



**GENERATION
VAPE**

A research collaboration project



In partnership with

**Cancer
Council**

Vaping and young people: Assessing early impacts of Australia's comprehensive approach to vaping product control

July 2025

Generation Vape acknowledges the following partners

Research partners

The Daffodil Centre



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Federal partner



Australian Government

**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

State partner



Proudly funded by the NSW
Government in association with
NSW Health and Cancer Institute
NSW

Abstract

This short report presents findings from Wave 8 of the Generation Vape research project, which includes monitoring vaping and tobacco product use among Australian young people aged 14–17. Conducted in April 2025, Wave 8 follows the implementation of Australia's landmark July 2024 vaping reforms, which restrict all vape sales, regardless of nicotine content, to pharmacies and bans vaping product advertising. These reforms aim to curb youth access and use and to reduce the social acceptability of vaping.

Wave 8 data reveal promising trends. The proportion of young people who have never vaped remains high at 85.4%, and smoking rates are at their lowest across all survey waves, with 94.0% reporting never having smoked. Curiosity about vaping continues to decline, with less than a third of young people who have never vaped expressing interest in vaping. Social norms are also shifting, with fewer young people reporting that their friends vape. Qualitative interviews reinforce this shift, with participants expressing embarrassment, shame, and a desire to dissociate from the label “vaper.”

Access to vaping products has also declined. Just over a quarter in Wave 8, 26.5%, of young people who have ever vaped reported purchasing their own device, down from 34.4% in Wave 6. Exposure to vape advertising on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat has significantly decreased. However, tobaccoconists and vape shops remain key sources of vape sales, highlighting the need for targeted enforcement.

Nicotine pouch use remains low (1.9%), and menthol cigarette use is common among young people who smoke, underscoring the importance of the 1 July 2025 menthol ban.

Australia's comprehensive and unique pharmacy-only approach to vaping regulation is showing early signs of success in reducing youth vaping rates, access, and social normalisation. Continued enforcement, education and mass media efforts, and support for cessation are essential to sustain these gains and prevent reversal under tobacco industry pressure.

Introduction

Australian vape laws, implemented in July 2024, that aim to limit the sale of all vapes (also known as e-cigarettes) to pharmacies only, regardless of whether they contain nicotine or not, have now been in place for a year.¹ The adoption of the pharmacy-only framework was a culmination of a series of national reforms that included ending the importation of all non-prescription vapes and a total ban on all disposable vapes. The vapes sold in pharmacies must adhere to strict standards around packaging, nicotine concentration, device specifications, and can only include tobacco and mint/menthol flavours.²

The July 2024 reforms also included a ban on the advertising and promotion of vaping products. Protecting young people was the primary intent of the changes to vaping product laws. The policy reforms were driven by evidence that young people could easily access vapes, vape use rates among young never smokers had rapidly increased, and that vaping promotions were exposing young people to misinformation about vaping product safety.³ Limiting vape access to only pharmacies provides a highly controlled channel to ensure that Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration “notified vaping goods” are used to help people quit smoking or to manage nicotine dependence.⁴

Australia is unique in the world in adopting a pharmacy-only access model, with other countries either banning vapes outright, or allowing their sale as a consumer good with a broad mix of restrictions on device type, flavours, nicotine concentration, taxation, and access.⁵ Assessing the impact of the Australian vaping laws is essential. While the laws are still fresh, monitoring for early signs of changes to attitudes and behaviours will help us to understand if the approach is having the intended effect on young people. The aim of this short report is to assess young Australian's vaping and other tobacco/nicotine product use, access, exposure, and perceptions.

Methods

The Generation Vape research project includes online cross-sectional surveys at 6-monthly intervals and annual in-depth interviews examining vaping attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and behaviours. From February 2022 (Wave 2), the research project has included a national sample of young people aged 14–17 (Wave 1 was NSW participants only).⁶ This short report presents survey findings from Wave 4 (February 2023)

through Wave 8 (April 2025). In response to tobacco industry product development and new tobacco control laws, survey questions were also added in Wave 7 to capture nicotine pouch product use and menthol cigarette use. All data for Wave 7 and 8 were collected following the 1 October 2024 national legislation changes requiring all vapes to be sold behind the counter from pharmacies.

For the purposes of these analyses, young people who ‘never vaped’ and ‘never smoked’ include those who have only ever had a few puffs of a vape or a cigarette respectively.

Ethical approval for the study was received by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Sydney (reference number 2021/442). Informed consent was provided by all participants to take part in the research after receiving a detailed Participant Information Statement.

Results

Product Use

The proportion of young people who report having never vaped in Wave 8 was 85.4%, consistent with the results reported in Wave 6, the most recent wave before the law changes. Just over 4% of young people report vaping on 100+ occasions (Table 1).

A similarly encouraging trend is also observed in smoking rates, with the proportion of young people who report having never smoked at its highest level across all waves at 94.0% for Wave 8. Less than 1% of participants report having smoked more than 100+ cigarettes in Wave 8 (Table 2).

Of young people who smoked a cigarette in the last 30 days, over 30% said that the cigarette had contained menthol, this includes products with a crushable menthol ball in the filter (Table 3).

In Wave 7 and 8, participants were asked if they had ever used a nicotine pouch product. Use remains low with just under 2% of young people in Wave 8 saying they have ever used a nicotine pouch (Table 4).

Table 1: Have you ever used a vape?

% of all young people reporting ever having used a vape^						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=3000	n=3000	n=3001	n=2990	n=3002	p-value*
Never vaped^^	82.5%	84.4%	84.3%	85.7%	85.4%	0.100
<10 occasions^^^	5.8%	5.2%	5.0%	4.9%	5.4%	
10 to <100 occasions	5.9%	4.8%	5.0%	5.3%	5.0%	
100+ occasions	5.8%	5.5%	5.7%	4.1%	4.3%	

For all Tables:

^ Percentages are weighted for gender, state, remoteness and age of the 2021 Australian population

* p is test of differences between waves 6 with waves 7 and 8 (or waves 7 with wave 8 when there is no wave 6 data), adjusted for sex, age, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, remoteness, SES, and language spoken at home.

**Asked only of those who smoked in the last 30 days

^^includes those who only had a few puffs

^^^does not include those who only had a few puffs

Table 2: Have you ever smoked cigarettes or other tobacco products?

% of all young people reporting ever smoked^						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=3000	n=3000	n=3001	n=2990	n=3003	p-value*
Never smoked^^	92.2%	93.3%	93.7%	93.9%	94.0%	0.905
<10 cigarettes^^^	3.5%	3.0%	3.0%	2.6%	2.8%	
10 to <100 cigarettes	3.1%	2.8%	2.1%	2.5%	2.5%	
100+ cigarettes	1.2%	0.9%	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	

Table 3: Was the last cigarette you smoked a cigarette flavoured with menthol or mint (including menthol filters, menthol capsules/crush balls)?

% of all young people reporting smoking a menthol cigarette**				
	Wave 4-6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	Q not asked	n=158	n=142	p-value*
Yes	-	22.4%	30.9%	0.158
No	-	67.7%	55.2%	
I don't know/unsure	-	10.0%	13.9%	

Table 4: Have you ever used an oral nicotine pouch, such as Zyn or Velo?

% of all young people reporting ever having ever used an oral nicotine pouch				
	Wave 4-6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	Q not asked	n=2990	n=3002	p-value*
Yes	-	2.1%	1.9%	0.309
No	-	96.5%	96.1%	
I don't know/unsure	-	5.3%	5.0%	

Product access and promotion

Fewer young people are reporting purchasing vapes themselves, with 26.6% who have ever vaped saying they bought their own device in Wave 8, down from 34.4% in Wave 7 (Table 5). However, tobacconists/vape shops remain, and are increasingly, key retailers willing to sell young people vapes, with 34.8% of those who purchased their own vape saying they bought their vape from a tobacconist/vape shop in Wave 8. Purchasing through social media channels remains low and has declined. For example, less than 4% of participants said they had bought a vape through Snapchat (Table 6).

In line with decreasing purchasing of vapes through online channels, significantly fewer participants reported being exposed to a vape advertisement on popular social media platforms in Wave 7 or 8, compared to Wave 6. Less than 9% of all Wave 8 participants said they had seen an advertisement for vapes on TikTok, compared to more than double that in Wave 6 (18.9%).

Table 5: Did you buy the vape yourself?

% of all young people reporting purchasing their own vape						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=538	n=499	n=500	n=439	n=453	p-value
Yes	35.5%	36.6%	34.4%	26.6%	26.5%	0.059
No	64.5%	63.4%	65.6%	73.2%	73.5%	

Table 6: Where did you buy the vape from?

% of young people reporting purchasing their own vape from each outlet						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=193	n=182	n=170	n=117	n=120	p-value
At a tobacconist / vape shop	23.1%	23.7%	26.2%	26.8%	34.8%	<0.001
Online vape store	6.8%	6.0%	5.3%	5.3%	7.4%	
At a petrol station	3.4%	6.0%	5.1%	3.9%	2.3%	
At a convenience store	9.9%	12.1%	7.3%	13.3%	7.8%	
Through Snapchat	9.7%	9.1%	9.0%	4.4%	3.6%	
Through Instagram	0.4%	0.8%	1.2%	1.1%	0.0%	
Through Facebook	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%	3.8%	0.9%	
From a friend	34.3%	28.4%	31.7%	26.5%	27.2%	
From someone selling them (not a friend)	9.3%	11.2%	11.6%	9.9%	14.0%	
Other	2.0%	1.5%	1.3%	1.0%	0.0%	

Table 7: Please indicate where you have seen or heard promotions for vapes

% of all young people reporting exposure to an advertisement for vapes						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=3000	n=3000	n=3001	n=2990	n=3002	p-value
TikTok	19.0%	17.9%	18.9%	10.3%	8.7%	<0.001
Instagram	12.8%	12.1%	12.1%	6.4%	5.4%	<0.001
Snapchat	14.5%	12.9%	12.5%	5.5%	4.9%	<0.001
Facebook	6.8%	6.0%	6.7%	3.6%	2.4%	<0.001

Social norms

More young people (25.0%) are reporting that none of their friends vape and fewer are reporting that some of their friends vape (Table 8). Fewer young people also reported that vaping is common amongst people their own age. Just over half said vaping is common in Wave 8 (54%), compared to 63% in Wave 6 (Table 9).

About half of those who have never vaped (not even a puff) are not at all curious about vaping, with less than 2% being very curious about vaping (Table 10).

The recalled reasons participants gave for first trying a vape also show signs of the decreasing normalisation of vaping (Table 11). Significantly fewer young people reported curiosity as the reason for trying a vape, with 45% in Wave 8, compared to 67% in Wave 6. Similarly, fewer participants initially tried vaping because of perceptions that it would be healthier than cigarettes and the number of participants who tried vapes because they would smell/taste better than cigarettes has more than halved from 31.8% in Wave 6 to 14.4% in Wave 8. All Australian states now include vaping in smokefree laws, and the increasing normalisation of

not vaping in smokefree areas is reflected in only 5.6% of participants in Wave 8 now saying they vape to get around smokefree laws compared to 18.0% in Wave 6.

Table 8: Do your friends vape?

% of all young people reporting their friends vape						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=3000	n=3000	n=2168	n=2255	n=2237	p-value
Most of my friends vape	12.6%	10.1%	8.4%	8.1%	7.6%	0.548
Some of my friends vape	38.0%	37.5%	34.1%	32.7%	31.9%	0.012
I know people who vape but they are not my friends	34.6%	38.9%	41.2%	42.5%	41.0%	0.292
None of my friends vape	20.4%	19.5%	22.3%	22.6%	25.0%	0.005

Table 9: How common is it for people your age to vape?

% of all young people who think its common to vape (vs not common and neutral)						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=3000	n=3000	n=3001	n=2990	n=3002	p-value
Yes	67%	63%	63%	57%	54%	0.059

Table 10: Have you ever been curious about vaping?

% of all young people reporting being curious about vaping ^{^^}						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=2081	n=2124	n=2168	n=2255	n=2237	p-value
Very curious	2.5%	2.3%	1.8%	1.9%	1.7%	0.570
A little curious	32.1%	31.5%	29.0%	29.0%	28.9%	
Have not thought about it, unsure	17.8%	18.7%	19.4%	20.6%	18.8%	
Not at all curious	47.6%	47.5%	49.8%	48.5%	50.6%	

Table 11: What are the main reasons you first started vaping?

% of young people reporting ever smoking and ever vaping ^{^^}						
	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	
Number of respondents (n)	n=198	n=181	n=173	n=150	n=158	p-value
Not as bad for your health as cigarettes	24.3%	12.1%	20.3%	7.0%	8.3%	0.003
Cheaper than cigarettes	18.3%	19.8%	21.1%	10.7%	13.7%	0.043
Believed they would taste/smell better than cigarettes	37.8%	25.3%	31.8%	19.3%	14.4%	<0.001
So I could smoke in places where smoking cigarettes is not allowed	12.8%	9.8%	18.0%	6.8%	5.6%	<0.001
I just tried them because I was curious	70.0%	66.5%	66.6%	55.3%	45.0%	0.002

The interviews with young people provide context for these changing social norms. The term “vaper” has highly negative connotations for young people, and reflects vape use changing from normal and acceptable, to being increasingly stigmatised. When asked how they feel about vaping or if they consider themselves a “vaper” several participants preferred to dissociate from the term and did not want to be defined by it. They also articulated a sense of shame and embarrassment about their vape use. Reasons for the changing perceptions include being embarrassed about continuing to vape despite it being unhealthy, shame around needing to vape and being addicted to vaping, and the loss of the fun and excitement they experienced when they first started vaping.

Judgement from others:

“Bad. Like it’s a negative thing. Cos it’s not good to do it. It’s frowned upon.”

(15-year-old, Male, Regular Vape user)

“It’s not a great um label to be attached with. Um just because yeah scared of judgement of other people. I’d say yeah that’s the main thing.”

(16-year-old, Male, Occasional vape user)

Embarrassing due to the known health effects:

“It’s lowkey like embarrassing, I guess... Like I have mates that do it, and then some mates that don’t, and they’re just like ‘You’re damaging like your lungs’, like, ‘What’s the point of like vaping and doing all that?’”

(15-year-old, Female, Former vape user)

“Uh like yeah, well embarrassing like I’m kind of embarrassed to like do it because like I’m like older now. It’s like what I used to do, I still do it now - because obviously I know all like the risks of it and how bad it is for me. But I still do it so it kind of is like a bit stupid for doing it but yeah like kind of like that.”

(15-year-old, Female, Regular vape user)

Shift from previous positive experiences vaping:

“I don’t know. It [being called a vaper] just makes me feel a bit like - it makes me feel like just a bit pathetic a little bit, like cause vaping doesn’t really bring that much like benefit.”

(17-year-old, Male, Regular vape user)

“like before it used to be more like cooler, like... I don’t know. I guess, like I don’t know, more fun and exciting but now it’s just like kind of like gross now.”

(17-year-old, Male, Regular vape user)

“This sounds like weird for me to say, but I feel like it’s kind of good that like I’m embarrassed by it...when I first started...where like “Oh, everyone’s doing it”, and now it’s like a lot of people think that it’s like cringe and it’s...just not cool to do that. So, I feel like it’s kind of like I don’t like to admit that I do I vape, cause it’s like it’s got this like kind of stigma around it now, yeah.”

(17-year-old, Female, Regular vape user)

Addiction leading to shame:

"Oh I hate it [being called a vaper]. Like I hate that I do it. It's not a thing I like anymore but it's only cos I can't stop either. I think it's just embarrassing having to rely on something that's made with batteries and stuff. I don't find it as cool as I did in year 7."

(14-year-old, Female, Regular vape user)

"it's just that one point where it was getting bad, cause I think we saw someone else doing it, and we were like 'oh my gosh, have a look at that guy, he's he's so addicted', and then we reflected like 'wait, that's us', and we were like 'oh shit'."

(17-year-old, Male, Occasional vape user)

Discussion and policy implications

Vaping rates are currently no longer increasing amongst Australian young people, suggesting peak vaping rates for Australian young people may be behind us. For comparison, in Wave 4 (April 2023) of the survey, 17.5% of young people said they had ever vaped compared to 14.6% in Wave 8. Fewer young people are also purchasing a vape themselves, an indicator that access laws may be beginning to have a measurable impact. Given their role as major suppliers of vapes to young people, tobacconists/vape shops should be subject to intensified enforcement and prosecution efforts, alongside stringent border controls to curb product supply channels.

In addition to these promising behavioural indicators, the social acceptability of vaping has changed markedly amongst Australian young people, with vaping no longer universally viewed as something "everyone" does, or as an aspirational accessory/behaviour. Curiosity around vapes lessening is another promising sign of less product misinformation reaching young people. Significant falls in participants saying they vape to skirt smokefree laws is another encouraging signal of decreased social acceptability. However, these attitudinal shifts could easily change if the combination of supply-side policies, coordinated enforcement efforts, effective mass media campaigns, quit supports, and health education interventions are not continued.

The tobacco industry continues to lobby for vaping products to be sold as easily purchasable consumer goods.⁷ In other comparable countries, like New Zealand, England, and Canada where vapes are permitted to be sold through general retailers, vape use amongst young people is higher than in Australia.⁸ The prohibition of vape advertising, including online, appears to be effectively reducing young people's exposure to vape advertising. Vape promotions are a known driver of the normalisation of vaping and a source of misinformation of health impacts. Proactive monitoring and enforcement of vaping promotion remains essential.

While nicotine pouch use remains very low amongst Australian young people, it is vital to enforce and strengthen the current regulatory approach that prohibits nicotine pouches to be sold in Australia. Compared to the US for example, where pouches are readily available as a consumer good, nicotine pouch use amongst young people has markedly increased.⁹ The 1 July 2025 tobacco product menthol ban, which includes prohibiting flavour beads in the filter, will also likely positively impact on teens as a significant proportion of those who have smoked report using menthol cigarettes.¹⁰

Australia's reinvigorated and comprehensive approach to both vaping and tobacco product control appears to be showing some early positive signs, but sustained and effective enforcement will be key to achieving concrete, longer-term public health gains.

Citation

Freeman, B, Egger, S, Rose, S, Brooks, A, Madigan, C & Dessaix, A. Vaping and young people: Assessing early impacts of Australia's comprehensive approach to vaping product control. *Generation Vape*. Cancer Prevention and Advocacy Division, Cancer Council New South Wales, July 2025.

Acknowledgements

This research was conducted by the Generation Vape research team from Cancer Council NSW, the Daffodil Centre and the University of Sydney and was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the NSW Ministry of Health and Cancer Institute of NSW.

The authors of this report would like to acknowledge and thank all contributors to this project including the Generation Vape Research Project Advisory Committee (RPAC), qualitative research partner MMRResearch, and quantitative research partner ORIMA Research.

Contact us

Cancer Council NSW, Cancer Prevention and Advocacy Division, Tobacco Control Unit

Email: generationvape@nswcc.org.au

Website: <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/cancer-prevention/smoking/generation-vape/>

References

-
- ¹ Australian Government, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2025) Vaping and e-cigarette laws and reforms. <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/smoking-vaping-and-tobacco/about-vaping#vaping-and-ecigarette-laws-and-reforms>
 - ² Grace, C , Greenhalgh, EM , Smith, L and Scollo, MM. 18.13 Regulation of vapes in Australia . In Greenhalgh, EM , Scollo, MM and Winstanley, MH [editors]. Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues. Melbourne : Cancer Council Victoria; 2025. Available from <https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-e-cigarettes/18-13-regulation-of-vapes-in-australia>
 - ³ Watts C, Egger S, Dessaix A, Brooks A, Jenkinson E, Grogan P, Freeman B. Vaping product access and use among 14–17-year-olds in New South Wales: a cross-sectional study. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health. 2022 Dec 1;46(6):814-20.
 - ⁴ Australian Government, Therapeutic Goods Administration. (2025) Notified vape list: goods for smoking cessation or nicotine dependence. <https://www.tga.gov.au/products/unapproved-therapeutic-goods/vaping-hub/notified-vape-list-goods-smoking-cessation-or-nicotine-dependence>
 - ⁵ Reiter A, Hébert-Losier A, Mylocopos G, Filion KB, Windle SB, O'Loughlin JL, Grad R, Eisenberg MJ. Regulatory strategies for preventing and reducing nicotine vaping among youth: a systematic review. American Journal of Preventive Medicine. 2024 Jan 1;66(1):169-81.
 - ⁶ Cancer Council NSW. Generation Vape Research Project. July 2025. <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/cancer-prevention/smoking/generation-vape/>
 - ⁷ Willis, J. Tobacco chief: Australia's black market ranks top 3 in world. The Daily Telegraph. 26 June 2025.
 - ⁸ Greenhalgh, EM , Jenkins, S , EM, Bain and Scollo, MM. 18.3 Prevalence of e-cigarette use. 18.3.2.1 International prevalence of e-cigarette use among young people. In Greenhalgh, EM , Scollo, MM and Winstanley, MH [editors]. Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues. Melbourne : Cancer Council Victoria; 2025. Available from <https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-e-cigarettes/18-3-prevalence-of-e-cigarette-use>
 - ⁹ Han D, Harlow AF, Miech RA, et al. Nicotine Pouch and E-Cigarette Use and Co-Use Among US Youths in 2023 and 2024. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2025;8(4):e256739. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.6739
 - ¹⁰ Freeman, B. Menthol cigarettes will be banned from April 1. Here's why – and what else is changing. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/menthol-cigarettes-will-be-banned-from-april-1-heres-why-and-what-else-is-changing-251920> (01 April 2025)