work."
- "Home, on breaks at work."
- "At home and work, as well as socialising events."

Finally, **28 young people** referenced their parents/carers vaping in the car.



- "In the house, in the car, at work, anywhere really."
- "Car (windows down) and in the garden."
- "Car and outside at home."
- "Outside and in the car."
- "In the house, car rides, technically everywhere."



## Do you think advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people? If so, how?

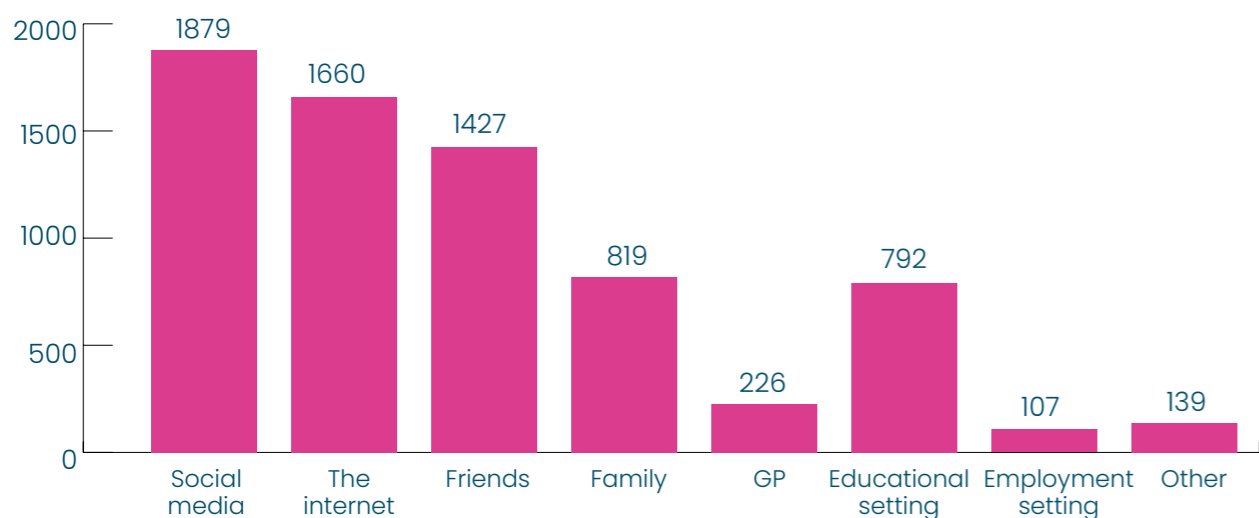
Of those who responded to this question, **56% of young people** highlighted that they believe that advertising and social media promotes vaping. There were direct references made to social media and comments relating to influencers. Themes such as colour, flavours and marketing were common throughout the overarching feedback given.

In contrast, **129 young people** stated no, with feedback that suggesting that peer pressure and school are a contributing factor to the uptake of vaping. In addition, **510 young people** stated the answer "no" without any supporting feedback, whilst **198 participants** stated they "didn't know".

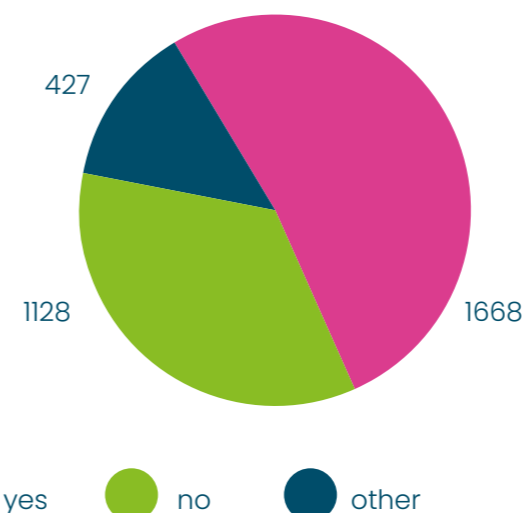


- "There are people on Instagram selling vapes."
- "Yes, tobacco companies pay influencers to show off new brands, flavours etc. as well as bright colours, young people smoking in adverts and also flavours similar to sweets."
- "Yes social media platforms such as Tik Tok is bad for it. Lots of young people have them in their hands and vape openly on the platforms. I have witnessed advertisements online advertising brightly coloured vapes which would come across enticing to teenagers/young adults."
- "Yes because people recommend flavours they show cool tricks and lots of people have them."
- "A lot of famous people vape. And it is in a lot of music videos, aimed at young people."
- "Yes, they're literally colourful sticks with flavours like "candyfloss" and "unicorn milkshake" they're not targeted at adults at all."
- "No I think it's all the other kids who vape."
- "No I only think school does."

## Where do you find information relating to vaping? Please select any that apply:



## Do you think children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping?



Further feedback provided included:

- "We have had loads in school - its the same boring information over and over again. They don't tell us anything just tell us not to do it."
- "Maybe. I think at this point it would be difficult to convince young people to stop."
- "You need to teach them how to quit."

## If you answered yes, what would you like this education to look like? e.g. who would you like to teach it, where would you like it to be...

This question received feedback from **1233 individuals**. Of that feedback, there were overarching themes that must be highlighted. **283 individuals** made direct comment about the need for people to understand the risks and consequences of vaping. There were comments about the need for research and information to persuade people to consider their health **Over 300 individuals** cited an educational setting would be the best place to deliver information with a further **108 individuals** identifying PHSE lessons.

**Over 100 individuals** stated that the information should be delivered by a health expert such as a nurse or the NHS whilst **27 individuals** cited that young people should be given information and resources to quit vaping. There were **58 comments** that described 'experts by experience' delivering hard hitting talks.

Safety and science are overarching themes, along with the need to educate primary school aged children of the consequences.



- "Doctors could come into school and show everyone the effects of it."
- "I'd want it to be a 'hurtful truth' type of learning opportunity. Showing smoker lungs, tracheostomys due to throat cancer and other things similar."
- "Teach them the consequences it's addictive but you have to stop. I heard that sometimes you can get popcorn lungs from it, it affects your teeth, gums and health problems."
- "Ex-smokers and ex-vapers should teach young children about the symptoms they faced when they were smoking. Some of the health risks that come with smoking or vaping. We should start teaching them in primary and high school since that is where the habit usually picks up."
- "Why it's bad, why people shouldn't do it, organizations to go to for support if wanting to stop."
- "A health specialist and how it's affects you long term."
- "I think more resources to helping quitting when people have motivation to quit, I feel unless someone wants to quit you can't change someone's behaviour."
- "I would like it to be taught in primary so more young people know it's bad."

### Is there any other feedback you would like to tell us regarding vaping?

When asked whether young people had any further feedback regarding vaping, **90 young people** shared their opinions regarding the negative aspects of vaping. The most popular opinion shared was that vaping is bad for your health, with young people concerned about the effect vaping will have on people's lungs. As well as this, other negative consequences of vaping were discussed, such as secondary smoke inhalation and the ease in which vapes can be accessed.

- "I strongly dislike people vaping, and I find it rude when people decided to do it in a confined space. I should not suffer because of someone else's bad choices."
- "It's bad and can damage the lungs."
- "No one is aware of the health risks and it is too easy to access"
- "I believe smoking and vaping laws should be stricter. It's shameful that people my age and younger can access this habit through their parents - it's literally child abuse. It's also shameful that people walk around while smoking and vaping without any regard to who is breathing in the smoke like young children and asthmatic people."
- "Yes, it is bad for health and teenagers shouldn't be doing it."

**35 young people** raised concerns around stopping young people from vaping, with the belief that this will not be possible as young people are now addicted and "it has been left too late." It was acknowledged that young people will not listen and will choose to vape anyway, despite knowing the risks.



- "Either way if you tell them about the dangers they will carry on. It's 2023, it's like a 'sick' trend."
- "Even if you try and stop it, there will still be kids vaping or smoking. More education still won't stop online influence."
- "I believe at this point, there is no stopping the current vaping epidemic. It has stretched too far and is growing as it has been suggested that it is almost a healthy habit with the promotion that it is better than smoking."
- "Left it too late now. There are people as young as 12 who have disposables. Left this obvious problem way too late."
- "If you do start to teach about vapes, some people will still do it because they are addicted."

In addition, **24 young people** highlighted a need for further education relating to vaping, specifically requiring information regarding the health consequences of this and the potential risks. There was a preference for this being provided within the school setting via teachers.

- "Don't just ban it, teach how to quit, the process and how to go about it."
- "Explaining the harmful effects of smoking has never changed anyone's minds, only further discouraging people who don't vape. Be more teaching of environmental causes of vaping and smoking. Explain how people such as me have started and the general effects on the world vaping/smoking has caused."
- "Just for it to be addressed more and the consequences and dangers of vaping to be made more aware of."
- "Education in schools because they should care about health."
- "Show more dangerous risks to vaping, maybe in school."
- "Start education at a younger age, as it is not a good habit."

The belief that vaping needs to be made illegal was put forward by **29 young people**. Within this, 10 young people made particular mention of shops selling to underage children, with a need for enhanced enforcement of regulations being necessary to prevent this.

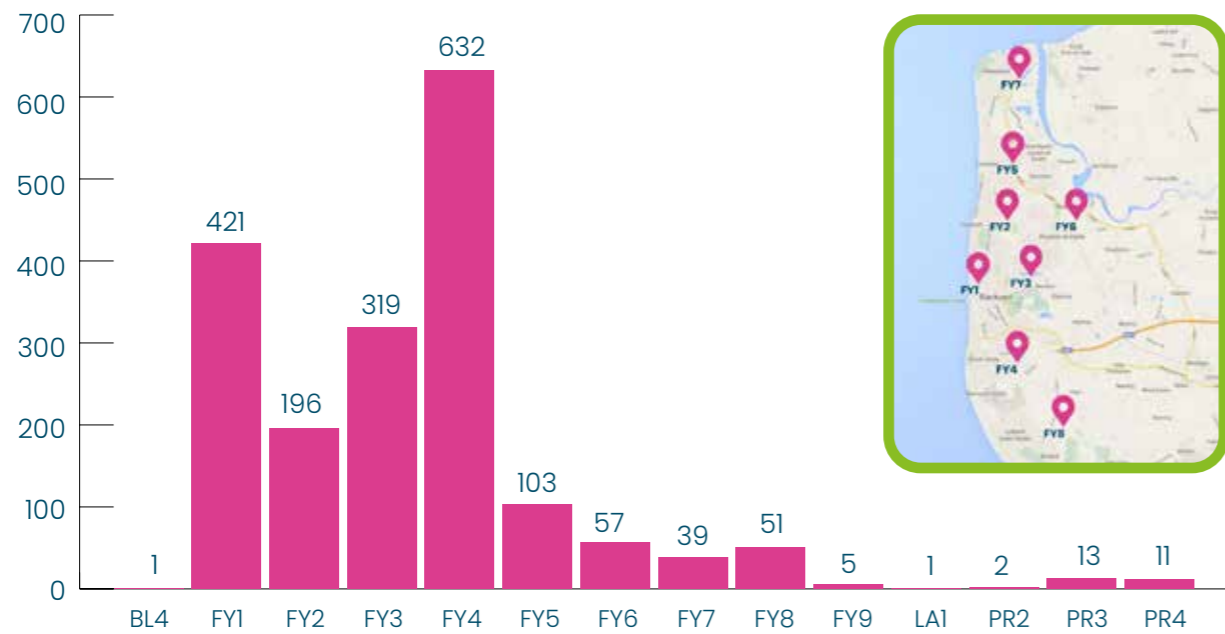
- "Ban it and make it illegal until we know everything about it."
- "More action took on shops selling to underage people."
- "Should be illegal as we don't know the side effects."
- "Ban vaping, what's the point. It is spoiling the community and health (Breathe fresh air it's free)."
- 11 young people acknowledged the issue of vaping within the school environment, and that this appears to be becoming more of a problem.
- "Becoming a problem around school outside of designated areas."
- "It's actually bizarre that so much goes on in school. Schools are aware and talk about students vaping yet don't seem to be proactive."
- "People are using the toilets to vape and it is not really comfortable to use the toilets knowing this."
- "Yes most people come out of school and start to vape with their friends and they are only in Year 8."



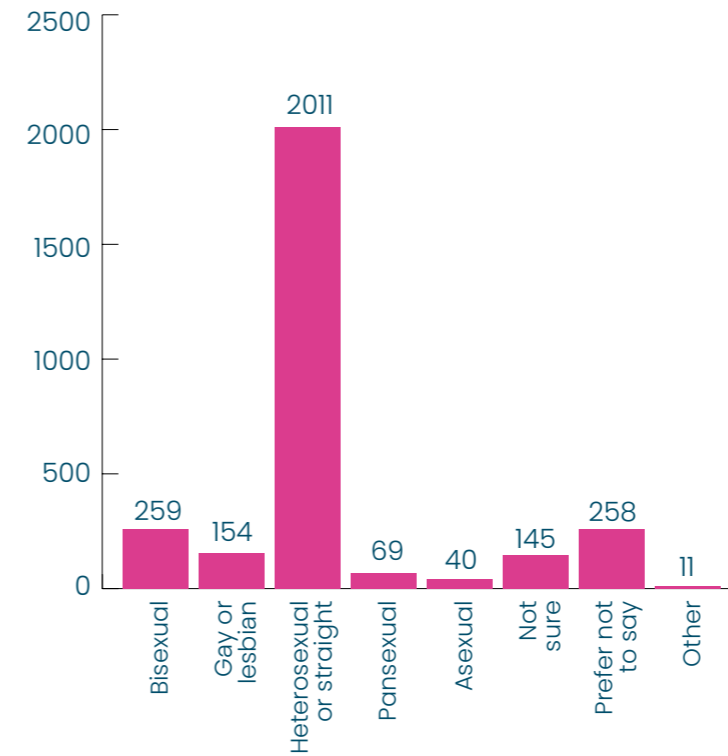


# Young person's demographics

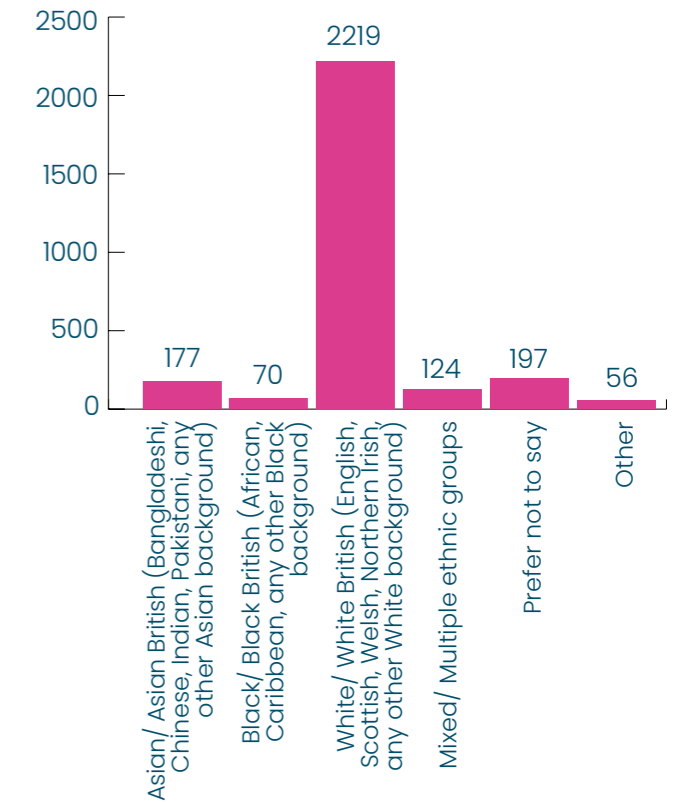
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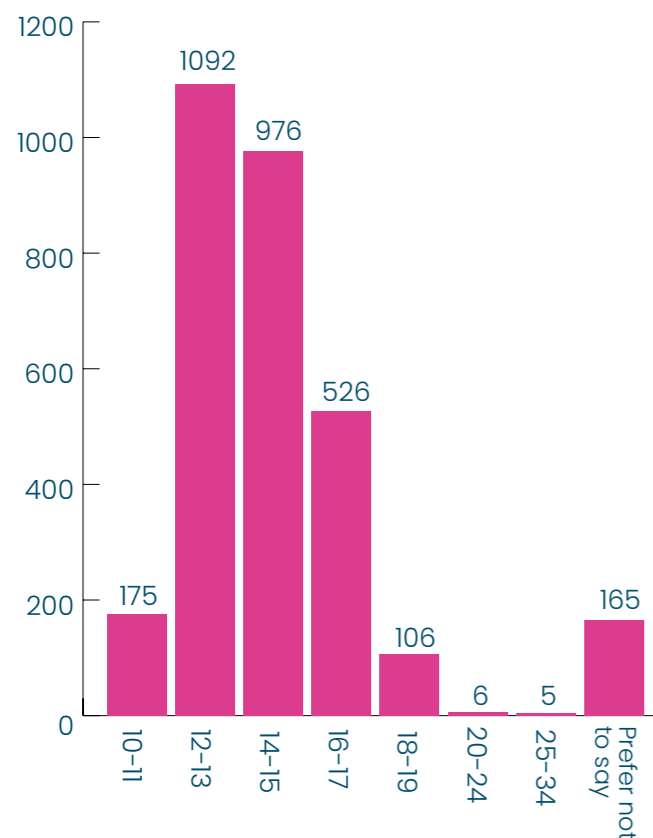
What is your sexual orientation?



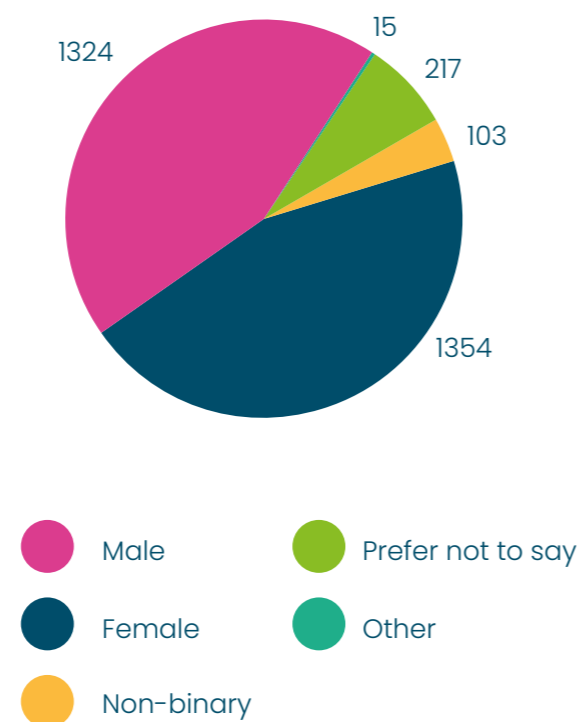
What is your ethnicity?



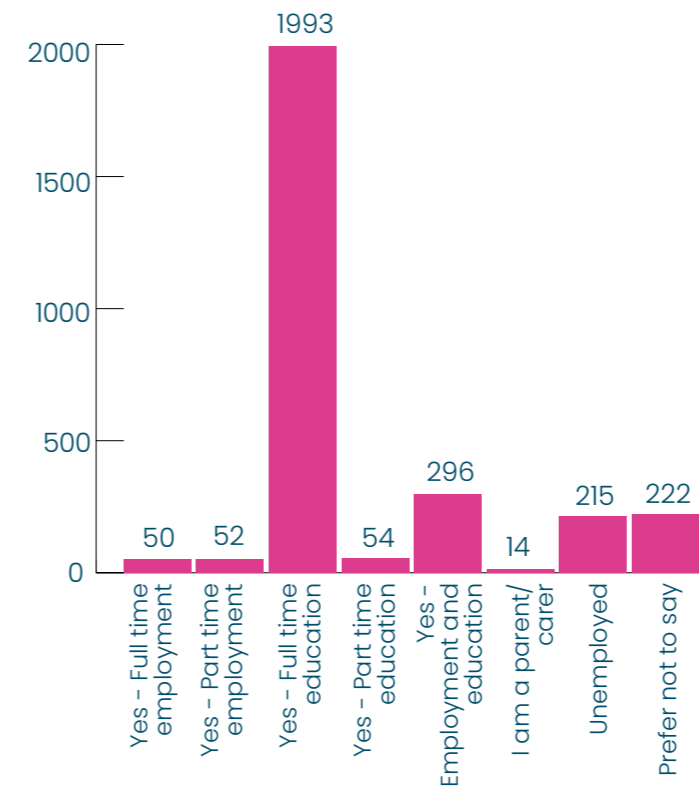
How old are you?



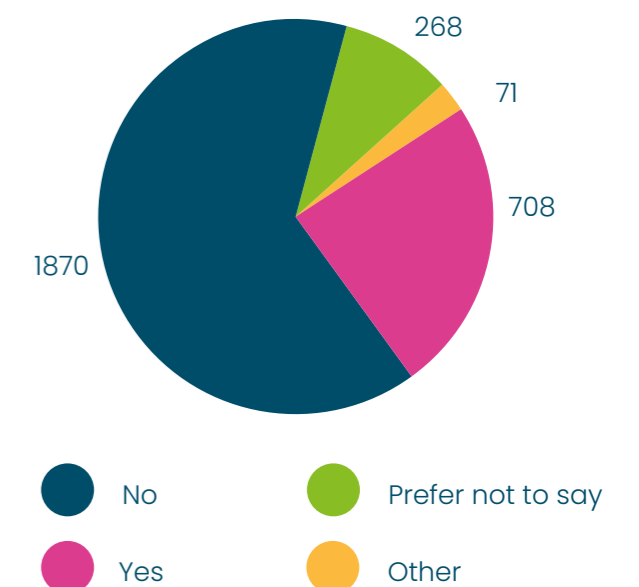
What gender do you identify as?



Are you in employment or education?



Do you have a long term health condition or disability?



Of those who stated that they have a long term condition, the most common were respiratory conditions (233 responses), mental health (121 responses), autism (106 responses) and ADHD (95 responses).

## Focus Group Spotlights

**638** children and young people engaged  
**25** focus groups

### We visited:

- SEND schools
- Supported accommodation
- Youth groups
- Primary schools
- Additional education provision
- Higher education
- Third sector organisations

### Awareness and usage

- Young people vape daily.
- Children and young people's preference is disposable vapes.



### Attitudes and why

- Vapes are cheap and marketed at children, with flavours such as PRIME and branded vapes.
- Children and young people are seeing adverts and videos on TikTok.
- Most common reasons for vaping include peer pressure, flavours and stress relief.
- Many people have not tried cigarettes before vaping.
- Some young people choose not to vape due to fears surrounding health implications.

### Access, safety and availability

- Children and young people feel that vapes and e-cigarettes are easy to purchase and are rarely asked for ID.
- Most commonly bought from the corner shop.
- Not enough safety information.
- Not enough research.
- Fakes vapes are available locally.
- Parents buying young people vapes as a reward for behaviour or attendance at school.
- Nose bleeds, persistent coughing and coughing blood were some of the identified side effects noted by young people.



## Children and young people's focus group feedback

### Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools and colleges

- Park Community Academy Sixth Form (23/2/23) – 11 young people.
- Highfurlong School (10/3/23) – 25 young people.
- Participants were aged between 12–19 years old.

**36**  
participants

### What are yours/peers reasons for vaping?

There were a variety of reasons given for vaping, with the most frequent being **peer pressure, stress** and **as an alternative to cigarettes.**

- “Cos they smoked before.”
- “Because other people do it.”
- “I get stressed.”
- “Cos something is going on at home.”
- “Peer pressure. Mate they hand it to you and see if you wanna try, I was like no I'm good.”

- “Cos it could make you cough more often.”
- “Cancerous.”
- “It gives you cholesterol issues and digestive issues.”

**Due to the majority of the young people within the SEND schools and colleges stating they do not vape, we asked the question: what type of vapes are you aware of?**

The type of vape that most young people in the focus groups were aware of were disposables, with some mentioning specific flavours and brands. The most popular were fruity and fizzy drink flavours, and the brands of disposable vapes included elf bars, aroma king and geek bars. Rechargeable vapes were raised by two individuals, however, there was far greater knowledge of **disposable** vapes within the groups.

### What are yours/peers reasons for not vaping?

The majority of reasons given for choosing not to vape related to the health consequences. Additional reasons given by individual students include disliking the smell and vaping being **addictive.**



- "Rick and Morty vapes."
- "Prime vapes."
- "Some are rechargeable."
- "Ghost bars."
- "Cherry."
- "Irn-Bru."

### Are you aware of where people buy vapes and how much they cost?

Many suggestions were made in the focus groups with regards to where you can buy vapes, with the most common response being corner shops. Some people referenced specific places or shops, including supermarkets, vape shops and petrol stations. Other individuals shared that they get vapes from their friends or parents, whilst others get them off the floor. In general, the majority of young people were aware of the price of vapes.

- "A corner shop in St. Annes."
- "Some of their mates hand it to them."
- "You can buy vapes off Wish now."
- "You can buy them off people."
- "There's huts outside and they sell them to anyone. My sister gets them from there and she looks about 12. She never gets asked for ID."
- "Rechargeable are £15-£20. My sister gets vapes and smokes them every 2 mins."

### How safe do you feel vaping is?

Overall, the consensus was that vaping is not safe, with some people forming this opinion from a health perspective, and others viewing the device itself as being **unsafe**. However, some individuals believe vaping is safe for short-term use, or are not interested in its safety.

- "I worry about my friend's vaping and I tell them to stop but they don't listen."
- "Vapes hardly do anything other than popcorn lung. We learnt about it in science."
- "The vape exploded in someone's pocket in hospital. I've seen it on websites and on the news."
- "My sister went out for New Year and put her vape on her bag and it set on fire."
- "If you do it for a month it's ok."

### Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?

There was an **equal divide** in young people's opinions on the safety of vaping in comparison to cigarettes, with most viewpoints being quite extreme one way or the other.

- "It's 100% definitely safer than smoking."
- "One month of smoking and your lungs are black, but one month of vaping and they're still pink. I've seen it on Youtube."
- "I would rather smoke! No idea what's in it."
- "Vaping is a lot worse than smoking."

### Do you worry about the long-term consequences of vaping?

As very few young people in SEND schools and colleges vape themselves, they reflected on what they perceive the long-term consequences to be for those who do vape. All of the comments raised by young people mentioned negative long-term effects on health, with reference being made to cancer. One individual stated that we do not know all of the consequences currently, and that it may follow a similar trajectory to smoking.

- "Toxins in the stomach."
- "You could end up brain dead."
- "Increase the chance of heart attack."

### Do you think advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people? If so, how?

The consensus was that young people were aware vaping was marketed at them, however they feel this did not have a direct impact on the number of young people who vape. Individual opinions varied with regards to social media content, as some see videos displaying the negative effects on TikTok, whereas others see attractive videos showing **"tricks"**.

A few young people believe Television programmes and branded vapes could encourage young people to start vaping. A further suggestion made by young people relating to the design of packaging and the vibrant colours.



- "Yes it's on TV, its everywhere."
- "You see people go live on Tiktok who are vaping. They're about ten years old. It usually gets taken down."
- "I see good and bad videos."
- "Colourful packaging that's aimed at us."
- "Rick and Morty might lead young people to vape."

### Do you think children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping?

Feedback regarding education was varied, with approximately half of the young people believing further education would not be beneficial. For those who do believe education on vaping is necessary, there was debate surrounding who would deliver this.

- "Yes it would be beneficial."
- "If you vape it is too late to go back."
- "A talk from a nurse would be better because they know more about it."
- "Someone like you. I wouldn't speak to a nurse."

### Did you know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal?

Most of the young people were unaware of the regulations surrounding vapes and the number of puffs that is deemed legal in the UK.

- "What's legal? It's on a rocky area. Some 3000 are illegal."
- "They pretend they are less puffs to sell it. They sell it on the packaging saying 200 so they can sell it."



## Have you ever seen the packaging of a vape?

Based on the discussion had around packaging, it is possible to suggest that the young people may have been getting confused with cigarette packaging, with references being made to images of lungs. Despite this, some young people were able to describe symbols on vape packaging.

- "The packaging has small warnings."
- "Exclamation mark."
- "18 sign."
- "Triangle shape hazard sign."
- "Some say 21 up. I've seen my sister's box."

## Do you think it would be easy to stop vaping?

The feedback provided by young people was based on conversations they'd had with peers surrounding stopping vaping.

- "It won't be easy at first but gradually yes."
- "I tried to make my friends stop but they don't listen then we have an argument."
- "They get suicidal if they haven't got it."

## Supported accommodation for young people, aged 16-18 years

- Clare Street (6/2/2023) – 5 young people.
- Bispham House (8/2/2023) – 1 young person.
- Participants were aged between 16-18 years old.

6 participants

## What are yours/peers reasons for vaping?

The primary reasons given for young people vaping included peer pressure, the taste and vaping being a **cheaper** alternative to smoking cigarettes.

- "It tastes nice and the flavours. Some people have an addictive personality."
- "It's a social thing."
- "People who have smoked first move to vaping cos of the cost."

## Where do you your peers vape?

It was clear from discussions that many young people perceive vaping to be acceptable indoors, but would only smoke cigarettes outdoors.

- "We're allowed to do it in our flats here."
- "Wherever, it depends how stressful the day is how often I do it. I get a short burst of calm from a vape but the effects of fags last longer."
- "Vape wherever but smoke outside away from the kids."

## What are yours/peers reasons for not vaping?

The young people who did not vape wish to live a healthier lifestyle, and in one case have been discouraged from engaging in this type of activity due to witnessing family members lead an unhealthy way of life. We had a conversation with the group around some people being deterred from vaping and smoking through seeing family members doing this, whilst others have imitated and internalised that behaviour.

- "To have a longer life."
- "I've watched my Uncle drink and smoke, I don't want to live like that."
- "People that vape have got no ambition for when they're older, they live in the moment."
- "My mum has smoked weed since I was a kid. I had my first joint at 11."

## Where do you buy vapes?

The young people within the group who vape put forward many suggestions of shops where they buy vapes, with an indication that **corner shops** are easier to buy from when under age. Furthermore, some people have vapes delivered and so don't have to show their ID. A few individuals mentioned being given vapes when they were younger by family or friends.

- "I get served anywhere, pretty much as long as you've got boobs you get served."
- "They sell them to us even though they know we're underage, it's all over Blackpool they don't care."





- "I order them online and they leave them in the post box so don't have to show ID. There was just fields around."
- "My Mum bought me a vape on my 13th birthday."
- "My friend gave me one and through my fag in the river."

### What type of vape do you use and why?

The majority of young people are currently using **disposable vapes**, having previously used box vapes or mod kits.



- "You can re-charge disposables on a wireless charger. Just put more liquid in, put the top back on and re-use it."
- "At school people have one of 3 types. They either have mod kits because they think they're well hard blowing phat clouds. People with pens are just old ass c\*nts. Most have disposables cause can get 3 for £13 and get all the different flavours."
- "It's easy to hide disposables in school."
- "Some people used to have the massive vapes but disposables are popular among young people now. It's cos you can just bin them when you're done with them. If you throw it on the floor, sometimes it's not truly done and you can get ten more puffs out of it."
- "You can get illegal ones which have 30-40ml. That's killing your insides."

### How safe do you feel vaping is?

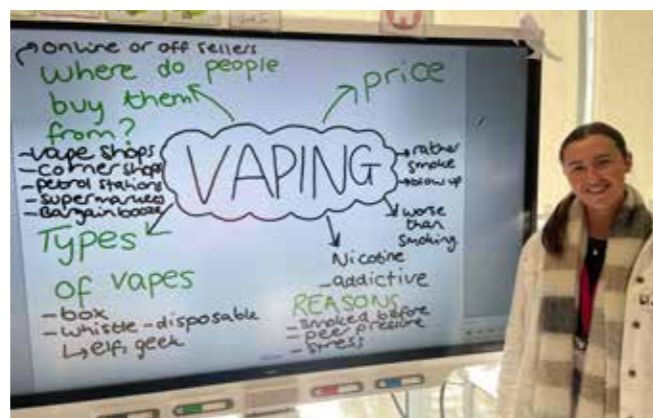
There were mixed views on the safety of vaping, however, the overall feeling from the group was that most people do not care if it is safe and do not consider the long-term consequences.

- "We're all gonna die eventually so we may as well enjoy ourselves whilst we're here."
- "My family have a history of breast cancer so I'm gonna die from that anyway."
- "They mustn't be that bad cos they have to test them out before they sell them."
- "If you don't smoke, it gives you a massive rush and you're not used to it. It sent my head dizzy. I used to vape but not anymore cos it made me feel crap."

### Do you think it would be easy to stop vaping?

The members of the group who informed us they vape did not feel it would be easy to stop, particularly for those who use vaping as a **coping mechanism**.

- "I stopped but then carried on again as someone set my anxiety off."



### Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes? Have you in the past or do you currently smoke cigarettes?

The group was generally in agreement that they feel cigarettes are safer than vapes, although they are not entirely sure on their reasons why.

A couple of individuals did not agree and believe vaping is safer. Some people stated that they vape and smoke, but their reasons for vaping were generally due to **affordability** and **accessibility**.



- "I think cigs are safer cos tobacco is more natural. Both have pros and cons."
- "There is not enough evidence to say either way."
- "Yeah we both vape and smoke."
- "I smoked before vaping. These are easier to get."

### Do you read the packaging when opening a vape?

The widespread opinion regarding vape packaging was that it isn't important to the young people and they do not pay much attention to it, particularly as the packaging is perceived as vague in comparison to cigarette packaging.

- "Vapes are not regulated the same as fags."
- "I actually did read the packaging last night cos I was bored. It just gives instructions and how to open it. Nothing about safety. It says a bit about pregnancy."

### Do you think children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping?

The consensus was that children and young people would not benefit from education as they would not take the information on board or change their behaviour.

- "Kids won't listen. They have to go through the physical side themselves."
- "They don't talk about vaping in school. Year 10 and 11 openly do it. If the teacher takes it off you, you can just snatch it back out their hand and they can't do anything about it. The more people tell you not to do it, the more they do it."
- "I think yes but they won't benefit much as kids don't listen."

### Do you think advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people? If so, how?

The group were of the opinion that the methods of advertisement, including the **packaging and flavours**, had more of an impact upon young people than social media. However, one individual acknowledged that the algorithm on social media channels has a big impact on what appears on your feed, therefore others may have a different experience.

- "Yes, it's the bright packaging and flavours. You can now get Skittle and Fanta flavoured vapes."
- "The packaging is colourful. It should be plain."
- "I don't think TikTok does as nothing comes up on mine. I don't see videos like this though as I don't like these vids. It's the algorithm."

## Youth groups

- Boathouse Youth Lytham Road site (WC 19/9/22) – 39 young people.
- UR Potential LGBTQ+ group (6/10/22) – 5 young people.
- UR Potential Blackpool Youth Council group (10/10/22) – 7 young people.
- Boathouse Youth Grange Park site (WC 31/10/22) – 66 young people.
- Magic Club (31/1/23) – 25 young people.
- REVOElution Youth Group (10/3/23) – 9 young people.
- Participants were aged between 11-17 years old.

151 participants

## What are yours/peers reasons for vaping?

There were a variety of reasons provided, with the most popular being due to **mental health issues**. Other reasons included peer pressure, to look cool, appealing flavours and how accessible vapes are. This included being able to access them from shops, family members and picking them up off the floor.

- "I've done it once. It found it on the floor. It tasted nice."
- "We didn't know what it was so we tried it. It tasted horrible. I'm eleven years old. We were offered it by our friends who are teenagers. They also smoke weed. Apparently it is good for you but I know it's not."
- "Everyone is peer pressured into doing it at my school. I heard someone being called a mug for not vaping when offered one in the toilet."
- "My brother has just gone into year 4, he had a bit of my dad's after finding it on the floor."
- "To deal with stress, I don't self-harm now I vape."

## What are yours/peers reasons for not vaping?

The most popular response to this question was due to **health** reasons. Additional reasons centred on the financial implications associated with vaping and safety.



- "I don't want popcorn lungs. I tried it before and told my Mum and she shouted and told me about popcorn lungs."
- "I don't vape because it's basically the same as smoking. It can damage your lungs."
- "They are overpriced lung cancer sticks."
- "I want to be in the RAF and to be able to breathe that's why I don't do it."
- "It burns your pocket."

## What type of vape do you use? E.g. disposable vape (elf bar), vape pen, pod mod, pod system.

The type of vape that young people either used or were aware of were **disposable vapes**, with many mentioning specific brands and flavours. The most popular brands mentioned were elf bars, geek bars and crystal bars. The second most popular type of vape mentioned was vape pens and again, specific brands were mentioned such as Cali pens, Eluxes and one person mentioned "weed pens".

- "Disposable because they have nicotine salt rather than a liquid. They're smoother on the throat and lighter and don't cause a chesty cough. They taste better."
- "Disposables are more popular among young people because corner shops have them and it's convenient. There's 50/50 chance of getting served disposables in a shop compared to vape pens etc."
- "Everyone bought Cali pens with their x-mas money."
- "My mates collect empty ones and keeps them."
- "There's crystal, eliquids, elf bars that are so much cheaper. Eluxs light up."



## Where do you buy vapes?

The most frequent response to this question was **corner shops**. Many young people also mentioned specific shops and geographical locations where they buy their vapes, including branded grocery shops and supermarkets. Other individuals stated that their friends or members of their family buy vapes for them.

- "You can get them by literally walking into corner shops. You have to act nice to the man then you don't get asked for ID."
- "There's a shop on my street that lets an eight year old buy vapes."
- "My friend buys me them or you can get randomers to go to the shop for you."
- "Year 6 kids get them from elders."
- "My mates Mum buys them for him."

## Do you get ID checked when buying vapes?

The most popular response to this answer was no, with young people further identifying reasons why, which included the type of shop and **"looking older"**. Other individuals stated that they do get ID'd while others said it depends on various reasons including "how old you look".

- "The corner shop don't ID you."
- "Barely anyone is asked for ID. They don't care."
- "When I try to get them yes as I look like a twelve year old."
- "One shop got caught now they always ask for ID."
- "With my friends, it depends if they're wearing glasses or not. My friend went in without glasses one day and didn't get served, then went in with glasses the next day and got served."



## Where do you/your peers vape?

When individuals were asked where they/their peers vape, the most popular response was **at school** with frequent reference to school toilets being the most popular location within schools. Other individuals stated they vape “anywhere” and others mentioned that they vape at home.

- “At school in the girls toilets, there’s about 12 girls in vaping. Now they have to guard the toilets because of it.”
- “Toilets at school aren’t even used for toilets anymore. They are just used to vape.”
- “In my bedroom, wherever I don’t even think about it.”
- “I know people that do it in the house because parents don’t view it as badly.”
- “Kids have them in their hands all of the time.”

## How safe do you feel vaping is?

The majority of individuals felt that vaping was **not safe**, with the main reason being due to the negative health consequences associated with vaping. Others mentioned that device itself is not safe, with some suggesting that it depends on other factors such as “concentration” and “percentage”. A small minority mentioned some of the positives of vaping, such as “it gives you energy” and “it’s just cool isn’t it”, and some were not interested in its safety.

- “I don’t think it’s safe. I know a 15 year old with popcorn lungs who has been in and out of hospital because of vaping. They are on an inhaler four times a day.”
- “People don’t even think about their health or even the plastic and environment.”
- “There are different percentages that do more damage.”
- “I had a disposable vape set on fire in my pocket (an Elux).”

- “It depends on how much you do. It’s classed as cool.”

## Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?

The majority of individuals felt that vaping was **worse than smoking**, with the most popular reason being that people vape more frequently than they would smoke. A smaller minority felt that vaping was safer than smoking, with some stating that they were both as bad as each other.

- “People have them in their hands all of the time. They do it a lot more often than smoking.”
- “As far as I know, all of the disposable vapes are 2% nicotine which is 40 fags. People are going through vapes quicker than cigs so it’s worse.”
- “It’s not very good for you but it’s better than smoking. You can find them anywhere on the floor. That’s when people try them. It is useful if trying to stop smoking.”
- “It really depends. It depends which vape you’re using and its concentration.”

## Have you in the past or do you currently smoke cigarettes?

Responses to this question were fairly evenly split, with the slight majority stating that they had previous smoked before vaping. Some mentioned that they vaped to stop themselves from smoking, while others had never smoked before vaping. One individual stated that they both smoke and vape.

- “I smoked first and then I vaped.”
- “Never smoked but vape.”
- “I still do both, I’m just vibing.”
- “Yeah I started vaping six months ago when I started quitting smoking. I spend £60 a month on vapes.”
- “Everybody who vaped tried a cig.”

## Do you worry about the long-term consequences of vaping?

The majority of responses mentioned the long term health consequences of vaping, with a particular focus on the impact on the **heart and lungs**. Other individuals mentioned that they do not know the long-term consequences because they are not taught about them. Other responses suggested that young people “don’t care” or aware of the long-term consequences but continue to vape regardless.

- “No one really knows because it’s not been spoken about. We don’t know the health risks yet.”
- “A girl I know I go horse-riding with vapes. She has asthma and still vapes. She does it regardless.”
- “One of the big things when it first came out was popcorn lung. Also with it being vapour, it could drown me from the inside.”
- “They don’t teach about vaping consequences in schools because if they teach about it, they think that they’re encouraging it.”
- “It may not be as bad as smoking but it could end in heart failure, especially if you go from smoking to vaping. Tar mixing with vapour in your lungs.”

## Do you think advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people? If so, how?

All of the responses indicated that they believed advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people. Around half of the responses mentioned the prevalence of vaping on specific social media sites such as **TikTok, Instagram**, Snapchat and Facebook, as well as the impact influencers vaping has on young people. The other half of responses stated that vaping is targeted within advertising specifically towards young people, due to the flavours and packaging.

- “They are all over social media. There’s pictures of vapes and influencers with them.”
- “It doesn’t help when influencers that bring out a drink (referring to PRIME) bring out matching vape flavours too. The packaging and flavours, like cotton candy, make people want to try them. They make them look attractive for kids.”
- “They are attractive, different colours. Always at the tills and make you want to buy them.”
- “I saw on TikTok a three year old vaping.”

## Do you think children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping?

The responses to this question were fairly evenly split, with some individuals stating the need for **more education** on vaping. Others mentioned lessons they already have such as PSHE, where some suggested education on vaping already took place, while others suggested PSHE teaches them about other things such as drugs, but not vaping. A minority of individuals stated that it depends on other factors, such as who would be teaching it.

- “Yes, we think so as we don’t know the long term effects.”
- “We get taught about e-cigs in school assembly and PSHE lessons.”
- “There’s loads of education about other things like smoking, alcohol and drugs.”
- “At school, it depends what teacher it is.”
- “School don’t teach us about vapes.”

### Did you know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal?

The majority of young people were aware of the regulations surrounding vapes and the number of puffs that is deemed legal in the UK. A smaller minority were unaware of the regulations.

- "I didn't know over 600 puffs was illegal."

### Do you read the packaging when opening a vape?

Most individuals stated that they do not read the packaging on vapes, with most discussing the bright colours/ pictures relating to the brand rather than any health warnings.

- "No-one reads the packaging. All I see is a picture of the vape."
- "Cigarettes have scary pictures on the front. Vapes are really colourful."
- "There's no health pictures on the packets."
- "Should make the writing bigger."



### Do you think it would be easy to stop vaping?

Discussions around this question were fairly evenly split, with some stating they would not be able to stop, citing reasons such as **pressures at home**, due to the length of time they have been vaping and simply not wanting to stop. Others said it is easier to stop vaping due to there being less nicotine and they have stopped in the past.

- "I couldn't last a week without one."
- "I don't think so, everyone is doing it at school."
- "My friend can't stop because of pressure at home."
- "It's easier to stop than smoking - vaping has less nicotine in it."

### How could young people be encouraged to stop vaping?

The majority of responses called for further education on vaping, specifically around the **health implications** related to vaping. One individual suggested that young people need to be incentivised to stop through rewards like vouchers.



- "I want to stop, you need to tell people the effect on their health."
- "I don't think there's enough education on vapes like there is for alcohol and cigarettes."
- "If someone doesn't vape for a year they should get rewarded. With a voucher or money."
- "Show young people what happens with their lungs if you do it."

### Is there any information that you think young people are missing in relation to vaping?

One of the key themes that was identified in this question was that individuals felt there needed to be more awareness around the impact vaping has on teeth. Other individuals had not heard about "popcorn lung" until discussions within the focus group, and felt they wanted more information on this.

- "Well I didn't know about popcorn lung until you guys were saying tonight which is worrying."
- "They need to learn how it can affect your braces - it can affect how quickly your teeth move."
- "Your doctors and dentists can tell."

### Other feedback

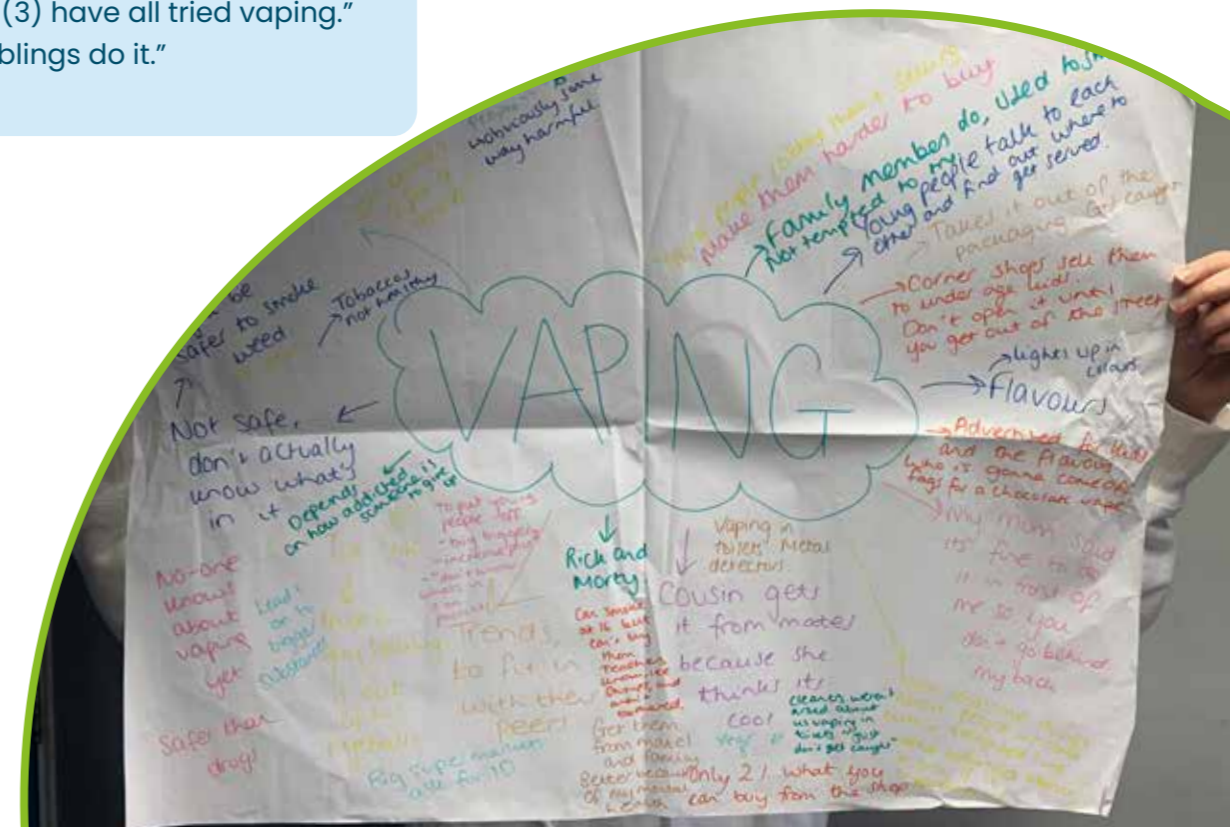
Other feedback from youth groups included:

- "We like to smoke the 'secret stuff'."
- "My sister (7), brother (10), sister (8) and sister (3) have all tried vaping."
- "I let my siblings do it."

### What are the consequences of vaping at school?

The most popular response to this question was that young people have their vapes **taken off them** if they are caught with them. The second most popular consequence was "detention" or "impact". A small minority stated that their school "search" individuals and some suggested that their school "do nothing" if people are found with vapes.

- "They take them off you and destroy them."
- "In our school, you will get a C5 and in some cases excluded."
- "Our school are not bothered about vaping. They only take them off you if they catch you. If you have them in your pockets they don't take them off you."
- "They search you at my school with a metal detector."
- "Our school have to give them back."





## Primary Schools

- Layton Primary School (4/1/23) – 89 young people.
- St Kentigern's Catholic Primary School (4/1/23) – 28 young people.
- St Nicholas Church of England Primary School (19/1/23) – 29 young people.
- Mereside Primary Academy (2/2/23) – 70 young people.
- Westminster Primary Academy (3/3/23) – 21 young people.
- Participants were aged between 10–11 years old (year 5 or 6).

237 participants

## Do you vape/ have you ever been tempted to vape? If yes, why?

The vast majority of individuals stated that they have **not vaped** and have never been tempted to vape, with the main reason being due to the negative health consequences of vaping. Some individuals admitted that they had been tempted to vape, with the most common reason being due to the **appealing smell** of vapes when someone else has been using them. A small number stated that they had tried it once but didn't like it, often encouraged by friends or family members and a smaller minority stated that they do vape.

- “I’ve been excluded for an afternoon for vaping, I know loads about it.”
- “I have been tempted, just to see what it’s like and I have vaped because someone peer pressured me to do it.”
- “I have done it once and I did it because my friend had one and I felt like if I didn’t do it they wouldn’t like me anymore.”
- “No because I know the consequences and know the risks of vaping.”
- “No because I was peer pressured once and I declined the offer I was given to vape.”
- “My mum and dad don’t like it so it makes me not want to try it.”



## What do young people know about vaping? E.g. types, price, where to buy...

The most popular response to this question centred on where young people are getting their vapes from, including various shops such as supermarkets, corner shops and vape shops. Several stated that young people **pick them up off the floor** and get them from friends or family members. Young people also gave information on what they knew a vape contained, with a strong focus on the knowledge that vapes contained nicotine and what this does. Others talked about how vapes contained a certain number of puffs, comparing this to the amount of cigarettes vapes are equal to. Other popular responses were around the cost of vapes, stating young people, family members and friends who they knew vaped and the various different types of vapes including disposables, vape pens and specific brand names like “Elf bar”, “Lost Mary” and “Crystal’s”.



- “Vapes can contain up to 50 cigarettes.”
- “I’ve seen friends of mine pick up vapes on the street.”
- “Some people ask older people to buy for them.”
- “You can buy them in sketchy or corner shops.”
- “Some places you can get 1 for £3.”
- “My Dad does to stop smoking.”
- “When someone vapes I like the smell of it, the last flavour I smelt was cherry it was so nice.”

## Why do you think young people or adults choose to vape?

There were a variety of reasons given as to why students felt that young people and adults chose to vape, with the most popular reason being **to look cool**, followed closely by **peer pressure**. Participants also stated that stress and mental health reasons are a contributing factor as to why both young people and adults choose to vape. Participants also felt that addiction played a significant part in people’s use of vapes as well as some suggesting that vaping is often used as a preferred alternative to smoking cigarettes.

- “People don’t know it’s dangerous and other people do it so they might copy them because they think it’s cool.”
- “Some people dare their friends to do it and get peer-pressured.”
- “They could be depressed, heart-broken or because of a dare by their friends.”
- “They think it will get rid of their problems like depression or problems at home.”



## What is peer pressure/influence?

When asked what peer pressure/ influence is, the majority of young participants shared their own definitions and understanding of peer pressure and influence.

Common phrases included **forced, pressured, encouraged** and **persuaded**. The second most common response centred on the impact social media, advertisements and celebrities has on influencing young people to vape. Young people cited specific social media sites such as "youtube" and "TikTok" as well as discussing how vapes are advertised towards children due to their appealing flavours and colours. Another common response was of young people's own experiences of peer pressure/ influence, where they disclosed instances where they were peer pressured/ influenced by friends and family members.

- "Peer pressure if when you get pressured or do it because you get blackmailed."
- "Saw a video of guys going up to young people, like 14, and they forced them to try."
- "People might have a celebrity they look up to and they want to be like them when they're older so they see them and decide to copy them and do it."
- "I did it twice, my Uncle forced me he's 16."
- "When I've been peer pressured I felt like I couldn't do anything."
- "I saw a doctor on TikTok and he said it's safe. And he had a blue tick."
- "There was a TikTok of a calendar with vapes in it" (advent calendar).

## How safe do you think vaping is? What are the risks?

The overwhelming majority of responses from young people was that vaping was **not safe**, with many individuals listing the various negative health impacts it can have on the body. Many discussed the impact it can have on lungs, heart, the brain, mental health and teeth. A large number of participants also mentioned the fact that vapes contain nicotine and are therefore **addictive**, which they also associated with being unsafe. A small minority felt that vaping was safer than smoking cigarettes, with a smaller minority feeling cigarettes were safer.

**3 young people** felt that vaping was safe, stating:

- "If you just vape a little every day you won't get addicted or have anything bad happen to you."
- "It's very addictive as it has nicotine and so it's dangerous."
- "It can turn your lungs black, but not as much as cigarettes."
- "Vaping can damage your lungs, it could possibly kill you."
- "If kid's vape, their brain will not develop properly."
- "It can cause cancer."
- "Vaping can lead to bleeding, teeth decaying and not being able to breathe properly."
- "If you find a vape on the ground don't pick it up because it might have drugs inside it and can kill you."
- "It can cause depression and even lead to the point where you can die."

## Would you like further education about vaping?

The general consensus was that individuals would like **further education** on vaping, in particular the health risks associated. Other participants wished to be educated more about vaping so they could pass this on to family members and friends who vaped to help them stop. A number of individuals stated who they would like to deliver this information, the most common being teachers, health professionals and parents. A small minority stated that they would not like further education on vaping.

- "Yes because I can tell my family and friends what the risks are."
- "Yes because it will teach me the right information instead of the wrong information."
- "I would like to learn more so we know the risks. I would like experts to come in and teach us. The more I know, the more I can avoid it and tell others about it so they don't end up in hospital."
- "I would want my teacher or someone I can trust."
- "Further education might not be the best idea as it might make other people want to do it more."

## How can vaping in young people be stopped?

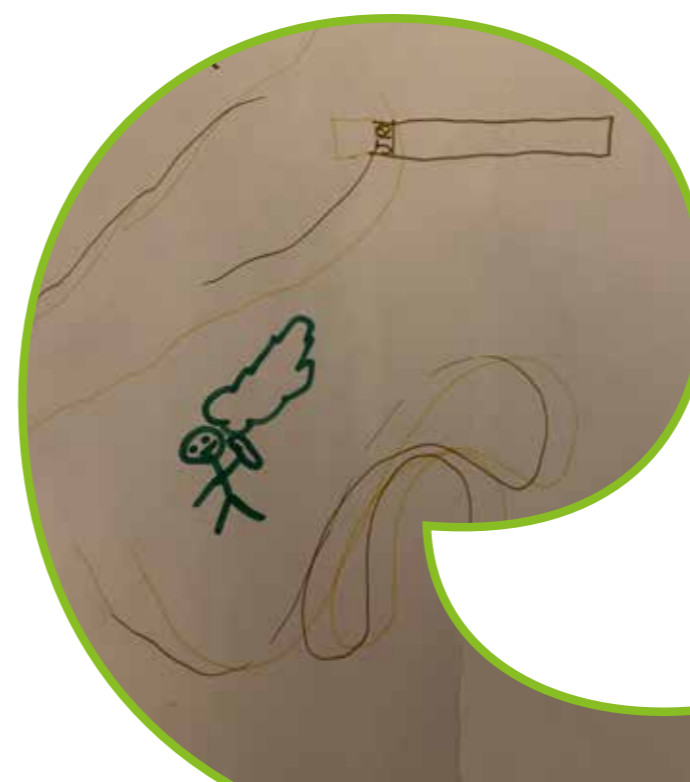
There were several suggestions from individuals as to how vaping in young people can be stopped. Some suggested that vapes need to be **less accessible** to young people, while others suggested that there needs to be **more education** available to young people about the effects of vaping.

- "Stop selling at the corner shop."
- "Could ask for ID."
- "They are recommending not to vape, but it should be the law."
- "Videos showing what happens to your body when you vape, the harm."

## Have you ever heard of vape-hunting?

When participants were asked this question, the majority of young people had heard of vape hunting and were able to articulate what this was. Some had witnessed someone they know vape-hunting, while others raised their concerns regarding the health implications of picking vapes up off the floor. A small minority of young people had never heard of vape-hunting.

- "To see if any puffs in it and pick it up".
- "Someone picked one up, tried it and said it was really bad."
- "Dogs could have peed on it."
- "Could have Covid."
- "If you see a vape on the floor, don't pick it up. It could have had a rat on it."
- "I know someone who does it. He is only 8 and has diabetes. They find fresh ones off the street and clean it with the top of their clothes."





## Additional educational provisions

- Athena: Educational Diversity (12/9/22) – 12 young people.
- Athena: Educational Diversity (20/1/23) – 10 young people.
- The Willows: Educational Diversity (30/1/23) – 4 young people.
- Spen Brook School (31/1/23) – 6 young people.
- Pegasus: Educational Diversity (7/2/23) – 9 young people.
- Pegasus: Educational Diversity (9/2/23) – 8 young people.
- Lancashire Alternative Provision (23/2/23) – 6 young people.
- Unique training (1/3/23) – 12 young people.
- The Alternative School (2/3/23) – 9 young people.
- RossCon training (9/3/23) – 7 young people.
- Participants were aged between 11-30 years old.

83 participants

## What are yours/peers reasons for vaping?

The most popular reason suggested for young people vaping was that it is a **social norm**, in which young people perceive it to be **cool**. It was acknowledged that vaping is a current trend, therefore young people engage in this in order to **fit in** with their peers.



- “People see other people vaping and so they think it’s okay.”
- “Because everybody else does it.”
- “Trends. To fit in with peers.”
- “If you’re close with someone you just share it with friends.”

Another frequently mentioned reason for vaping was due to the array of **flavours** and **colours** that young people gain enjoyment from. As well as this, the **vaping tricks** that can be performed attract young people to vaping.

- “Sweet flavours, blue and pink lemonade.”
- “Sometimes my mates vaping makes me want to when I smell the flavours.”
- “I like it cause it lights up my room with the LED lights on the vape.”
- “The flavours, you can tiger blood and prime vapes.”
- “Because they want to do tricks they have seen online, like 00000.”

In addition, using vaping as a method to **relieve stress or boredom** was also common within the focus groups, specifically for young people experiencing struggles.

- “Stress. It’s a coping method. How much I vape depends on what happens in the day and how stressed I am.”
- “There’s nothing to do. If people found out that you’re chilling at a youth club, they’d think what are you doing you absolute gimp.”
- “Clears my head.”
- “Makes me feel better.”
- “My mates with ADHD, autism, anger management and all that, they vape to calm them down.”

Further reasons given for vaping included **peer pressure**, and being **surrounded** by vaping or smoking from a young age.

- “Someone gave me one in year 5 and I didn’t know what it was.”
- “If you don’t do it you get called a p\*ssy”.
- “Everyone I know vapes, they try to get me to.”
- “I started in year 6 cos of my dad’s cigarettes.”
- “Makes a difference if your parents vape. My Mum smoked and now she vapes. I wanted to try it and I’ve grown up around it. Because she vapes, I think it’s alright.”

## What are yours/peers reasons for not vaping?

When describing those that choose not to vape, young people highlighted **health** as the most common reason. This was closely followed by long term conditions such as **asthma**. **Religion** and **strict parents** was also cited within feedback gathered.

- “Some of my mates do sport so don’t want to vape.”
- “My best mate doesn’t. She’s got asthma.”
- “Health benefits, I want to be an athlete.”
- “Religious reasons.”

## Where do you buy vapes?

Those that buy vapes typically choose independent **corner shops**, as they do **not have to provide proof of age**. Some of the young people mentioned the **‘dodgy’** corner shops selling counterfeit vapes. Additionally, they recalled the shopkeepers removing the vape from the packaging or instructing children and young people to not open the vape until they are on a different street.

- “I get it from corner shops. They say don’t get it out of the packet before you are out of the shop and down the street.”
- “Corner shops, but some of them are selling fake vapes and they’re shit.” When asked how we know the vape is fake, “they’re in different packaging than normal. The text is bolder. The battery dies quick and the coil burns.”
- “You can get them from the corner shop. Year three’s get them and everything.”
- “Corner shops sell them to under age kids and they say don’t open it until you get out of the street. The man says quick quick.”
- “They wait for the shop to be empty then they’ll serve you.”
- “I know seven year olds getting served in a corner shop.”
- “Corner shops. Some shops take them out of the box first so it doesn’t look like you’ve just bought them.”

Furthermore, **stealing** vapes from big stores or supermarkets was discussed on a number of occasions, with some young people doing this to **sell** the vapes and others using the vapes they have stolen.

- "To steal them from a supermarket, you take it to the toilet, then take it out the packaging and just put the vape in your pocket."
- "Food warehouse is dead easy to steal from."
- "Young people are robbing them and selling them, I've done it."
- "They're easy to rob from B&M."

Other young people order their vapes through **online** means, whether that be a website, social media or an app.

- "Got 8 vapes delivered to the house off vape shops online. They just post it through the letter box. If they knock I say Mum isn't in and it's for her."
- "On snapchat you can ask your mates."
- "I get mine from the dark web. You can get them imported from America to your house."
- "Can order vapes on UBER eats. Mum answers the door." After a short discussion, the individual noted that their Mum doesn't know the contents of the order. "I only do it for stuff I can't buy."
- "There's insta vape accounts, the Blackpool account advertises where you can get a vape with no ID. It's just a random person from Blackpool that runs the account."

Finally, some young people were **not aware** where their vape had been purchased, due to being given them by family members or acquaintances.

- "I tax it off my auntie."
- "My cousin buys them for me."
- "My mate is a girl. Someone asked her to do stuff for a vape."

### Do you get ID checked when buying vapes?

The general consensus was that young people are less likely to be asked for ID in corner shops as opposed to supermarkets. With this being said, young people identified that **girls** are more likely to be served a vape **without ID** than boys.

- "You can get served in any shop in town they will not ask for ID."
- "Definitely girls are more likely to get served, cos they are pervs".
- "It's harder for boys, all they have to do is wear a push up bra".
- "I don't get ID'd. I had a fake ID but I lost it."

In addition, those who are worried they will be asked for ID when buying a vape shared that they **ask other people** to go into the shop on their behalf. One individual also mentioned **wearing a mask** in the shop when buying a vape.



- "I get a mate to go in."
- "Bare little kids hanging around asking outside shops."
- "You can send friends in if needed."
- "It's better for the shops if you are wearing a mask so they don't get identified".

### How safe do you feel vaping is?

The most frequent response when asked if vaping was safe, centred on potential negative health implications as a result of vaping. Specific mention was given to long term conditions such as **cancer** and **respiratory difficulties**.

- "Can get popcorn lungs."
- "Restricts your breathing."
- "Can get lung cancer."
- "They can make people feel dizzy depending on how much they are used in a day."
- "I've developed a cough since vaping."

Similarly, several young people made reference to **coughing up blood** as a consequence of vaping and the implications surrounding certain types of vapes.

- "Crystal vapes have made people cough up blood. Some of them quit but some don't."
- "My mate Liam spits out blood."
- "Geek bars make you cough up blood."
- "Coughing up blood is a minor issue."
- "I started coughing up blood for a bit but it didn't scare me or make me want to stop."

In addition, multiple young people deemed vaping to be unsafe, questioning the ingredients. Specific mention was given to the safety surrounding vaping during **pregnancy**.

- "Don't know what's in vapes."
- "It's not safe."
- "Obviously it's in some way harmful if pregnant women can't use a vape."
- "Don't think it's safe at all."
- "Not safe if you're pregnant, can give the child disabilities."

In contrast, a minority of young people did not seem concerned in regards to the safety surrounding vaping, prioritising **short term gain**.

- "Not thinking far ahead about long-term effects."
- "No not worried."
- "Don't really care if it's safe or not."
- "Mum sends me things about people in a coma with a collapsed lung but I'm not bothered about it, I'll only be bothered if it happens to me."

Further to this, some young people made reference to **safety concerns** relating to the device itself and the **dangers** these can pose.

- "They can explode."
- "My mates were trying to charge a vape with an Apple charger and it blew up."
- "The rechargeable ones can blow up at any time."
- "Refillable ones are worse. Their liquid is stronger. They have more nicotine. They run the risk of burning out their coil which you cannot tell straight away. Disposable ones are more convenient."
- "It gets really hot if it gets wet."

Finally, a minority of young people highlighted the **lack of research** relating to vapes and their safety.

- "No-one knows about vaping yet."
- "No-one knows if it's safe, we don't know the long-term effects. Nothing you like to do is healthy."
- "We don't know, it took twenty years to find out what happens with cigs."



## Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?

Most of the young people believed that vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes due to the ingredients within a vape being better for your health than those in a cigarette.

- "It's safer as it's got no carcinogens."
- "There is no tar in vapes so this is better for you."
- "I'd rather have a toother than smoke a fag."

In contrast, some young people believe that cigarettes are safer than vapes.

- "I think cigarettes are safer. There's like 42-50 cigarettes in a vape. That's scientifically proven my Dad has researched it to get my brother to stop. He was addicted to aroma king and it was just lasting him 3 days."
- "Tooters are worse than baccy."
- "Cigs are safer than vapes cos vapes can explode."

For others, they felt as though they are **both bad**, or it is dependent on the type of vape and how often this is being used.

- "You can change vape pens to alter how hard they hit you."
- "You can get vapes that don't have nicotine."
- "Safer in the fact that tar isn't left on lungs but I'd say they are the same apart from that."

## Have you in the past or do you currently smoke cigarettes?

The general consensus from young people was that many are now starting to vape before having smoked cigarettes. They acknowledged that this differs to previous generations, whereby smoking cigarettes was more popular.

- "More adults smoked first then vaped but more children are vaping first."
- "Not a lot have smoked before they vape."

With that being said, some young people described smoking **cigarettes** from a young age **prior to vaping**.

- "Yeah but I vape now. When I'm super stressed I have a cig but I'm not interested otherwise."
- "I started smoking at 11, I'd take my grandma's cigarettes but I've stopped smoking now and moved to a vape."
- "I smoked before, my cousin put a cigarette in my mouth when I was 9."

Additionally, some young people have **started smoking** cigarettes since vaping.

- "It's easier to get fags off strangers."
- "More common for people to go from vapes to cigs."

For those who currently smoke cigarettes and/or vape, it was discussed that this can vary dependent upon the situation. Examples given included when **socialising**, when **experiencing stress** and if people do not have a vape.

- "Occasionally smoke, if no vape."
- "I smoke cigarettes when I drink alcohol, but I don't vape."
- "I do both at the same time, just depends on the mood. I tend to vape more."
- "My Mum currently only buys horrible cigarettes so I stick to vaping at the moment. It's only when I'm really stressed that I smoke."

## Do you worry about the long-term consequences of vaping?

The overall consensus was that young people **do not worry** about the long-term consequences of vaping.

- "I'd have one last toot of a vape before I die."
- "Don't worry about it."
- "You only live once."
- "It only comes around once."
- "Not arsed."

In contrast, some young people highlighted the potential long term health consequences as a result of vaping. Young people made specific reference to health concerns, such as **persistent nosebleeds and popcorn lung**. It is important to note that despite the majority being aware of the long term risks, young people choose to vape regardless.

- "I do worry about popcorn lung and the consequences but go back for more anyway."
- "You can get water vapour on your lungs."
- "You can get something called popcorn lung that will eventually kill you."
- "They can cause health issues like headaches and nose bleeds."
- "Children have ended up in hospital due to constant nosebleeds from the stronger vapes."

Finally, a minority of young people believe vaping to be **unsafe**.

- "It is not thought to be safe."
- "I did, main reason I quit."

## Do you think advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people?

The majority of young people believe that **social media** and advertising promotes vaping, with specific mention being made to **TikTok** and **Instagram**. Young people stated how social media platforms such as these advertise tricks and endorse new flavours. It was noted that the majority of young people choose to actively avoid social media content displaying the negative consequences of vaping, or if this content is consumed, young people choose to continue vaping regardless with this content having very little impact.

- "TikTok does, there's a video of a guy blowing a vape out of his eyeballs."
- "All over TikTok. There's accounts that show vapes and new flavours when they come out."
- "I see people in hospital beds with breathing tubes on TikTok but it doesn't make me want to stop."
- "I just watch cool videos of people doing tricks and that."
- "Some post about coughing up sick, but I'll just avoid that one".
- "New flavours on TikTok, at the moment it's Mr Blue and bubblegum."

Similarly, some young people made reference to **Snapchat**, as a means to promote and sell vapes.

- "Sometimes you have naughty kids robbing from a shop and they put it on snap to sell to young ones."
- "You can post any on snap."
- "People use snapchat to sell vapes."

In addition, young people made reference to the **attractive exterior** to vapes, noting features such as flashing lights and bright colours. Some young people acknowledged that advertising and marketing is aimed at themselves, however choose to continue despite this being apparent.

- “Packaging has fruity pictures on and they’re all in a display cabinet with lights.”
- “Advertised for kids and the flavours. What adult is gonna come off fags for a chocolate flavour vape.”
- “Why would a bright, light up vape and sparkly wrapper be targeted at adults? Course it isn’t.”
- “They have fidget spinner vapes now that light up.”
- “They make them fluorescent.”

Finally, some young people discussed various **flavours and brands**, highlighting their appeal to young people.

- “They look like sweet flavours.”
- “Slush puppy – aimed at kids.”
- “It looks good, you can get Rick and Morty. Some flash.”
- “You can get Spongebob vapes mate.”

### Do you think children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping?

The overall consensus was that young people would benefit from **further education** in relation to vaping, with a preference for this to take place with younger children in settings such as **primary schools**.

Other young people suggested educational sessions be facilitated by authoritative figures or someone relatable.

- “The younger ones should have someone in uniform telling them about, because it would sh\*t them up and they wouldn’t dare to try it.”
- “Yeah, you could learn about it in year 6 maybe.”
- “Teenagers who can speak on the same level, make it fun.”
- “A police officer, they’ve got to have fear.”

In addition, some young people suggested that sessions **showcasing the health consequences** of vaping would be the preferred way to educate young people.

- “They should listen to people who have got lung cancer or are really ill from vaping.”
- “Someone who knows about the effects and can shock them.”

Finally, a minority of young people felt that this would **not be beneficial** as they already vape.



- “No, it won’t benefit anything cos we do it. You could tell young people though who are in primary school.”
- “No I wouldn’t be bothered.”
- “I wouldn’t bother. It’s like when the police come in and talk to you about drugs. You’re gonna do it anyway. When someone tells you not to do it, it makes you want to do it more.”

### Did you know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal?

Largely, feedback suggests that young people are aware that vapes **over 600 puffs are illegal**. That being said, young people are aware of shops having a wide range of ‘under counter’ vapes that are easily accessible.

- “Yes you can get Gluxes which are fake Eluxes.”
- “Yes you can get 70k Aroma Kings.”
- “Eluxes are always under counter.”
- “The 600 puff ones, you can get them sometimes under the counter.”

### Do you read the packaging when opening a vape?

Most young people stated that they **do not read** the packaging when opening a vape.

- “I just throw it on the floor.”
- “The packaging is colourful, I never read it!”
- “I don’t read the print on the back. Sometimes I do but I don’t pay attention.”

For those that do, the young people discussed some of the information they have previously seen on a vape packet.

- “Most are 2% nicotine, says it on the packet.”
- “Sometimes it’s in a different language.”
- “It says on it it’s bad for pregnant people. There’s a small picture of a pregnant woman with a cross through it.”

- “I did last night when I was bored led in bed. It just says 18+ and do not swallow the liquid.”
- “Yeah sometimes if it’s a new one like a crystal bar. It tells you to wait two mins before using it.”

Despite this, it has been noted that there **isn’t clear health warnings** on the packaging to deter people like there is on cigarette packaging.

- “They’re not like cig packs. Just say don’t vape if you’re under 18 and if you’re pregnant.”
- “There is small to no health warning.”
- “Cigarette packaging has graphic images of potential damage to health, but there is just text on vape packaging.”

### Do you think it would be easy to stop vaping?

The young people’s opinions on how easy it would be to stop vaping were relatively **mixed**. Some young people think they would find it difficult to quit due to the addictive nature of the vape.

- “If I don’t have it, I feel like I’m going to die.”
- “It’s hard to quit.”
- “No I’m addicted, I used it to stop smoking cigarettes.”

Alongside this, some people have **tried to stop** vaping previously and have **struggled** with this.



- "I tried to stop cigs and vaping but I got really agitated."
- "I'm not bothered about it when I'm in school but crave it after school."
- "It's like I've trained my body and at half 2 I think where's my tooter."
- "I did try to stop but ended up not. If my mates would stop I would."
- "I quit for a few weeks and then started again."

On the other hand, others feel that it would be **easy** to stop vaping, with some having previous experience of this.

- "Personally it was very easy to stop."
- "I stopped for 2 weeks cause I didn't have one and I didn't need it."
- "I can just not have it."
- "I stopped cause I want to join the army."

### How could young people be encouraged to stop vaping?

In order to encourage young people to stop vaping, discussions took place surrounding the marketing and advertisement of vapes. Several young people suggested **health warnings** on packaging to deter young people, alongside increasing the cost of vapes in order to make these less accessible.

- "To put young people off, they need to make you buy more at once which will increase the price. At the moment, you can buy one for £5 or 3 for £12, sometimes it's two for a tenner. This is cheap so kids can just get them."
- "They need to put on the packet something like we don't know what's in it or we don't know whether it's safe."
- "Make them harder to buy."

In addition, some young people suggested that **increased knowledge** surrounding the long term health implications of vaping, alongside personally experiencing a health consequence themselves, would encourage them stop vaping.

- "I think about my lungs, it doesn't make me want to stop though."
- "If I coughed up blood I'd probably stop."
- "If I knew it would kill you."

Furthermore, a minority of young people made reference to **financial or material rewards** as an aid to stop vaping.



- "My mum encourages me to stop because she works for the NHS. She offers me money or a new pair of trainers but I get them anyway."
- "Money would make me stop."

Finally, a small proportion of young people did not know what could encourage young people to stop vaping. Other suggestions focused on **future implications on loved ones**, and areas in which vaping should be permitted.

- "Nothing would help young people to not vape, they just won't listen."
- "Think it needs to be treated like smoking and done outside or in a smoking area, then less people will wanna do it."
- "I don't want it to affect my kids."

### Is there any information that you think young people are missing in relation to vaping?

Health information was an overarching theme throughout conversations. Packaging and **clear information** was a suggestion in which to deter young people. Along with this, young people felt that health impacts are not discussed enough.

- "Health risks aren't mentioned enough."
- "The package for a vape states that it is bad for you but does not specify why. It is believed that it is for 18 and over only due to the nicotine. There are health issues but the package does not say what these are."

### If you are given vapes, who gives you these and why?

The consensus among young people was that **family members buy, share and give vapes** to young people.

- "Get money off my Nan, she knows I'm using it to buy vapes and she's not arsed."
- "Cousin gets it from mates because she thinks it's cool."
- "Get them from my mates and my family. It's better me doing this for my mental health than something worse."
- "Get them free off my brother, he got 3 boxes full worth £120, he has 80-90 e-luxes."
- "Yeah my dad buys them for me."

In addition, young people discussed **borrowing, buying and selling vapes** to their friends.

- "Lend them off the 15 year old over the road."
- "You open the tooter, take a load of drags out of it, put it back in the packet using hair straighteners and sell it to your friends."
- "Tax them off your friends."
- "My friend across the road."

Furthermore, a minority of young people discussed receiving vapes as an **incentive for good behaviour** and full attendance at school.

- "My Mum buys me them, she bought me 2 vapes on Friday cause I'd been good for a week."
- "Got to be good this week, due 2 vapes on Thursday."
- A teacher said, "some parents are saying if you come in every day, you'll get a vape on Friday. Kids are being bribed with vapes now."

Finally, the Healthwatch Blackpool team were informed about **vape hunting** through focus group discussions. Feedback was mixed, with some young people openly admitting to undertaking this, whereas other young people perceived this as unpleasant.

- "There's something called vape hunting. It's where people go out and try find vapes on the floor, then pick them up and see if they have any puffs left."
- "People pick them up off the floor, for people that can't afford it and say wonder if this has any drags left on it."
- "Vape hunting is dutty."
- "Isn't it when you pick them up off the floor? You don't know what's been put in it or where it's been."

## Fake and counterfeit vapes or e-cigarettes

There was a **clear understanding** from young people that there is an **under the counter market** of fake and counterfeit vapes. It appears that some young people are choosing to purchase said vapes due to the number of puffs and value for money. Others are disappointed with the standard or feeling from a fake vape, and so would prefer to have a legitimate brand.



- "Fake vapes are stronger, they hit the back of your throat more."
- "I get two 7,000 puffs per week. They are £12 each."
- "You can tell cos the thing you took out of is bent."
- "Lost Mary's light is on the wrong place. Writing is dodgy as well."
- Young people described that fake vapes are identifiable through their QR codes, as well as the poor quality of the packaging or vape itself.
- "I've had one before, you know cos it's got bigger writing and a different QR code. If you can't scan the QR code on the back then you know it's fake."
- "You can rub off the logo on the front."
- "It doesn't taste like the flavour it's meant to be."



## Higher Education

- Blackpool and the Fylde College Bispham Campus fresher's fair (20/9/22) – 24 young people.
- Blackpool and the Fylde College University Campus fresher's fair (22/9/22) – 11 young people.
- Blackpool Sixth Form College (13/10/22) – 11 young people.
- Blackpool and the Fylde College Bispham Campus Level one Early Years cohort (1/2/23) – 15 young people.
- Blackpool and the Fylde College Bispham Campus T Level Health and Social Care cohort (1/2/23) – 8 young people.
- Participants were aged between 16-19 years old.

**69**  
participants

## What are yours/peers reasons for vaping?

Multiple reasons were given as to why young people vape, with the most frequent response noting that vaping acts as a method of **relieving stress**, often used as a coping mechanism. Second to this, young people stated they vape in order to **stop smoking cigarettes**. Other reasons were given by young people, such as the attractive flavours of vapes, vaping because of boredom alongside the comfort this gives, feeling addicted and peer pressure.

- "Due to the stress of school."
- "Stress - I used to smoke cigs and switched."
- "Swaggy and stops me smoking."
- "Addicted to fags and switched to vapes."
- "Strawberry ice flavour's got me in a chokehold."
- "Whenever I want a fruity twist."
- "It's the holding it. I sit and roll it in my and when I'm not smoking it."
- "Friends will say 'try this flavour'."
- "Sometimes I match my outfit with my vape."

## What are yours/peers reasons for not vaping?

When asked why young people do not vape, the most frequent answer referenced unknown potential health implications, alongside exacerbating **pre-existing health conditions**. In addition, some young people noted the smell being unpleasant, alongside the **expense** of vaping.

- "Expensive."
- "We don't know enough about vaping."
- "I don't know what the long-term effects are."
- "If you have pre-existing health conditions, you don't want to vape to make it worse."
- "It smells."
- "I don't wanna die."
- "I hate it when people vape around me. I find it overwhelming."



## What type of vape do you use? E.g. disposable vape (elf bar), vape pen, pod mod, pod system.

The most frequent responses from young people were disposable vapes, referring regularly to Elf bars and the convenience of these. The importance of **fruity flavours** were noted, however the limitations of disposable vapes were also discussed. Some young people made reference to the longevity and advantages of Pod Mods, however the practicalities surrounding these make them unappealing to young people.

- "Disposable vapes are more practical."
- "The flavours are important."
- "Vimto flavour."
- "Elf bar – disposable."
- "I used to have a pod vape but it's too much faff and spilling."
- "I won't buy disposables. It is cheaper and easier to use these ones (mods)."
- "You can't choose the nicotine amount on disposables."

## Where do you buy vapes?

When asked where young people buy vapes, responses were mixed, with young people discussing the **easy accessibility** of these and the best locations in which to purchase vapes.

- "It is in every corner shop so it's just easy."
- "All the shops in Poulton/Blackpool sell them."
- "They are in every shop I walk past."
- "It is easy to get them, you don't need to steal or commit a crime."
- "It was easier in town centre 2 years ago to get served."

## Do you get ID checked when buying vapes?

The most frequent response put forward by young people was that they do not get asked for ID when buying vapes, even if presenting in **school uniform**.

Several factors were discussed which could influence this such as **gender**, with females more likely to be served.



- "Girls don't get ID'd, because we have boobs."
- "I used to get served with vaped when in my uniform."
- "Boys do, all the time!"
- "I've never been ID'd."
- "I used to get served in my school uniform for ages then the police had a word with him."

## How safe do you feel vaping is?

The consensus among young people was that vaping is deemed **unsafe**, with a lack of research and understanding regarding the long term impacts on health discussed among the group.

- "It's not safe, it's definitely bad."
- "There isn't enough research to know the negative effects."
- "I don't think it's safe, it's sent people to hospital."
- "We don't know enough about it."
- "It's deffo not safe."
- "It is the lesser evil of drug use."

## Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?

Responses for this question were mixed, with several members of the group believing this statement to be true. Despite this, a minority of young people felt that cigarettes were safer than vapes, with the strength of vapes, alongside a greater risk of increased addiction from vaping, being noted.

- "Vapes are stronger (than cigarettes) and you take it in faster."
- "One Elf Bar is the equivalent of 50 cigarettes."
- "Fags are worse, they have paint on them and all sorts."
- "Equally as bad."

## Do you worry about the long-term consequences of vaping?

Several young people discussed the potential health implications when asked if they worry about the long-term consequences of vaping, noting that these are still **unknown**. Some young people made reference to the long-term consequences on the environment, with the disposable of vapes and **pollution** being discussed.

- "Bothered about the environmental impact of throwing them away."
- "Yes, popcorn lungs is when you have too much water in your lungs from vaping."
- "I think about air pollution every time I take a toke, but everyone else does it."
- "We don't know enough about it. It can impact on brain development."
- "I do know about them (long term consequences) but I don't think about it much."

## Do you think advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people? If so, how?

When discussing advertising and the social media content surrounding vapes, several young people noted the **influence TikTok** has upon marketing, with the promotion of flavours, tricks and the algorithm promoting similar videos. In addition, some young people made reference to the appealing packaging and colours.

- "Yes. I saw a giant vape on a TikTok video."
- "There are videos of vape tricks called ghost, jellyfish and tornadoes."
- "When I like a post on social media, more stuff comes up, so I see it all the time."
- "You want to experiment with different flavours after seeing the ads."
- "They give you tips on TikTok, like how to charge a vape without a charger."
- "You can get ones that light up and are glittery and all the flavours so it is marketed towards children."
- "The packaging and the vapes look sleek."

## Do you think children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping?

When asked if children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping, the consensus from the group was yes, with one person noting a preference for information to be distributed via popular social media channels. In addition, young people voiced a preference for education within a school settings via someone with **lived experience**. Other suggestions included information being shared via the GP surgery.

- "I saw a post that told me to stop scrolling on Instagram, and this worked. Maybe social media, such as TikTok, could have posts like this, informing of the dangers of vaping, as that's where young people are listening."
- "GP to inform us of health impacts of vaping."
- "It would be best delivered through a lesson."
- "If it came from someone young who we can relate, that would be good."
- "I'd only stop if I was told by my Doctor to stop because I was going to die."
- "From young people who understand and have vaped."

### Do you think it would be easy to stop vaping?

The consensus among the group was that young people would **struggle** to stop vaping, acknowledging they feel **addicted**.

- "It wouldn't be easy to stop."
- "Can't come off the vape now, I'm addicted."
- "I've tried so many times to stop. I would only stop if they didn't exist."
- "Vaping doesn't make me feel good but I feel worse when I don't."
- "If I go without it for 6 hours, it's uncomfortable. I don't like the feeling."



### Third sector organisations

- Prince's Trust Blackpool cohort one (7/10/22) – 7 young people.
- Prince's Trust Blackpool cohort two (25/1/23) – 11 young people.
- Blackpool Football Club Community Trust (13/2/23) – 13 young people.
- Streetlife (20/2/23 and 21/2/23) – 18 young people.
- Community Breathing Group (1/3/23) – 4 people.
- Ukraine Hub (3/3/23) – 3 young people.
- Young participants were aged between 16-25 years old.



### What are yours/peers reasons for vaping?

The most common reasons for vaping were described as **peer pressure, flavours, marketing and stress relief**. It must be noted that for some young people, they have been used as a quit aid from cigarettes and cannabis. The cost has also been noted along with the popularity amongst young people.

- "It's just flavoured air. It's like breathing but with flavour."
- "To help with anxiety."
- "Sometimes the smell and taste of cigarettes makes me sick. That's why I vape."
- "Cos of my mental health."
- "The flavours make it more tempting."
- "I got pressured into doing all of it at college."
- "It helps me to come off the weed to be fair."

### What are yours/peers reasons for not vaping?

Health was the most common response posed by young people, closely followed by the price of vapes. Some respondents described vaping as being a **detriment to their personal health** and that of their families, hence choosing not to vape.



- "I was vaping for a bit then both of my lungs collapsed and they were inflamed. Had a stabbing pain. I had 6 drags of it. I had to go to the hospital. Now I don't touch it and I've even stopped smoking weed."
- "Vapes make you cough up blood."
- "Too expensive."
- "I don't want to get addicted."



## What type of vape do you use? E.g. disposable vape (elf bar), vape pen, pod mod, pod system.

The most frequent vape used amongst young people was **disposables**. Young people described the different brands on the market alongside the prices. It must be noted that the young people are attracted by **'special offers'** and deals. They are accessing brands that are sold under the counter such as E-lux due to the price, strength and puff quantity.

- "Disposables, they last three days and don't have to be charged."
- "I use an Elf bar. They're small and cheap. You can get 2 for £10. They're easy to get."
- "With Elux, you get more puffs and a stronger liquid."
- "Cos they've got nice flavours."

## Where do you buy vapes?

Most young people access vapes from small independent **corner shops** as they are sure that they can access them without identification. With that being said, there is mention of young people accessing them from high street stores and also asking parents, siblings or peers to **purchase them on their behalf**.

- "We just buy them from any corner shop."
- "I used to get my mates mum to buy them."
- "I get people to buy me them, anyone that will do it."
- "My sister, she has 1000's."
- "More likely to be asked for ID for buying alcohol rather than buying a vape."
- "I never get asked for ID in town."

## How safe do you feel vaping is?

Participants have acknowledged **severe** and **concerning** health conditions relating to vaping. With that being said, there is feedback to suggest that young people don't think about the long term consequences. Young people have suggested that where e-cigarettes and vapes have had negative press,

they **don't know what to believe** and if there is enough scientific research to know if it is safe. The overall consensus however suggests that vaping is worse than smoking cigarettes.



- "Not very, it can put liquid on your lungs. It contains liquid oil. I've got that in my mouth once by accident and it tastes disgusting. For example when a window condensates, how do I know that's not happening to my lungs. It's the same thing and drowning from the inside out. It's ruining people's lungs."
- "Can result in brain damage or nose bleeds."
- "You can get blood clots and everything."
- "Vapour goes back onto your lungs."
- "Not safe, I wish I never started."
- "You don't know what's in them."
- "A lad, 19, ended up with bad lungs in hospital after smoking fake vapes."
- "My throat feel like it's closed in the morning."

## Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?

Feedback suggests that vaping is perceived to be worse than cigarettes. Young people have discussed the lack of research and information on ingredients. There is concern about the **'vapour'** from young people and an interest to find out more information on the health risks associated from a reliable source.

- "No, it's worse than cigarettes as you are inhaling vapour. The vapour is going onto your lungs."
- "I think vaping is worse than cigarettes, because there isn't any research on vaping."
- "Smoking is safer, all vapes are is toxins."

## Have you in the past or do you currently smoke cigarettes?

Approximately **half of the respondents** have smoked cigarettes before vaping. Interestingly, half of respondents have tried vaping, and as a result have begun smoking. Young people discussed **alcohol** being a contributing factor to smoking and also discussed a 'kick' that entices young people to smoke.

- "I tend to smoke a lot more when I drink."
- "I vaped then moved on to smoking cigarettes. I was pressured into doing all of it."
- "Loads of people vape who haven't smoked, they get the disposable ones which are high end nicotine, then they're addicted."
- "I quit smoking and started vaping."

## Do you worry about the long-term consequences of vaping?

Young people have provided feedback that suggests that they are not thinking about the long term health impacts of their habits. There is feedback to suggest that there is a **lack of research** and that young people use vapes to support their mental health and wellbeing. That being said, young people have described incidents and consequences surrounding the use of vapes on others health.

- "My mate used to get nose bleeds from the elf bars. He's switched brands now. Its cos the blood vessels popped in his nose. It's not made me want to stop, I like blood."
- "It's like having a phone – same with vapes. It is there next to you and you just pick it up."
- "There's no long term research done on it yet. It's new."
- "Yeah and I don't care. I just need something to relieve my stress."

## Where do you/your peers vape?

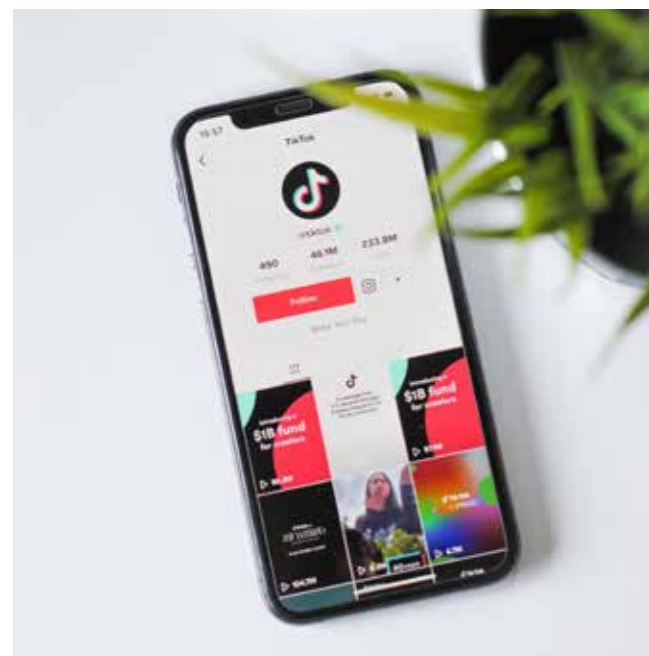
Young people described vaping anywhere due to the lack of aroma. There was feedback to suggest there is **no clear messages** around the usage of vapes, for example on public transport or across the town. Young people have described trying not to vape amongst young children.

- "Anywhere. If we are out and about mostly."
- "I vape inside. It makes my room smell nicer."
- "There are mixed messages where you can and can't vape."
- "Not in front of kids."

## Do you think advertising and social media promotes vaping to young people? If so, how?

Young people's feedback suggests that vapes are **advertised** and **marketed** with young people in mind. Young people have described online videos on TikTok of tricks, flavours and trends. Young people have stated that vapes are too easily accessible. In addition, they believe the packaging and presentation of vapes is designed for young people's benefits.

- "Yes, change the packaging."
- "Yeah, all vapes are on show. Why hide fags but not vapes?"
- "I just think that it's all propaganda. They're trying to rip us off. First Covid, then this."
- "Yeah it's aimed at young people. You can get fidget spinner vapes and star wars."
- "On Tiktok, now and again you see people doing tricks and that like the dragon. That's when you inhale it and blow it out of your mouth and nose at the same time."
- "I've seen lots of stuff on vaping."



## Do you think children and young people would benefit from further education relating to vaping?

The consensus amongst young people is that education and information is important. That being said, young people have suggested targeting information at **primary school aged children** as a prevention method. It is believed that external providers would be more impactful as children and young people feel that they will be 'talked down to' if information was shared from a teacher.

- "If you're younger yes, maybe those for in primary school before they start. There's no point teaching it if people have already started vaping."
- "Yeah it would benefit young people before they start. Include it like sex education."
- "Education should be around the cycle of addiction."

## Did you know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal?

Feedback was mixed in relation to this question. Some young people were aware and some were not. Interestingly, some young people had **illegal vapes** on their person without being aware that they are illegal. Some young people were concerned that their local shops are selling illegal goods, therefore information was shared regarding trading standards.

- "No I didn't know."
- "So this means my corner shop is selling illegal vapes."
- "I can get ones 3500 puffs, Rick and Mortys."

## Do you think it would be easy to stop vaping?

The consensus was that young people would **struggle to quit** vaping due to factors such as mental health, addiction and habits. Young people believe that if they personally had a health issue as a result of vaping they would quit immediately. Along with this, some respondents have noted that quitting vaping is simple.

- "It's the habit of smoking and vaping."
- "I don't think so, we are addicted to nicotine."
- "Only if I had a medical issue like lung cancer."
- "Not thought about it before. I don't think I would be able to. I have PTSD and use it to help."
- "Vaping is the cocaine of drugs mate, it's the easiest one to get off."

## How could young people be encouraged to stop vaping?

Young people have suggested **tighter licencing, price increase** and no displays would support young people to stop vaping. Along with this, young people have suggested that changing the packets, adverts and marketing to include health risks would support. Lastly, young people would like to see **clear evidence** on the health risks associated with e cigarettes and vaping.

- "Vapes going through a licensed pathway."
- "Don't have them on display."
- "Make them more expensive."
- "Change the advertising like they did with fag packets, make them black."
- "Show them the evidence. Don't try to scare them, they just won't listen."

## Fake and counterfeit vapes and e-cigarettes

Young people have described counterfeit vapes being readily sold across the town. Young people have said that the vapes taste different and are **stronger** and **harsher**. There are concerns that they are being sold over the counter in corner shops. Young people have specified that if the QR code is unsuccessful, the vape is likely fake.

- "Vapes should have to go through a licenced pathway to be sold in shops, because you have no idea if they're fake."
- "You can scan the QR code on them to see if they're legit."
- "Some corner shops sell snide vapes (fake vapes)."
- "Yes I've had one, it dies quicker and it's harsher on my throat."





# Teacher & professionals feedback

Healthwatch Blackpool have collected feedback from 138 teachers and professionals on the topic of vaping in Blackpool. We are incredibly grateful to all of the people that chose to take part in conversations and support our survey.

The insight has been invaluable and has been used together to formulate our conclusions.

Feedback from **138** teachers and professionals

## Survey Spotlight

### Awareness and usage



– “I also think they are easy to get now, so many young people are being served under age, by local corner shops and markets.”

– “I have witnessed this first hand both in school and with my own children. The increase in litter from vaping that is left in areas where youngsters congregate. Young people themselves have told me when they have begun vaping.”

### Attitudes and why



– “Due to social media trends it has become popular to collect a full range of vapes and people don’t want to fall behind on a trend.”



– “Fashionable, obviously targeted at young people due to flavours and use of USB tech appealing to young people.”

### Access, safety and availability



**33%** concerned by the lack of health research into the long term health consequences.



**44%** of teachers and professionals believe that vaping is as bad as smoking.



**73%** of teachers and professionals were not aware that vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal.



**74%** of teachers and professionals would benefit from further education relating to vaping.

## Teacher/professional feedback

### In your opinion, do you think that vaping has increased in young people?

**127 teachers/professionals** think that vaping has increased in young people, with one stating that this is due to vaping being a new commodity. **3 teachers/professionals** stating it depends on the timescale, as they believe it has increased since 10 years ago due to its availability.

**4 teachers/professionals** were unsure, and **1** did not believe vaping has increased in young people.

### If you answered yes or depends, why do you think this?

**47 teachers/professionals** stated that they had directly witnessed an **increase** in vaping in young people themselves, either in their place of work, their own family or within the community.

- “I have witnessed this first hand both in school and with my own children. The increase in litter from vaping that is left in areas where youngsters congregate. Young people themselves have told me when they have begun vaping.”
- “I have noticed more young people of lower ages vaping.”
- “I work in a college and in the 3 years I have been there the volume of vapours has increased greatly to the point we have provided them with a larger vaping area.”
- “I have worked with several young people and they have either entered the home vaping or started vaping after making friendships.”

In addition, **31 teachers/professionals** believed that **peer pressure** was a contributing factor towards the increase in young people vaping. The most popular responses included phrases like “trendy”, “cool”, “fitting in” and “fashionable.”

- “Peer pressure, it has become one of the latest trends and if you don’t vape, you aren’t ‘cool’.”
- “Because people think it is cool and see it as a way to chill and relax.”
- “Young people want to look grown up and think it will make them ‘fit in’ more with their peers.”
- “Seen as a cool thing to do, bored kids, seen as harmless almost as a hobby.”
- “The young people I volunteer with are always vaping. In my opinion it seems that they all want to be seen doing it as it is cool and what their peers are doing.”

**Accessibility and availability** of vapes were mentioned by **8 teachers and professionals**, with them sharing the opinion that this has contributed to the increase in vaping in young people.

- “Easy access at home and seen as less of a health concern compared to smoking, reduced stigma. Advertising and increase in shops on the High Street and availability in convenience stores.”
- “I also think they are easy to get now, so many young people are being served under age, by local corner shops and markets.”

- “Not overly informed but it does seem that way – generally smoking is no longer as ‘cool’ as it used to be. Parents are choosing to vape over smoke so it’s more readily available for them to access.”

Furthermore, **16 teachers/professionals** felt that advertisement and social media has impacted on the increase in young people vaping. The most popular responses included **“social media trends”** and vaping being **“attractive to young people”** due to factors such as colours and flavours.

- “Due to social media trends it has become popular to collect a full range of vapes and people don’t want to fall behind on a trend.”
- “Fashionable, obviously targeted at young people due to flavours and use of USB tech appealing to young people.”
- “I think that vaping has become a trend, not just for young people, with the designs and aesthetic more appealing than cigarettes, as well as the perception it is safer and healthier than smoking. I also feel there has been less stigma around vaping than smoking as the effect/smell of second hand smoke is not as off putting with vaping.”
- “Vaping is advertised everywhere now-days, it’s seen on tv, in shows, celebrities and influencers are vaping too. It’s also viewed as less harmful than smoking.”

**12 teachers/professionals** believed that vaping in young people has increased due to the **perception of reduced health risks**. As well as this, mental health reasons were cited as a contributing factor to increased vape usage.

- “Being advertised as safer than cigarettes, more socially acceptable.”
- “I think it could potentially be linked to the mental health difficulties linked to Covid. Likewise, it’s not seen as dangerous so more people are doing it for fun.”
- “It is seen as a far less harmful ‘pursuit’ than smoking cigarettes – less addictive, less anti-social.”
- “Increase in mental ill health, especially around anxiety.”





## Have young people said, or have you heard anecdotally, why they vape?

**37 teachers/professionals** had not heard why young people vape, however others identified several consistent themes.

A key contributing factor towards the increase in young people vaping, identified by **43 teachers and professionals**, was **peer pressure** and **social influence**. Elements of marketing and social media, such as TikTok trends, were also mentioned.

- "Many have said it's a peer thing or because their mates do it. Parents haven't stopped them so it must be OK."
- "They have said because it is fun and enjoyable, they like the social side to it."
- "Young people that I care for tell me that they need it when I ask why they vape, personally I feel this is a copied behaviour due to peers using vapes but then also especially disposable vapes are easily addictive."
- "Because they think it is cool, because they see it on Tiktok tend to be the most commonly heard comments."

Using vaping as an alternative to smoking was raised by **21 teachers and professionals**, who stated that young people believe vaping is a **safer** and less harmful substitute to smoking.



- "It is 'cool' and is not harmful like smoking. I do remind them that when smoking was first started people believed it was good for them before the data came out 50+ years later."
- "It's safe is the common response. Which was the claim regarding smoking years ago."
- "They say it's better than smoking but open smoke as well as vape."

According to **16 teachers and professionals**, the key reason for young people vaping is due to its **appeal**, both visually and in terms of enjoying the taste.

- "A lot of people have said they really like the taste and that is why they do it."
- "The device is desirable."
- "They like the flavour and the look of the smoke."

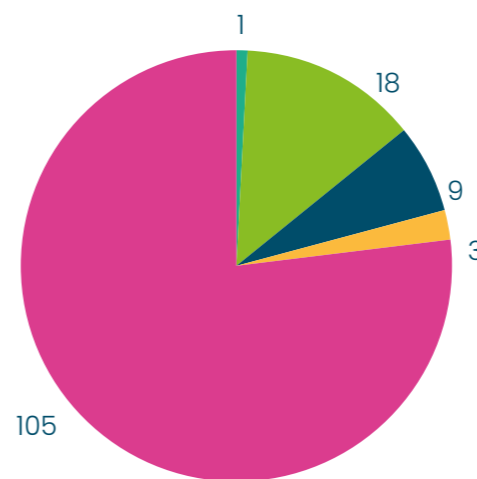
**13 teachers/professionals** stated that **stress** and **mental health** reasons had been mentioned by young people as to their reason for vaping.

- "Some young people have told me it's because they are stressed."
- "Some will relate to how they manage their mental health."
- "Yes, some claim to use it as an anxiety relief, others as a way of rebelling against parents."

**Accessibility of vapes** for young people, relating to both availability in shops, cost and lack of identification required to purchase, was also identified within the responses by **7 teachers and professionals**.

- "Vape shops don't ID anyone, so it's easier."
- "It's easier to get a vape than a packet of cigarettes."
- "Easier to obtain than cigarettes and cheaper."

## Do you vape or smoke cigarettes?



- Yes - vape
- Yes - smoke
- Yes - vape and smoke
- No
- Other

## What are your personal opinions regarding vaping?

**35 teachers/professionals** commented that they were concerned by the **lack of current health research** into the long term health implication of vaping. Common opinions included "unknown health risks", "lack of knowledge", "we don't know enough" and "lack of evidence."

- "Until data of long term effects is released then it is an unknown risk. Similar to smoking, it is seemed as safe in these early stages but time will tell."

- "Too early to be certain about long-term health problems associated with vaping - we should be strongly discouraging young people from vaping."
- "Supposedly safer than smoking, however there is not enough research yet to disprove or prove this. Inhaling a substance that is not 'natural' still has its risks. Personal choice at the end of the day, we can only educate young people as necessary."
- "There should be more government research and information available regarding the effects of vaping - possibly including TV adverts, info in doctors surgeries etc."

When viewing vaping as an aid to quitting smoking, **31 teachers and professionals** believe it to be a **useful tool**. However, many also acknowledged that young people who begin vaping have often never smoked before.

- "A good substitution for smoking. It still delivers nicotine without as many of the harmful chemicals typically found in cigarettes."
- "I think it is excellent for helping people to stop smoking but don't think people should take it up as a new hobby."
- "As an ex-smoker my understanding is it's to help people give up smoking but its being used as a replacement and in some cases, used more than people would actually smoke."
- "I gave up cigarettes' to improve my health and fitness and was informed they were safer than cigarettes'. I only vape on a very low tar but then I see reports on vaping in general and not convinced they are safer than cigarettes. But I am not ready to give up as yet. They are very addictive."

– “I think as an initial tool for smokers to quit then vaping is brilliant as a short term thing however I feel that the range of good tasting flavours makes it acceptable to simply place smoking in peoples’ lives and not be used as a tool to give up all together.”

– “HATE IT!!! Sick of walking into college and many students vaping outside the door. Hate the insipid smell of sweet chemicals as I walk past and hate the rudeness from students when you challenge them. Have caught student’s vaping in toilets and sat in chairs before going into lessons. Think it should be a no-vaping college!”

**22 teachers/professionals**

responded with their concerns around vaping being targeted at young people, through the **design and marketing.** Alongside this, many shared their worries surrounding the increased prevalence of vaping in young people. In particular, some teachers/professionals provided further comment on the impact of vaping on young people within educational establishments.

In addition, **21 people** shared their views regarding the **impact on health,** as many perceive there to be negative consequences in the future for those who are currently vaping.

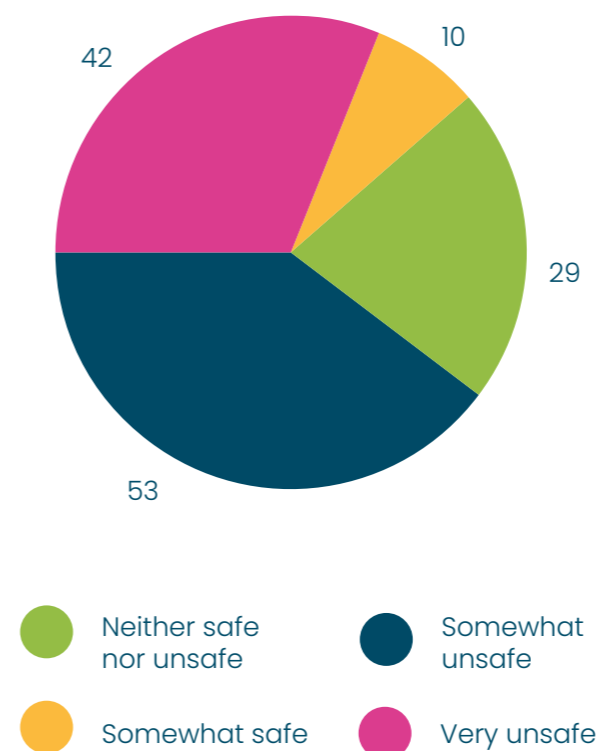
- “With regard to education establishments smoking and vaping should be banned. We have an opportunity to influence behaviours and remove peer pressure and temptation, habits formed before you turn 18 are often difficult to break as you get older. However difficult we should do what is best for our students and that may mean restricting what they can do at college.”
- “It has just become another ‘cool thing’ for teenagers to do.”
- “It’s made to look appealing to young people, by having all kinds of flavours.”
- “They are too available and advertised to young people as an enjoyment and not used for the purpose they are. Also they will be more appealing for children and young people due to having flavours such as popular sweets.”

- “The long term health effects of vaping will bring the country to its knees. The NHS will suffer such a massive implosion in 20-30 years when it turns out vaping is just as dangerous for our health as smoking. Everyone will suffer for non-regulation.”
- “Lung popping filth, will be the death of the NHS, unregulated and dangerous. At least tobacco is regulated.”
- “It is very dangerous to have mist in the lungs and I think there will be long term consequences on those that started young - many chest infections and pneumonia when they are older.”
- “It looks awful and I think there is a storm brewing with public health.”

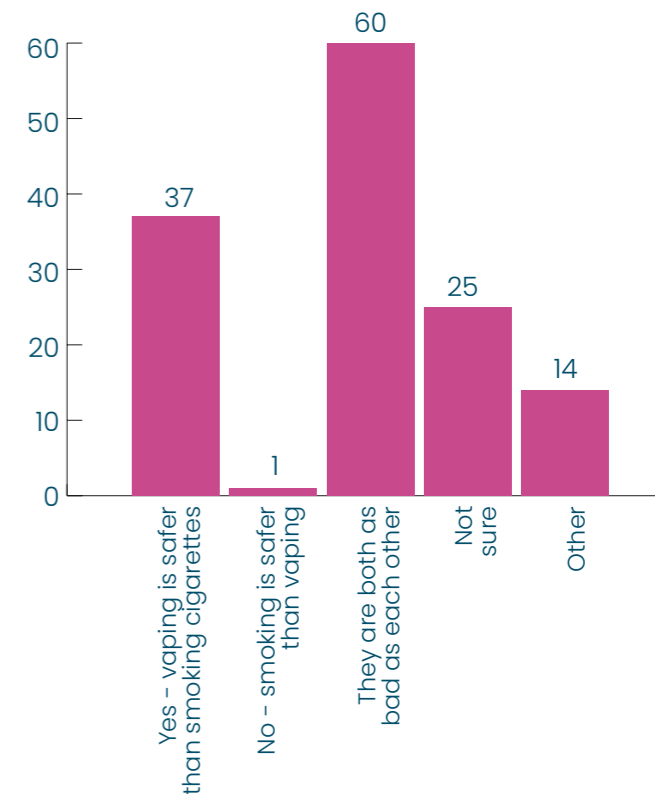
**13 teachers/ professionals** provided further opinions around the wider **social and environmental issues** associated with vaping. Several participants mentioned the impact on the environment due to plastic waste, as well as anti-social behaviour and lack of control measures in public establishments.

- “It also seems a bit of waste of money and there is an environmental impact - lots of plastic litter and batteries which aren’t recyclable.”
- “It seems people consider it fine to vape indoors which is rather annoying, despite the fact many establishments make it clear that it is not allowed.”
- “I think that it should be treated like smoking, too many venues tolerate it inside, and retailers need to be held accountable for selling them to children.”
- “The UK’s limits on a vapes strength are much higher than what is legally allowed in Spain. I think they are too readily available.”
- “A sign of deprivation.”

**How safe do you feel vaping is?**



**Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?**



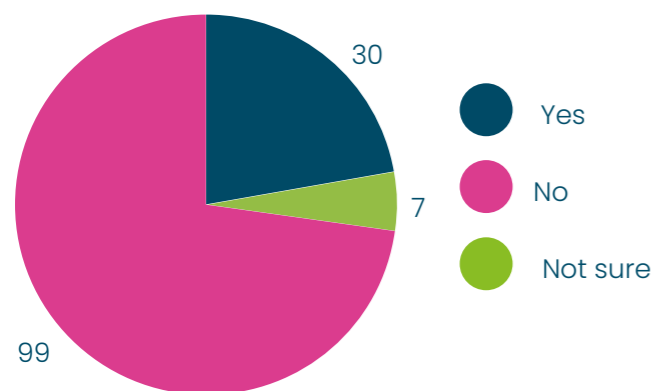
Other responses included:

- “I think some vapes have little or no nicotine so are less damaging. Some products are almost the same, I believe.”
- “I would say it is still dangerous, but reports are saying it is safer due to chemicals not being there? However I don’t feel there is enough research really as I am sure dangers are still present.”
- “If there is nicotine added to then it is just as bad as smoking a cigarette. If there is no nicotine then I would say it is safer than smoking.”
- “More discussion and understanding needs to be done first. Initial studies are showing oral and tongue problems.”

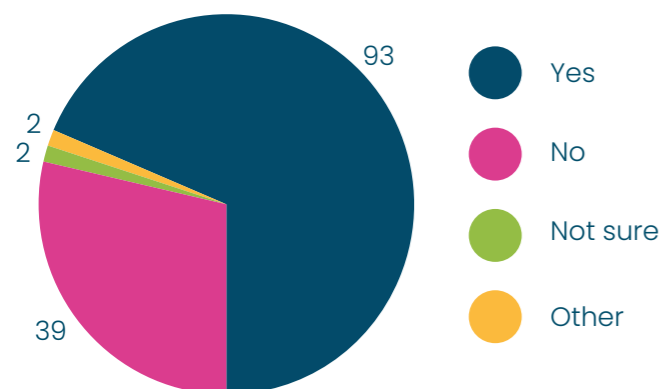


### Did you know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal?

**73% of teachers and professionals** were not aware that vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal.

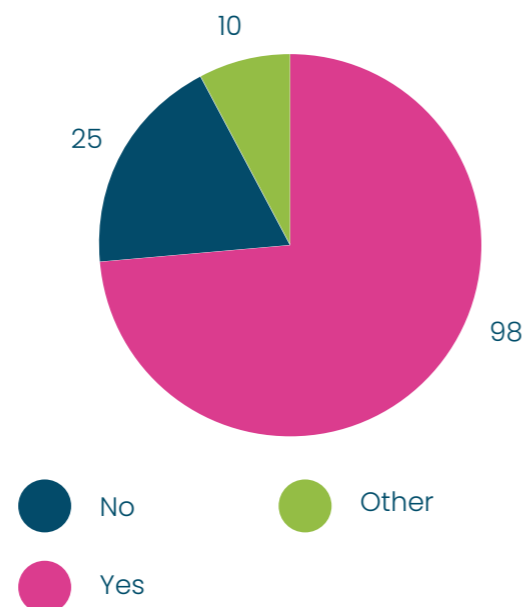


### Did you know it is illegal for retailers to sell vapes to under 18's and that you can confidentially report underage sales to Blackpool Council trading standards on 01253 478375, or you can email tradingstandards@blackpool.gov.uk?



Both other responses were aware of the age restriction, but did not know about the reporting option.

### Do you think teachers/professionals would benefit from further education relating to vaping?



Some examples of other responses included:

- "A short training may be appropriate but an hour might be excessive."
- "I don't see what the point would be - policy changes would have the most impact."
- "Unless it was relevant to curriculum."
- "I don't think it would make a difference."
- "The general public would benefit from more information related to vaping in a similar way to smoking cigarettes."



### If you answered yes, what would you like this education to look like? e.g. who would you like to teach it, where would you like it to be...

The most popular suggestion, put forward by **26 teachers** and professionals, was to receive delivered sessions for both young people and teachers/professionals. Key phrases included **"lessons", "PSHE", "staff training"** and **"CPD."**

- "Maybe in science lessons/PHSE lessons when talking about the bad effects of smoking to also talk about vaping being just as bad for your health."
- "Training for nominated staff. Cascaded to other staff and written into PHSE/ science as part of the National Curriculum."
- "This education needs to be at a national level (via the government) and then taught through the curriculum. This needs to be in key stage 2 (or 3 at the very latest) as this is where poor habits/behaviour/misunderstanding starts."
- "Training around the legal side of it would be beneficial and training to understand how to explain to young people the negatives and side effects of vaping."

**26 teachers and professionals** stated that they would like the education to be **"accessible"** or **"online"** resources that can be easily used and incorporated into their work with young people.

- "Education and information that will enable youth workers to challenge some of the myths and provide facts to young people would be beneficial." "I feel that this information could be easily passed on to those who want it in the form of a video or online learning page (similar to the ones found on TES). I feel that any in person training/information would be unnecessary and not time efficient."
- "It could be info packs which we could use with staff and/or students."
- "Online would be fine. Guidance on the stats in terms of % of age groups vaping, health stats related to it, legal requirements, details on what is influencing younger children/teens to try vaping, ways we can support people who do and provide information to help them consider different choices."
- "There should be more government research and information available regarding the effects of vaping - possibly including TV adverts, info in doctor's surgeries, etc."



In contrast, **17 teachers and professionals** suggested that this education should be delivered by a health professional, or someone external to the educational environment. Popular phrases included **“medical professionals”**, **“NHS”** and **“expert speakers.”**

- “Health professionals and addiction specialists who can show the cost and effects on health. In schools and families. The effects on dental health.”
- “Possibility of medical professionals or outside agencies to provide workshops etc. This way it is not just seen as teachers nagging about it.”
- “Professional who was worked with someone who has experienced negative consequences of vaping.”
- “Support through police explaining the law and health professionals visiting.”

When think about the messaging, **17 teachers and professionals** felt that the education needed to focus on the **negative impact** vaping has on young people, in order for them to understand the dangers or potential damage.

- “I would be happy to teach it. I think it needs to be quite shocking e.g. photos of lung cancer.”
- “National coverage, have the advertisements showing death, crippled lungs (bit like tobacco).”
- “The effects/impact of vaping and how we can encourage students to quit or not try it. Who we can refer them to in order to help them with their vaping addictions. This would be suitable for staff and students.”

**Lived experience** was most important to **5 people** when providing education on vaping.

- “I think the teachers would be people from organisations and people who previously vaped but have now stopped due to effects of it.”
- “People who can relate to PRU students.”
- “Someone with experience in smoking or vaping.”



### Is there any other feedback you would like to tell us regarding vaping, e.g. where young people purchase these, what influences this...

The most prominent feedback received from teachers and professionals was around how young people are **accessing vapes**, based on their own professional experiences.

- “I have seen young people buying these devices all over the town. I have reported it to council when I see it but it still happens. Challenge 21 or 25 is not effective in most small retailers in the town.”
- “I have overheard students saying their friends who are over 18 buy them for them.”
- “Majority of the kids, get their supplies from their friends, parents or older friend/sibling. Or nick from others.”
- “Vapes can be purchased in nearly every local high street shop, post office, and the vape shops are spreading throughout the UK due to the demand being so high.”
- “Young people can pick them up anywhere now. Garages are worse as they frequently sell to underage young people. Cheap vapes are also an influence as it is now cheaper to buy vapes than most cigarette products.”

As well as this, **21 teachers and professionals** provided further comments around the influence of peer pressure, branding and social media on young people vaping.



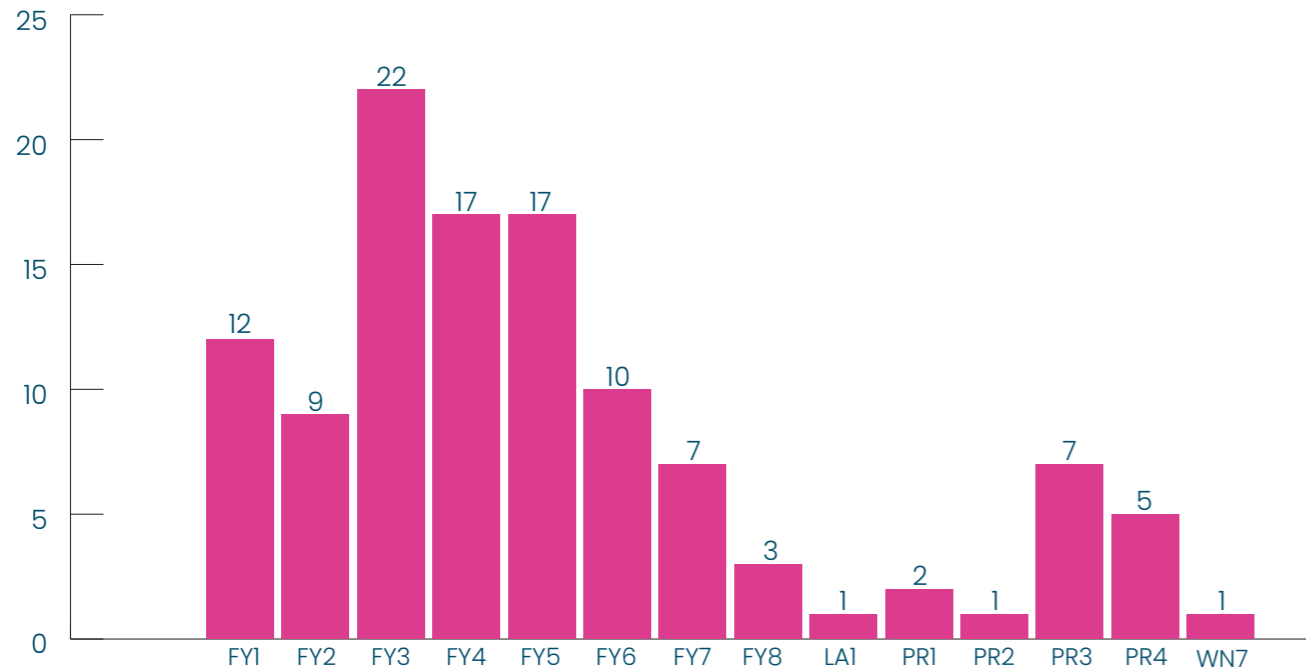
- “Friends and older siblings can influence younger people on what they perceive they should be doing, following suit and being ‘trendy’.”
- “I must stress I believe a significant percentage of college vapers will have started after joining the college and being swayed by peer pressure. We should remove this and allow students to make their own decisions outside of college.”
- “Most of the social media personalities they follow are vapers.”
- “Peers, social scene eg. nightclubs, they vape inside so not having to go outside like normal cigarettes.”
- “Things you’re seeing on social media such as prime and cold candy- I think these are all used to allure people.”



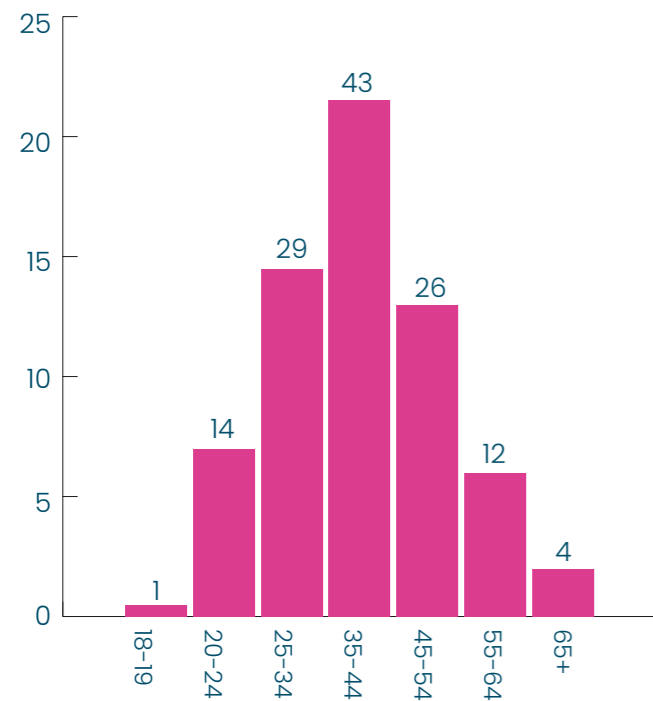


# Teacher/professional demographics

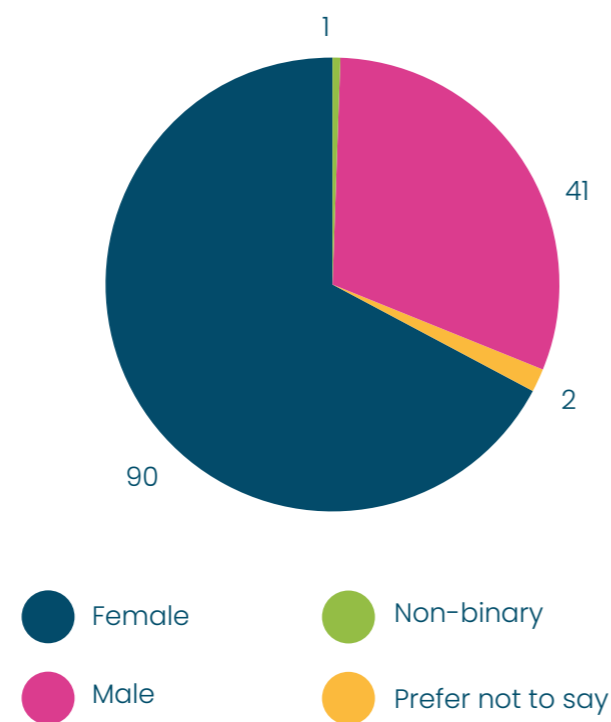
Please enter the first half of your home postcode:



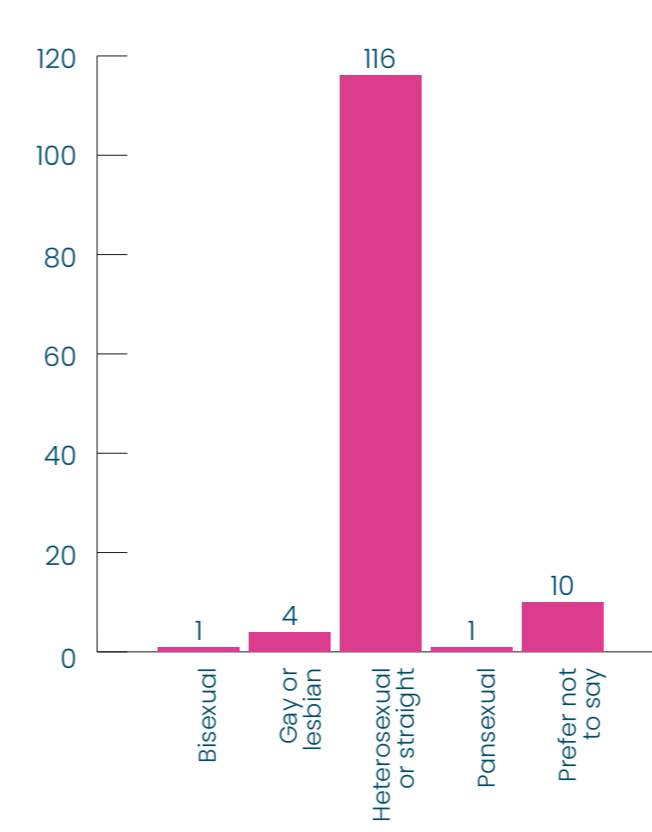
How old are you?



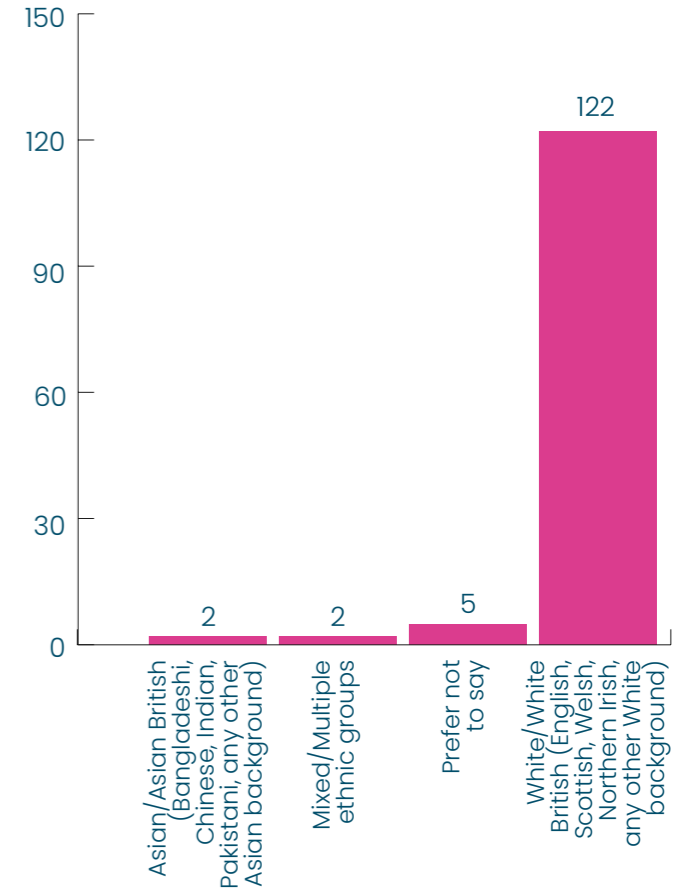
What gender do you identify as?



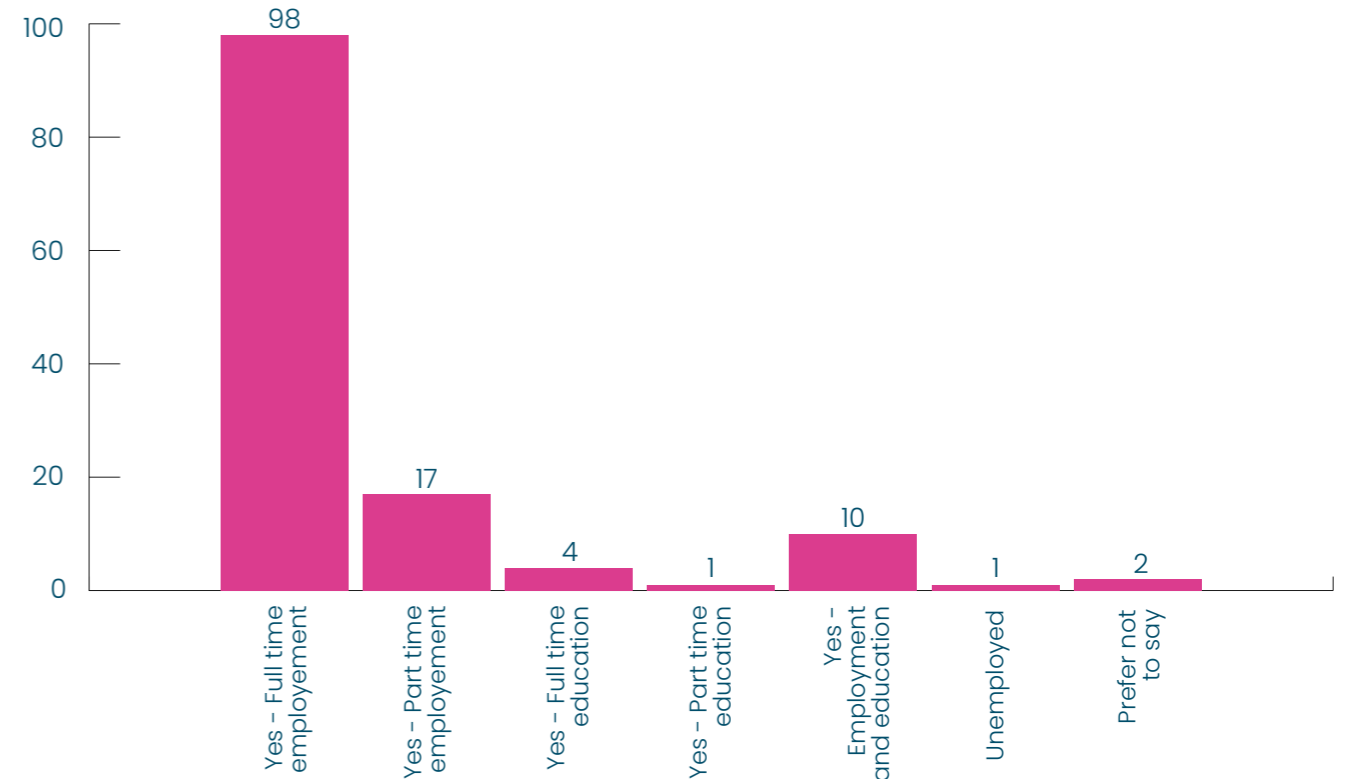
What is your sexual orientation?



What is your ethnicity?



Are you in employment or education?

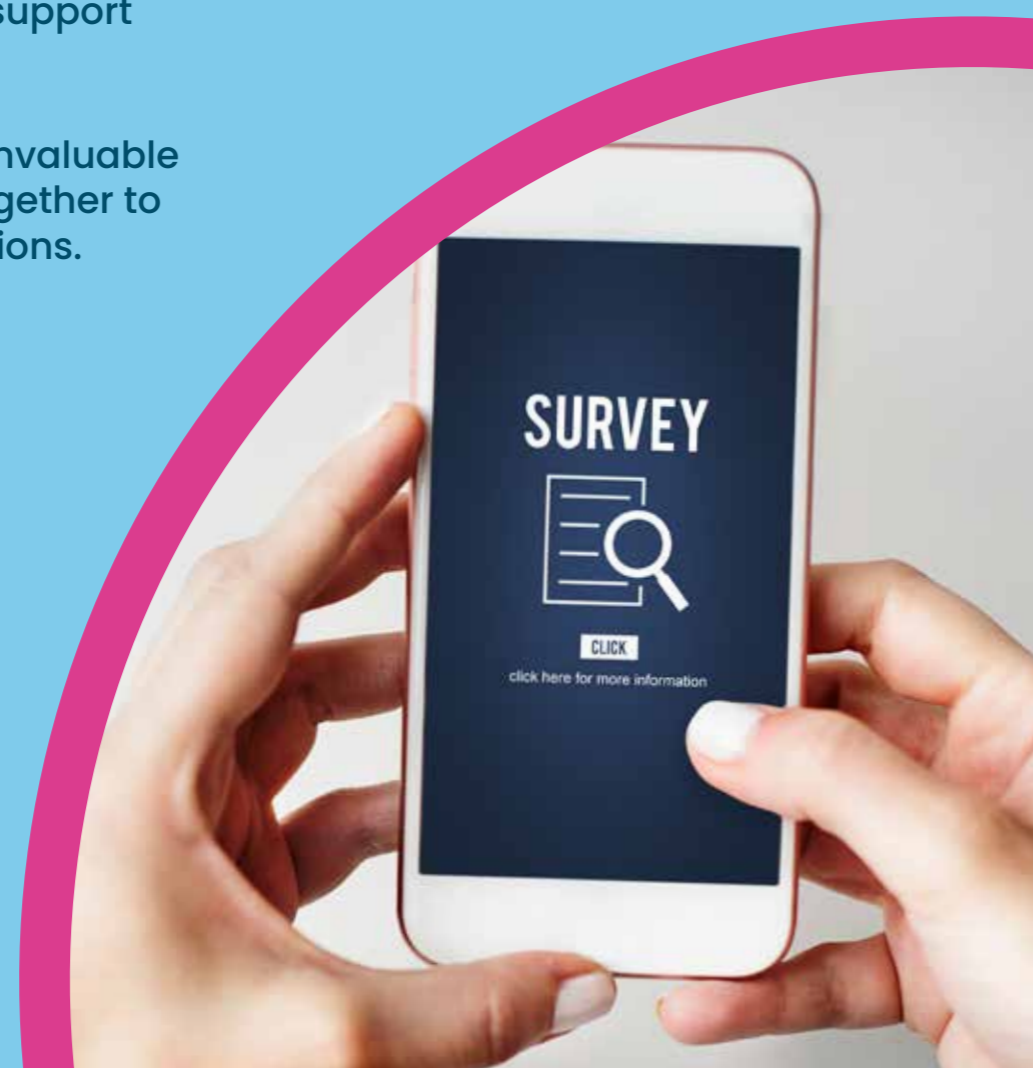


# Parent & carer feedback

Healthwatch Blackpool have collected feedback from 297 local parents and carers on the topic of e-cigarettes and vaping in Blackpool. We are incredibly grateful to all of the people that chose to take part in conversations and support our survey.

The insight has been invaluable and has been used together to formulate our conclusions.

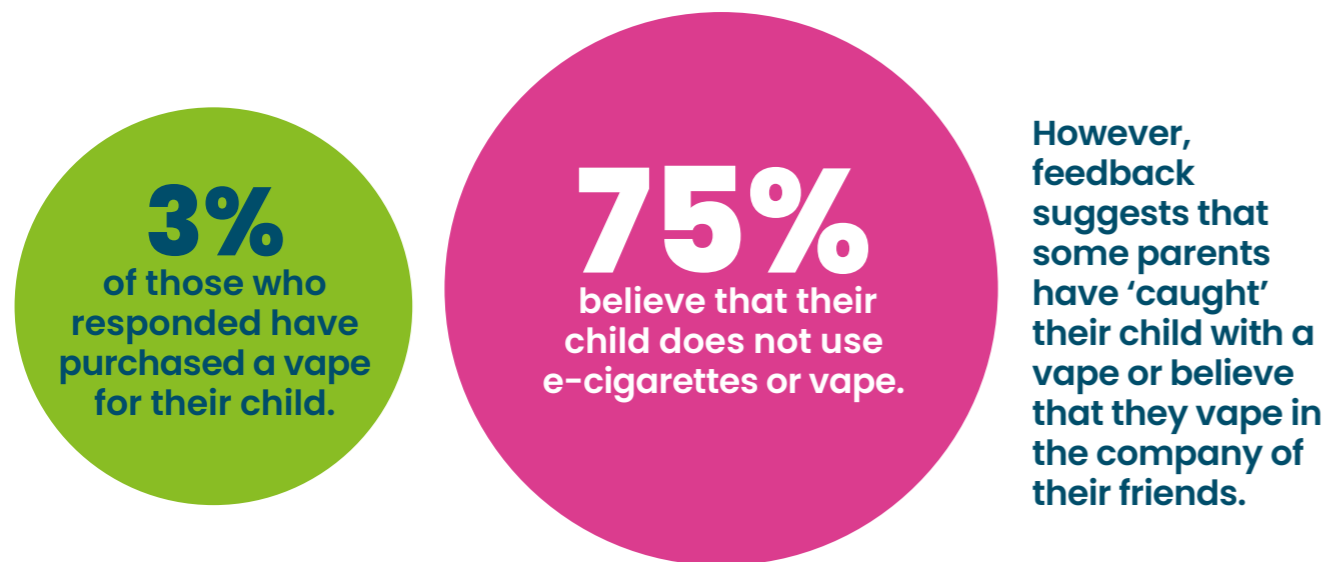
Feedback from  
**297** local parents  
and carers.





# Survey Spotlight

## Awareness and usage




## Attitudes and why

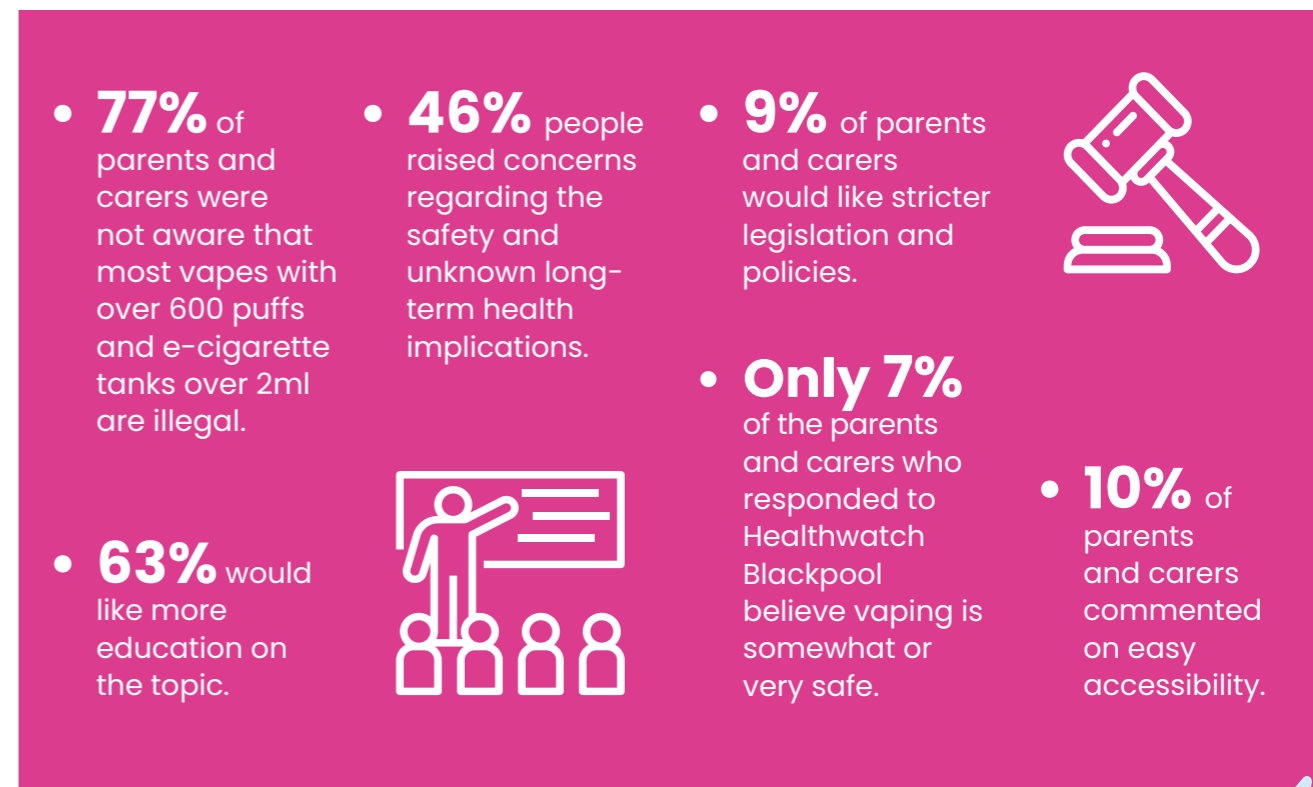


- "It's a good tool to train people away from smoking, but the science is relatively new and the dangers are not fully known yet. What we do know is that some liquids can cause "Popcorn Lung" and the units themselves can combust. I suspect that there will be more harmful effects that come to light in the future."

- "I have a son who used to vape and ended up having a heart operation, we still think this was due to vaping."



## Access, safety and availability



- "I've reported the shop where my child buys vapes from, both to trading standards and to the police. Nothing's happened, they still sell vapes to children in their school uniform. How do you battle that as a parent?"

- "Vapes should be regulated like cigarettes behind the counters not on display."

- "There should be more stringent sanctions for those who do not follow legal guidelines."

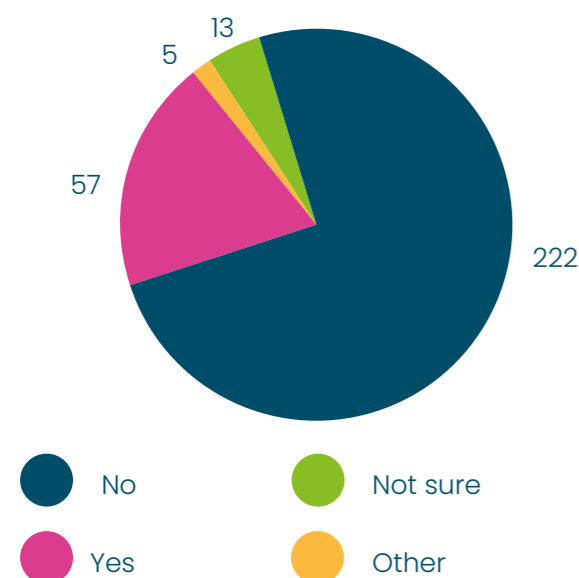
- "My son was sold vapes at age 11, my husband reported it to the police nothing was done, it's been difficult to prevent him getting vapes due to the child friendly products and easy access. My child claims they no longer vape but I found one today under his pillow - he coughs constantly."

- "There isn't enough safeguarding in place to prove your age. The products have not yet been taxed by government like cigarettes are, so the price will need to increase at some point when this is introduced by government. Sellers of vaping products should also be licensed such as it is with those that sell alcohol."

# Parent/Carer Feedback

## Does your child vape?

**75% of parents** and carers who responded to the survey believe their child does not vape.



Other: 2 respondents stated that their children had tried vaping. Further responses include:

- "Has done but I have caught him doing it so hopefully he doesn't anymore"
- "With friends only."

## If you answered yes, do you know what their reasons are for this?

The most common theme within responses was social acceptance. **To fit in** was referred to by **17 people** in their responses.

- "Because it's a trend and pretty much everyone of her age are."
- "Because everyone else does it apparently."

Tying in with this theme, **10 individuals** stated that young people and children want to **"look cool"** and mentioned the social aspect of vaping.

- "They do it around their friends to look cool."
- "No it's ridiculous they have no idea what is in the vape they just do it at parties because everyone else is."

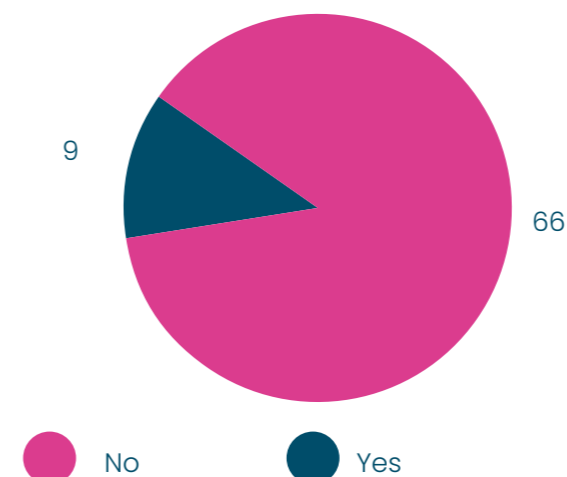
**8 people** pointed to **anxiety** and stress relief as a reason for the child or young person vaping.

- "Yes, she has had a distressing 3 years and suffers from anxiety."
- "If you asked her she would say it helps her when feeling nervous or anxious."

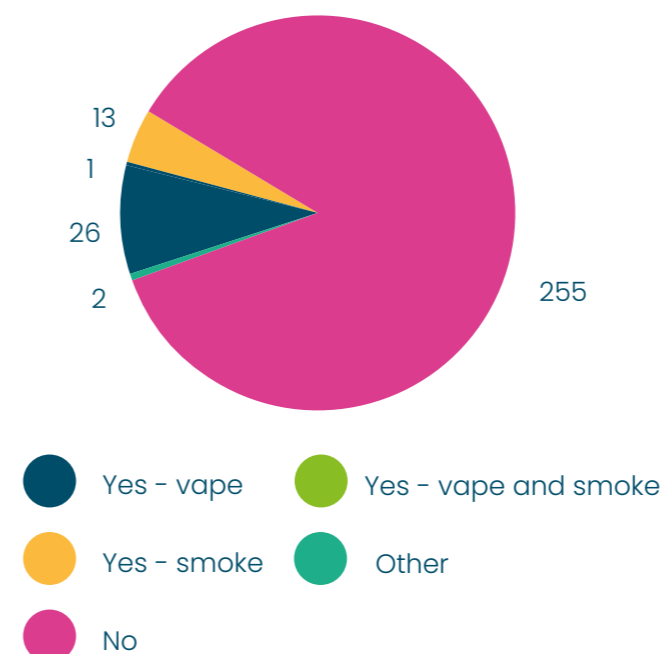
**Peer pressure** was another common response, with **7 of the respondents** citing this as a reason. A few parents and carers raised concerns around the accessibility and appeal of vaping products to young people.

- "Peer pressure amongst friends, from what I've seen there seems to be a lot of young people vaping. Disposable vape pens with wild flavour names and bright and bold colours that appeal to younger people. I'm not sure a purple grape flavour with a bright purple colour is aimed at middle aged smoker."
- "My son was sold vapes at age 11, my husband reported it to the police nothing was done, it's been difficult to prevent him getting vapes due to the child friendly products and easy access. My child claims they no longer vape but I found one today under his pillow - he coughs constantly."

## Have you ever bought your child a vape?



## Do you vape or smoke cigarettes?



Other: One person confirmed recently quitting, and one voiced:

- "Used to, which is why I know how addictive they are. I used vapes to stop smoking. Five years later I used nicotine patches to stop vaping e-cigs! Now I've not vaped or smoked for 5 years!!!!"

## If you answered yes, where do you smoke or vape? e.g. at home, when out socialising

The most frequent response, from **27 respondents**, indicated that people vape or smoke when out in public places or when socialising, with a commonly used phrase being **"Out and about."**

- "Whilst socialising but my daughter is unaware of this."

**20 people** specified that they vape or smoke **at home**, although the majority did not specify whether this was inside or outside of the house.



- "My vape is non nicotine so I do it in the house."
- "I smoke in my back garden."

**8 people** stated that they have no preference where they vape or smoke, and do this **anywhere**.

- "Everywhere. I smoke at home and when I'm out and about. Even when I am driving or walking somewhere."
- "Everywhere but at home smoke outside."
- "Little bits all day at work and at home. Even when socialising as it CBD for pain I vape."



## What are your personal opinions regarding vaping?

Of the 272 responses, **124 people** raised concerns regarding the safety and **unknown long-term health** implications. Within this, many are fearing the impact that vaping will have on the younger generation who are engaging in this behaviour from an early age.

- "It's a good tool to train people away from smoking, but the science is relatively new and the dangers are not fully known yet. What we do know is that some liquids can cause "Popcorn Lung" and the units themselves can combust. I suspect that there will be more harmful effects that come to light in the future."
- "I have a son who used to vape and ended up having a heart operation, we still think this was due to vaping."
- "Concerned as the long term implications of vaping and the passive impact for others has not been determined. Until such time as robust data is available as to the short and long term health impacts as well as safe disposal and environmental impacts it should not be openly encouraged/viewed as safe."
- "Should be discouraged as cigarettes are. It will take years before we know the full damage vaping can do to a person."
- "I believe years from now it will be proven that vaping is as bad if not worse as cigarettes (just how historically cigarettes were once touted as good for you). My father died of pulmonary fibrosis and his consultant discussed with us his fears for this generation being fed untruths about vaping. How lungs were only ever meant to take in air and how any foreign substance introduced to the lungs can damage them. I truly believe vaping in the future will be seen in a very different and dangerous light and this generation will pay the price for being ignorant about how bad it is."

- "No one really knows the long term effects. It isn't controlled by any safety standards during the manufacturing process. The products are not controlled during their import or resale as far as I know."

There was a view that vaping is beneficial for those who are using it as an **aid to stop smoking** cigarettes, with this being mentioned in **56 responses**. It is perceived as a healthier alternative to cigarettes, and so should be utilised for this purpose. Despite this, many are of the opinion that young people who have not smoked cigarettes, should not be vaping.

- "I do not agree with them at all, the purpose of these when first came out was to help smokers to come away from cigarettes or tobacco and now young children and teens are smoking e-cigarettes as a trend now, which I feel gives them the habit of an addiction to start smoking in future."
- "Crazy response to allow anyone who is not a long term smoker to access, they include nicotine and are themselves addictive."
- "Vaping to get off cigarettes I can understand but kids just starting to vape without ever smoking is ridiculous."
- "Very good if adults use to quit smoking. I worked in the industry and the problem is outlets selling illegal vape products which don't comply with UK regulations and also selling to under 18s. The problem isn't with vaping itself. It is safe if buying from established companies but at the correct strength. 99% safer than smoking as said by NHS and Public Health England. The disposable market has been taken over by those flouting trading standards and selling to under 18s, which like alcohol and cigarettes is illegal."

- "Should be a prescribed and regulated medicine. Should only be prescribed to a person who is addicted to nicotine from smoking as part of withdrawal."

**41 people** expressed their concern over the **accessibility** and apparent "targeting" of vape products towards young people, taking into account that young people are susceptible to the marketing and conform to social norms.



- "I feel they are widely promoted and far too many premises have popped up all over the place selling these products, advertising all types of flavours they have in stock which in my opinion are aimed at young people."
- "I feel as though the Vaping market has been targeted towards children/young people with the colourful casing and sweet flavours."
- "It's like turning smoking into sweet treats for kids."
- "I think it's absolutely disgusting and would like to sue the company that attracted my young child with products designed to addict at an early age."
- "I am concerned that it is unregulated and marketed to make it more appealing to children."
- "Appears to be marketed at young people in the same way alcopops were, with their appealing 'flavours' and bright colours."

Some people shared their views on **vaping indoors** or in an enclosed spaced, with **23 comments** suggesting this is a negative aspect of vaping.

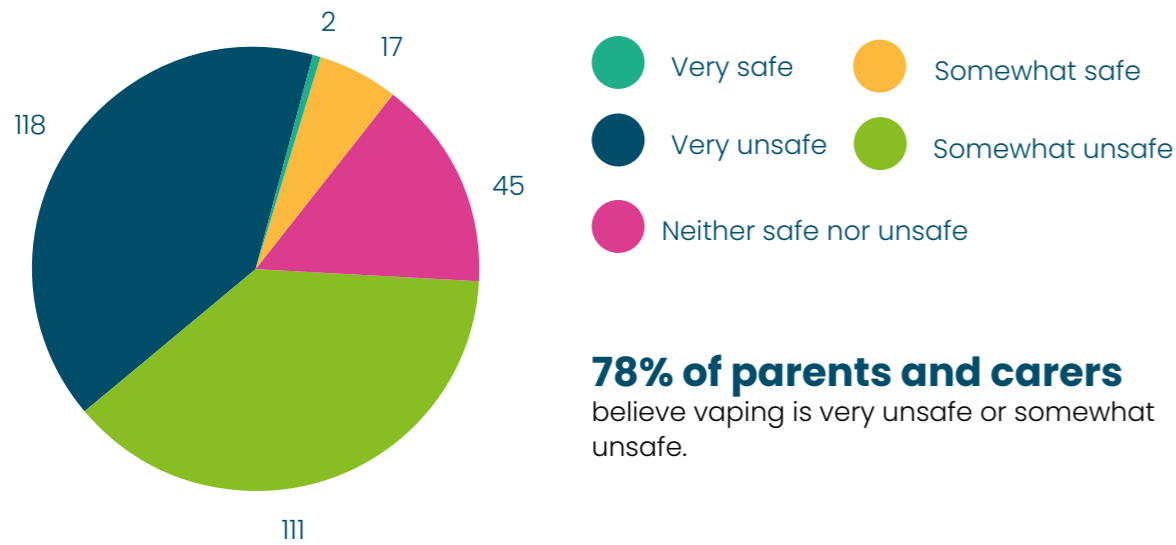
- "It's a nuisance, the clouds of smoke the smell, kids vape anywhere including in buildings where they shouldn't be."
- "Don't like that people will vape without asking where they would not smoke."
- "Should not be allowed in workplaces/schools/colleges/public indoor places etc. The vapour from other people using some vapes in public places triggers my asthma."
- "I do think it's an individual choice to vape but there should be allocated areas in society where people can smoke or vape so other people don't have to inhale the contents."
- "It's very antisocial and people feel they can vape indoors as it's not smoke."

There were **16 positive or neutral comments** made about vaping, which included:



- "It's a personal choice. It is much less harmful than tobacco and doesn't impact on those around you so I think on the whole it is positive."
- "I've only been vaping for a month after pain relief wasn't working. Vaping is not an issue in my eyes as long as not filling the room with vapour. Small tokes are fine inside."
- "I've vaped for 10 years. At first I mixed between smoking and vaping, now only vape. It's been fine for me and no issues."
- "My daughter only vapes very occasionally so I don't think it's an issue, if it were that she was using it more regularly I would be a bit more concerned."

### How safe do you feel vaping is?



**78% of parents and carers** believe vaping is very unsafe or somewhat unsafe.

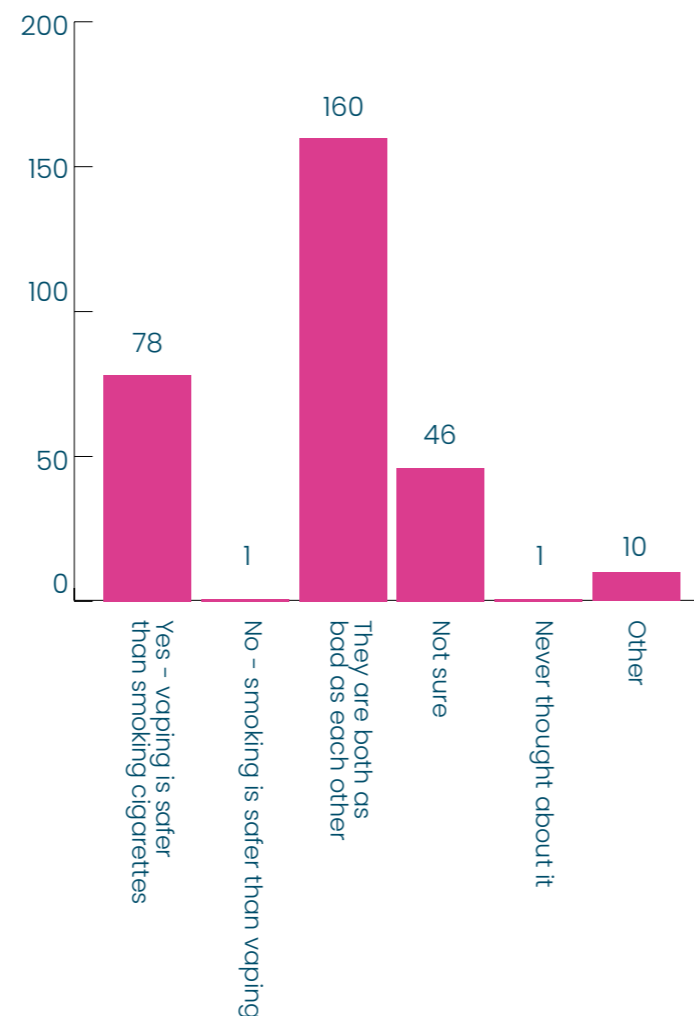
### Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?

Other: Three respondents agreed that, if used as a tool to quit smoking tobacco, vaping is safer, with one person further commenting, "However now vapes are getting nicotine into young children and has become a gateway drug." Four people voiced concerns about the lack of clear evidence available, due to vaping being new, with one person stating:

- "There is no scientific evidence yet presented to establish a reasoned decision on this question. Safer not to vape until this is available."

Other comments included:

- "Depends if it has nicotine in it"  
 - "I assume vaping is safer but not sure"  
 - "Depends on the reason for vaping."

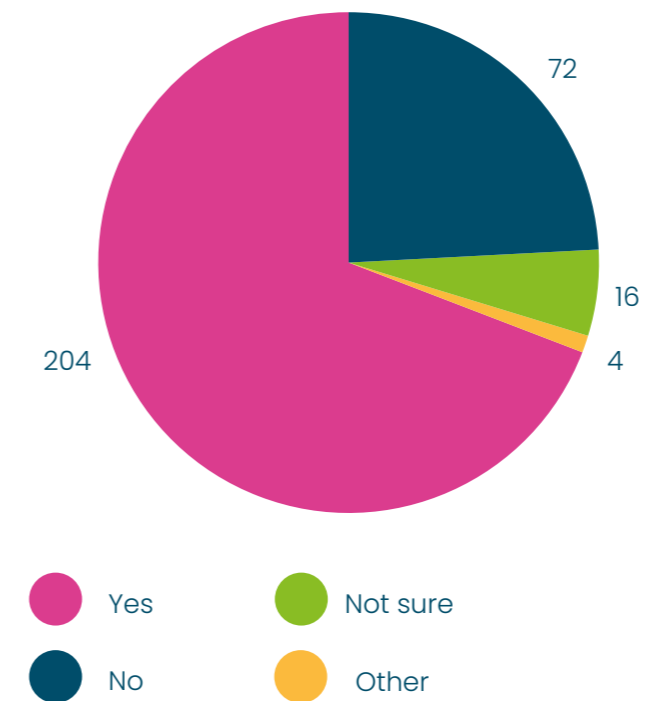


### Did you know that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal?

**77% of parents and carers** were not aware that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal.

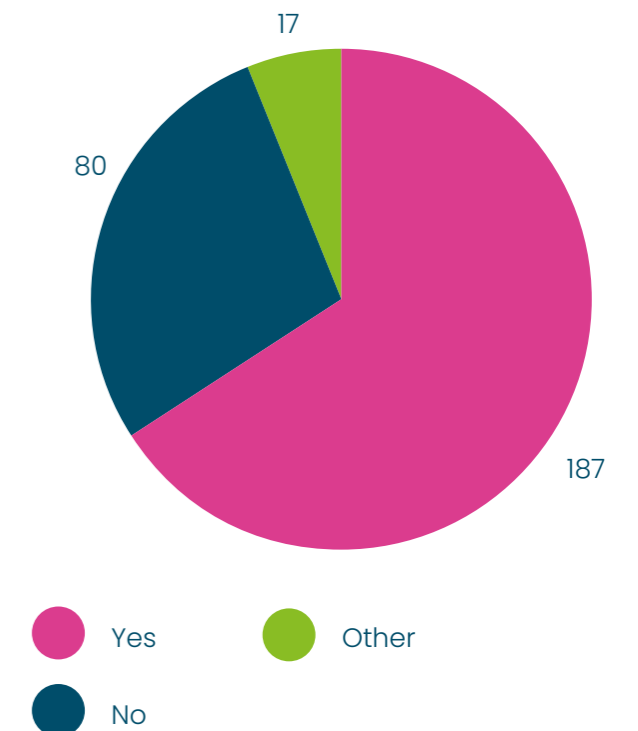


### Did you know it is illegal for retailers to sell vapes to under 18's and that you can confidentially report underage sales to Blackpool Council trading standards on 01253 478375, or you can email tradingstandards@blackpool.gov.uk?



Other: Two respondents stated that they were aware of the age limit, but not of the reporting. One person believed the age limit to be 16.

### Do you think parents/carers would benefit from further education relating to vaping?



Many of the 'other' responses acknowledged that some parents and carers may benefit from education if their child is vaping, but otherwise it may not be relevant. As well as this, the method of delivering this education would need to be sensitive in order to not "patronise" the parents.



## If you answered yes, what would you like this education to look like? e.g. who would you like to teach it, where would you like it to be...

Several distinct themes were identified by **150 parents and carers** as to how they would like education around vaping to be delivered and what it should look like. The most common theme was education taking place within **school**, often as part of the curriculum and taught by teachers within a variety of lessons. Some comments refer to the children receiving the education, whereas others are aimed towards parents and carers.

- "Needs to be in the school where all parents are familiar."
- "They should teach it in primary schools Year 10/11 before they get to college."
- "It should be taught to all children and parents at a convenient time."
- "PSHE, at school."
- "It should be taught alongside alcohol and drugs awareness."
- "When you study science it could be incorporated into any lesson. This way you could teach from an earlier age."

**38 parents and carers** felt that education should focus on the potential negative impact of vaping, with common phrases including **"safety"**, **"long-term effects"**, **"dangers"** and **"risks"**. Many parents and carers felt that this education needed to be "shocking", with a focus on the health implications associated with vaping.

- "I think there should be talks of what vaping does to your body, and your mental health, and can cause addiction to not just vaping but to other things."

- "I would like some hard hitting education to the teenagers on what it does to their lungs."
- "I feel they need to show the popcorn lungs to children."
- "I think education needs to be shocking tell people the horror stories show them medical images, do they really want this to happen to their children?"
- "Health implications. Dangers of buying unlicensed product which have been found to be dangerous. I.e. unscrupulous individuals making vats that are unregulated."

Furthermore, **26 respondents** felt that general information on vaping needs to be more widely available to the public. Participants suggested **accessible information** in the waiting areas of colleges/schools and GP's which largely contained factual information, statistics and research to inform the general public.

- "I think there should be more information in schools and just overall more publicity about vaping."
- "More public awareness, it should not be left to schools to teach."
- "General advice etc. about how to support reduction of use."
- "Local displays, in bus shelters etc."
- "Absolutely due to some information in this survey that I wasn't aware of, so my conclusion would be we all need further info regarding this matter."

An additional **24 parents and carers** felt that **emails or information letters** sent home from educational establishments would improve knowledge of vaping. Several respondents highlighted the need for this information to be "clear and concise" and for them to have the opportunity to contact someone if they had any further questions.

- "Email drops from schools to parents at primary and secondary."

**17 parents and carers** felt that the platform of **social media**, or other media sources, should be utilised to educate young people and the general public on vaping. Popular social media sites such as "Facebook" and "TikTok" were suggested as potential places where this education could be distributed through adverts and informative videos.

- "Social media etc. would be a good way to spread knowledge, for parents and teenagers."
- "I don't know what this education should look like maybe a tiktok campaign would be reach the right demographic."
- "I think it should be government/nhs based education and taught through the media."
- "Public Health messages in the media etc."
- "It would need to hit main stream media for most people to listen sadly. But any effort is still worth it."

- "I think many parents do not understand the potential risks and see it as safe - clear concise information should be issued from independent & reliable trustworthy sources. Email tool box talk/online briefings etc. may help."
- "Probably information provided via parent portal would be easiest to distribute and potentially reaches more people."
- "A short informative fact based email."
- "An easy to read paper on it would be beneficial sent by email with a contact if have questions."

A further **24 people** felt that education should be delivered **online**, either through websites containing information related to vaping for parents and carers, or through online courses that can be attended flexibly.

- "An information link like the nhs provides for details on services or illnesses."
- "Online info. I don't think zooms or classes as poor attendance would be an issue."
- "Short online videos would be best format."
- "I think maybe online information/courses would be the best option."

Specifically, leaflets or booklets were suggested on **21 occasions** as the best way to educate them on vaping. The preference appears to be for these to be provided by **educational settings** so parents and carers can use as a tool for discussion with their children, or readily available within places such as GP surgeries.

- "Happy for this to be an information leaflet/infographic that is sent out to parents/carers."
- "A booklet to discuss with children."
- "General posters/leaflets in frequently visited places, e.g. doctor's surgeries."
- "Some kids don't listen to anything the listen to their friends - probably leaflets about the dangers."
- "Maybe a leaflet drop when the next voting papers go out."

Finally, **14 people** felt it was important that any education that is delivered should be done so by a **healthcare professional** who is educated on the topic of vaping. Common phrases included "NHS", "healthcare", "medical" and "clinical".

- "Delivered by health professions to a wide audience so probably at college."
- "A presentation by experts in lung conditions, to be done at College."
- "Health professionals in education centres, schools, colleges etc and health centres."
- "Maybe an evening of people-in-the-know educating parents/carers and most definitely the same for students. At least then the students can make a far more informed decision as to whether they should be giving them up and encouraging their friends/family to give them up."

## Is there any other feedback you would like to tell us regarding vaping, e.g. where young people purchase these, what influences this...

Of the 113 responses to this question, **29 parents and carers** wished to provide further feedback regarding the **accessibility** of vapes to young people. The majority of comments centred on where young people are getting vapes from, including "from friends", "vape shops", "corner shops" and "garages."

- "I believe there are far too many vape shops around Blackpool town centre."
- "Far too accessible for the youth of today."
- "Kids buy them in Poulton and online."
- Many raised further concerns about the prevalence of the sale of vapes to underage young people.
- "I know they purchase them from many shops like local phone shops (south shore) mini markets etc. they are not asked for id and certain sellers are known to sell to underage children so this encourages their friends to purchase more, especially the 600+ vapes."
- "I think the small independent corner shops don't care so much as bigger retailers as to who they sell to."
- "The main distributors in Manchester are responsible for selling these products to outlets. Most vaping only shops sell within the law. It's mainly independent convenience stores, petrol stations etc. who are selling to under 18. It is also too easy to purchase online."
- "I've reported the shop where my child buys vapes from, both to trading standards and to the police. Nothing's happened, they still sell vapes to children in their school uniform. How do you battle that as a parent?"

Similarly, **27 parents and carers** provided comment regarding the need for **stricter legislation** and policies, as well as clearer guidelines on both the sale of, and use of vapes.



- "Not sure what policy is on vaping in public spaces, but more should be done to deter people from vaping on buses, confined spaces etc. Encourage those who vape to be more considerate of others around them."
- "There isn't enough safeguarding in place to prove your age. The products have not yet been taxed by government like cigarettes are, so the price will need to increase at some point when this is introduced by government. Sellers of vaping products should also be licensed such as it is with those that sell alcohol."
- "There should be greater penalties for people selling to underage users."
- "Vapes should be regulated like cigarettes behind the counters not on display."
- "There should be more stringent sanctions for those who do not follow legal guidelines."

The impact **peer pressure** has on young people choosing to vape was raised within **22 responses**.

- "Peer pressure and trends are the influence in young people, ecigs have unfortunately become the latest trend."
- "Peer pressure or trying to fit in is always a problem for youths. Vaping is the new smoking and will be done to look good and fit in. Especially with kids who are easily influenced or get bullied for being different."

- "Peer pressure/boredom/not fitting in/everyone else is doing it! These are all reasons that youngsters will dwell on. I started smoking at age 18 because I was "bored" and all my mates were doing it."
- "Young people see it as being 'cool' or going hand in hand with a prominent influencer or celebrity. They feel more mature engaging in something which is not allowed."

## 15 parents and carers

shared concerns about the potential **health risks** of vaping in young people. Many comments displayed worry about the lack of knowledge of the risks, as well as the general belief that vaping is "harmless" or "better than cigarettes".



- "Some seem to think it's healthier than smoking but it was invented to get people off cigarettes so children doing it is beyond ridiculous!"
- "It is a concern for their health and mental state."
- "I don't think the potentially harmful or addictive effects are well enough understood and communicated."
- "I feel that a lot of people think "well, at least they're not smoking real cigarettes". However, vaping contains chemicals too & can contribute to bad habits/addiction etc."

Some parents and carers voiced their opinion that the **marketing and advertisement** of vaping appears to directly appeal to young people.

- "Vapes are being made to appeal to younger generations, all colours, all shapes and sizes, glittery, fancy etc."
- "I think Vaping has become popular amongst children and teenagers due to all the fancy designs and fruity flavours. Even non-smokers are attracted to vaping."
- "They should make it flavourless and not scented as this is an encouragement to young people."
- "My own children do not vape, but I have heard one of my children talking about how the flavours sound nice, which may tempt them to try."
- "Vaping appears to be more accepted in society, and due to the many different flavours, it's becoming even more tempting to young people. I often see many young people around Blackpool, some appearing as young as 10, smoking vapes."

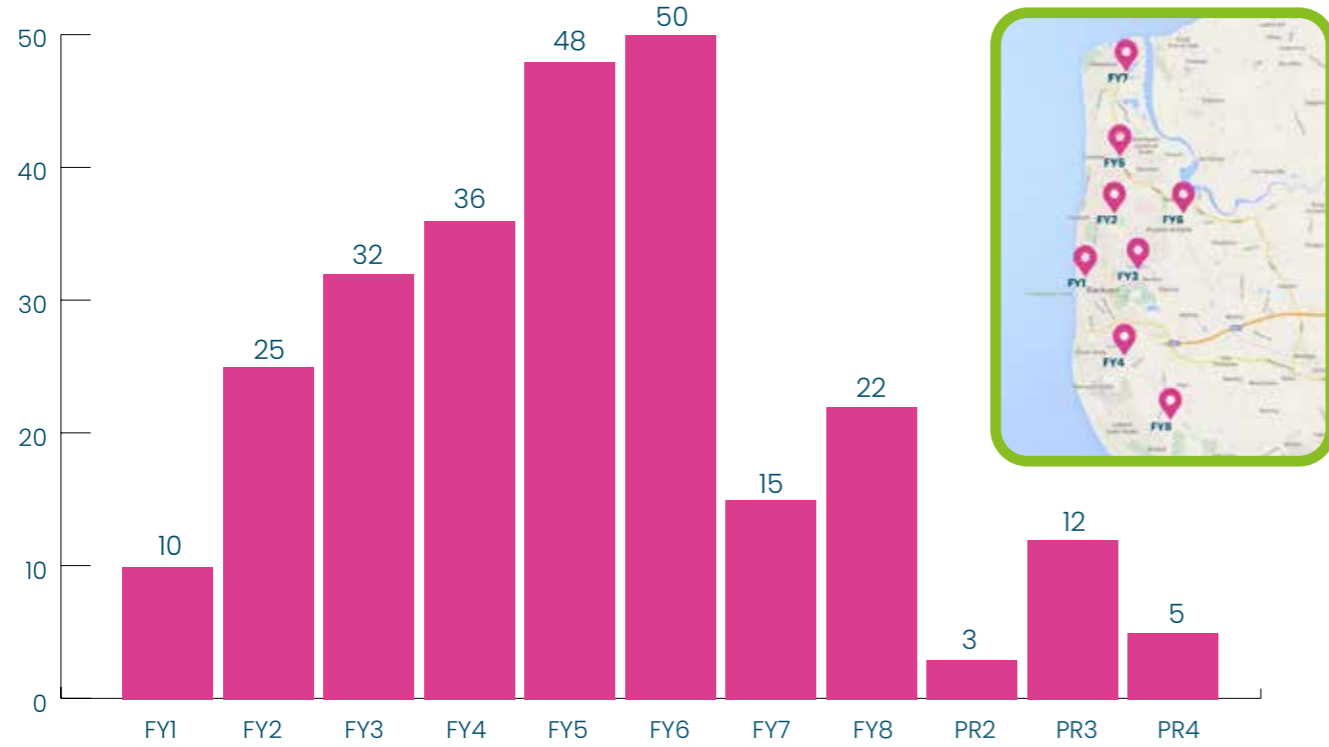
Finally, **10 people** communicated unease regarding the prevalence of vape usage in young people within educational establishments.

- "Appalled that some colleges have smoking areas right by the main entrance where groups of students can be seen vaping and smoking traditional cigarettes that is often accompanied by some poor behaviour."
- "Far too much vaping happening in schools and the consequences appear to be less severe than when students are found smoking traditional cigarettes."
- "I think college plays an integral part. By providing smoking or vaping areas you, by default, support it."
- "Looks terrible as you drive into the college the smokers / vaping corner as it's the first thing you see - not the best first impression."
- "Please crack down on this in schools!"

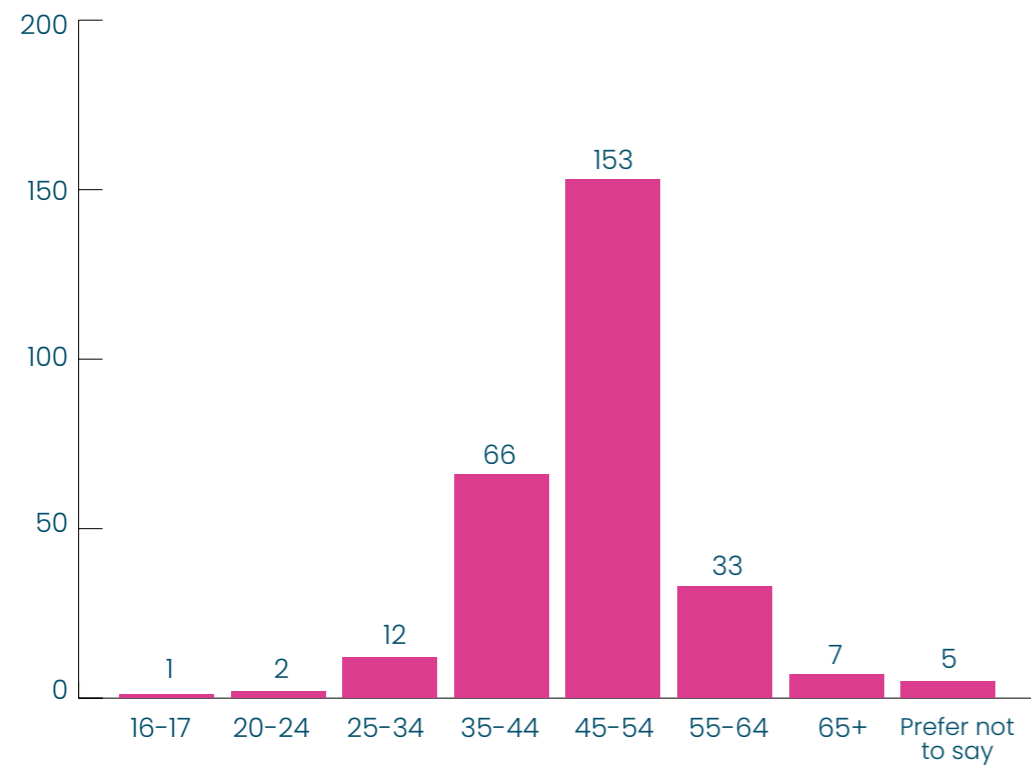


# Parent and carer demographics

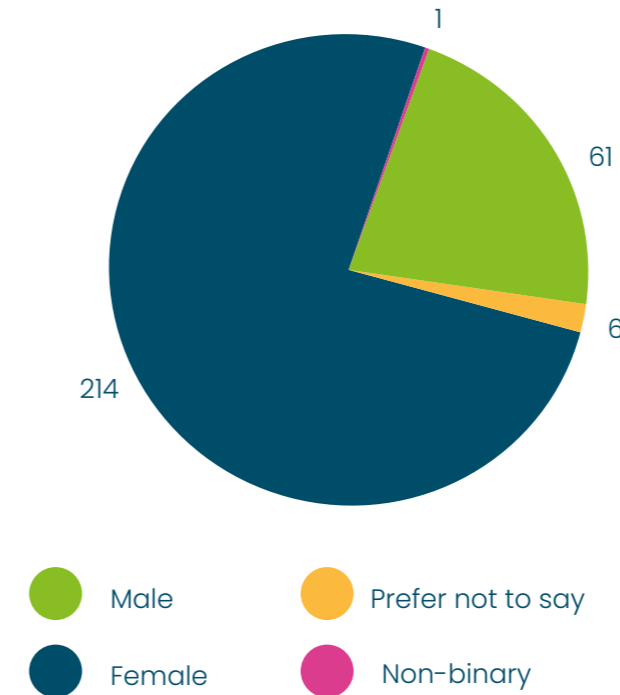
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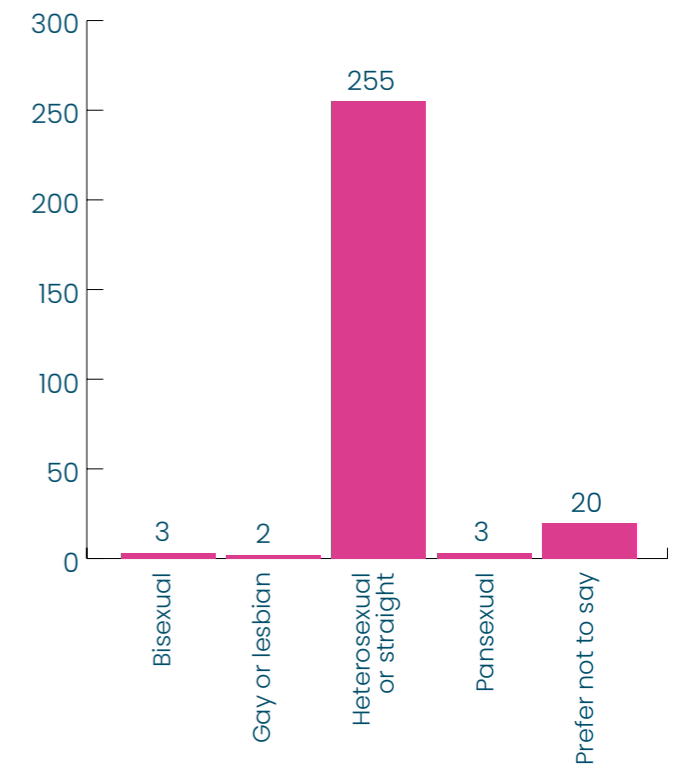
## How old are you?



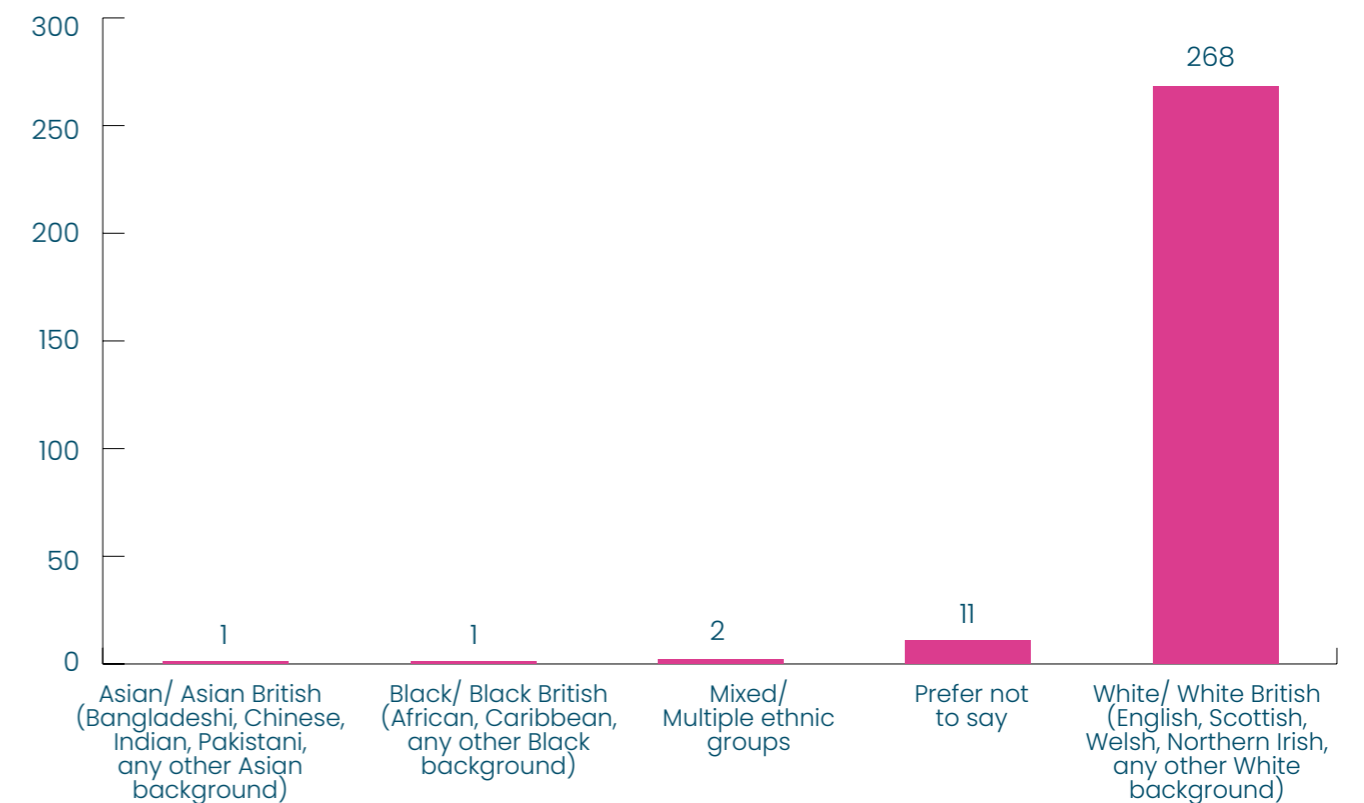
## What gender do you identify as?



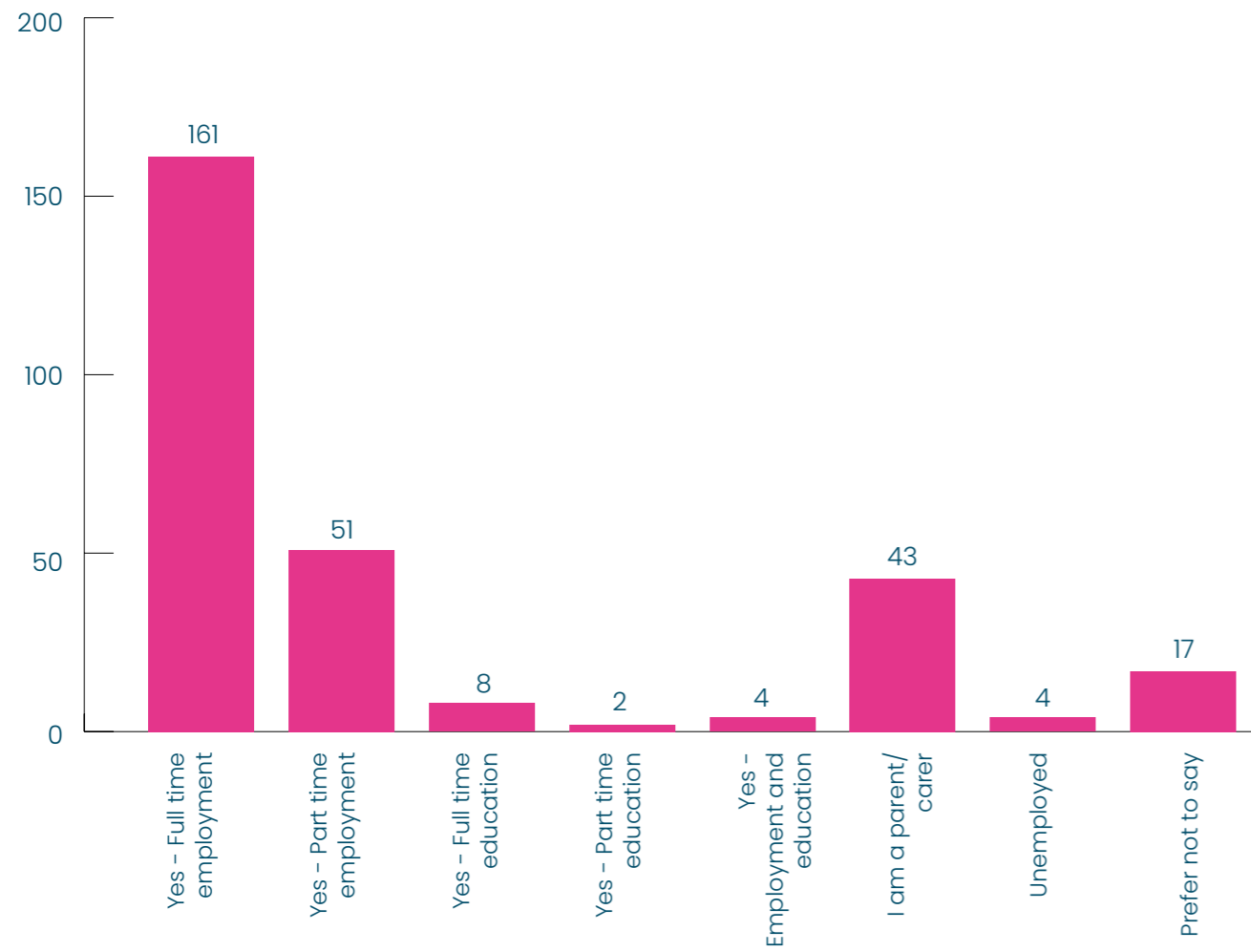
## What is your sexual orientation?



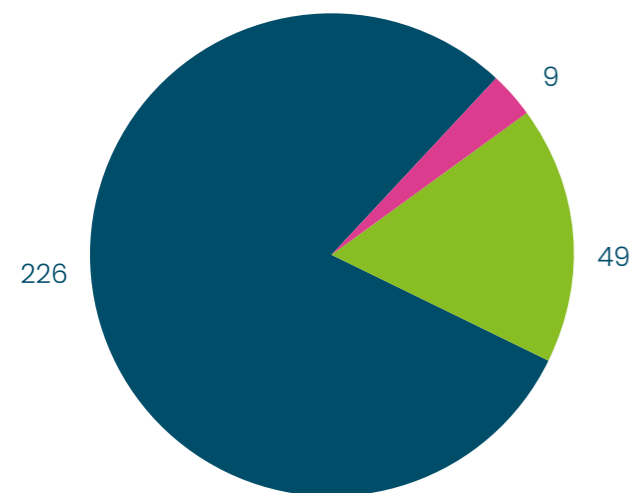
## What is your ethnicity?



### Are you in employment or education?



### Do you have a long term health condition or disability?



Yes (light green)  
No (dark blue)  
Prefer not to say (pink)





## Conclusion

Healthwatch Blackpool engaged with 4170 children and young people across Blackpool on the topic of e-cigarettes and vaping, through a survey and focus groups. Alongside this, 297 local parents and carers and 138 teachers and professionals shared their views via the online survey.

**4170** children and young people engaged  
**297** local parents and carers  
**138** teachers and professionals

### Awareness and usage

It is clear from feedback, both from young people and teachers/professionals that the **prevalence** of vaping has **increased** in young people, with the majority of young people having not smoked cigarettes prior to vaping. Since starting vaping, a large proportion of young people have not started smoking cigarettes, nor do the majority use vaping to prevent themselves from smoking cigarettes. Despite this, over a quarter of young people have diversified and believe they have tried THC vapes. In contrast, within SEND educational settings, there does not appear to have been an increase in student's vaping.

Of those that vape, young people typically vape **daily** and have done so for **1-2 years**.

The type of vape favoured by young people was **disposables**, due to the **taste, low cost** and **convenience** of purchasing. The preferable flavour of vape for young people is **fruity**, most often containing nicotine. Young people noted they choose to vape inside the house, or wherever they feel. Interestingly, when parents and carers were asked if their child vapes, the vast majority who took part in this survey believe they do not. More than half of young people have parents/carers who vape, smoke or vape and smoke, with their parents

and carers also choosing to do this **within the house**. Contrary to the above, almost all of the parents and carers who engaged with Healthwatch Blackpool via the survey indicated they do not vape or smoke cigarettes. Overall, young people's understanding of **nicotine** and the **effect** it has on the body appears to be reasonable. The most popular explanation given is that nicotine is **addictive** and so makes you want more, which results in the formation of a habit that is **difficult to stop**. When engaging with primary school aged children, the understanding of nicotine was lesser than that of older children and young people.



Most participants of all ages were unsure or were not aware that most vapes with over 600 puffs and e-cigarette tanks over 2ml are illegal. However, the majority are aware that it is **illegal** for retailers to sell vapes to under 18's and that you can confidentially report underage sales to Blackpool Council trading standards.

### Attitudes and why

A large proportion of young people said they do not know why they vape.

However, the lead reason given for vaping was to **relieve stress** and **improve mental health**, followed by vaping **to look cool** and peer pressure.



In contrast, the primary reason given for not vaping was due to this being perceived as being **unhealthy** and bad for you, with young people specifically worrying about **the risk of cancer**. Teachers and professionals perceive the increase in young people vaping being as a result of peer pressure, accessibility of vapes and the impact of social media and advertising. Of the teachers and professionals who completed the survey, the majority do not vape or smoke cigarettes. Similarly, parents and carers believe their child vapes to **'fit in'** and **'look cool'**. As well as this, some mentioned their child struggling with anxiety, and so they use a vape as a method of stress release to manage this.

When teachers/professionals and parents/carers were asked for their personal opinions regarding vaping, several shared their concerns for the safety of vapes and the long-term health implications, particularly as there is a lack of research. With that being said, some parents and carers highlighted the benefits of vaping for those who use it as an **aid to stop smoking cigarettes**.

Feedback surrounding stopping vaping was mixed. Young people who stated they would struggle to stop, cited reasons such as **addiction to nicotine** and a dependence on vapes for **stress relief**. Some young people shared that they are most frequently given vapes by their friends.

A large number of young people believe advertising and social media promotes vaping, with direct references made to TikTok and influencers. During focus group sessions, young people referenced specific vapes that derive

from popular TV shows and **influential trends**, for example PRIME and Rick & Morty vapes. In addition, aspects of marketing such as **colours and flavours** were frequently mentioned. Most young people find information relating to vaping on social media and the internet, as well as through friends.

Feedback from young people relating to **further education** on vaping was mixed, with just over half of young people feeling this would be beneficial. Young people would like the education to take place within a school or college setting, with some specifying within PSHE lessons. Furthermore, several young people suggested delivering this education to primary school aged children, as a preventative measure. In terms of the content, young people feel there is a need for **increased understanding** around the risks and consequences of vaping. There were comments about the need for **research and information** to persuade people to consider their health.

In addition, teachers and professionals felt they would benefit from further education relating to vaping. Suggestions were made to incorporate this into the **existing curriculum**, through accessible resources such as information packs, online materials and videos. Others shared a preference for external professionals, such as those working in the NHS, to deliver the education.



Furthermore, just over half of parents and carers see value in further education relating to vaping, with an emphasis again on this being taught within a school setting. Some parents and carers would like to receive the education themselves, whereas others feel it should be directed at children and young people. The suggested methods for this included **'shocking'** information surrounding the **dangers** and **risks** of vaping, alongside informative letters sent home to parents and carers. General promotional materials were suggested in public places, to increase knowledge and understanding across the whole community.



## Access, safety and availability

Most young people purchase vapes from **corner shops**, due to ease of access and not being asked for **proof of ID**. The most common source of money to pay for vapes was from employment, whether that be full or part time. In addition, young people mentioned receiving money from family members, who are sometimes unaware that this money is being used to fund vaping. During focus group discussions, some young people shared that they are bought vapes by parents as a **reward** or an **incentive** to attend school or exhibit good behaviour. As well as this, young people shared information about **'vape hunting'**, a social activity whereby young people search the streets for vapes discarded on the floor. However, the vast majority of parents and carers who completed the survey stated they do not purchase vapes for their child.

Over half of young people choose not to read the packaging when opening a vape. In addition, some young people notice a difference in packaging when the vape is **'fake'**, with the vape itself feeling harsher on the back of the throat. Aside from this, others struggle to differentiate between a 'fake' vape and a legitimate vape, as discussed within focus group settings.

The majority of young people are **not concerned** about the **long-term health consequences** of vaping. For those who are concerned, specific reference was given to the unknown health risks. Of all participants who completed the survey, the vast majority perceive vaping to be very unsafe or somewhat unsafe, although many believe vaping to be safer than smoking. With that being said, a large proportion felt vaping and smoking cigarettes are both as bad as each other.





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