

# Tobacco Control News

Evidence in Brief – February 2024

## Findings from the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey



This month I thought you would be interested to hear about the latest findings from the [Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey \(ASSAD\)](#), published in late December 2023. The survey includes questions about tobacco and e-cigarette use (vaping) as well as alcohol and other drugs. ASSAD is a national survey which is usually completed every three years by Australian secondary school students aged 12-17 years. The survey did not take place in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, so this is the first report on student smoking and vaping since 2017. Between March 2022 and July 2023 over 10,000 students from 83 schools completed the survey. We do not yet have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific results, however I thought you would be interested to hear about the broader survey findings since they are the most recent stats we have on youth smoking and vaping behaviours.

### Key Messages:

- 1 Smoking Decline:** Smoking rates among students reached their lowest point ever, reflecting successful preventative health efforts. In 2022/23 one in seven students (14%) reported ever smoking, compared to around one in five in 2014 (19%) and 2017 (18%).
- 2 Vaping Increase:** Almost one-third (30%) of students tried vaping in the last two years – more than double the proportion who had tried vaping in 2014 (13%) and 2017 (14%).
- 3 Dual Usage:** More than one in nine students (12%) reported smoking and vaping. This is also higher than in 2014 (8%) and 2017 (8%).
- 4 Concern for Health:** The rise in vaping among students raises concerns about potential health implications and the need for continued monitoring and education regarding nicotine consumption among youth.

### Smoking Prevalence 2022/23

In 2022/23 the study found that:

- 14% of Australian secondary school students had ever smoked even part of a tobacco cigarette;
- Less than one in 10 students (8%) had smoked in the past year;
- Around 3% had smoked in the past month;
- 2% had smoked in the past week.

Older students (16-17 years old) were more likely than younger students (12-15 years old) to have ever smoked or to have smoked recently (in the past year, past month, or past week). There were no significant differences in smoking behaviours between male and female students.

### Changes in Smoking Behaviours over time

Smoking behaviours among Australian secondary school students have continued to decline in recent years. This includes:

- Ever-smoking – down to 14% in 2022/23 from 19% 2014 and 18% in 2017
- Smoking in the past year – down to 8% in 2022/23 from 14% in 2014 and 13% in 2017
- Smoking in the past month – down to 3% in 2022/23 from 8% in 2014 and 2017
- Smoking in the past week – down to 2% in 2022/23 from 5% in 2014 and 2017.

This shows a positive shift away from smoking behaviours among Australian youth.

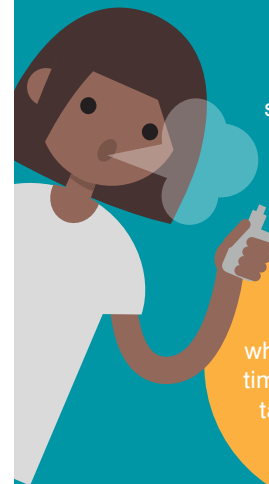
Smoking behaviours among Australian secondary school students have continued to decline in recent years

14% of Australian secondary school students had ever smoked even part of a tobacco cigarette



Almost 30% of Australian secondary school students had ever vaped

Young people who vape are three times more likely to take up smoking



## Vaping Prevalence 2022/23

In 2022/23 the study found that:

- Almost 30% of Australian secondary school students had ever vaped;
- 16% had vaped in the past month;
- 5% had vaped regularly (20 or more days) in the past month;
- 3% had vaped daily in the past month.

Gender differences in vaping behaviours show more female than male students vape:

- More female students (35%) than male students (25%) reported ever vaping;
- Around one in five female students (19%) reported vaping in the past month compared to one in eight male students (13%);
- More female students vaped regularly (6%) and daily (4%) compared to male students (4% vaped regularly and 2% vaped daily).

Vaping behaviours also differed by age, with older students (16-17 years old) more likely to vape than younger students (12-15 years old):

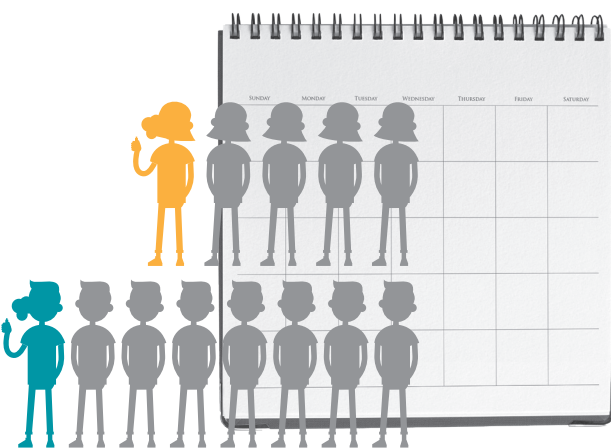
- Just under half (43%) of older students reported ever vaping, compared to just under a quarter (24%) of younger students;
- More older students had vaped in the past month (22%) compared to younger students (13%);
- Older students were also more likely to vape regularly (8%) and daily (6%) than younger students (3% vaped regularly and 2% vaped daily).

These findings highlight the importance of factors such as age and gender when understanding vaping behaviours among youth.

### Changes in Vaping Behaviours over time

Vaping behaviours among Australian secondary school students have increased in recent years. This includes:

- Ever-vaping – increased to 30% in 2022/23 from 13% in 2014 and 14% in 2017;
- Vaping in the past month – increased to 16% in 2022/23 from 3% in 2014 and 4% in 2017;
- Dual use ever (smoking and vaping) – increased to 12% in 2022/23 from 8% in both 2014 and 2017;
- Monthly dual use (smoking and vaping) was also higher in 2022/23 (3%) compared to 2014 (1%) and 2017 (2%).



1 in 5 females reported vaping in the past month compared to in 1 in 8 males

## What do students vape, and where do they get their vapes from?

The ASSAD data shows a similar trend to previous studies showing most young people use disposable vapes (80%), with fruit flavours (74%) and sweet/dessert flavours (3%) preferred. Most students don't purchase their vapes – they get them from friends (60%). Students who buy vapes reported purchasing them from a vape shop (29%), through the internet (20%), at a tobacconist/tobacco shop (12%) or from a dealer (10%).

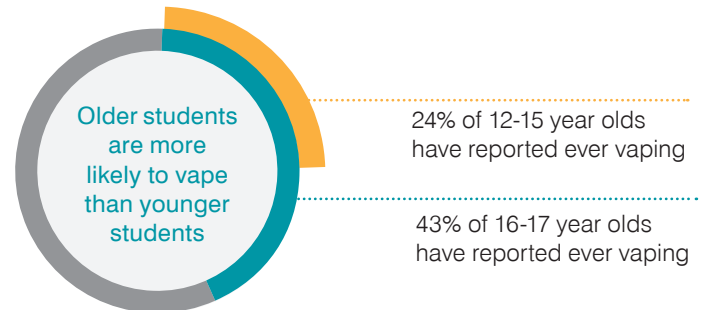
### Take Home Message for TIS Teams:

The good news from this latest data is the positive downward trend in tobacco use by young people. However, the significant increase in vaping is a concern because we know that:

- the earlier a person starts experimenting with products containing nicotine, the more likely they are to become regular long-term users;
- young people who vape are three times more likely to take up smoking.

It is never too early to educate youth about the benefits of not smoking or vaping. The TIS program must continue to build upon existing effective [health promotion activities for youth](#) to prevent smoking and vaping uptake and encourage those who have started to vape regularly to quit.

For more information about the ASSAD including data collection methods and study results you can check out the December 2023 report [here](#).



Most young people use disposable vapes  
74% preferred fruit flavours