

QoN 002-01 In your opinion of the data available, has there been a significant increase in the use of e-cigarettes by school children in the last years, especially among Maori youth?

First, it is important to clarify what is meant by 'use' of e-cigarettes: 'use' does not necessarily mean daily or even more frequent use. Much of the use by young people can be considered as 'experimentation'. Many surveys ask a question about 'any use in the past 30 days' and define that behaviour as 'e-cigarette use' when clearly a few puffs on a single or even a few occasions is far more likely to represent experimentation.

Second, if experimenting with vaping at 14-15 years of age leads to an increase in smoking at a later age, we should be able to observe this pattern in data from older NZ cohorts. However, this is not the case when viewing the New Zealand Health Survey data on school children aged 15-17 years old: Daily smoking *decreased* over time (5.8% in 2014/15 to 3.0% in 2018/19) while Daily e-cigarette use (indicating that the user may be dependent on nicotine/vaping) increased over time (0.1% in 2015/16 to 1.7% in 2018/19).

There is an increase in daily vaping, across all groups, and it is something to monitor closely, but the base level is very low. Data on 14 and 15 year olds is instructive. Among Year 10 students aged 14 and 15-years-old in 2018, 38% of students had tried vaping (ever vaper), up from 29% in 2016 and 20% in 2014. However, only 1.9% of students were daily vapers, compared to 0.7% in 2014 and 8% of students vaped at least monthly (current vapers), up from 3% in 2014.

Māori aged 14 and 15 years were two times more likely to be current vapers than non-Māori. At the same time, smoking in this group has not increased.

The full impact of the lack of regulatory controls on marketing and promotions in NZ over the past two years is yet to be seen in survey data. But given that there has been very little control and the vaping companies have had few restrictions, one might expect to see an increase in the next wave of survey data on NZ school children. Whether this will translate into increases in smoking among this group is unknown, but in my view is unlikely because of the limited extent of any 'gateway to smoking from vaping' effect, and the possibility there is also a 'gateway from smoking to vaping' at play.