

# Youth19 – Vaping Fact Sheet

## What is vaping?

Vapes or electronic-cigarettes (e-cigs) are battery-powered devices that heat e-liquid and create a vapour that users breathe in. There is evidence that switching from smoking to vaping can reduce harm and help smokers to quit.<sup>1</sup>



Concerns around vaping are that the long-term effects are not known, and that it could lead to smoking among young people.<sup>2,3</sup> Also, e-liquids generally contain nicotine which is addictive and may affect brain development in adolescents.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons the Ministry of Health warns against e-cigarette use in non-smokers, particularly young people.

## New, high-quality data

In 2019, researchers from four universities collaborated to survey over 7700 NZ adolescents (13–18 years) in 52 Auckland, Northland and Waikato schools. This is the latest survey in the Youth2000 series, and the first NZ study to look at vaping in secondary students of all ages.<sup>5</sup>

The survey was a representative, high-quality and ethical study about the wellbeing of rangatahi/youth. Schools were randomly selected from each region and then students were randomly selected from each school roll. Consenting students completed the anonymous survey in English or Te Reo Māori on handheld internet tablets.

The survey explored many aspects of health and wellbeing – see [www.youth19.ac.nz](http://www.youth19.ac.nz)

## How common is vaping in high school students?

Overall, 38% of students in the Northland, Auckland and Waikato regions reported they had tried vaping, 10% vaped regularly (monthly or more often) and 6% vaped weekly or more often.

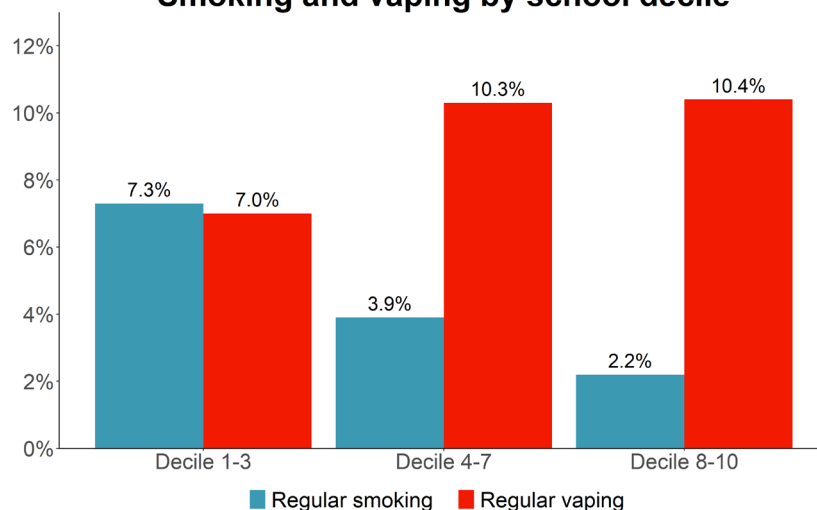
Vaping varies by school, so particular schools may have more or less vaping than the averages above. Regular vaping is more common in boys, older students, and in both European and Māori students compared with other ethnicities.

## Do non-smokers vape?

In short, yes. Many high school-aged vapers are non-smokers. We found nearly two-thirds (65%) of students who had ever vaped and nearly half (48%) of regular vapers had never smoked cigarettes. Vaping seems to appeal to a wider range of young people than smoking. For example, as shown in the graph below, regular smoking – monthly or more often – is now rare in high decile (i.e. more affluent, decile 8–10) schools but vaping is relatively common across deciles. This has important implications (see over for details).

A scientific paper presenting more detailed analyses will be published soon.

Smoking and vaping by school decile



# Youth19: Smoking and vaping in secondary students

		Has ever smoked	Regularly smokes	Smokes weekly or more often	Has ever vaped	Vapes regularly	Vapes weekly or more often
		N=7178 % [95% CI]	N=7169 % [95% CI]	N=7169 % [95% CI]	N=7179 % [95% CI]	N=7161 % [95% CI]	N=7161 % [95% CI]
	<b>Total</b>	14.8 [12.7-17.0]	3.8 [2.9-4.7]	2.4 [1.7-3.1]	37.9 [35.0-40.8]	9.8 [8.0-11.5]	5.8 [4.4-7.1]
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	14.5 [11.5-17.5]	3.8 [2.6-5.0]	2.2 [1.3-3.1]	34.9 [31.4-38.5]	8.3 [6.2-10.5]	4.5 [3.1-5.9]
	<b>Male</b>	15.1 [12.7-17.6]	3.7 [2.6-4.9]	2.5 [1.5-3.5]	41.8 [38.6-45.1]	11.4 [9.8-13.1]	7.2 [5.7-8.8]
<b>School Decile</b>	<b>Decile 1–3</b>	24.4 [21.1-27.8]	7.3 [5.8-8.9]	5.3 [3.6-7.1]	44.8 [39.6-50.0]	7.0 [4.3-9.6]	2.9 [1.3-4.4]
	<b>Decile 4–7</b>	15.2 [13.0-17.4]	3.9 [2.9-4.8]	2.5 [1.8-3.1]	40.3 [37.0-43.6]	10.3 [7.3-13.3]	6.3 [4.6-7.9]
	<b>Decile 8–10</b>	10.2 [8.1-12.3]	2.2 [1.3-3.0]	1.0 [0.4-1.6]	32.2 [27.8-36.6]	10.4 [7.7-13.1]	6.5 [3.9-9.0]
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Māori</b>	25.9 [22.3-29.4]	7.4 [5.6-9.1]	4.9 [3.4-6.5]	55.8 [52.1-59.6]	13.1 [10.3-15.8]	7.8 [6.0-9.5]
	<b>Pacific</b>	21.5 [17.7-25.4]	6.5 [4.7-8.4]	5.0 [3.3-6.6]	45.0 [41.7-48.2]	8.0 [5.8-10.1]	3.0 [1.6-4.4]
	<b>Asian</b>	7.1 [5.1-9.0]	1.4 [0.7-2.1]	0.8 [0.4-1.2]	20.3 [16.8-23.8]	4.2 [3.1-5.4]	2.8 [1.9-3.6]
	<b>Other</b>	14.6 [10.0-19.3]	2.4 [0.6-4.1]	1.5 [0.2-2.7]	30.7 [24.2-37.3]	8.6 [5.0-12.1]	5.6 [2.4-8.8]
	<b>European</b>	13.4 [11.9-14.8]	3.3 [2.5-4.0]	1.8 [1.2-2.4]	40.3 [37.5-43.0]	12.4 [10.0-14.9]	7.6 [5.6-9.5]

Ethnicity prioritised according to NZ Ministry of Health protocol, 2017.<sup>6</sup> 'Regular' smoking/vaping means monthly or more often. N= is the total number of students who responded to each question. '95% CI' refers to 95% confidence interval.

## What do the findings mean?

- Youth19 findings show that many adolescents who vape are non-smokers, and patterns of regular vaping are different from smoking (e.g. vaping is more common in males and mid/high decile schools).
- Trend data collected by ASH NZ show that vaping in Year 10 students (14–15 years) has increased rapidly since 2015, while the decline in smoking in this age group has stalled or even begun to reverse, particularly among Māori and students in low decile schools.<sup>7</sup>
- These findings call into question the idea that vaping is displacing smoking. The alternative possibility, that vaping is fuelling smoking, must be taken seriously by communities and policymakers.
- Measures to protect youth, particularly Māori and disadvantaged youth, from both vaping and smoking harm are needed, e.g. limitations on where vapes and tobacco can be sold and a ban on vaping advertising and sponsorship, including online and social media promotion.

Find out more at [www.youth19.ac.nz](http://www.youth19.ac.nz) Contact us: [youth19@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:youth19@auckland.ac.nz)

### References

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