

Young people's views and experiences of information about vaping



Hampshire Young People's Views and Experiences of Information About Vaping (2025)

Background

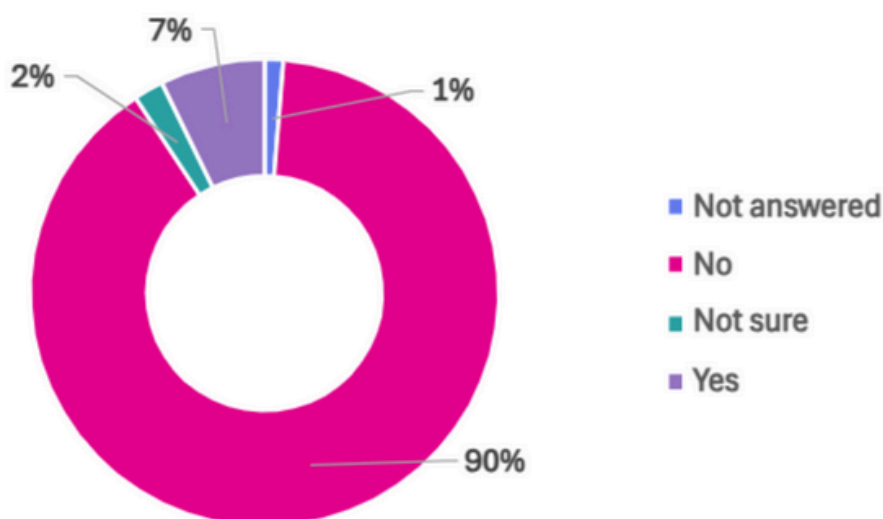
This project was initiated by two proactive young Youthwatch volunteers who recognised the impact that vaping was having on their peers and wanted to take action. They developed a series of questions to explore how much young people understood about the risks and dangers of vaping, and to gather ideas on how to improve the information and advice available to them.

The survey was distributed to all high schools and sixth form colleges in Hampshire via email and was also promoted on social media. It opened on 3 July 2025 and closed on 30 September 2025.

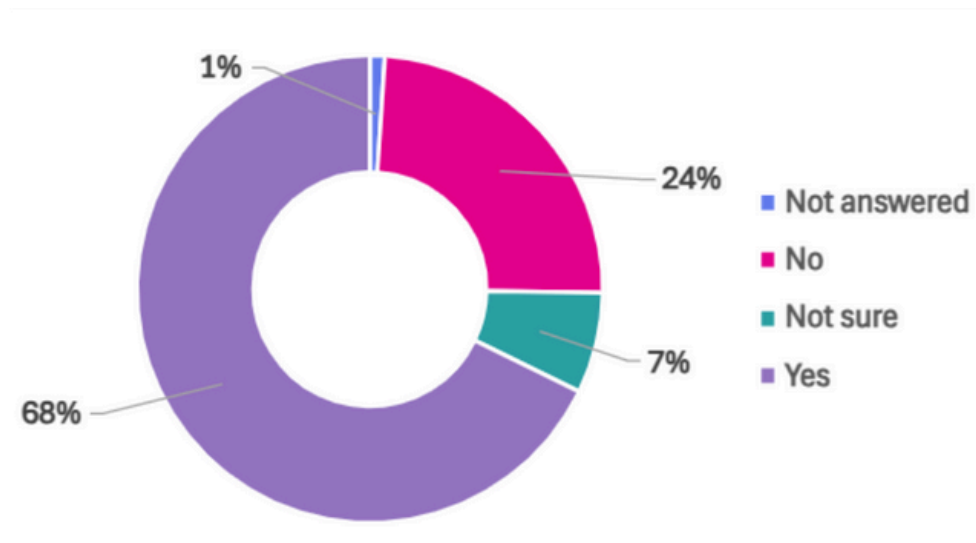
In total, 387 responses were received from young people aged 11 to 20 and above.

Findings

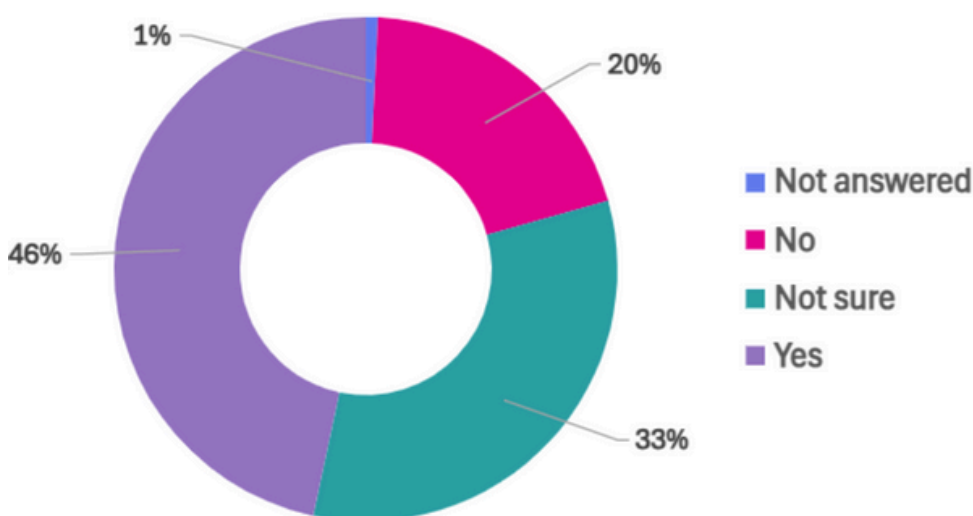
Q1. Have you ever vaped?



Q2. Do you know anyone who has vaped?



Q3. Do you think teenagers in your community are aware of the potential dangers of vaping?



General Awareness

Many respondents said they feel that young people are aware of the dangers of vaping, mainly because teachers have covered it in PSHE lessons and assemblies. They also mentioned that there are posters up in school.

Common responses were:

"We learn about it in PSHE"

"We've had 3-4 PSHE lessons on vaping."

"We have lots of info given to us from schools"

Awareness often comes from school rather than family conversations. Only a couple of young people mentioned discussing it with parents. Some young people spoke about talking to their friends about the dangers of vaping.

Outside of school, young people mentioned adults as part of the normalising culture of vaping, with a few mentioning adults vaping in public spaces and playgrounds.

"Because people tend to vape in public spaces like town centres, pathways to school, at parks where younger children are on sight."

"I have seen a lot of parents vaping or smoking with their kids."

Education and Information Sources

Schools were the main source of information about the dangers of vaping with lots of mentions of lessons, posters and assemblies.

Several people commented that even though it was covered at school, the message currently does not always stick in the minds of young people or affect their behaviours.

"There are posters, but I don't think anyone reads them."

"We learn it in PSHE but I don't know how much people remember."

Very few young people mentioned social media or the internet as information sources in the free text of this question. However, in Q5 when respondents were asked directly about where they currently went for information social media and friends were the most mentioned, with school coming a close third.

Aware but lack of concern about risks

A major theme in the feedback was that young people felt that their peers were aware of the risks but ignored them. For some young people it was simply about a lack of interest, with words like "don't care," "ignore," "still do it," and "think it's cool" coming up repeatedly in responses. A few commented that it was seen as a "fun" activity.

"They know it's bad but do it anyway."

"Most of them just don't care."

"They still vape even though they know it's dangerous."

However, some young people felt it wasn't always as simple as an issue of 'personal choice' and acknowledged other influences caused young people to 'ignore' the health risks. They spoke about addiction (nicotine dependence), peer pressure, dealing with personal issues or mental health problems as reasons young people vaped despite knowing the dangers.

"Some people vape and they don't know the risk they just say it tastes good or helps them deal with depression and others do but are addicted to them."

Peer Pressure & Personal image

Many mention peer pressure or the desire to fit in or look cool as the main reasons people vape. Some note that vaping is seen as "grown-up" or to "look good".

There's also recognition that seeing others do it (friends, adults, parents) normalizes it.

"They do it to look cool."

"They see others do it so they think it's okay."

"because people think it's cool to vape."

Still gaps in knowledge

A significant number of people responded that they felt that some young people weren't aware of the health implications and long-term effects of vaping.

"Most people especially teenagers don't know the dangers of vaping and the effects of it."

"It depends on who the person is. I know people who know about the safety precautions and people who don't know."

"I think kids my age are unaware what vaping can cause to your mental health and they think it's just fun to do."

Some respondents said they felt young people don't fully understand the dangers, or think vaping is a "healthier" alternative to smoking.

"To most it's just flavoured air and they overlook the chemicals inside"

"People think it's a healthy version of smoking."

Some acknowledge that vapes are new and long-term effects aren't well known.

"No, they absolutely are not [aware of dangers], vapes haven't had enough research done into them like cigarettes have. Cigarettes have been smoked for years, whereas vapes are a newer thing so our generation are basically the test dummy's for what damage is caused by vapes."

"Vapes are still being studied, so people don't understand future risks."

Other responses

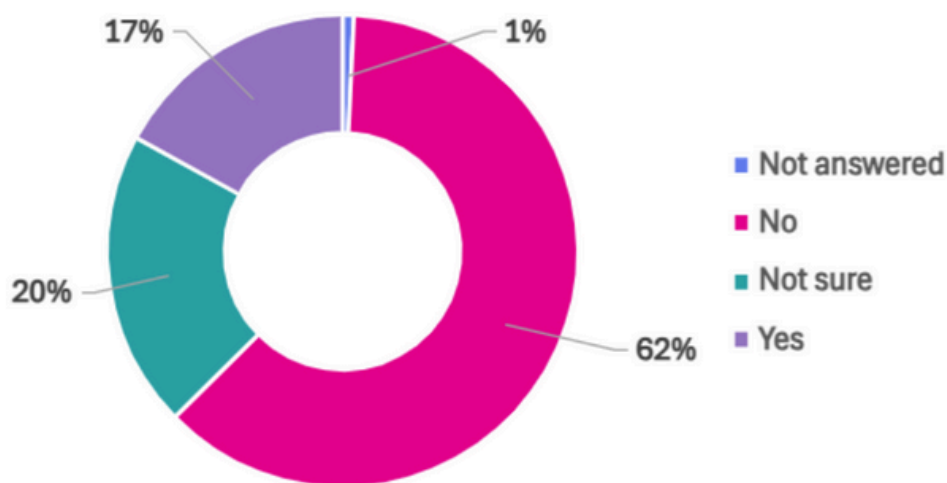
Quite a few people answered "I don't know" or didn't like to speculate on what other young people might know or not know about the subject.

Many responses mention lung damage, addiction, diseases, or death.

Summary

- Awareness exists among young people, but they feel that its effectiveness is limited. Although many felt that young people will have heard the message about vaping from school, they don't internalize it.
- Young people felt that lack of interest, peer influence, addiction, personal and mental health issues are complicating factors, which undermine this awareness.
- Education is working in terms of knowledge levels, but young people felt it had not been that affective in changing behaviours in many cases.
- A significant number of people felt there were still gaps in information, and that some of their peers did not fully understand the risks associated with vaping.

Q.4. Have you heard of any perceived benefits of vaping among teenagers?

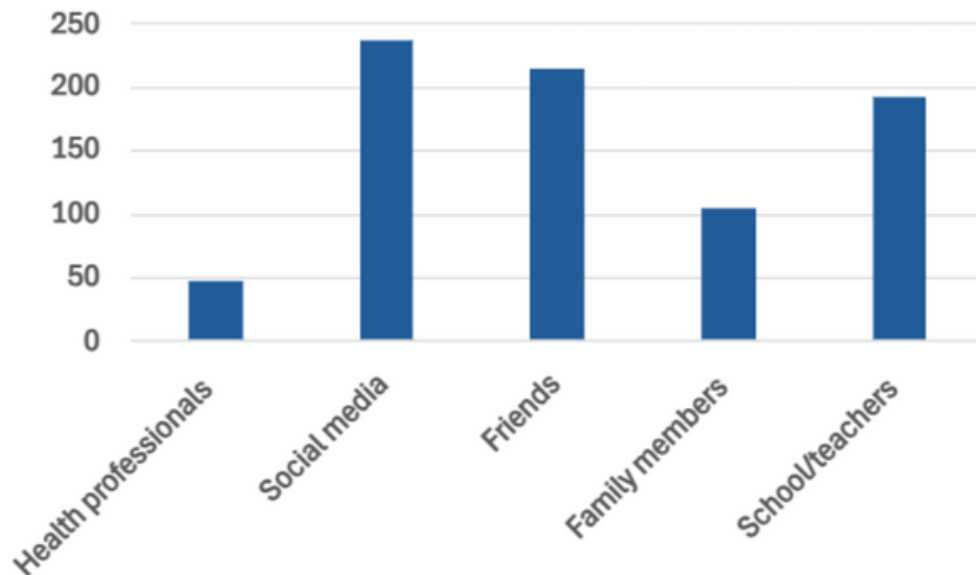


Although some respondents indicated that they had heard of perceived benefits of vaping, very few chose to explain their answers, so it is unclear what they had heard these benefits might be or where this information had come from.

Among the few who did elaborate, responses included "reducing stress or anxiety," "improved concentration," and "looking cool."

One comment stated: "Can cure anxiety makes you feel better."

Q5. Where do teenagers in your community usually get information about vaping?



The top three current sources of information about vaping for young people were:

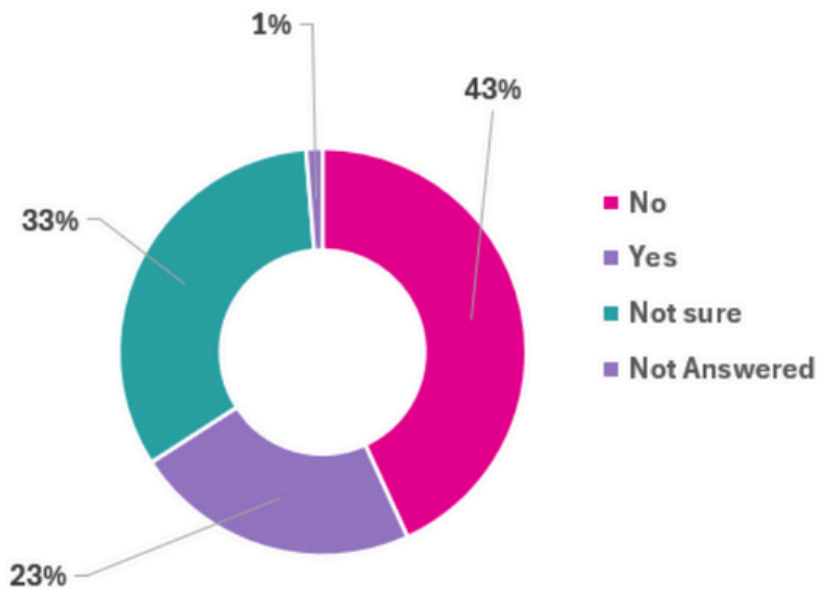
1. Social media
2. Friends
3. School

Social media was the most popular source of information currently used by young people. This survey did not have the capacity to determine the specific types of content being viewed. It would be interesting to explore what information young people seek about vaping on social media, and which platforms and accounts they use most frequently.

Health professionals were the least likely to be identified as sources of information. This is likely because young people do not have regular contact with health professionals in their day-to-day lives. Instead, it appears that young people are more likely to talk to their friends about vaping. Comparatively few mentioned family members, suggesting that vaping is not widely discussed at home.

Although schools were frequently mentioned in the free-text responses to Question 3 (about whether young people know the dangers of vaping), they still ranked below the other two main sources of information.

Q6. Do you think the current sources of information about vaping are sufficient for teenagers?



Respondents were split on this question. However, the largest proportion felt that teenagers do not receive enough information about vaping, which indicates there is a potential gap in education or communication on the issue.

In the free text element of this question people gave more information on their answer. A few explained why they felt the information available was sufficient, these focused on it being clear and easy to understand.

"Yes, I think the current sources of information can be sufficient, but it depends on how teens are accessing and engaging with them. There are reliable sources out there—like health classes, government websites, social media campaigns, and even YouTube videos—that explain the risks of vaping in a way that's clear and understandable."

"It helps me understand it can affect my health if I ever start vaping, which will definitely keep me away from vaping."

Some did make comments about the limitations of information, saying it was repetitive.
"They are very repetitive about the same things everywhere."

"We cover it every year."

A few mentioned ways that the information could have more impact, which included real life scenarios and experiences of people who have quit vaping, the short-term health effects and impact on people's futures.

"I think we learn about long term effects not necessarily what happens as you do it."

"If the main information is said by people who has experience and quit."

"I think they need to see a real-life scenario of it and share the effects of vaping in real life."
"Don't really have any medical examples."

There were many comments in the free text that indicated young people seemed pessimistic that information about the dangers of vaping alone would effectively change people's habits.

"Everyone knows the dangers of vaping but still vape."

"They listen but they don't care if it's bad for your health"

"No because even though we get this knowledge some people still decide to ignore it and vape."

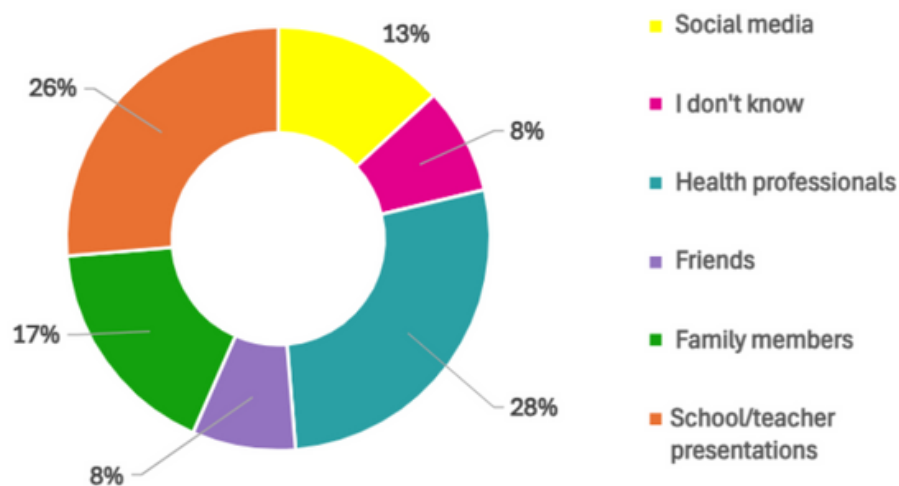
Other comments included worries about misinformation and issues around trusted sources.

"Some networks aren't trusted by teenagers or the network talks about benefits only."

"It could be false information"

A better understanding of what sources and networks young people use, and trust would be useful, but this was beyond the scope of the survey.

Q7. Where would you recommend teenagers get information about the dangers of vaping?



Q8. What changes do you think would be most effective in helping teenagers in your community to make informed choices about vaping?

More impactful education

Many comments highlighted the need for more information about the dangers of vaping, including its short- and long-term health consequences, as well as a desire for more lessons on the topic in schools. However, these gave no detail about how this information should be delivered.

Examples of comments included:

"Making sure that they know the dangers of vaping."

"More lessons about it."

Some responses focused on improving the impact and effectiveness of vaping-related education. Many suggested that using 'real-life stories' that young people can relate to and that make the risks feel real, would have a strong impact.

"Teaching them real stories instead of scenarios or warnings"

"A presentation with real world cases about what can happen to vapers."

"Teaching teenagers the real dangers of vaping in school using short videos or true stories."

Others proposed a range of approaches, such as:

- Posters in schools and public places
- Videos and images showing health effects in school presentations
- Discussions about the mental health impacts of vaping
- Social media campaigns
- Talks delivered by health professionals

Banning Vapes

Many respondents spoke about banning vapes in the UK.

"That they should stop vaping and listening to other people... Vaping should be banned."

"Simply by banning vapes."

Making it harder for young people to purchase vapes

Respondents mentioned ID challenges for buying vapes, punitive action against shops that sell to people under the age of 18.

"Enforcing that vapes are illegal under 18 and requiring ID to buy."

"Need ID for vapes. no matter how old they are"

Involving families/parents more in discussions about vapes

Several people felt that it should be discussed more outside of school.

"More talk inside and outside of school."

"Family members talking to them about how bad it is."

Advertising and packaging

Some young people felt that the way vapes were marketed made them appealing to young people, with bright colours and types of flavours. They felt that they needed to be made to look less appealing and have clearer warnings on the packets, like cigarette packets.

"Removing bright happy colours from the packaging and cover most of it with warnings as they do for cigarettes."

"Not having the packaging in bright intriguing colors."

"Make the packaging show effects like smoking."

Support for young people

Some felt that more support was needed for young people, such as confidential support groups, peer support and positive activities.

"A support group." "Extra support"

"More places to easily go with confidentiality"

"Get kids involved in more of a sport environment and keep them fit so that they stop vaping (gym, daily run etc)"

"Everyone being more aware about the dangers of vaping so they can encourage others to quit."

Schools tightening measures to discourage vaping

Other people said that they felt that schools needed to do more to stop young people vaping.

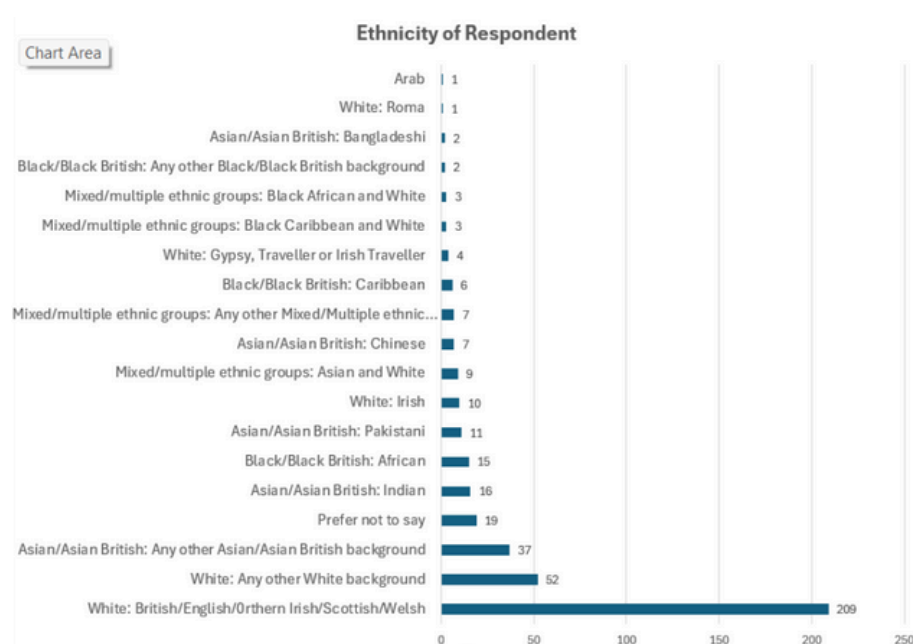
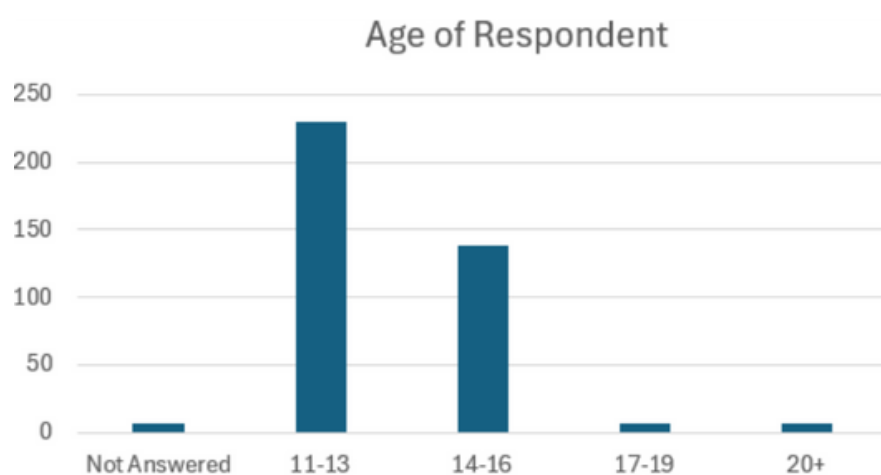
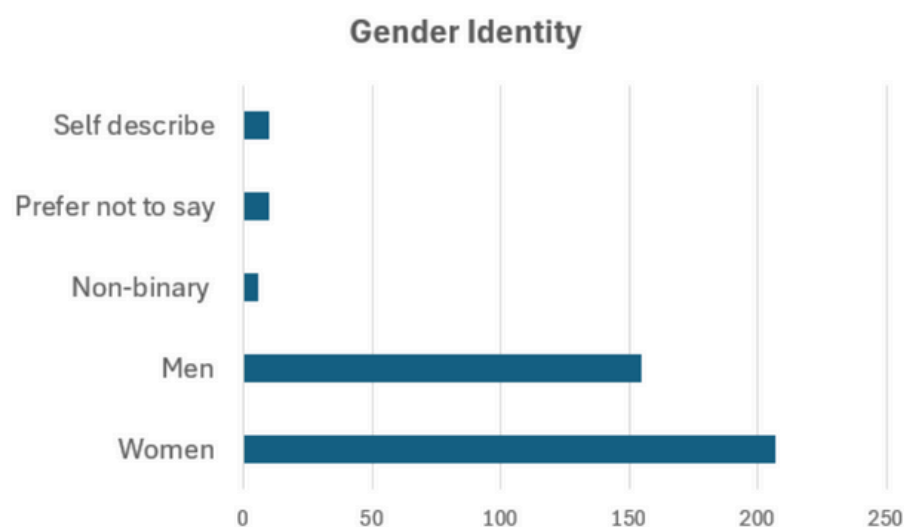
"Do not allow them and the instant you suspect someone having one in school bag check them."

"Vape detectors in toilets and regular check to make sure they work"

"Rewards for handing in vapes."

A lot of young people said that they did not know or weren't sure how to address the issue.

Who completed the survey?



Note: Some respondents selected multiple options.