

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 6 May 2024

New research reveals young adults agree that vapes must not be available in retail outlets

The latest national data from the Generation Vape study led by Cancer Council reveals more than eight in 10 (86%) young Australians aged 18–24 support or are unconcerned by removing vaping products from retail outlets. This study comes ahead of the Senate vote on the vaping bill that will stop retailers from advertising, supplying or commercially possessing non-therapeutic vapes.

According to latest AIHW data, current and ever vaping is highest among 18–24-year-olds, most of whom have never smoked. However, 18–24-year-olds who vape are supportive of no longer allowing retailers to sell vapes and nearly 1 in 2 have tried to quit vaping before.

Despite this, as of February this year, the Generation Vape study found that 79% of young adults who vape say that it's 'easy' to access vaping products.

Alecia Brooks, Chair of Cancer Council's Tobacco Issues Committee and co-author of the study, explains that the proposed vaping bill will support the existing import ban and prevent vapes being sold in communities without a prescription.

"It's unsurprising that young Australians say vapes are easy to access when in every community, some retailers are blatantly selling vaping products to young people. However, it's encouraging that young people themselves recognise that this retail environment is putting them at risk, and want it stopped."

The study revealed eight in 10 (80%) of young Australians who regularly use vapes, and bought their own vape, bought it from bricks and mortar shops.

"With more than half of these young people having bought vapes from tobacconists, a 15 per cent increase in just two years, it's clear that access to vapes is easy and growing. Just three per cent are now buying them through social media platforms, because it's simply much easier to walk into a store and purchase one, no questions asked. By removing supply from retailers, young Australians and communities will be safer for it."

The study also found that in two years, the number of young Australians aged 18-24 using a vape with over 3000 puffs has doubled (18.5% to 36.5%).

Associate Professor Becky Freeman, study chief investigator from the University of Sydney, is concerned that young Australians are readily accessing vaping devices with high amounts of nicotine. The types of devices young people are using has changed over the study period.

"More than a third of young Australians are now using a vape with over 3000 puffs, which is more than double from just two years ago. The vape industry is targeting these high concentration nicotine vaping products at young people and setting them up for addiction."

“Over half of the young people who vape in our study plan to quit within the next 6 months, we need to ensure our policies fully support these quit attempts. Having vapes so easily available undermines young people taking steps to quit.

“Until the Federal Parliament votes in favour of this vaping bill, young people will continue to easily access and use vapes, putting their health at risk.”

Brooks says, “the vaping bill will protect young Australians from the harms of vaping products and limit access to only people with a valid prescription with the personalised support of a doctor to help them quit.”

Cancer Council encourages all MPs and Senators to act on the concerns of young Australians, parents, teachers and the wider community, by voting in support of the vaping bill to reduce the devastating harm that e-cigarettes are having on our communities and young Australians.

-ENDS-

For support to stop vaping or smoking for yourself or a loved one, speak to your healthcare professional or contact Quitline. Call 13 7848 or visit quit.org.au.

Notes to the Editor:

Generation Vape is the leading Australian study to survey teenagers about their experiences and perceptions of vapes. It is led by Cancer Council NSW in partnership with the Daffodil Centre and the University of Sydney, and funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Minderoo Foundation, the NSW Ministry of Health and Cancer Institute NSW.

The research project involves multiple waves of data collection, which includes online cross-sectional surveys completed at each wave (at approximately 6 monthly intervals). As Wave 1 focused on a NSW only sample, this media release presents the findings from the national sample, collected from Waves 2 (between February and April 2022) to Wave 6 (February and April 2024).

Contact details

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About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia’s leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians.

Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

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