

YOUTH VAPING DURING COVID-19:

BC youth's experiences during the pandemic



McCreary
Centre Society

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KEY FINDINGS

Data collected from youth aged 12 to 19 in June, September and December 2020 showed that around a quarter to a third had ever tried vaping.

On all three surveys, youth were more likely to have stopped vaping or to have vaped less since the pandemic started than they were to have vaped more or to have started vaping during the pandemic. However, by December, there was an increase in the percentage of youth who started vaping and who vaped more in the past three months, and a decrease in the percentage who reported vaping less.

Among the 75% of December survey respondents who had never vaped, more than 8 in 10 reported not vaping because they thought it would be bad for their health and/or they were not interested in vaping.

The December survey asked youth who had vaped in the past three months on how many of the past 30 days they had vaped. Over a third of youth had vaped every day in the past month.

Among youth who vaped daily, 75% had their first vape within 30 minutes of waking up, including 34% who had their first vape within five minutes of waking up.

The more time that elapsed since the pandemic started, the more likely youth were to report their stress levels were currently higher compared to pre-pandemic.

Among youth who had ever vaped, those who vaped during the pandemic were more likely than those who had vaped pre-pandemic to report last vaping because they felt addicted; were vaping instead of smoking cigarettes; and because they felt anxious, sad, or bored. Youth who had vaped pre-pandemic were more likely to report having vaped the last time because they wanted to try it and because their friends were doing it.

Youth who had never vaped were more likely than those who had vaped to report trusting vaping information that came from health experts, their school, and family. In contrast, youth who had ever vaped were more likely to trust health information that came from social media and vaping companies.

Youth who had vaped during the pandemic were the least likely to trust information that came from health experts, their family, and school, and were the most likely to trust information that came from vaping companies.

Around half of youth (48%) had seen advertisements promoting vaping products in the past month—commonly on Instagram, public transit, Snapchat, YouTube, and TikTok.

Just under two thirds of youth who vaped (64%) felt it made their physical health worse. However, 31% reported it improved their social life and 24% felt it improved their mental health.

Youth most commonly vaped in person with friends. However, those who vaped during the pandemic were more likely than those who had last vaped pre-pandemic to have vaped alone, with friends online (e.g., while video chatting), or in person with their siblings.

Among youth who vaped in the past three months, respondents who completed a survey when school returned in September were more likely to have vaped in person with friends than youth who completed a survey in June or December.

Around 1 in 5 youth (19%) reported that returning to school in September affected their vaping, most commonly because their school-related stress had increased, or because they were again socializing with peers who vaped.

The vast majority of youth who vaped (93%) had shared a vaping device, including 56% who shared one during the pandemic. The more frequently youth vaped, the more likely they were to share a device.

Youth researchers who worked on this project felt the survey results highlight the need to understand the underlying reasons behind vaping, and that there is often more than one reason a youth might vape. As one stated: *"We need to listen to the youth who vape to understand their experiences, because youth who don't vape don't know what it's like, and the same goes for adults."*

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, results from the BC Adolescent Health Survey showed that 27% of BC youth aged 12 to 19 had vaped in the past month. Since then, vaping among BC adolescents has been an area of concern for health professionals, schools, and policy makers.

Between 2018 and 2020, McCreary Centre Society (McCreary) was involved in several initiatives seeking to capture youth's perspectives on vaping and to ensure youth learned about the potential health impacts of vaping. A number of projects were put on hold when BC schools closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and there was growing concern that the knowledge of youth vaping we had gained pre-pandemic may no longer be relevant.

To ensure we have a current and up-to-date understanding of vaping from a youth's perspective, the BC Ministry of Health commissioned McCreary to conduct a study to canvass the vaping experiences of youth in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. An advisory committee of BC vaping experts oversaw the project and 28 youth researchers were recruited and trained from communities across BC to co-develop and deliver three online surveys to their peers.

The youth researchers met regularly from May 2020 to January 2021 to develop survey items; review and provide context to results; and discuss survey dissemination strategies. The researchers shared each wave of the survey with their peers through various social media channels, such as Instagram and Facebook, as well as through their class 'chat' and school website.

The study included young people aged 12 to 19 from across BC. Youth who had never vaped, as well as those who had vaped, were invited to take part, as the surveys included questions about thoughts and perceptions around vaping that all young people could answer.

The study was comprised of three different online surveys delivered at three monthly intervals. The first survey was available three months after physical distancing regulations came into effect in BC (June 2020), and subsequent surveys took place in September 2020 and December 2020.

Each survey was accessible online for one month, and youth were welcome to participate at any time-point, including at all three time-points.

At each time-point, youth who completed a survey were welcome to enter into a gift card draw to win one of six gift cards. For the December survey, \$2 was donated to the Trevor Coburn Memorial Grant Fund for every submitted survey. A total of \$3,548 was raised.

The surveys took approximately 10 minutes to complete. At each time-point, there were a few similar questions. Other items were added or modified based on questions generated by findings from the previous survey and contextual factors. For example, the September survey asked about vaping in the context of the return of in-person schooling.

Quotes from youth who completed a Vaping during COVID-19 survey are included throughout the report.

The Trevor Coburn Memorial Grants program was established in honour of Trevor Coburn, who passed away suddenly in August 2020. Trevor was involved with McCreary for over 15 years as a member of the YAC, a peer and adult mentor, and as a researcher and facilitator on various projects. The granting program provides grants of up to \$500 to young people wanting to address areas of youth health that Trevor was passionate about, including peer mentorship, homelessness, substance use, and youth in and from government care. To learn more about the fund visit www.mcs.bc.ca/trevor_coburn_memorial_grants.

Limitations

The surveys were designed to provide a snapshot of youth vaping at different points during the pandemic, rather than as a longitudinal study of individual youth. As such, the surveys may have canvassed different demographics of youth at each time-point. The results may also not be representative of the BC youth population. For example, youth from the Fraser region were under-represented in the sample.

Analyses in this report

All reported comparisons in this report are statistically significant at $p < .05$. This means there is less than a 5% likelihood these results occurred by chance.

Where it is not obvious, a note is added to a table or graph if there is no statistically significant difference between two percentages.

Youth survey respondents

A total of 1,120 youth completed a survey in June; 686 completed one in September; and 1,774 in December. Among youth who completed the September survey, 14% indicated they had also completed one three months earlier in June (another 15% did not remember if they had done so). Among youth who completed a December survey, 6% reported they had completed at least one of the previous two vaping surveys (10% of youth who had vaped vs. 5% of youth who had never vaped), including 1% who had completed both previous surveys. Another 17% did not remember if they had completed the previous surveys.

Youth ranged in age from 12 to 19, with an average age of 15. Fifty-eight percent were female, 38% were male, and 4% were non-binary (they did not identify as male or female, or were not yet sure of their gender identity).

Youth from all five of BC’s Health Authorities were represented, including Vancouver Coastal (38%), Vancouver Island (28%), Fraser (16%), Interior (14%), and Northern BC (6%; percentages exceed 100% due to rounding). Survey respondents most commonly identified as European, followed by East Asian.

Survey respondents’ background	
European	51%
East Asian	19%
Southeast Asian	11%
Indigenous	9%
South Asian	6%
Latin/South/Central American	5%
African	3%
Australian, Pacific Islander	2%
West Asian	2%
Other	8%
Don’t know	9%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.
Note: Among youth who marked ‘Other,’ they most commonly specified Canadian.

BC YOUTH'S EXPERIENCES WITH VAPING

Youth who had vaped



I only vaped once to try it. Once the pandemic happened, I didn't bother to try again. Since COVID is respiratory, it seems like a foolish idea to vape right now."

The percentage of survey respondents who had ever vaped ranged from around a third on the June survey (34%) and September survey (35%) to a quarter on the December survey (25%).

In June, youth were more likely to have last vaped pre-pandemic than during the pandemic, whereas later into the pandemic this pattern was reversed, with youth more likely to have vaped during the pandemic.

There were few gender differences in having ever vaped or having vaped during the pandemic (among those who had vaped). One exception was in December when females were more likely than males to have ever vaped (23% vs. 19%), and non-binary youth were the most likely to have done so (53%).

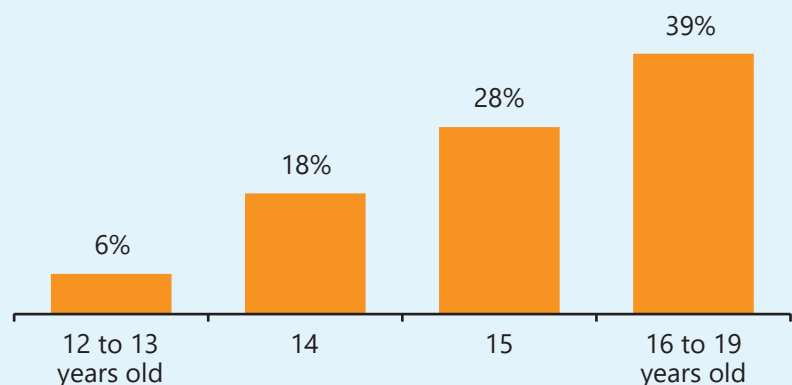
Across all three surveys, older youth were more likely than younger ones to have vaped, with those aged 16 or older the most likely to have vaped. However, among youth who had vaped, older and younger youth were equally likely to have vaped during the pandemic.

When youth last vaped (among all survey respondents)

	June 2020	September 2020	December 2020
Never vaped	66%	65%	75%
During the pandemic	12%	24%	20%
Pre-pandemic	22%	12%	5%

Note: For 'Never vaped,' the difference between June and September was not statistically significant.

Youth who had ever vaped



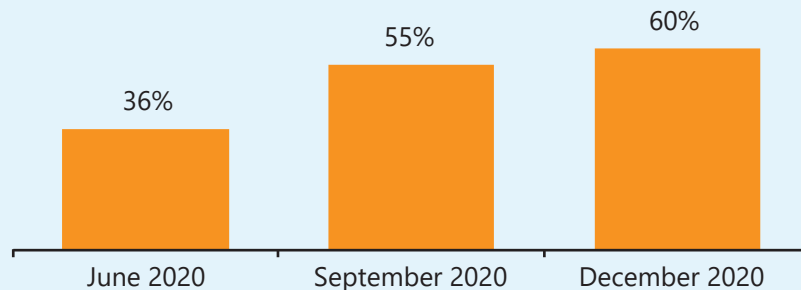
Source: December 2020 survey.

Among youth who had vaped, the percentage who vaped in the past three months increased from June to September. The percentages on the September and December surveys were similar.

The December survey asked youth who had vaped in the past three months on how many of the past 30 days they had vaped. Over a third of youth had vaped every day in the past month. There were no differences based on gender or age.

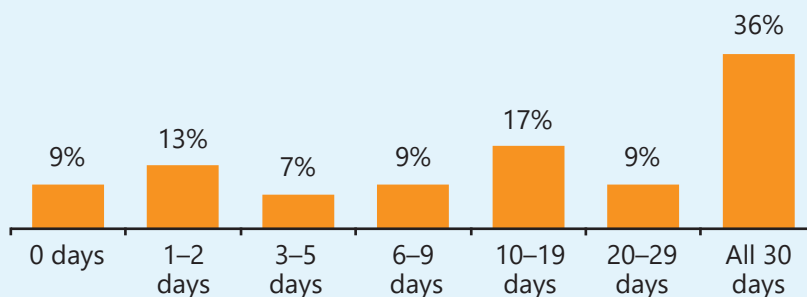
On the December survey, youth were also asked how soon they have their first vape after they wake up. Among those who vaped in the past month, half (50%) reported having their first vape within 30 minutes of waking up, including 23% who had their first vape within five minutes. Another 10% had their first vape within 31 to 60 minutes, and 40% had their first vape more than an hour after waking up. There were no age or gender differences. Among youth who vaped every day in the past month, three quarters (75%) had their first vape within 30 minutes of waking up.

Youth who vaped in the past three months (among those who had ever vaped)



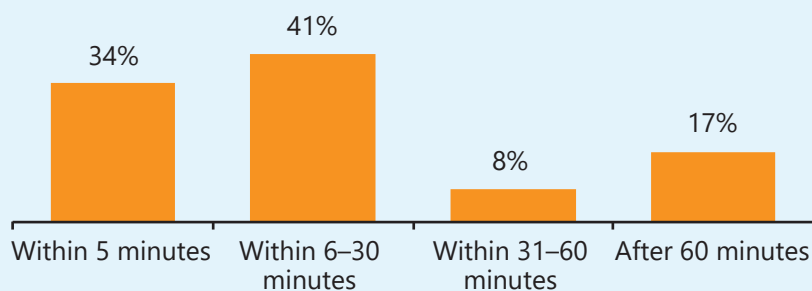
Note: The difference between September and December was not statistically significant.

Number of days youth vaped in the past month (among those who had vaped in the past three months)



Source: December 2020 survey.

How soon youth vaped after waking up (among those who vaped every day in the past month)



Source: December 2020 survey.

Stress and vaping

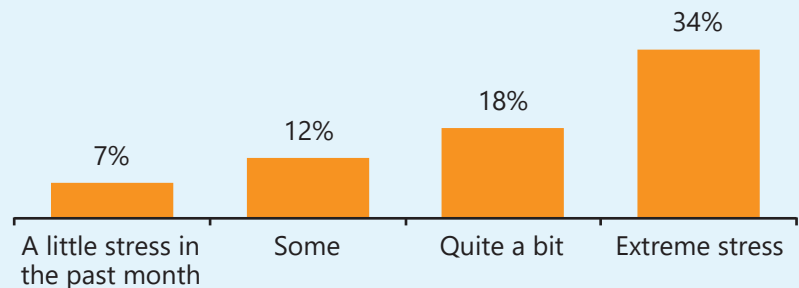
In September and December, all youth who completed a survey were asked how much stress they experienced in the past month. Most youth who completed the December survey (92%) felt at least a little stressed, including 15% who felt extreme levels that stopped them from functioning properly. Youth were more likely to report extreme stress in December than three months earlier (10% in September).

Youth who experienced higher levels of stress were more likely to have vaped in the past three months than those who experienced lower levels of stress.

On all three surveys, youth were asked if their stress level was higher, lower, or about the same now compared to before the pandemic started. The more time that elapsed since the pandemic started, the more likely youth were to report higher stress levels now compared to pre-pandemic.

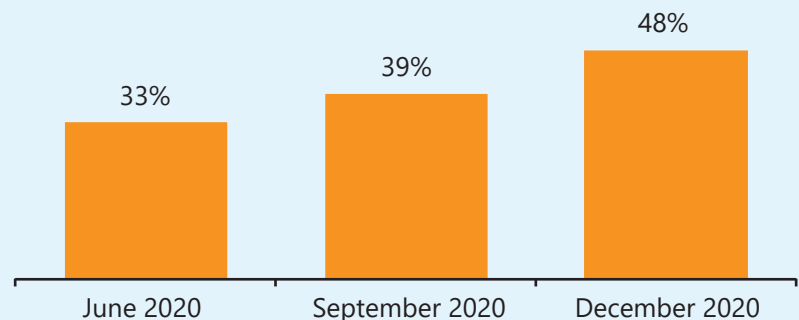
On the December survey, youth who felt their stress was higher now than pre-pandemic were more likely to have vaped during the pandemic (22% vs. 18% who felt their stress was about the same as pre-pandemic).

Youth who vaped in the past three months in relation to how much stress they experienced recently (among those who experienced stress)



Source: December 2020 survey.

Youth whose stress level was higher now than pre-pandemic



People youth knew who vaped

Household members

The June survey asked youth if they lived with someone who currently vaped, and 19% indicated they did. Among these youth, 66% reported it was their siblings, and 21% indicated their parents/caregivers vaped. Youth also identified other people in their household who vaped, such as roommates.

Youth who lived with someone who currently vaped were more likely to have ever vaped (61% vs. 28% of youth who did not live with someone who vaped), and to have vaped during the pandemic (46% vs. 31%; among those who had ever vaped).

Friends

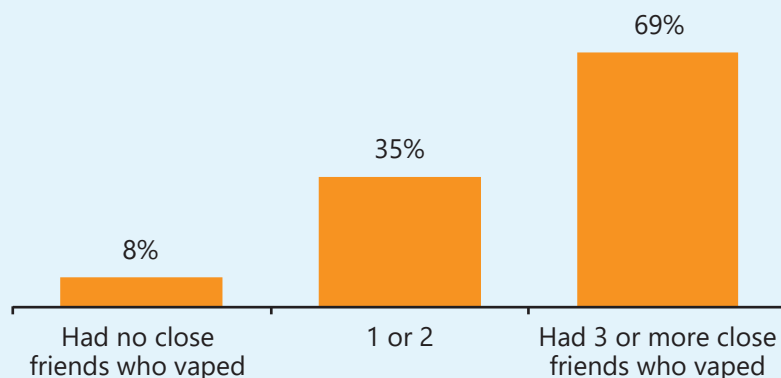
In September, youth were asked if they have friends who vape. Over half of survey respondents (56%) had close friends who vape, including 36% who had three or more such friends.

Youth were more likely to have ever vaped if they had close friends who vaped, and those with three or more such friends were the most likely to have vaped themselves. Also, vaping during the pandemic was highest among youth who had three or more friends who vaped (72% vs. 53% of those with two or fewer friends who vaped; among those who had ever vaped).

In September, youth were asked if they were concerned about breathing in vapour from others who vaped (second-hand vaping). Around 6 in 10 youth (61%) were at least a little concerned about second-hand vaping, including 8% who were very concerned. Youth who had never vaped were the most likely to be concerned about second-hand vaping, while those who vaped during the pandemic were the least likely to have this concern.

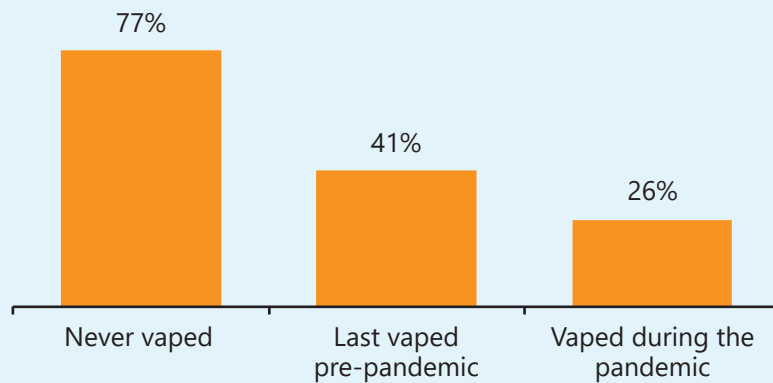
The more friends that youth had who vaped, the less likely they were to be concerned about breathing in vapour from others (e.g., 38% of youth with three or more friends who vaped had this concern vs. 66% with one or two friends vs. 78% with no friends who vaped), likely because having friends who vaped was associated with vaping themselves.

Youth who had ever vaped



Source: September 2020 survey.

Youth who were at least a little concerned about second-hand vaping



Source: September 2020 survey.



I find it hard to breathe and it makes me feel unsafe when people vape in the washrooms or in the PE change rooms."

Perceived harms of vaping compared to smoking cigarettes



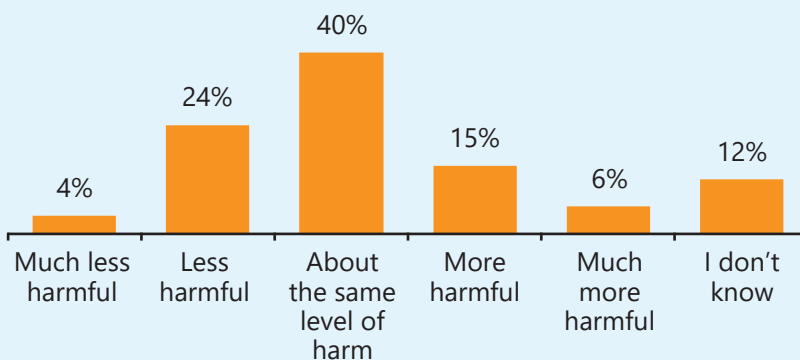
I marked 'I don't know' for this question... because I don't think there's been enough research about it. I think that it's about the same but in 20–30 years maybe we'll learn it's really bad for us, just like they did with cigarettes."

Across all three surveys, youth most commonly thought it was equally harmful to vape as it was to smoke cigarettes.

Thinking that vaping was less harmful than smoking cigarettes was more common among older youth compared to younger ones (e.g., on the December survey, 31% of youth aged 14 or older felt that vaping was less or much less harmful than cigarettes vs. 20% of youth aged 12–13).

Regardless of youth's age, those who had ever vaped were more likely than those who had never vaped to feel that vaping was less harmful than smoking cigarettes. Youth who had vaped in the past three months were the most likely to feel this way (with similar findings across surveys).

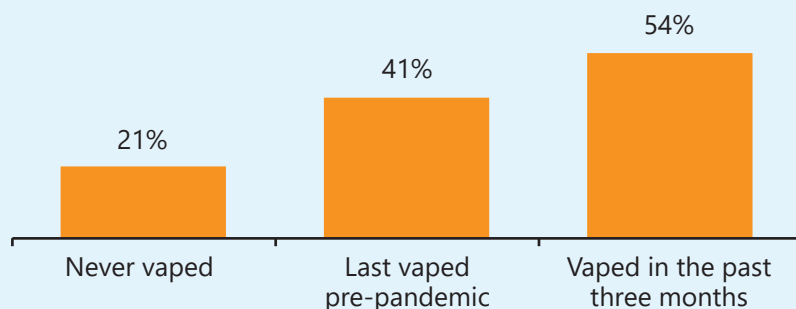
How harmful youth thought vaping was compared to smoking cigarettes



Source: December 2020 survey.

Note: Percentages exceed 100% due to rounding.

Youth who thought vaping was less harmful than smoking cigarettes



Source: December 2020 survey.

Trusted sources for vaping information

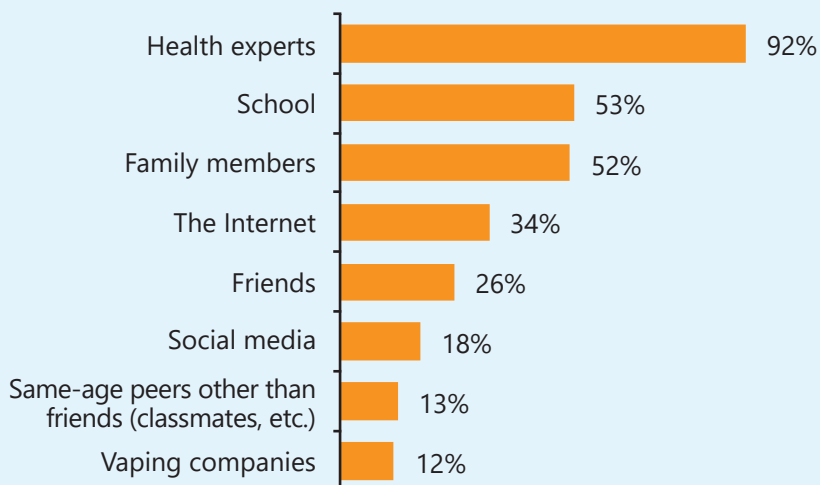
In June, youth were asked who they trusted for information about vaping. The vast majority trusted health experts for this information, while a little over half trusted their school and family members, and a minority trusted the Internet, social media, their peers, and vaping companies.

In September, most youth did not access social media when they wanted reliable information about vaping. However, 10% identified social media sites they had accessed and believed to be trustworthy sources of vaping information (14% of youth who had vaped vs. 7% who had never vaped). They most commonly accessed information through Instagram and Snapchat, followed by YouTube, TikTok, and government websites.

Among June survey respondents, youth who had never vaped were more likely than those who had vaped to report trusting vaping information that came from health experts (97% vs. 83%), their school (64% vs. 33%), and family (61% vs. 35%). Youth who had vaped were more likely to trust information that came from social media (21% vs. 16% of youth who had never vaped) and vaping companies (21% vs. 7%).

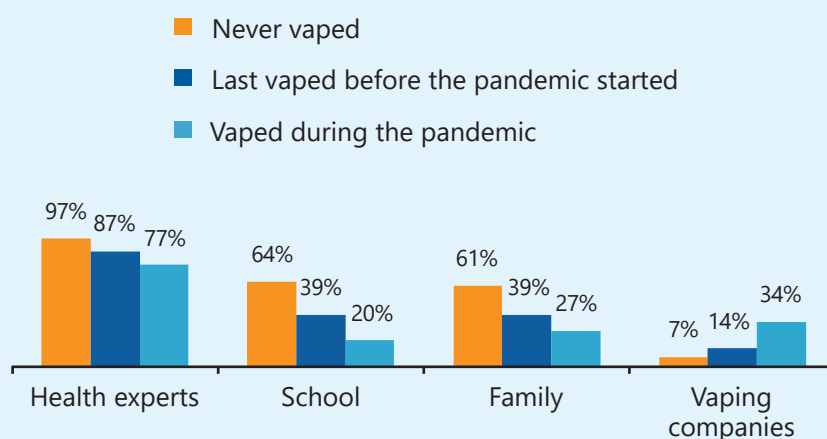
Further, youth who vaped during the pandemic were less likely than those who had last vaped pre-pandemic to trust information about vaping that came from health experts, their family, and school, and were more likely to trust information that came from vaping companies.

Who youth trusted for information on vaping (those who indicated 'quite a bit' or 'very much')



Source: June 2020 survey.

Youth's experiences with vaping in relation to who they trusted ('quite a bit' or 'very much') for information on vaping

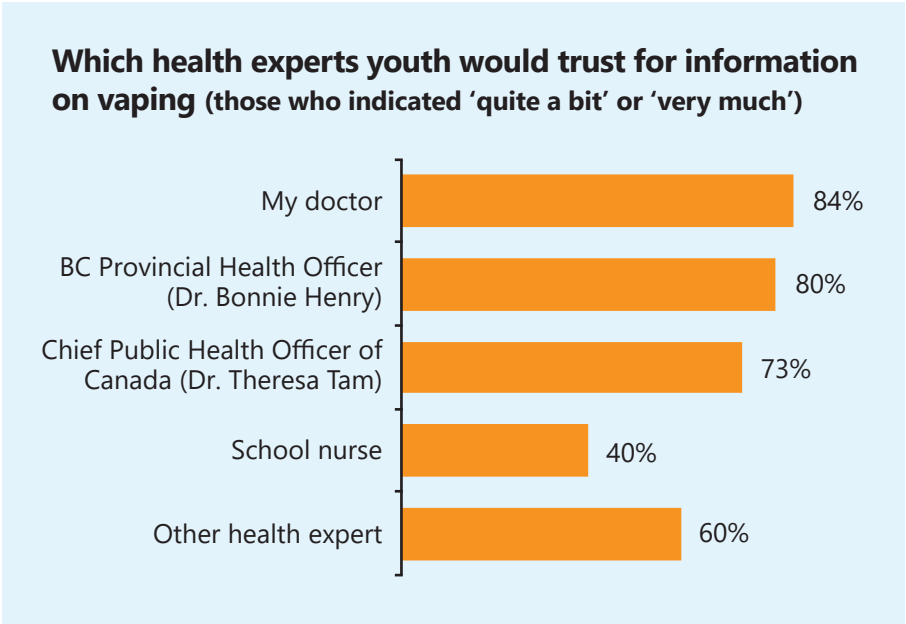


Source: June 2020 survey.

Trusted health experts

In September, youth were asked which health experts they would trust for information on vaping. They were most likely to trust their own doctor and BC’s Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry.

Youth who had never vaped were more likely than those who had vaped to report trusting the various health professionals for information about vaping. However, there were no differences among youth who had vaped (e.g., those who vaped more recently compared to pre-pandemic).



Source: September 2020 survey.
Note: The difference between ‘My doctor’ and ‘BC Provincial Health Officer’ was not statistically significant.
Note: For ‘Other health expert,’ youth most commonly specified a family member in the health care profession.

Which health professionals youth would trust for information on vaping (those who indicated ‘quite a bit’ or ‘very much’)

	Never vaped	Ever vaped
My doctor	90%	75%
BC Provincial Health Officer	86%	67%
Chief Public Health Officer of Canada	81%	59%
School nurse	49%	25%
Other health expert	63%	52%

Source: September 2020 survey.

Reliable sources for vaping information

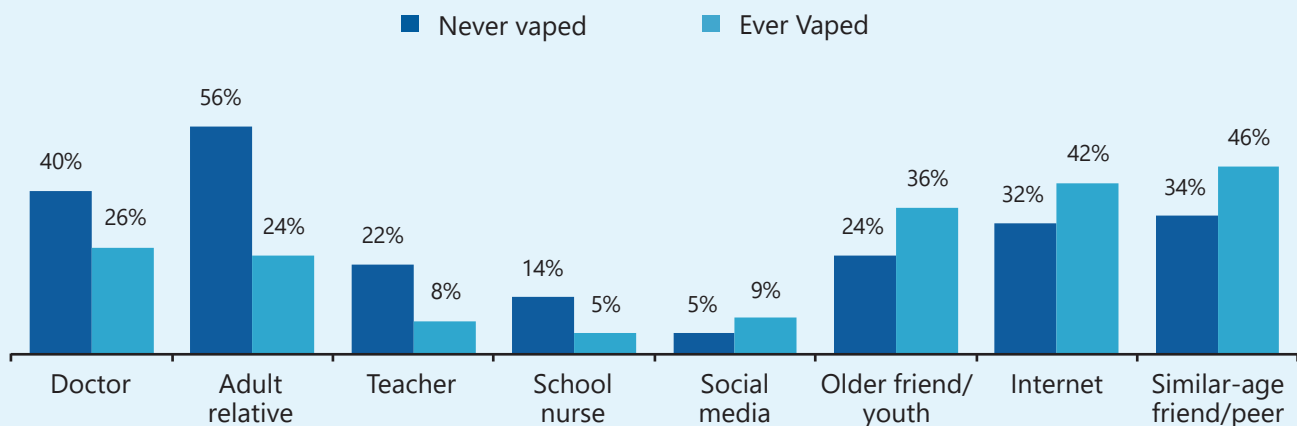
To build on information gained in earlier surveys about who youth trusted for information about vaping, the December survey asked youth where they would go if they needed to access reliable information about vaping. Youth most commonly listed an adult family member (48%), followed by a similar-age friend or peer (38%), a doctor (36%), the Internet (34%), an older youth/older friend (27%), a sibling or another close-in-age relative (22%), teacher (18%), a school nurse (12%), and/or social media

(6%; they could mark all that applied). Those who reported they would access the Internet most commonly specified they would do a Google search and/or access health websites. Those who reported they would turn to social media most commonly specified they would access Instagram.

Youth who had never vaped were more likely than those who had vaped to report they would access reliable vaping information from adults. Those who had

vaped were more likely than those who had never vaped to turn to their friends, the Internet, and social media (findings were generally similar regardless of age). Among youth who had ever vaped, there was no difference in where they would access reliable vaping information, based on whether they had vaped during the pandemic or pre-pandemic.

Where youth would go to access reliable information about vaping



Source: December 2020 survey.

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Information about the laws on vaping on school property

Youth were asked on the December survey if they had received information regarding the laws about vaping on school property. Around a quarter of youth (26%) indicated they had not received this information, and another 16% did not know or did not remember if they had received this information.

Just over half of youth (54%) had received this information from their school, while fewer had received this information from their family (12%) and peers/friends (8%). Also, 3% identified another source, and these youth commonly specified a police officer, such as an officer connected to their school (they could mark all that applied).

Regardless of age, youth who had vaped were more likely to have received information about the laws on vaping on school property from their peers/friends (11% vs. 7% of youth who had never vaped).

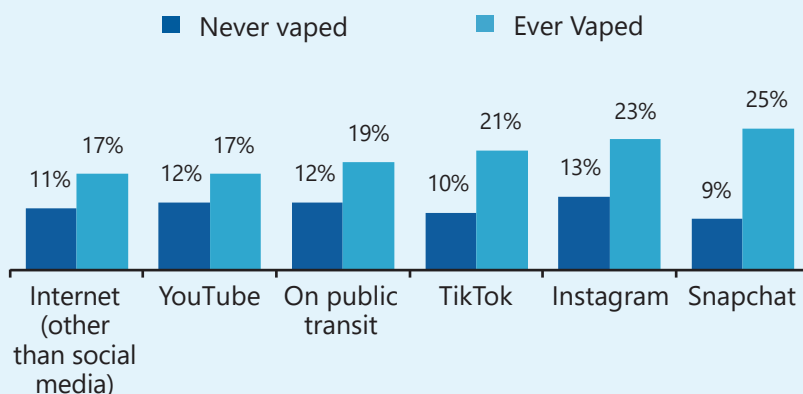
Advertisements promoting vaping products

When asked in December where they had seen advertisements promoting vaping products in the past month, around half (52%) of youth indicated they had not seen such ads. The rest had seen these ads on Instagram (16%), public transit (14%), Snapchat (13%), YouTube (13%), TikTok (13%), the Internet other than social media (e.g., ads on websites; 12%), television (10%), and magazines/newspapers (6%; they could mark all that applied). Also,

7% had seen advertisements promoting vaping in other places, and they most commonly specified billboards, posters in their community, the radio, and vape shops.

Youth who had vaped were more likely than those who had never vaped to have noticed advertisements promoting vaping products in the past month (59% vs. 44%).

Where youth saw advertisements promoting vaping products in the past month



Source: December 2020 survey.

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

YOUTH WHO HAD NEVER VAPED

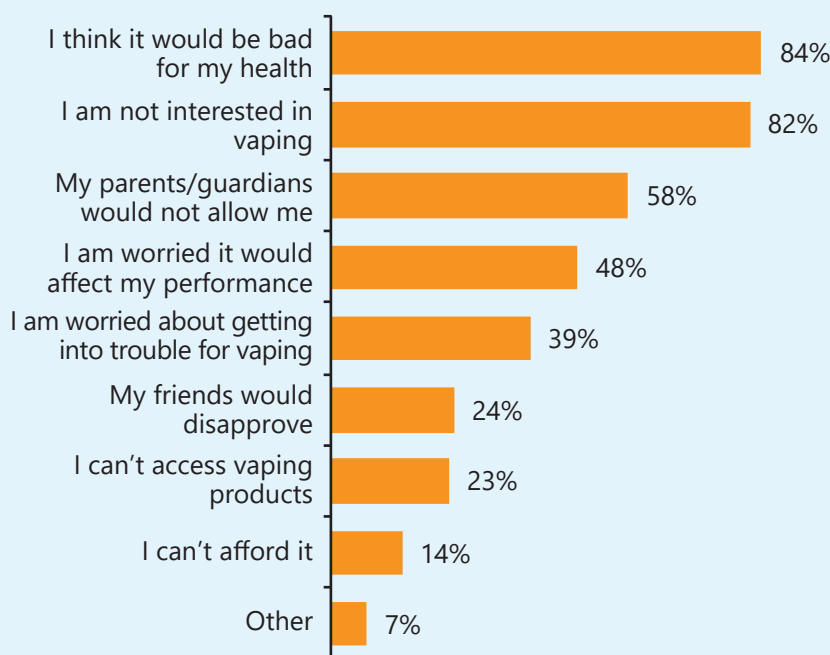
At each time-point, most youth who completed a survey had not vaped. In December, youth who had never vaped were asked about their reasons for not doing so. Among the 75% of survey respondents who had never vaped, more than 8 in 10 reported not vaping because they thought it would be bad for their health and/or they were not interested in vaping.

Seven percent specified a reason not among the list of options, and common responses included a fear of becoming addicted to vaping (because of a family history of addiction, for example); having a pre-existing medical condition (e.g., asthma) that would become exacerbated if they vaped; not wanting to be associated with negative stereotypes linked to vaping; and feeling that vaping could be detrimental to achieving their career goals.

Among youth who had never vaped, those aged 14 or older were more likely than younger youth to report not vaping because they were not interested in doing so (85% vs. 76%), they were worried about getting into trouble for vaping (41% vs. 34%), and they could not afford it (16% vs. 10%). Youth aged 12 or 13 were more likely than those aged 14 or older to report never vaping because they thought it would be bad for their health (88% vs. 82%).

Females were more likely than males to report never vaping because they were not interested in doing so (84% vs. 80%) and they thought it would be bad for their health (87% vs. 81%). There were no other gender differences among youth who had never vaped.

Reasons for not vaping (among youth who had never vaped)



Source: December 2020 survey.

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Reasons youth had never vaped

"Worried about getting addicted."

"Don't want to risk nicotine addiction."

"My dad is very addicted to cigarettes and I don't wanna turn out like him."

"I have no desire to try vaping after seeing what other forms of smoking have done to family members."

"It is a horrible habit that can easily become addictive."

"It is an unnecessary thing to indulge in, and I'd rather not endanger my health or the people around me."

"Vaping is horrible for your health, and it is gross."

"I have asthma so my health would get super worse if I vape."

"I have a heart condition so if I were to vape, it could harm me in the long run a lot more than others."

"I know that vaping is bad for my health. I also really like soccer so I wouldn't want to take away my chances of being a pro player because of a vape."

"I am very worried about damaging my lungs. As a distance runner, this would not only damage my performance but also a big part of my overall health."

"Popcorn lung sounds nasty."

"I'm scared of what it will do to me."

"People mostly do it because it is 'cool', but it's not. It is also very injurious to your health."

"I personally don't want to be associated with the stereotype of the 'stoner' kid because it will affect my image and academic performance for post-secondary."

"My career depends on good health."

"I don't think that vaping would benefit me in any way."

EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH WHO VAPED

All findings in this section are among youth who had vaped.

Reported reasons for vaping

On all three surveys, youth were asked about their reasons for vaping the last time they had vaped. The most commonly reported reasons (across surveys) were vaping because their friends were doing it, feeling there was nothing else to do, and wanting to try it.

Youth's reasons for vaping the last time they vaped

I felt like there was nothing else to do/I was bored	40%
My friends were doing it	40%
I wanted to try it	37%
The taste/flavours	35%
I felt stressed or anxious	34%
I wanted to have fun	33%
The visual appeal of the vapour	25%
I am addicted to vaping/I feel hooked	24%
I felt down or sad	22%
I vaped instead of smoking cigarettes	16%
I vaped instead of using other substances	16%
A family member was doing it	8%
I was pressured into doing it/to fit in	7%

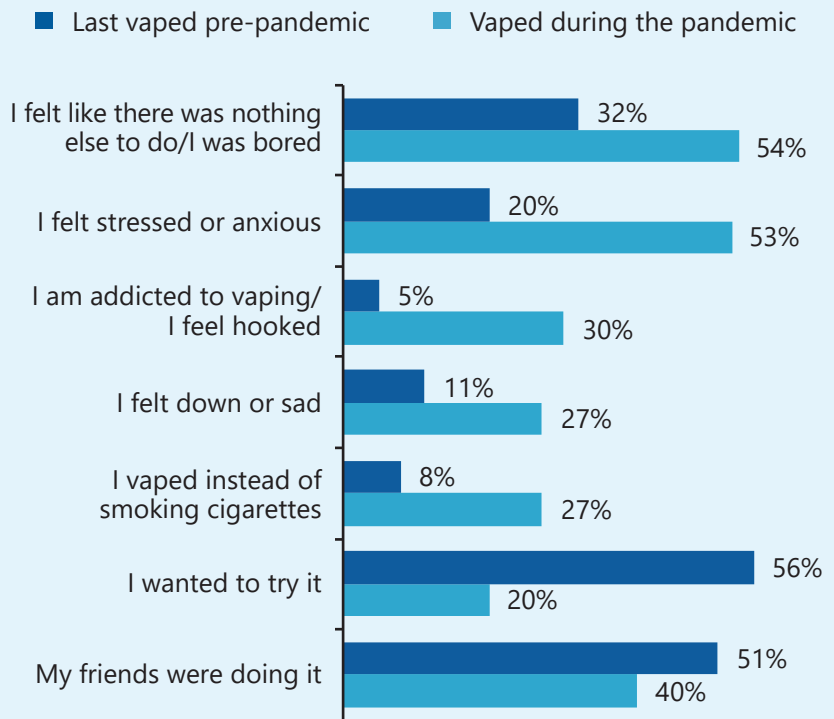
Source: December 2020 survey.

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Youth who vaped during the pandemic were more likely than those who had last vaped pre-pandemic to report vaping the last time as an alternative to smoking cigarettes and because they felt addicted to vaping, as well as for emotional reasons such as feeling anxious, sad, and bored. Youth who had last vaped pre-pandemic were more likely to report having done so because they wanted to try it and because their friends were doing it. Similar patterns were found in each survey.

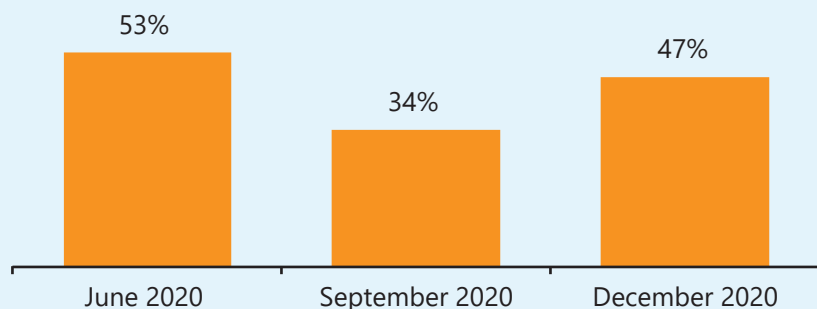
Among youth who vaped in the past three months, those who completed a survey in December were less likely than those who completed the earlier two surveys to report vaping the last time because they felt there was nothing else to do (e.g., 45% vs. 57%; among September respondents). They were more likely than September respondents to report vaping because they felt down or sad (30% vs. 18%) and because they felt stressed or anxious.

Youth's reasons for vaping the last time in relation to when they last vaped



Source: June 2020 survey.

Youth who reported last vaping because they felt stressed or anxious (among those who vaped in the past three months)



Note: The difference between June and December was not statistically significant.

Reasons for vaping (among those who had vaped)

"I've only vaped once, it was with my friends. They handed it over and everyone was looking, it was more like peer pressured. I've gotten offered to do it again, but I've turned it down. I just don't think I'd need to do it, for safety reasons."

"I have friends that vape and sometimes peer pressure me into doing it."

"Many kids feel pressured to vape because it's a social thing."

"Many kids are getting dependent on vaping. They start out doing it to be cool but they end up getting addicted."

"Kids think it's cool to vape but once you get addicted it sucks."

"Vaping is a coping mechanism for stress and anxiety for me. Better than self-harm and other unhealthy things."

"It seems that a lot of kids I know are [vaping] to deal with mental disorders (e.g., anxiety or depression) and stress."

"It helps a lot with stress and that's what it's used for as a kind of relief. It's not just kids wanting to be cool, it's a better alternative to other drugs and self-harm for coping with stress and anxiety. It's easy and quick."

"Personally, I have severe trauma and mental health complications that has started my vaping."

"I can stop [vaping], I can start, I've never had any problems. I totally understand it's bad for you, but it does relax me, and I'm very VERY moderate with how I do vape. Only on the bad days."

"Vaping is preferred over cigarettes for me because the higher nicotine levels deliver a quicker relaxed feel. I have stopped smoking cigarettes as I no longer felt anything. Both make me feel gross and I do not recommend either unless you can control yourself."

Where youth got their vape juice

Youth were asked on all three surveys where they got their vape juice the last time they vaped. On all surveys, they were most likely to have acquired it from someone under the age of 19.

However, youth who vaped during the pandemic were less likely than those who had last vaped pre-pandemic to have acquired their vape juice from another youth, and were more likely to have given someone money to buy their vape juice, or to have gone to the store to buy it themselves.

There were some differences across surveys. Youth who completed the latter two surveys (in September and December, 2020) were more likely than those who completed the June survey to have received their vape juice from another youth (just over 43% of respondents who completed the September and December surveys vs. 26% of June survey respondents; among those who had vaped in the past three months).

Also, youth who completed a survey in December were less likely than those who completed a survey six months earlier (June) to have gone to the store to buy vape juice (16% vs. 30%; among those who had vaped in the past three months).

Where youth got their vape juice, the last time they vaped

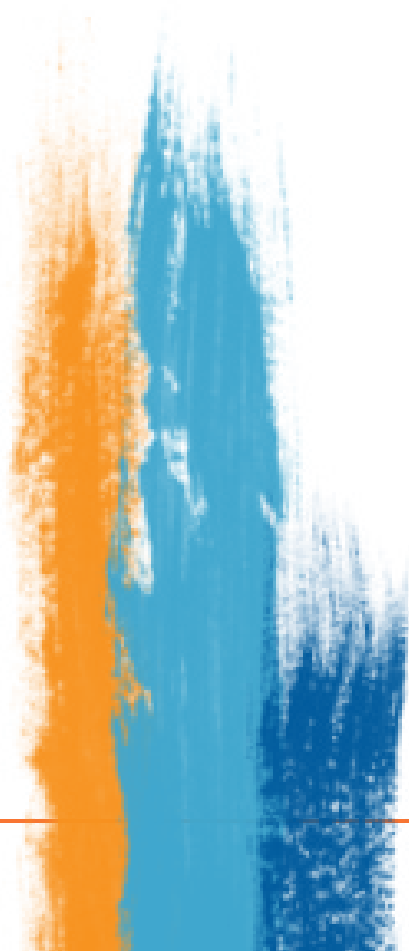
A youth (under age 19) gave it to them	52%
Gave someone money to buy it for them	27%
An adult (19 or older) bought it for them	16%
Went to the store and bought it	12%
Bought it online	8%
Traded something for it	7%
Took it without permission	6%

Source: December 2020 survey.

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



I can't bus anywhere to get my juice or vape stuff so I have to ask my mom to drive me."

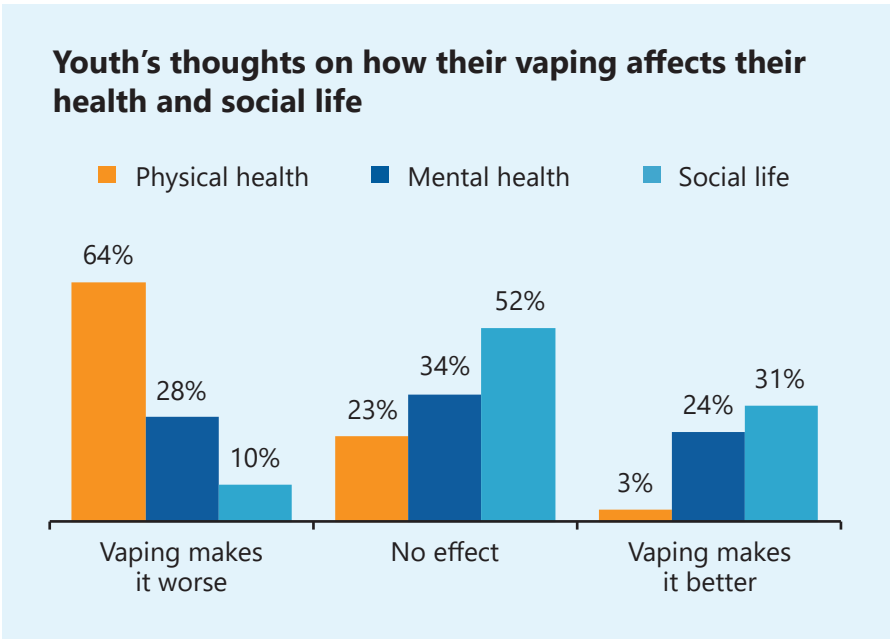


Perceived effects of vaping

The June survey asked youth who vaped how they thought their vaping affected their physical health, mental health, and social life. Most thought that vaping made their physical health worse, compared to a minority who felt it worsened their mental health and social life.

Youth were most likely to think that vaping made their social life better, and least likely to think it made their physical health better.

Youth who had last vaped pre-pandemic were more likely than those who vaped during the pandemic to feel that vaping worsened their mental health (34% vs. 16%) and social life. There were no other differences in perceived effects of vaping based on when youth last vaped.



Source: June 2020 survey.
Note: 8%–14% of youth reported not knowing how vaping affected their physical health, mental health, and social life.

Who youth vaped with

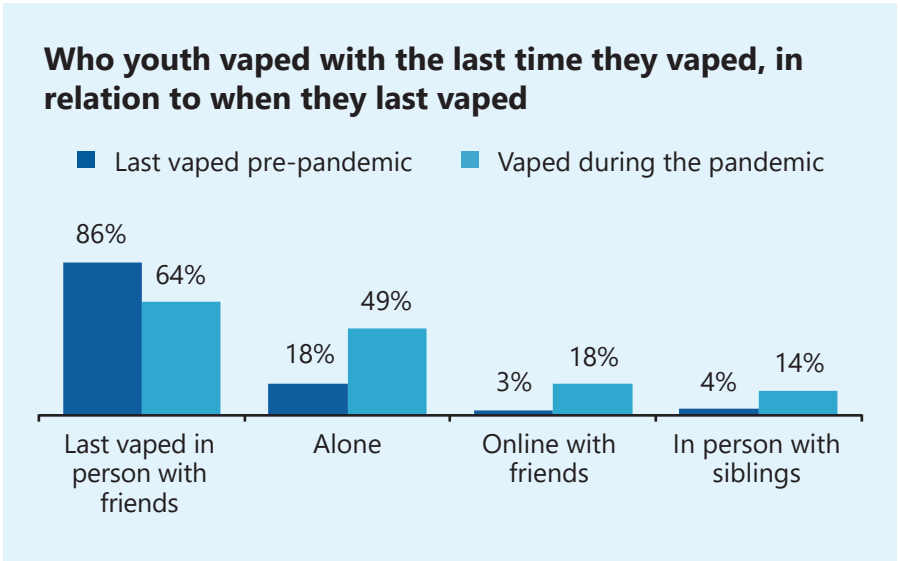
Consistent across all three surveys, youth were most likely to have vaped in person with a friend the last time they vaped.

However, findings generally showed that those who had last vaped pre-pandemic were more likely to have last vaped face-to-face with a friend than those who vaped during the pandemic. In contrast, those who vaped during the pandemic were more likely than those who had last vaped pre-pandemic to have vaped alone, with friends online (e.g., while video chatting), or in person with their siblings.

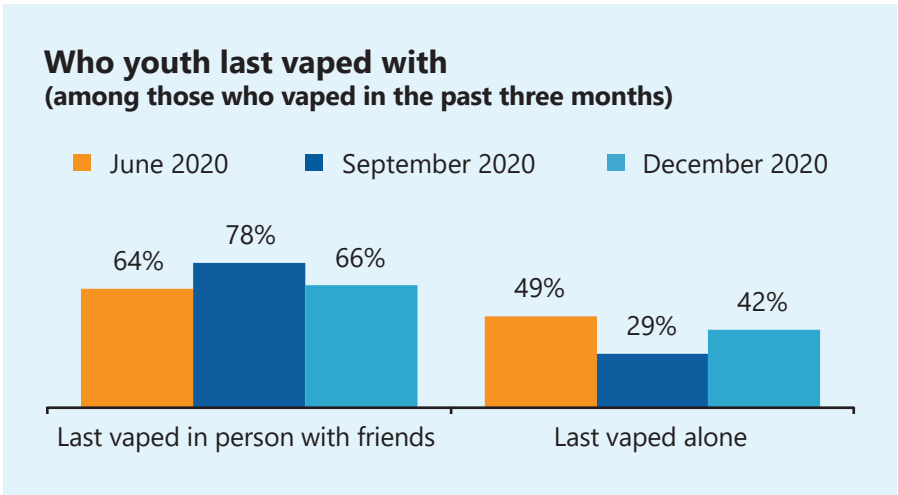
Among youth who vaped in the past three months, September respondents were less likely than June and December respondents to have vaped alone the last time they vaped, and were the most likely to have vaped in person with friends.

Who youth vaped with the last time they vaped	
In person with friend(s)	74%
Alone	33%
Online with friend(s)	13%
In person with sibling(s)	8%
In person with adult family member(s)	5%

Source: December 2020 survey.
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



Source: June 2020 survey.



Note: The differences between June and December were not statistically significant.

Sharing a vaping device

In December, youth were asked if they had ever shared a vaping device with someone. The vast majority of youth who vaped (93%) indicated they had shared a device, including 56% who shared one during the pandemic and 54% pre-pandemic (youth could mark all that applied).

Among youth who vaped during the pandemic, those aged 14 or older were more likely to have shared a vaping device during the pandemic than those aged 12 or 13 (e.g., 77% of youth aged 14 or 15 vs. 47% of those aged 12 or 13).

Youth who last vaped in person with friends were more likely to share a vaping device during the pandemic than youth who did not last vape in person with friends (74% vs. 61%; among those who vaped during the pandemic). Also, those who vaped on six or more days in the past month were more likely to share a vaping device during the pandemic than those who vaped on fewer days (81% vs. 65%; among those who vaped during the pandemic).

There were no differences in sharing a vaping device based on youth's gender, or on where they got their vape juice.

Changes in youth's vaping behaviour during the pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic affected my vaping because I was not able to get juice, so therefore I was forced to quit. I was also not spending time with friends who have vapes. I also realized how destructive it was on my health and no longer found it interesting."

Three months into the pandemic, half of June survey respondents indicated that the pandemic had no effect on their vaping (54% of youth who had last vaped pre-pandemic vs. 42% of youth who had vaped during the pandemic).

Youth were more likely to have stopped vaping or to have vaped less since the pandemic started than they were to have vaped more or to have started vaping during the pandemic.

June survey respondents who last vaped because they were addicted to vaping or because they felt sad, stressed, or bored were more likely to report an increase in their vaping since the pandemic started compared to youth who vaped for other reasons, such as to have fun, because they enjoyed the taste/flavours, or because their friends were vaping. For example, 17% of youth who had last vaped because they were stressed or anxious reported an increase in their vaping since the pandemic started, compared to 7% of youth who had last vaped because their friends were doing it.

Effects of the first three months of the pandemic on youth's vaping (among those who had ever vaped)

No change in vaping	50%
Stopped vaping during the pandemic	24%
Vaping less since the pandemic started	16%
Tried to quit during the pandemic but was unsuccessful	9%
Vaping more since the pandemic started	7%
Started vaping during the pandemic	2%

Source: June 2020 survey.

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Experiencing stress or boredom as reasons for increased vaping was reflected in some June survey respondents' answers to an open-ended question about how the pandemic had affected their vaping:

"Before the pandemic, I would only vape once every couple of months, but due to increased stress levels I have vaped several times during the pandemic."

"In my opinion the pandemic made me [vape] a lot more cuz the online schooling stresses me out a lot and when I chuff it helps with that."

"I wanted to quit because it was affecting my breathing and I wanted to get in shape but the stress of school and the pandemic made [my vaping] worse than ever before."

"I'm bored and vaping is something to do."

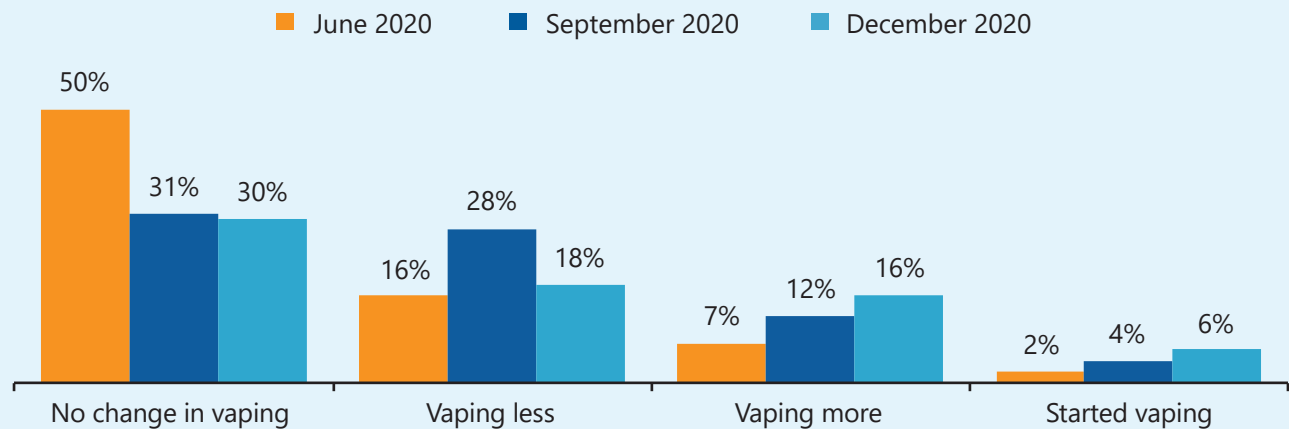
"When COVID-19 started I thought this was a good time to quit, because I've always thought of quitting. I was going vape free for a good week or two, but then eventually I started vaping again. I think it's the boredom and staying in bed that really made me have thoughts like 'imagine having a head rush right now.'"

When asked in June if the pandemic had affected the amount of nicotine they vape, most youth (59%) reported no effect in this area. Around a quarter (23%) reported they had been vaping less nicotine as a result of the pandemic, while fewer youth had been vaping more nicotine (10%). Nine percent reported not knowing if the pandemic had affected the amount of nicotine they vape (among those who indicated the question applied to them).

In September, youth were asked if their vaping behaviour was different now compared to three months earlier (around June 2020). Consistent with findings on the June survey, youth were more likely to report a reduction or cessation (54%) than they were to report that they had started vaping or that they were vaping more (16%). Similarly, in December youth were more likely to have vaped less or completely stopped vaping (46%) than they were to have started vaping or vaped more (22%) over the past three months.

However, there were some changes over time. For example, by December there was an increase in the percentage of youth who started vaping and who vaped more in the past three months, and there was a decrease from September in the percentage who reported vaping less.

Youth's reported changes in their vaping behaviour compared to three months earlier (among those who had ever vaped)



Note: For 'no change in vaping,' the difference between September and December was not statistically significant.

Note: For 'vaping less,' the difference between June and December was not statistically significant.

Note: The difference between September and the other two timepoints was not statistically significant for 'vaping more' and 'started vaping'.

Returning to school in September

On the September survey, around 1 in 5 youth (19%) reported that returning to school that month—after an extended leave due to the pandemic—affected their vaping. When asked to explain, youth most commonly indicated that their vaping increased because their school-related stress had increased, or they were vaping more because they were again socializing with peers who vaped.

How (if at all) youth felt that returning to school in September affected their vaping (September 2020)

"More stress therefore more vaping."

"Stress levels are high, especially when starting [school]."

"School is very stressful for me so it has increased my vaping, in school and out of school."

"There are more people who have vapes at school."

"My friend has a vape and I do it sometimes, and if I am at school I will be around it all the time."

"More opportunities [to vape] being around people with constant access."

December holiday season



December is a really hard month for me."

On the December survey, 7% of youth reported that the December holiday season affected their vaping. When asked to explain, around half of these youth commented they were vaping more—for example, due to school-related and pandemic-related stress. The other half commented they were vaping less because it was more difficult for them to access vapes/vape juice or they decided to quit (e.g., because they started caring more about their health).

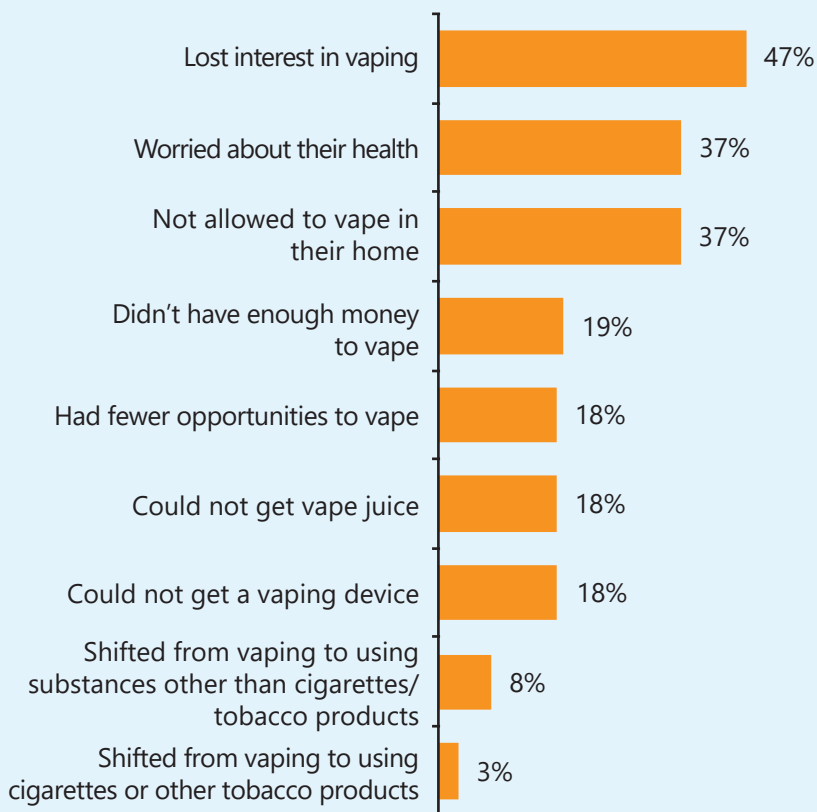
Stopping or reducing vaping

Reasons youth stopped or reduced their vaping during the pandemic

Among youth who had stopped or reduced their vaping in the past three months, their most common reason for doing so (across surveys) was a loss of interest in vaping. However, youth were more likely to report this reason in June than September (53% vs. 42%).

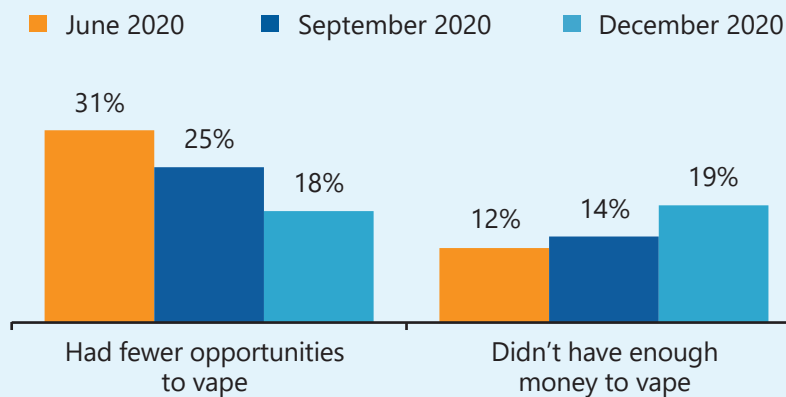
Over time, youth were less likely to report having fewer opportunities to vape but were more likely to report not having enough money to vape, as reasons they had stopped or reduced their vaping in the past three months.

Youth's reasons for having stopped or reduced their vaping in the past three months (among those who stopped or reduced their vaping)



Source: December 2020 survey.
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

**Youth's reasons for having stopped or reduced their vaping in the past three months
(among those who stopped or reduced their vaping)**



Note: The difference between September and the other two timepoints was not statistically significant.

In response to an open-ended question on the June survey about how the pandemic has affected their vaping, youth most commonly noted that they had vaped only in social situations before the pandemic (e.g., at school or parties), and due to the physical distancing regulations that came into effect, they had fewer opportunities and less of a desire to vape during the first three months of the pandemic.

Also, many explained they did not own a vaping device and had shared their friends' vapes before the pandemic, which they did not want to do during the pandemic due to the risk of contracting COVID-19. Some added that they had no desire to buy their own vaping device.

Youth's comments about reduced vaping during the pandemic

"I stopped vaping because I was never addicted to it in the first place, just did it because friends did it."

"I don't own a vape, and during the pandemic I haven't thought about vaping at all. It is strictly a social activity for me."

"I never enjoyed vaping, I would just do it when my friends were to try it out. I'd only use it once or twice and then I'd get bored and wouldn't use it for a month."

"I can't go to school and meet my friends anymore so I don't have the same opportunities to vape."

"My friend who I'd vaped with decided to quit during the pandemic so I don't feel the need to vape at all."

"I usually vape at parties and I haven't gone to any since the pandemic started."

"I usually only hit it like 2 or 3 times at parties or with friends... Since we haven't been able to hang out with friends, I don't do it because I don't have [a vaping device]. I actually don't even like it at all. I would neeevverr buy one. To me it's a waste of money."

"I stopped because I don't have my own vape and sharing them is unsanitary during this time especially. I never had an addiction, I'd just occasionally use my friends'."

"I haven't vaped cause I haven't seen my friends and I use their vapes."

"I don't own a vape I only share with friends at parties. But since COVID-19 I ain't sharing anytime soon."

"COVID-19 made me stop vaping because I don't want to share germs with people and I don't have my own [vaping device]."

"Me having asthma and vaping and also the COVID-19 pandemic made me want to stop."

"I started to care about my future and how much vaping could possibly affect it."

Desire to stop or reduce vaping

Around 60% of December survey respondents who were vaping indicated they wanted to stop or reduce their vaping. This included 35% who wanted to do so in the next three months, 18% within the next year, and 8% in more than a year. Percentages were comparable to findings from September when the question was asked for the first time.

There were no differences in youth's reported desire to stop or reduce their vaping based on their gender, age, or number of days they vaped in the past month.

Youth who saw vaping as less harmful than smoking cigarettes were less likely to report wanting to stop or reduce their vaping (e.g., 28% vs. 46% who saw vaping as equally harmful as smoking cigarettes).

Among December respondents, those who last vaped because they wanted to have fun were less likely to indicate a desire to stop or reduce their vaping compared to youth who last vaped for other reasons (48% vs. 68%). This finding was not seen in September.

Reasons for wanting to stop or reduce vaping

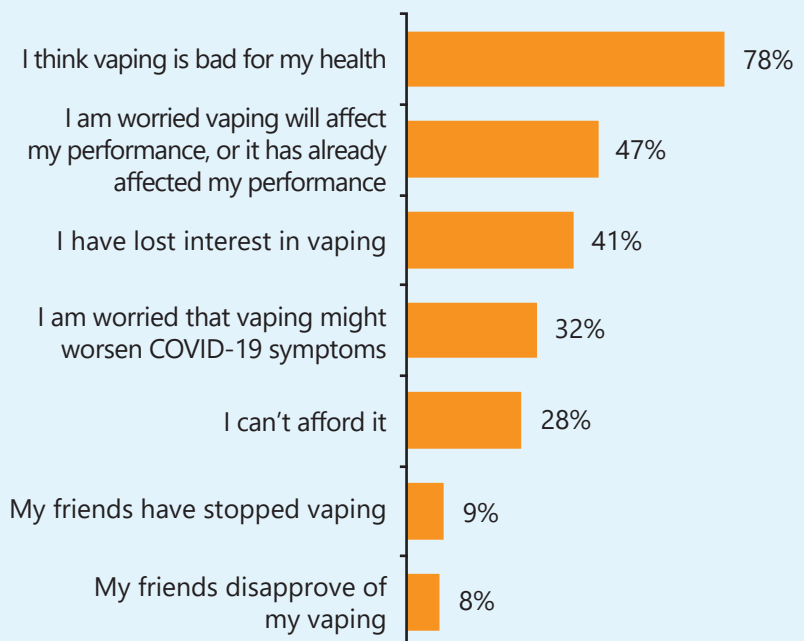


I just don't wanna be like 27 and still vape."

On the December survey, youth who indicated they wanted to stop or reduce their vaping were asked for their reasons. Most identified thinking that vaping was bad for their health.

There were generally no differences in reasons youth gave for wanting to stop vaping, based on their gender identity, age, or number of days they vaped in the past month. Exceptions were that youth aged 14 or older were more likely to identify having lost interest in vaping as a reason for wanting to stop or reduce their vaping. Those who vaped on five or fewer days were also more likely to want to stop or reduce their vaping because they had lost interest (61% vs. 30% of those who vaped on more days).

Youth's reasons for wanting to stop or reduce their vaping (among those who wanted to stop or reduce their vaping)



Source: December 2020 survey.

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Supports to help youth stop or reduce vaping



I think it's great that there are websites and links on the Internet providing important information about this unknown and potentially harmful addiction."

Awareness of resources

Among youth who had ever vaped, most were unaware of available resources to help young people quit or reduce their vaping. For example, 62% of December respondents who vaped had not heard of any available resources in BC, and less than a third (29%) had heard about HealthLink BC.

However, compared to those who completed a survey six months earlier (June), youth in December were more likely to know about QuitNow (19% vs. 12%; among those who vaped).

Youth were also aware of other resources to help young people stop or reduce their vaping, and they most commonly specified resources through their school.

Help to stop vaping

Youth were asked on the September survey what would help them, or what has helped them, to stop or reduce their vaping. They most commonly identified feeling ready or motivated to do so (36%) and/or spending less time around others who vape (37%). Other identified supports included mental health counselling (11%) and access to Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products or smoking cessation products (4%). A few youth indicated that access to QuitNow, HealthLink BC, and/or getting more support through their school to stop or reduce their vaping would be helpful or has been helpful (numbers too small to report).

WHAT YOUTH WANTED TO LEARN ABOUT VAPING

All youth who completed the June survey (including those who had never vaped) were asked an open-ended question about whether there was anything they wanted to learn about vaping.

Many indicated there was nothing else they wanted to learn about vaping. Those who identified wanting to learn something most commonly wanted to understand the harms associated with vaping, and different harms associated with different forms of vaping (e.g., whether vaping without nicotine could still cause damage to the lungs).

Many youth also wanted to know whether vaping is less harmful than smoking cigarettes or cannabis, and wanted to learn about the long-term effects that vaping can have on the lungs and other parts of the body (e.g., brain). Some also felt that more research should be carried out in this area and that the results should be shared openly with youth.

"I want to learn about the lifelong effects of what vaping can do, what it can do to your lungs and possibly if it's safer than smoking weed or smoking a cigarette."

"How much it really affects teens and the long-term effects from vaping, even if you don't see them now, and can it be almost the same as smoking after doing it for a period of time?"

"The difference between cigarettes, weed, and vaping. How bad is it on our lungs? Brain?"

"It seems every time the school tries to educate us on why it's bad, all scientific studies are inconclusive. I know it's because of the longer length of time needed for science to understand all there is to know about vaping, but it certainly isn't convincing when these studies all 'guess' what's going to happen. So, in short, more scientific studies."

"I want ... real facts that talk about the science behind vaping."

"I would like to learn the true health effects of vaping.... To clearly learn the effect a standard, everyday vape has on someone, without the dramatization, and without the propaganda, would put an end to any disagreement."

"I'd like there to be more research, obviously I think everyone wants that but that all takes time."

Other youth wanted to learn more about how to quit vaping, or how to support others to stop vaping.

"I would like to learn how to quit vaping. I've seen lots of resources to keep youth from vaping, but nothing on how to quit, especially since vapes are marketed as an 'alternative' to smoking or something to help quit smoking."

"Whether there are things to help people quit effectively."

"Easy ways to quit."

"What resources there are that can help young people quit or seek help."

"How to help people stop vaping."

"How could I help my friends to quit?"

Others stated they wanted to learn about why youth vape. Some commented that having discussions about the reasons youth might vape (e.g., the social aspect, mental health challenges) could be beneficial. They also felt it would be helpful to focus on the underlying causes of vaping to best support youth.

"Why do people feel the urge to vape? Does vaping really help people calm down at a psychological stand point?"

"I want it to be explained in a more fair way in terms of social relationships ... and more of the social side. You will not convince people to not vape by showing them some video and science statistics."

"I would like to have actual education instead of fear-mongering by adults. The issue is, we aren't taught any facts. The answer to our questions is always 'I don't know, but don't vape!' like, that's not what we need.... Most of the time it's underlying issues. Every student I know who has a nic addiction has untreated depression, abusive parents, etc. If the school would spread accurate information instead of trying to scare students, as well as finding the root of the problem and providing more mental health help, it would be way more successful."

ROLE OF SCHOOL

Youth offered a range of suggestions in response to an open-ended question on the September survey about how schools could best support students to stop or reduce their vaping. A number of youth (who did not vape) identified punitive strategies, such as confiscating students' vapes, monitoring washrooms to catch youth who vape, and sending youth home or suspending them for vaping on school grounds.

"Confiscate their supplies."

"Suspend them."

"Send them home."

"Stricter punishments."

"Ban the vapes on school property."

"Metal detectors in bathrooms to stop vaping in bathrooms."

"Have someone monitor washrooms and change rooms for students vaping."

Many also felt that it could be helpful for students to attend more presentations and watch videos at school, and to put up posters, which address the harms associated with vaping. One suggestion was for similar-age peers to present, as this may have more of an impact on students than adult presenters.

"Educate them on what the effects are."

"They could make kids learn more about vaping by showing them a video or making a presentation."

"By going more into how terrible it is. Like showing the lungs of people doing it and how bad it is for you."

"They could put up posters about the consequences."

"Giving them all the information around vaping (the positive + negatives) and allowing them to make the decision once they have all the information, also educating parents around it."

"Bring in people closer to our age that students can relate to more when having assemblies about not vaping. When the school brings in a 40+ doctor or health official, students usually don't care."

However, others felt that these approaches (punitive rules and providing information on the harms associated with vaping) would likely have no positive effect on youth who already vape.

"Students will only learn to better hide their vaping if it is directly banned; stricter rules encourage more devious behaviours."

"I think students who are or have vaped shouldn't be punished just for that ... Telling kids not to do something will likely make them want to do it more, so I think it should be looked at more like a problem rather than a crime."

"It's very hard. People who are already vaping will not listen. People who don't vape are strongly against vaping."

"When we see teachers giving us information about vaping, we just get irritated and do it more."

"I doubt we'll listen, to be honest. Even when we know cigarettes are harmful we still smoke them, so it'd be a similar situation."

"Posters don't really work. Saying it's gonna kill us is something we hear every day."

"Addiction isn't easily stopped by a poster on a wall or a presentation."

Some suggested that a supportive, understanding, and non-judgmental approach would be most effective in helping youth to stop or reduce their vaping. They felt that greater awareness among school staff of the reasons youth might vape, and particularly awareness of mental health symptoms and addiction, could be an important step to supporting youth to get the help they need. They also felt that youth should be supported to access resources to help them quit vaping.

"They could talk to us 1-on-1 and let us talk about why we are addicted and what they could do to help with stress another way. It's more complicated than telling our parents and them yelling at us for how bad it is."

"Create judgement-free support groups with health experts to look at reasons they started vaping (stress, etc.) and reasons to quit and maybe helping them manage what got them to start vaping (ex. help find other ways to cope with stress other than vaping)."

"Don't shame students for vaping. Acknowledge them and their feelings, then help them on their terms."

"Stop giving huge consequences and causing stigma around vaping."

"Instead of banning vaping, give students help and access to quit."

"I think schools should talk about how to quit vaping because school pretty much only says you shouldn't vape, but what happens if you already have?"

"No one is going to stop vaping unless they want to, you may as well create them a designated area for them to vape and it be just right outside of school grounds, somewhere they know they can go to vape."

"If you want vaping to be less of a problem, give us a place to do it."

"They could help the kids that are addicted to get help, and to stop kids from starting they could introduce more mental health support."

"Teachers could be a lot more aware of the effects and symptoms of anxiety and depression."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Despite concerns that the pandemic may lead to increases in vaping, most youth who completed surveys had not vaped, and those who had vaped often stopped or reduced their vaping during the pandemic. However, it was concerning that youth who completed a December survey were more likely to report they were vaping more compared to three months earlier. Also, some youth were more likely to have vaped during the pandemic, including young people who lived with someone who vaped or had friends who vaped; those who were vaping because they were addicted or struggling with mental health challenges; and those who were less likely to think that vaping negatively impacted their health.

Although some youth participated in all three waves of the survey, the results cannot be claimed to be representative of all youth aged 12 to 19 or to show behavioural changes over time. The report does however provide a snapshot of youth vaping at three different timepoints. As such, it paints an important picture of youth vaping during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights the link between stress and vaping. The more time that elapsed since the pandemic started, the more likely youth were to report higher stress levels now compared to pre-pandemic. Moreover, the more stress youth experienced, the more likely they were to vape in the past three months. Also, just under half of youth who

vaped in the past three months reported last vaping because they were stressed or anxious. These findings, and youth survey respondents' suggestions for how youth who vape can be supported, underscore the necessity of providing youth with the mental health support they may need.

The findings also highlight the importance of increasing awareness among youth of available supports to help them stop or reduce their vaping. Over two thirds of youth wanted to quit vaping in the future, yet most were unaware of existing resources in BC to help young people quit vaping.

Youth are clearly accessing information about vaping from a variety of trusted sources, as well as from less reliable ones, such as vaping companies, and are seeing vaping products advertised on the social media sites they visit. It is therefore noteworthy that when youth wanted reliable information about vaping, they most commonly identified an adult family member as the source they would reach out to. This finding speaks to the need to ensure that adults feel equipped to have an informed and non-judgmental conversation with youth about the topic, which provides the information and support young people are looking for. There may also be value in supporting influential social media personalities to become more aware of the potential harms of vaping and some of the misinformation which

might be contained in vaping advertisements, so that they can share this information with their followers.

Schools can be a source of information and support for young people, where important and non-judgmental dialogues about vaping can take place. Such dialogues could include information about how mental health can influence decisions about vaping, the potential risks of sharing vapes, and locally available resources for those wishing to reduce or quit their vaping.

The role of youth researchers on this project has emphasized the importance of ensuring young people are involved in data collection and hosting conversations about vaping. This should be extended to ensure they are also involved in designing interventions. As one youth researcher stated, *"We need to listen to the youth who vape to understand their experiences, because youth who don't vape don't know what it's like, and the same goes for adults."*

SHARING THE RESULTS

Youth researchers picked out three findings that they felt adults should pay particular attention to. These were:

- Three quarters (75%) of youth who vaped on a daily basis vaped within the first 30 minutes of waking up. They felt this was important to highlight as it showed the need for adults to recognize that some youth are experiencing addiction, and responses to youth vaping should take this into account.
- There was a rise in survey respondents reporting high stress levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is important for adults to consider, as managing stress was one of the underlying reasons for some respondents to vape. Teaching stress management skills would be beneficial to all youth, particularly as some youth researchers have found that access to mental health resources has been limited by the pandemic.
- Around a quarter (24%) of youth who vaped were below the age of 15, yet a significant percentage of youth at each time point had been able to purchase their vaping products from a store.

Finally, the youth researchers felt that youth who did not vape should try to understand the reasons their peers might vape, in order to be less judgmental and more compassionate.

The youth researchers identified the key audiences they would like to share the results with. These included:


- **Parents/caregivers** - The findings show that any youth can have experience with vaping and also that having a trusted adult to talk to is important. Resources should be made available to support parents to have an open, informed and non-judgmental conversation with their kids about the reasons youth might be vaping. Such resources could include articles in school newsletters to parents, and parent Facebook groups, and ensure parents are aware of services and supports to help youth deal with a nicotine addiction.
- **Schools** - As with parents, understanding the reasons youth might vape can help schools to more effectively respond to vaping and support youth who vape. The report findings can inform school interventions and policies, and lead to a focus on encouraging open conversations about vaping including its relation to mental health, rather than suspending or expelling youth. Schools can play a vital role in supporting youth to access needed counselling, and particularly online counselling while the pandemic is restricting activities.

- **Elementary schools** should focus on prevention by supporting students to build positive peer relationships, get involved in healthy activities, learn healthy ways to manage stress, and to access supports to address mental health challenges they may experience. Such prevention strategies, in combination with age-appropriate facts about vaping and addiction delivered by older students, would likely be the most effective way to address vaping.

- **All adults** - While the youth researchers committed to sharing the survey results among their peers, they felt the focus should be on getting the information to adults, so that adults can have a better understanding of what youth's experiences have been with vaping and the pandemic.

The results from the surveys highlight the need for adults to listen without judgment to youth's experiences and struggles, in order to learn how to best support them. The findings also show the underlying and sometimes complex reasons behind vaping, and that there is often more than one reason a youth might vape.

The youth researchers also created an infographic poster of the findings from the report they felt were most important for parents to know.



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**VAPING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:
BC YOUTH'S EXPERIENCES**

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Vaping during the COVID-19 pandemic

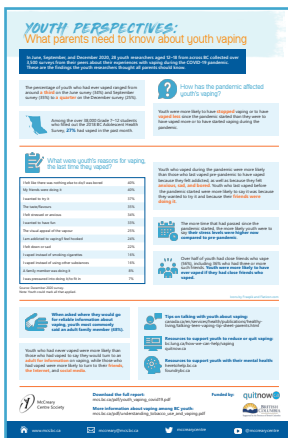
BC youth's thoughts and experiences

Hard copies of this report and the infographic poster can be ordered at mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

The Youth Action Grants (YAGs) were created by McCreary's Youth Advisory & Action Council (YAC). The purpose of the YAGs is to provide BC youth (ages 12–19) from school districts that participated in the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey the opportunity to deliver a project to improve youth health in their school or community. Applications from youth wishing to address vaping or other health topics are currently being accepted. Learn more about the YAGs and download the application at www.mcs.bc.ca/youth_action_grants.

QuitNow is a BC-based service for those looking to reduce or quit tobacco and e-cigarette use. It is funded by the government of British Columbia and delivered by the BC Lung Association. The service is available free-of-charge to all BC residents at www.quitnow.ca.

HealthLink BC has a number of resources for people wanting to quit nicotine-related products at www.healthlinkbc.ca.



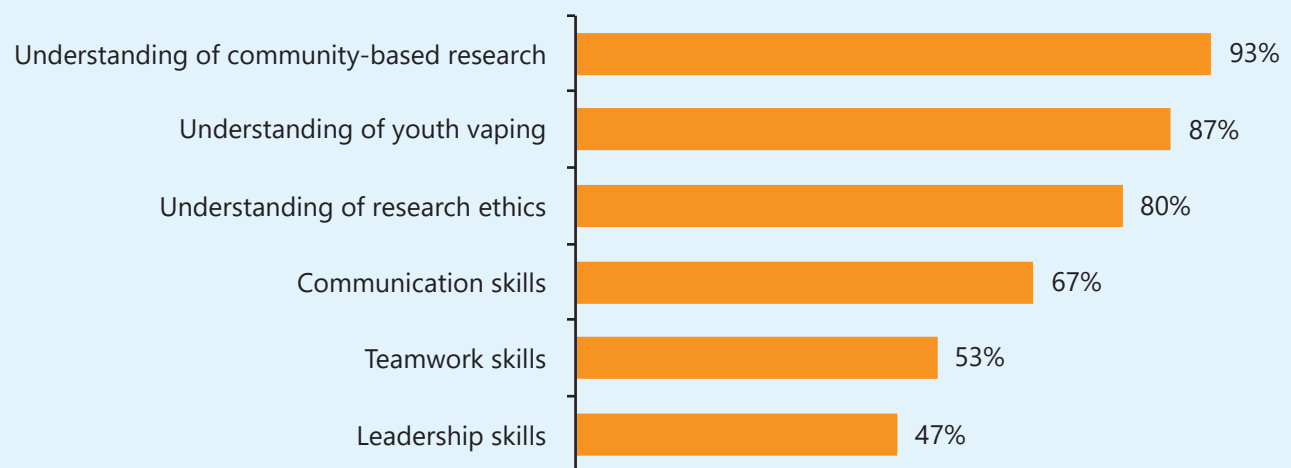
APPENDIX: YOUTH RESEARCHERS' EXPERIENCE ON THE PROJECT

Youth researchers involved in this project ranged in age from 13 to 18, and came from a range of backgrounds, including European, Indigenous, South Asian and East Asian. The youth also represented diversity in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as experiences with health conditions and disabilities.

In response to an evaluation question about what they liked most about taking part in the project, youth researchers commonly identified learning about the research process and contributing to community-based research, as well as reviewing the survey findings, and the opportunity to engage with other youth across the province who had similar interests.

In addition to learning more about youth vaping, evaluation findings showed that most youth researchers reported gaining skills and knowledge in areas such as community-based research and research ethics (e.g., confidentiality) through their involvement in the project. Virtually all youth also reported at least some improvement in their communication, teamwork, and leadership.

What youth researchers gained from their involvement in the project (those who indicated 'quite a bit' or 'very much')



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

The majority of youth researchers reported gaining useful work experience. They also felt they had helped other young people, made a contribution to their community, and had been involved in a project that was meaningful to them.

What youth researchers gained from their involvement in the project...

"I really enjoyed the research experience I obtained from this project."

"I enjoyed taking part in this, and think it was great preparation for future jobs."

"I really enjoyed meeting other youth and sharing experiences about what was happening in their community and all the data we were able to collect about all youth throughout B.C."

"I helped out my community and participated in a really cool project!"

"I got to earn valuable experience and help the community."

"I wanted work experience and to do something interesting and meaningful during lockdown, and that's what I got from taking part."

"I hoped that I would be able to identify problems around youth vaping in our province and that is what we were able to achieve."

In response to an open-ended question about what they had learned through their involvement in the project, youth researchers commonly identified learning about the reasons young people may vape (including the link between mental health and vaping); BC youth's experiences with vaping; and how to best support youth who vape.

What youth researchers learned from their involvement in the project...

"I learned quite a bit about the endeavours happening all over B.C. that I was originally unaware of. I also learnt a lot about mental health and how people's mental health struggles may cause them to be addicted to substances etc."

"I learned a lot about vaping in our youth and the reasons why people do it."

"About how many people are actually vaping and why."

"I learned more about vaping issues amongst youth around the province."

"I learnt about team work and public speaking, how to get better at it."

"The impact of vaping on youth and understanding what the vaping youth need."

"Various statistics and information gathered from youth about vaping."

"I learned other perspectives on vaping from my fellow youth."

"About what other youth are going through and how to help them."

Most youth did not report experiencing challenges to participating in virtual meetings or in administering the vaping surveys. However, a few identified difficulties with encouraging other young people to complete the surveys, and noted that some of their peers were reluctant to participate because they did not feel online surveys were anonymous or secure.

Other feedback from youth researchers...

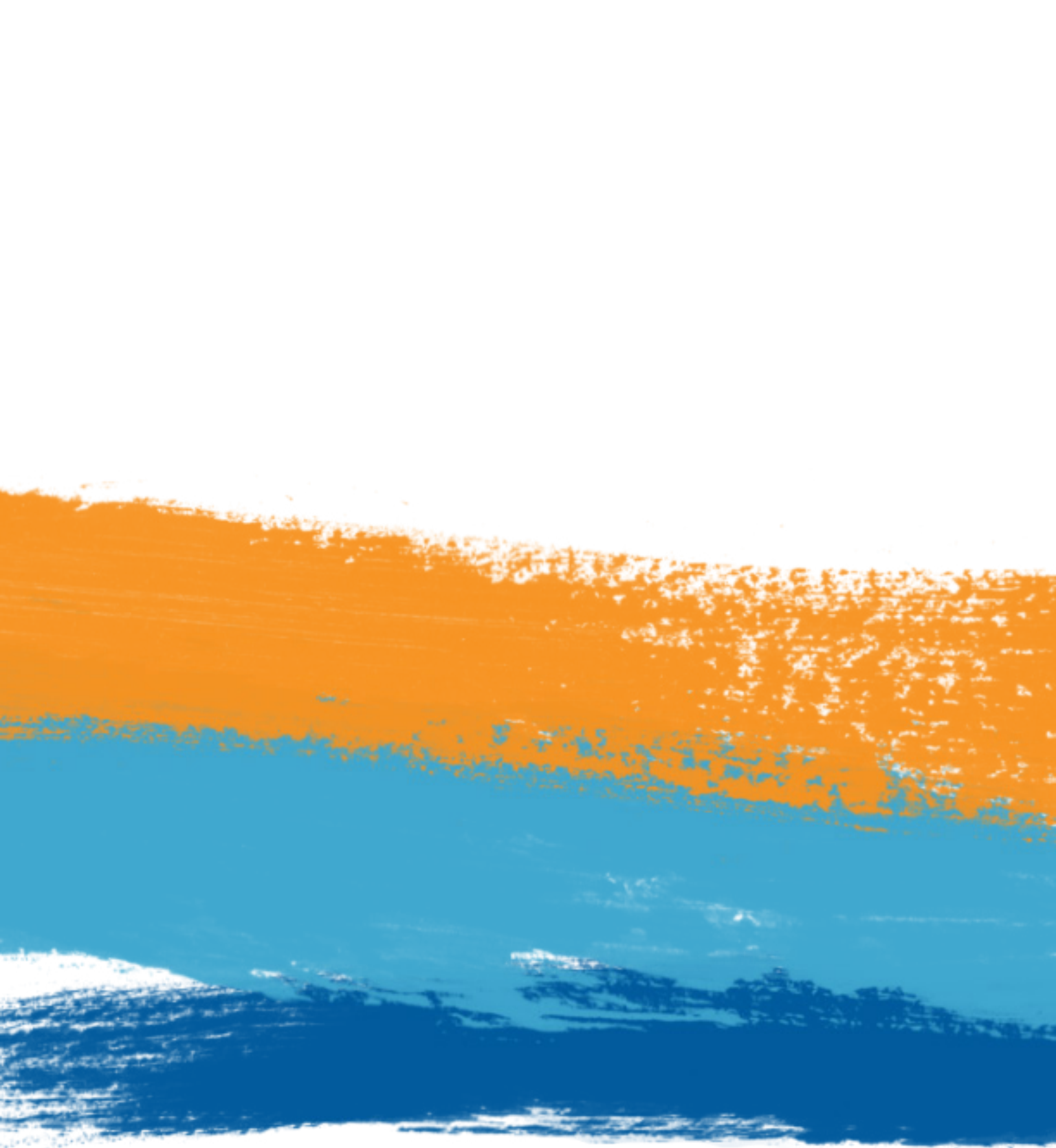
"It was educational and engaging throughout."

"I think everything went pretty smoothly."

"I wouldn't have changed anything."

"I am so extremely grateful for this amazing opportunity. I made wonderful friends and it just feels good being able to help!"

"Thank you very much for this awesome opportunity! I really enjoyed it and learned lots."



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