

# “It Didn’t Fill the Void”: Reasons for E-cigarette and Tobacco Dual Use

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## Background

Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) likely pose fewer health risks than smoking, yet many smokers adopt ENDS without fully relinquishing smoking. Known as ‘dual use’,



this practice is widespread and compromises health benefits ENDS may offer.

To date, few studies have explored how dual use practices arise and manifest.

## Methods

We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 ENDS users who reported smoking tobacco and vaping at least once a month.

We explored participants’ smoking history, their recent and current smoking, trial, uptake and patterns of ENDS use, and future smoking and vaping intentions. We used a thematic analysis approach to interpret the transcripts.



## Results: Four themes explained dual use

### Inauthenticity of ENDS

ENDS alleviated nicotine cravings but did not replicate the experience of smoking.

*“It gives you something, but not like a cigarette... I know it’s not the **real deal**”*

Perceptions of the “real deal” varied; participants wanted to replicate the nicotine rush, hand-feel, throat-hit, taste, or emotional benefits they associated with smoking cigarettes.

*“Trying to make that transition between cigarettes to e-cigarettes, you don’t get that throat-hit. You feel like you’re not really having a **proper cigarette**”*

ENDS did not substitute for smoking in specific ritualised practices, such as drinking coffee or alcohol.

*“... a coffee and a cigarette, it’s kind of like a mixture of smooth and like rough... it’s just **not the same** satisfaction or the same feeling that you would get from a vape and a coffee”*



### Managing impositions

Some participants had no intention of quitting smoking but used vaping to offset inconveniences created by tobacco control measures.

*“**Money** was my motivation... There wasn’t the fact that I wanted to quit, it was I didn’t want to spend forty dollars every week on cigarettes”*

### Rationalising reduced smoking

Several had modified their goal from quitting smoking completely, and came to view reduced smoking as a successful outcome.

*“I’m sort of happy where it is at the moment because I was smoking like 40 a day so it’s a hell of a lot **cut down** from what I was using.”*

### Adaptive social identities

Dual use reflected attempts to comply with social group norms and manage stigma. Younger, social smokers enjoyed the camaraderie of vaping:

*“...vaping is better, I suppose... it’s kind of more **social**, you just hang around with your friends and vape inside”*

Yet vaping had a derogated status among social smokers’ wider networks where smoking was normative:

*“[Vaping] was almost **embarrassing**, for some reason... when I went out to town, I’d smoke a **cigarette.**”*



When around non-smokers, daily smokers vaped to avoid causing discomfort to others and to manage feelings of stigma. Yet in settings where smoking was normative, some smoked in preference to vaping.

## Conclusions

Dual use reflects both social and physical cues; it assisted participants to navigate smoking restrictions and allowed them to manage divergent norms. Policies that discourage smoking, particularly excise tax increases on smoked tobacco and smoke-free space restrictions, appear important in prompting ENDS use; future work could assess their role in reducing dual use.

### Funding and Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (grant 16/149). We thank the research participants who provided the data reported on in this manuscript. We thank Anna Latu, Kale Fruean, Stephanie Erick, Zoe Hawke and Professors Phil Gendall and Richard Edwards for their assistance with this research.



ASPIRE2025

