

Tobacco Control News

Evidence in Brief February 2025

Preventing the use of e-Cigarettes by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth



Hello TIS teams!

Just a brief update from me this month. I really had to share an important new paper from the [Next Generation Youth Wellbeing Study](#), led by Prof Sanda Eades AO. You might recall that Prof Eades was the inaugural winner of the [Tom Calma Award](#) at the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference held in the Gold Coast last October. This award recognised the impact of her work in tobacco control, which has transformed public health in Australia.

The Next Generation Youth Wellbeing study follows a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 10 to 24 years of age from urban, rural and remote communities in Central Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia, tracking their health and wellbeing – including tobacco use – through interviews, focus groups and surveys.

The most recent paper from this study describes several protective factors associated with not vaping among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth which can inform the activities of community programs like TIS. You can read my in-depth review of this paper below.

We are also starting to see reports of falling vaping rates in young Australians. This decline is thought to be related to the [anti-vaping laws](#) introduced by the Australian Government last year.

[Data](#) from the SA Population Health Survey shows that vaping rates among 15 to 29-year-old South Australians have dropped by a third from 15% in 2023 to 10% in 2024. This means that 90% of young South Australians do not vape. During the same period suspensions for vaping in South Australian schools more than halved. You can read more of the report from the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) [here](#).

A recent report from the [Generation Vape](#) study suggests this is a national trend. According to survey results from November 2024, 85% of young people aged 14 to 17 years had never vaped. This is the largest proportion of 'never-vapers' since the study began in 2022. The survey also found that:

- almost 94% of young people had never smoked
- most young people (82%) recognise vaping is unsafe
- the majority of young people (87%) agree that vaping can be addictive.
- You can read the full Generation Vape report [here](#).

Whilst it is good to know that Australia's strict e-cigarette legislation is having a positive impact on young people's vaping, there is still work to be done. Laws alone aren't enough. They can encourage positive behaviour change like quitting vaping but work best when supported by other activities. This means we need to keep up our efforts with education programs and information campaigns that promote awareness of the benefits of smoke and vape free living.

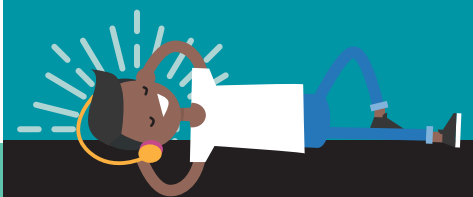


75%
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16-24 years have never vaped

82%
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16-24 lived in smoke-free homes.

Programs for young people need to focus on the broader issues of adolescent health and wellbeing

Almost 94%
of young people have never smoked



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In depth Paper Review

Heris, C. L., Graham, S., Williams, R., Banks, E., Yashadhana, A., Davis, K., ... & Eades, S. (2025). Protective Factors Against e-Cigarette Use Among First Nations People Aged 16-24 in the Next Generation Youth Wellbeing Study. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 36(2), e951.



Self-reported survey data was collected from 419 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16 to 24 years during 2018-2020. The analysis explored the relationship between 'never vaping' and factors expected to protect youth from vaping. These factors were chosen based on evidence from the literature along with community consultations and covered:

- demographics (location, age, gender)
- socioeconomics (income, employment, education, housing)
- health (tobacco and other substance use, mental health)
- culture and identity
- systems of exclusion (bullying, racism, interaction with the justice system)

Take Home Message

Most young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16-24 years (75%) have never vaped. Factors that are likely to protect against vaping for this age group include better mental health, smokefree influences, no other substance use and fewer experiences of racism or justice system interactions. Comprehensive prevention programs focused on preventing nicotine addiction for 16-24-year-olds should include activities which promote these factors.

Key Findings

Most respondents (82%) lived in smoke-free homes. Young people living in Central Australia were more likely to have never vaped compared to those living in urban and regional areas of WA and NSW. This probably reflects the wider availability of vaping products in non-remote areas at the time of data collection. Never vaping was associated with:

- never having smoked or used cannabis
- having non-smoking friends
- being currently employed and/or expecting to be working full-time in the next 5 years
- higher income (among those currently working)
- good mental health
- no personal or indirect experiences of racism or discrimination
- no negative interactions with the police or criminal justice system

Study Limitations

As this study only looks at data from one point in time, it can only show associations between likely protective factors and never vaping. It cannot prove that these factors stop people from vaping. Future data collection for the Next Generation study will provide an opportunity to study changes over time to better understand if these factors really prevent vaping uptake.

The results might not apply to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because most participants were from Western Australia (56%), with a third from New South Wales (34%) and 10% from Central Australia.

Take Home Message for TIS Teams

Recent Australian Government law changes are starting to block the tobacco industry's attempts to attract young people to vaping. However, ongoing education is needed. Programs for young people need to be:

Comprehensive

This includes addressing other harmful behaviours like smoking along with vaping, raising awareness of the harms of vaping and the benefits of smoke and vape free living.



Holistic

Including a focus on the broader issues of adolescent health and wellbeing in activities.



Strengths-based

Focusing on youth strengths and capabilities rather than deficits, centring positive resources and values like connection to culture, community and family.

