

# ACT secondary students' use of tobacco and e-cigarettes, 1996 to 2022

## Results in brief

Smoking prevalence among Australian secondary school students' remains a significant public health concern. The use and availability of e-cigarettes among young people in Australia has also become a serious public health challenge, with large increases in young people e-cigarette use being reported over recent years.

This insights brief examines ACT secondary students' use of tobacco and e-cigarettes between 1996 and 2022. It provides a summary of the detailed report *ACT secondary students' use of tobacco and e-cigarettes, 1996 to 2022*, which was prepared by the Epidemiology Section of the ACT Health Directorate.

[Results of the full report can be found by clicking on the download button below.](#)

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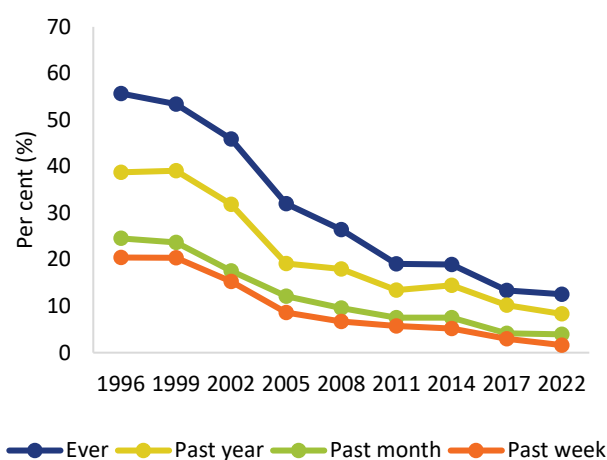
## Key messages

### Smoking

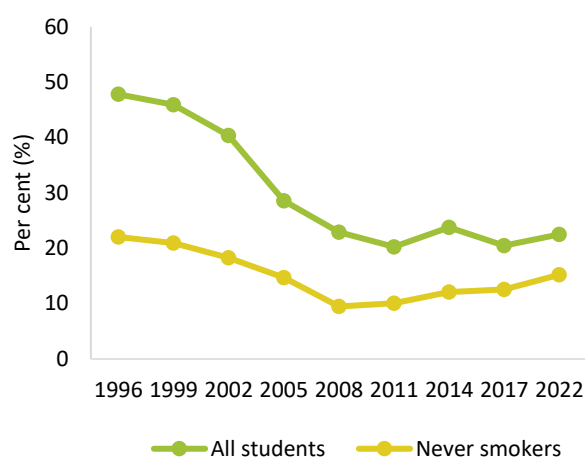
- There was a significant decline in the proportion of ACT secondary students who had ever smoked, smoked in the past year, past month and past week, between 1996 and 2022 (Figure 1a).
- In 2022, the ACT estimates for the proportions of students who had ever smoked, smoked in the past year, past month and past week were similar to the national estimates (Table 1).
- Over the same period, the proportion of secondary students susceptible<sup>1</sup> to smoking significantly declined, however, among secondary students who had never smoked, the proportion who were susceptible to smoking remained stable. Since 2008, there has been an increase in never smokers' susceptibility to smoking (Figure 1b).
- In 2022, 48% of secondary students who had ever vaped were susceptible to smoking compared to just 13% who had never vaped.

<sup>1</sup> Susceptibility is defined as any intention to smoke or any intention to vape in the next 12 months.

**Figure 1a: Smoking prevalence by recency, ACT secondary students, 1996–2022**



**Figure 1b: Smoking susceptibility, ACT secondary students, 1996–2022**



**Table 1: Smoking prevalence, ACT secondary students and Australian secondary students, 2022**

Recency period	ACT	Australia
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Lifetime (ever) smoking	12.6 (8.4, 18.3)	13.5 (11.1, 16.3)
Past year smoking	8.3 (5.5, 12.5)	8.2 (6.7, 9.9)
Past month smoking	3.9# (2.2, 7.1)	3.4 (2.7, 4.4)
Past week smoking	1.6# (0.9, 3.0)	2.1 (1.6, 2.7)

95% CI: 95% confidence interval.

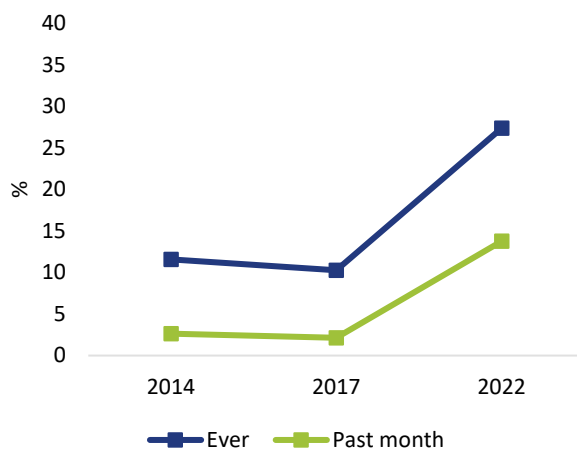
# Estimate has a relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

## Vaping

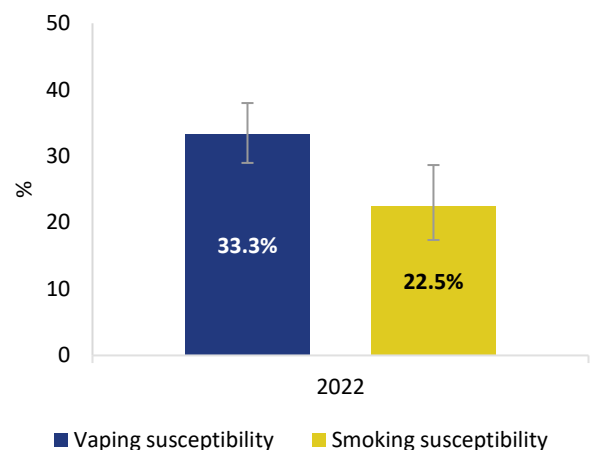
- Between 2014 and 2022, there was a 125% increase in the proportion of students who reported that they had ever vaped (12% and 27% respectively) (Figure 2a).
- Likewise, the proportion of students who reported that they had vaped in the past month significantly increased over the same period, with a 367% increase in past month vaping (3% and 14% respectively) (Figure 2a).
- There was an increase from 4% to 11% among male students who had vaped in the past month compared to a 2% to 16% increase among female students who had vaped in the past month between 2014 and 2022.
- When looking at past month vaping by age group, there was an increase from 1% to 10% among students aged 12 to 15 years who had vaped in the past month compared to an increase from 6% to 22% among students aged 16 to 17 years between 2014 and 2022.

- In 2022, 33% of secondary students were susceptible to vaping making them almost one and a half times more likely to be susceptible to vaping than smoking (Figure 2b).
- In 2022, females were 1.6 times more likely to be susceptible to vaping than males.
- Students who had vaped in the past month were 1.8 times more likely to report that they would find it difficult to stop vaping than students who had smoked in the past month would find it difficult to stop smoking in 2022.
- In 2022, more students reported that none of their friends smoked compared to none who vaped. Around one third of students reported that some or most/almost all of their friends smoked compared to more than half whose friends vaped.
- In 2022, the ACT estimates for ever vaping, vaping in the past month and regular vaping were similar to national estimates (Table 2).
- Never smokers were significantly more likely to be susceptible to vaping than never vapers in 2022 (Figure 3).

**Figure 2a: Vaping prevalence by recency, ACT secondary students, 2014-2022**



**Figure 2b: Vaping susceptibility and smoking susceptibility, ACT secondary students, 2022**



**Table 2: Vaping prevalence by gender and age group, ACT secondary students, 2022**

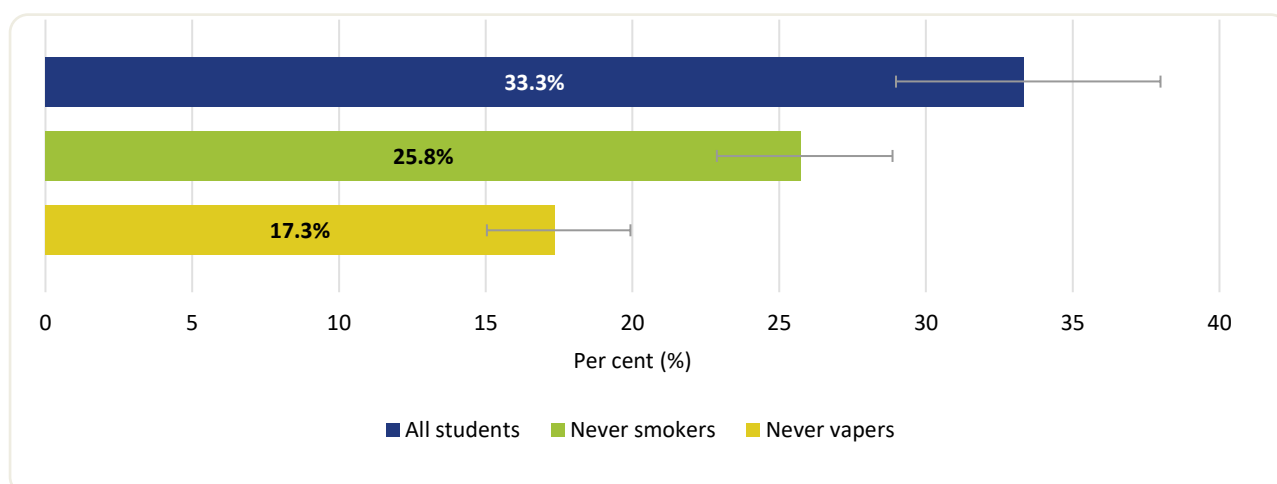
Recency period	Male	Female	12 to 15	16 to 17	Total <sup>(a)</sup>
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Lifetime (ever) vaping	23.5 (17.8, 30.3)	30.6 (21.3, 41.7)	20.7 (15.4, 27.3)	41.9 (35.4, 48.7)	27.4 (23.1, 32.1)
Past month vaping	11.4 (7.8, 16.4)	15.9 (10.8, 22.9)	9.8 (6.8, 14.0)	22.3 (17.7, 27.8)	13.8 (11.5, 16.4)
Regular vaping (20+ days past month)	3.5 (2.4, 5.1)	7.2# (4.2, 12.1)	3.8# (2.1, 6.7)	8.6 (5.8, 12.6)	5.3 (3.4, 8.2)

95% CI: 95% confidence interval.

<sup>(a)</sup> Total includes respondents who identified as male, female, other and those who did not answer and may not always add to the sum of male and female.

# Estimate has a relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

Figure 3: Vaping susceptibility, ACT secondary students, 2022



## What does this mean?

- Tobacco use has declined over time; however e-cigarette use has risen, especially among female students and younger students.
- Increased prevalence of vaping over time, together with higher susceptibility to vaping, finding it difficult to stop vaping and having friends who vape have been observed.
- Protecting young people from the harms of vaping and nicotine dependence is the primary focus of the Australian Government’s reforms to e-cigarette regulation<sup>2</sup>. The monitoring of tobacco and e-cigarette use over time will help inform the impact of these measures.

## Acknowledgements

The ACT Health Directorate would like to thank the government and non-government education authorities, the school principals, teachers, and students who participated in the survey to make this study possible.

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To access the full report, click the download button on page one or visit [HealthStats ACT](#).



Epidemiology Section  
Data Analytics Branch

For further information:  
[HealthSurvey@act.gov.au](mailto:HealthSurvey@act.gov.au)  
[www.stats.health.act.gov.au](http://www.stats.health.act.gov.au)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/smoking-vaping-and-tobacco/about-vaping#:~:text=smoking%20and%20vaping,-Vaping%20and%20e%2Dcigarette%20laws%20and%20reforms,smoking%20or%20manage%20nicotine%20dependence>