



Major vaping reforms: Will they deliver on public health aims?

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Summary

On 17 June, new vaping laws aimed at reducing youth vaping will come into effect, introducing measures to limit product visibility, tighten marketing restrictions, and end the sale of disposable vapes.

Drawing on evidence from parallel tobacco control measures, this Briefing suggests these changes—if rigorously enforced—could help to reduce vaping uptake among young people and support those trying to quit vaping. However, industry non-compliance poses a major threat, and key regulatory gaps still require urgent attention.

Previous Briefings^{1,2} have highlighted how youth vaping in Aotearoa rose dramatically following the arrival of cheap, high-nicotine, disposable vapes in 2019.³ Aotearoa has among the highest youth vaping rates in the world – almost three times higher than Australia, Canada and the USA,⁴ with many young people who vape experiencing adverse physical and mental health outcomes, including addiction.⁵⁻⁸

In response, the coalition Government [amended the law](#) in December 2024, immediately increasing penalties for selling vapes to minors and introducing new rules on product visibility, marketing, and design, which take effect on 17 June 2025.

Reduced vaping product visibility

From 17 June, general vape retailers, such as dairies, will no longer be able to display vapes, a change that aligns vaping point-of-sale regulations with those introduced for smoked tobacco in 2012. Specialist vapes stores may display vaping products, but these must not be visible from outside the store, and online stores may no longer show vaping product images.

Many studies show that tobacco point-of-sale display bans have helped reduce youth smoking and are associated with reduced adult smoking prevalence.⁹⁻¹³ Logically, parallel measures that greatly reduce young people's exposure to vaping products will have a similar effect, helping put vapes 'out of sight, and out of mind'. Limiting visual cues that trigger cravings may also reduce relapse among people trying to quit vaping.¹⁴

Marketing restrictions

An [earlier Briefing](#)¹⁵ explained that upcoming changes will limit product discounting, giveaways and loyalty schemes, tactics likely to have attracted young customers who do not vape. The measures will also disallow the use of email-newsletters to promote these offers.

Tobacco control research shows comprehensive marketing restrictions reduce smoking uptake and, to a lesser extent, contribute to cessation among people who currently smoke;¹² applying these restrictions to vaping should achieve similar outcomes.

Ending sales of disposable vapes

From 17 June, selling, offering for sale, manufacturing, supplying or distributing disposable

vaping devices will be disallowed. Other jurisdictions, including [Australia](#), [Belgium](#) and [England](#), have recently introduced similar restrictions, but it is too early to assess their impact.

Young people prefer disposable vapes; a 2023 survey found 65% of 16-19 year olds who vaped used disposable vapes most often, and an additional 16% used 'multiple products' likely including disposable vapes⁴ (Figure 1).

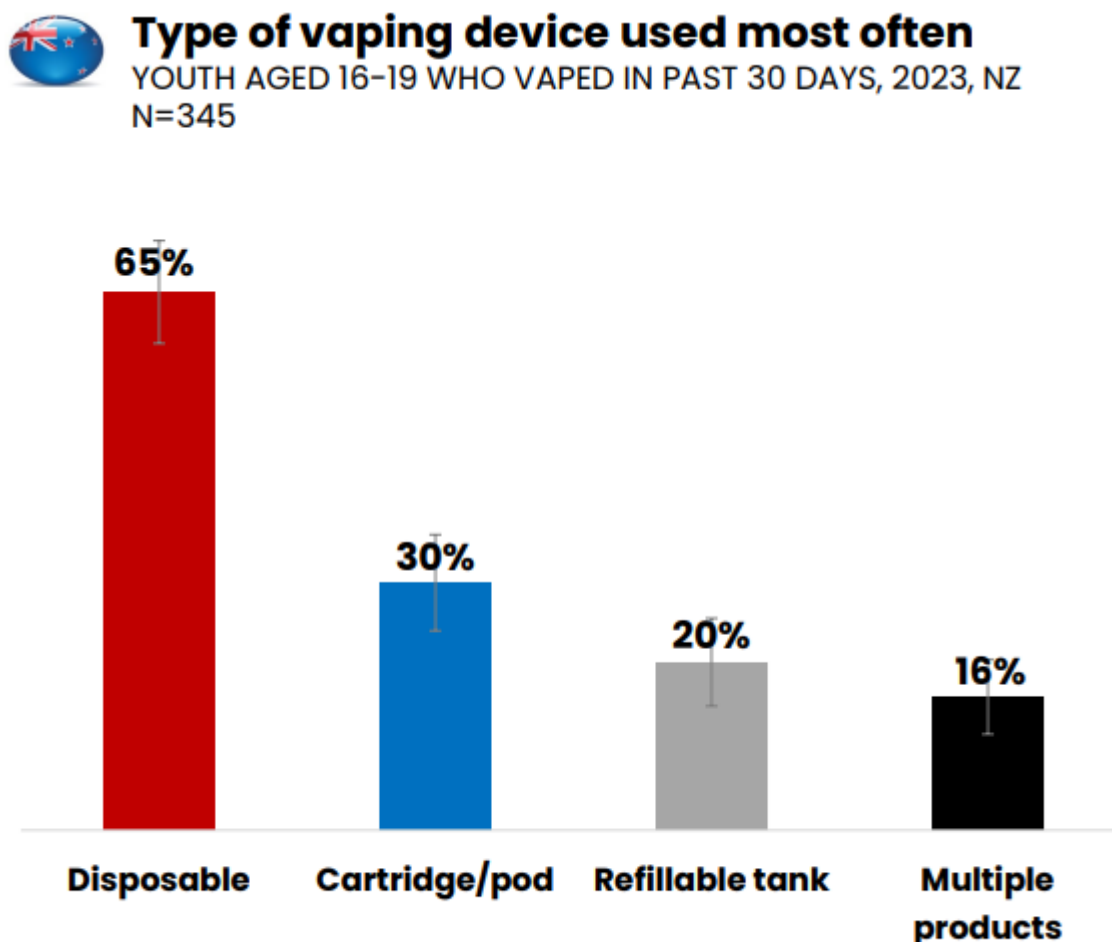


Figure 1: Type of vaping device used most often, 2023, New Zealand. ITC Youth and Young Adult Survey. Note that participants were permitted to choose more than one response option.

However, a survey of adults living in Aotearoa who smoke or have recently quit found they were much less likely to use disposable vapes (See [Appendix](#): Tables 1 and 2). Disallowing disposable vapes will thus likely affect young people more, given the high proportion who use them.

Although disposable vapes are inexpensive (often NZ\$10 or less), reusable devices are more cost-effective over time; disallowing disposables is thus unlikely to financially disadvantage people using vaping to stop smoking. Like the 1997 policy ending sales of 10-pack cigarettes—favoured by minors due to the lower price—this law change aims to address product affordability's role in youth uptake. But will it work?

Disallowing disposable vapes—in combination with ending price discounting (discussed

above) —is likely to reduce, but not eliminate, the availability of very cheap vaping products. The vape industry has already introduced [low-priced reusable products](#), and will likely expand this category. Excise tax would reduce affordability more effectively than disallowing specific product designs.¹⁶

Ongoing monitoring is needed to assess the impact on youth vaping, but other benefits are clear: disallowing disposables will greatly reduce toxic vape waste that poses serious [environmental health risks](#).¹⁷

Likely impact on public health

The known effects of tobacco policies offer important insights into the new laws' likely impact, and parallels with policies that reduced youth smoking offer grounds for cautious optimism.^{12 13} Nonetheless, complex real-world settings mean the outcomes remain uncertain.

Critics have argued that people may turn to smoking if they cannot buy their favoured (disposable) vape products.¹⁸ However, in 2022 (well after disposable vapes became widely available), fewer than 15% of people who formerly smoked and currently vaped used disposables (see [Appendix](#)). The potential risk that people may return to smoking affects only a small minority.

If rigorously enforced, the new measures will reduce vapes' visibility and may denormalise vaping and reduce the availability of cheap vapes, likely reducing vaping uptake among youth. Furthermore, the new measures are likely to support the many people who regret starting to vape and want to quit.^{14 19 20}

[However, poor compliance is widespread](#),^{21 22 23} and poses a major threat to the effectiveness of these new measures. The [Ministry of Health has communicated](#) what the changes mean for retailers.

Although the new measures close some loopholes, they fall short in other respects. Because vaping is highly addictive, comprehensive measures, including bespoke support for vaping cessation among young people, are urgently needed. Further measures, such as reducing vape store numbers, their location near schools,²⁴ and their clustering in low-income neighbourhoods,^{21 24} are also needed to reduce youth vaping and the inequities in prevalence already evident.³

What this Briefing adds

- **New vaping laws take effect 17 June**, introducing measures to reduce youth vaping by limiting product visibility, tightening marketing rules, and ending the sale of disposable vapes.
- Tight marketing restrictions and point-of-sale display ban aligns with parallel successful tobacco control strategies; these measures are predicted to reduce youth vaping uptake, and support people's efforts to quit vaping.
- Disallowing disposable vapes addresses environmental concerns, and removes youth-favoured products from the market, but the availability of low-cost reusable vapes may undermine the effectiveness of this measure.

Implications for policy and practice

- Industry non-compliance poses a major threat to the effectiveness of these law changes, and rigorous enforcement is essential.
- Although the new measures close some loopholes, they fall short of a comprehensive approach to addressing youth vaping.
- Detailed monitoring and policy evaluation are essential to measure policy effectiveness and any unintended consequences.

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Appendix: Type of vaping device used by adults who smoke or recently stopped smoking

Tables 1 and 2 present unpublished results from Wave 4 of the [New Zealand ITC EASE survey](#), conducted Oct-Dec 2022. A total of 1,579 people who smoke or recently quit took part.

Table 1: Type of vaping device used most often, adults who recently quit smoking and use e-cigarettes at least monthly, 2022, New Zealand

Device Type	Number	Weighted percentage [95% confidence interval]
It is disposable, not refillable (battery is non-rechargeable)	48	14.6 [10.3, 20.4]
It uses pre-filled pods, caps, or cartridges that must be replaced when they are empty (rechargeable)	72	29.9 [22.6, 38.5]
It uses re-fillable pods, caps, or cartridges (battery is rechargeable)	81	33.7 [26.3, 41.9]
It has a tank that you fill with liquids (battery is rechargeable)	62	21.7 [16.1, 28.7]
Total	263	

Table 2: Type of vaping device used most often, adults who currently smoke and use e-cigarettes at least monthly, 2022, New Zealand

Device Type	Number	Weighted percentage [95% confidence interval]
It is disposable, not refillable (battery is non-rechargeable)	133	25.7 [21.4, 30.6]
It uses pre-filled pods, caps, or cartridges that must be replaced when they are empty (rechargeable)	172	37.6 [32.4, 43.0]
It uses re-fillable pods, caps, or cartridges (battery is rechargeable)	121	21.8 [17.8, 26.5]
It has a tank that you fill with liquids (battery is rechargeable)	84	14.9 [11.5, 19.1]
Total	510	

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