

# Self-reported impacts of nicotine vaping on wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand:

Qualitative analysis of open text responses from the ITC Youth & Young Adult Survey

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## Introduction

Better understanding of the positive and negative impacts of nicotine vaping on the wellbeing of young people is needed to inform policy and practice.

## Methods

We used inductive thematic analysis to explore open text responses to three survey questions about how vaping had affected respondents' i) physical health (n=526) ii) mental health (n=438) iii) other aspects of wellbeing (n=358). Open ended questions were asked of participants whose responses to corresponding closed questions indicated that vaping had affected their wellbeing.

Survey participants (N= 3414) aged 16-29 were recruited from commercial panels in Aotearoa New Zealand. Data was collected Aug-Sept 2023.

## Results

### Detrimental effects on respiratory health & fitness

(Pacific, F, age 19)

*My fitness has declined and I get tired quicker. Also affects my breathing pattern when I'm running*

### Vaping was both detrimental to relationships yet made socialising easier

*It has helped with my social well-being as people connect over vaping.*

(NZ Euro, M, age 22)

*I felt I had lost connection to my whānau in some way since they strongly disagree with people who vape/smoke.*

(Māori, trans/non-binary, age 27)

### A small number reported improved wellbeing after switching from smoking

*I have so much more energy and I feel amazing about not smelling like an ashtray all the time.*

(Māori, F, age 26)

*Vaping allowed me to smoke a lot less which affected my physical capabilities as well as made me feel better about myself in general*

(Asian, F, age 21)

### Negative financial impacts

*Spending too much money on vapes instead of things I actually need*

(Māori, M, age 21)

### Vaping reportedly both eased and caused anxiety and stress

(Māori, M, age 23)

*It's like a coping mechanism, it helps one release stress and anxiety with every puff.*

*Always on edge & anxiety has worsened. Initially started vaping because of anxiety but now I rely on it and it's a never ending cycle.*

(Pacific, F, age 25)

### Detrimental impact of addiction

*I feel trapped due to the fact I can't seem to quit vaping. I can feel people judging me because of my choices.*

(Māori, F, age 18)

## Conclusion

**Reported negative impacts far outnumbered positive;** but:

- impacts on mental and social wellbeing were mixed
- a few respondents reported benefits after switching from smoking to vaping.

**Impacts of vaping extend beyond biomedical consequences,** e.g.

- detrimental financial impact

**Our findings offer insights that can inform policies and programmes,** e.g.

- prevention messages focused on fitness and financial impacts may resonate with diverse young people;
- there is a need to offer young people safer coping tools

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