# Use of vapes and other novel tobacco and nicotine products among young people in Great Britain

ASH Fact Sheet | June 2026

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# Executive Summary

This factsheet presents findings from the 2026 ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey on vaping among 11–17-year-olds in Great Britain. Key findings include:

- **19% of 11–17-year-olds have tried vaping**, an estimated **1.1 million**. This has been at a similar level since 2023.
- **6% currently vape,** an estimated **370k**, with **2% vaping daily**, an estimated **140k**.
- Ever smoking among youth increased from 14% in 2023 to 21% in 2025, raising concerns. However, ever smoking has fallen to **18% in 2026**. One in 20 young people currently smoke (4.8%).
- Perceived harm from vaping is high: **62% of young people inaccurately believe vaping is as harmful or more harmful than smoking.**

# Introduction

This factsheet analyses how behaviour and attitudes to vapes (e-cigarettes) among young people have changed over time. The Youth Smokefree GB analysis conducted by ASH is based on data concerning young people collected by YouGov for ASH and is carried out in the Spring each year. The survey began in 2013, and this update includes the results of the 2026 survey (n=2,926) carried out in March and April 2026. The 2026 survey was of 11-17 year olds. Before 2026, the survey covered 11-18 year olds, but only the 11-17 portions of these surveys are used in this fact sheet.

The methodology is set out in Appendix 2. For information on adult vaping see Use of vapes (e-cigarettes) among adults in Great Britain.[1] For a summary of regulations on vapes see Appendix 1. For detail about vaping and smoking definitions, see Appendix 3.

# 1. Trends in behaviour

**Vaping prevalence over time**

- Current vaping is 6% in 2026, (370k children) following a doubling from 3% in 2021 to 7% in 2022.
- Ever vaping among 11-17 year olds is at 19% (an estimated 1.1 million children), having plateaued at 18-20% between 2023 and 2026.
- Regular vaping (more than once a week) plateaued at 4% in 2026 (200k children), after rising from 1% in 2021 to 4% in 2023.
- 38% of current vapers vape daily, equivalent to 2% of all 11-17 year olds (140k children)
- Experimentation (tried once or twice) is the most common form of vape use at 10% (an estimated 590k children).

**Vaping by age**

- Prevalence increases with age:
    - 11–15-year-olds: 13% ever vaped; 4% currently vape.
    - 16–17-year-olds: 32% ever vaped; 13% currently vape.

**Vaping by smoking status**

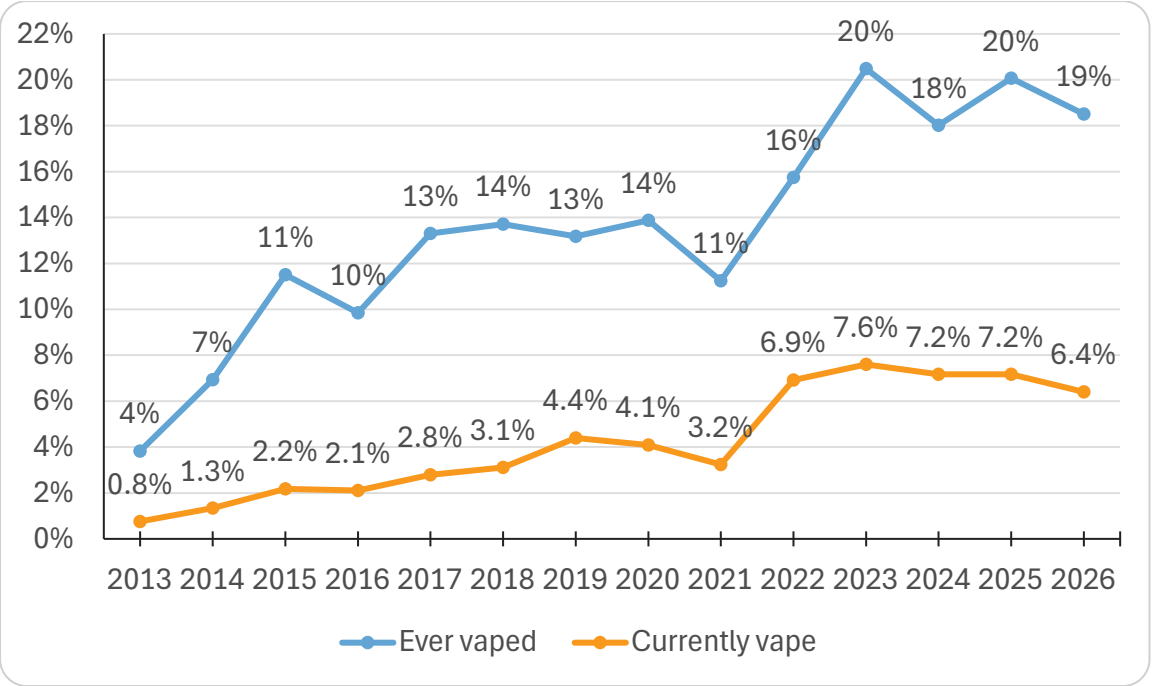
- 52% of 11-17 year olds who currently smoke also vape, compared with 19% of those who have stopped smoking.
- Among the 81% of 11-17 year olds who report never having smoked, 9% have tried vaping and 1% currently vape.
- Ever smoking among youth increased from 14% in 2023 to 21% in 2025, raising concerns. However, in 2026 ever smoking has fallen to 18%.

## 1.1 Vaping prevalence over time

**For definitions and question wording, see Appendix 3.**

In 2026, most 11-17 year olds (children) have never tried vapes (82%). The proportion who have never vaped is similar to the previous two years (2024: 81%, 2025: 79%). The proportion of 11-17 year olds who currently vape (6%, Figure 1) is similar to last year (7%). Only 3% of children say they are not aware of vapes (e-cigarettes) in 2026, compared to 36% in 2013 when the survey started. This group is assumed to have never vaped.

**Figure 1.** Use of vapes by GB youth (aged 11-17), 2013-2026

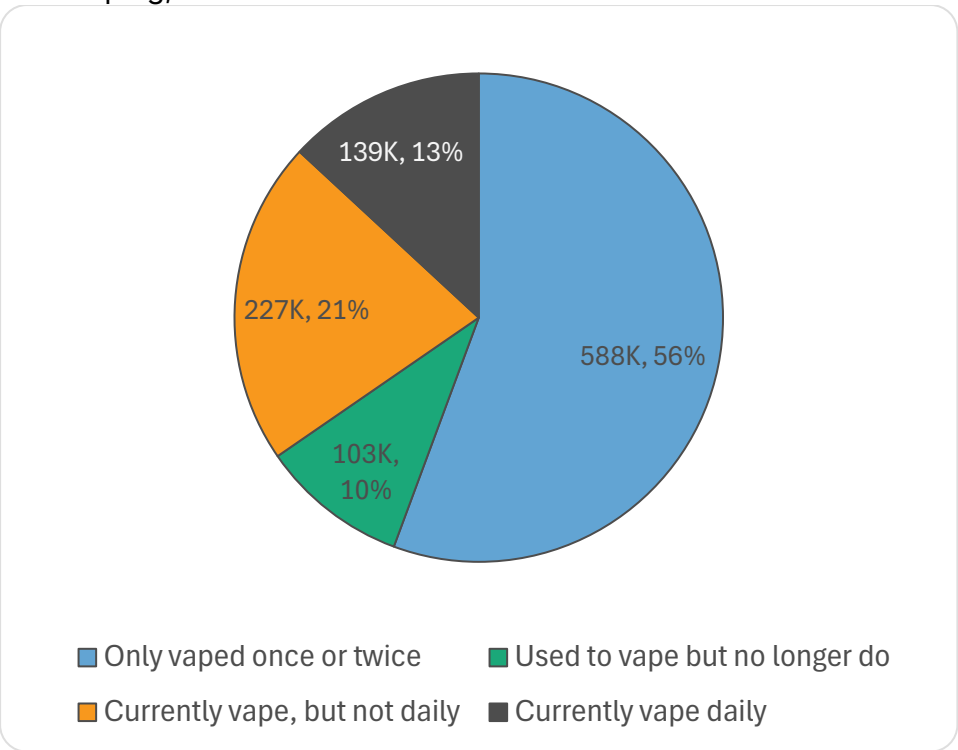



**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2013=1,895, 2014=1,817, 2015=1,834, 2016=1,735, 2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019=1,982, 2020=2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2023=2,028, 2024=2,574, 2025=2,746, 2026=2,926).*

In 2026, 19% of 11-17 year olds have tried vaping. Ever vaping rates had increased significantly each year from 2021 (11%) to 2023 (20%), but this trend appears to have plateaued in 2024 (18%), 2025 (20%) and 2026 (19%).

The 19% who have tried vaping is equivalent to about 1.1 million young people in GB. Most of these have only ever vaped once or twice (58%, equivalent to 590 thousand young people, Figure 2). About one in 8 young people who have ever vaped currently do so daily (13%, equivalent to 140 thousand young people).

**Figure 2.** Degree of vaping among ever vapers, GB youth (aged 11-17) who have ever tried vaping, 2026

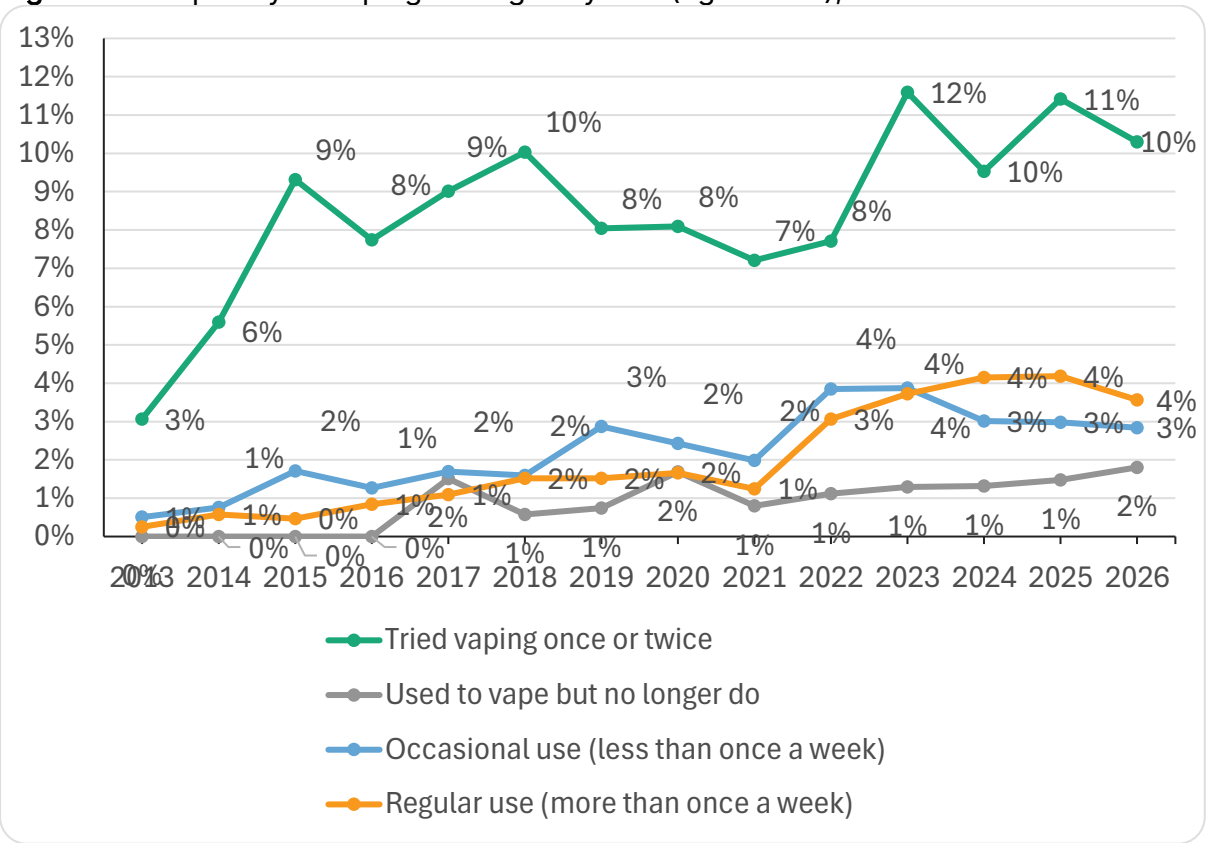



**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey 2026.** *Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds who have ever vaped (n=640)*

Experimentation with vapes (trying once or twice) grew significantly from 8% in 2022 to 12% in 2023 (Figure 3). This increase plateaued in 2024 (10%), 2025 (11%) and 2026 (10%). Most (78%) of those who have never smoked but have vaped have only tried vaping once or twice.

Current vaping doubled between 2021 (3%) and 2022 (7%) and has remained fairly static since (7% in 2025). Regular use has increased since 2021 (1%), with 4% of 11-17 year olds vaping more than weekly since 2023.

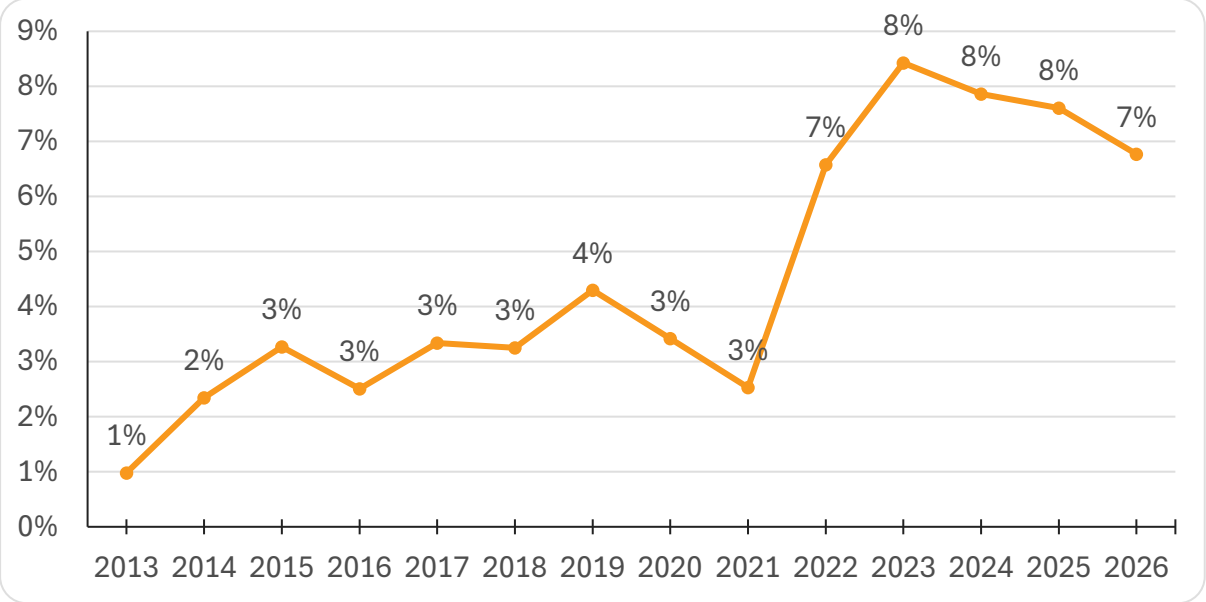
**Figure 3.** Frequency of vaping among GB youth (aged 11-17), 2013-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2013=1,895, 2014=1,817, 2015=1,834, 2016=1,735, 2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019=1,982, 2020=2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2023=2,028, 2024=2,574, 2025=2,746, 2026=2,926)*

Another measure of current vaping is whether people have vaped in the last month. The levels of vaping in the last month appear similar to the levels of current vaping and also show a plateau (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Past month vaping, GB youth (11-17), 2013-2026

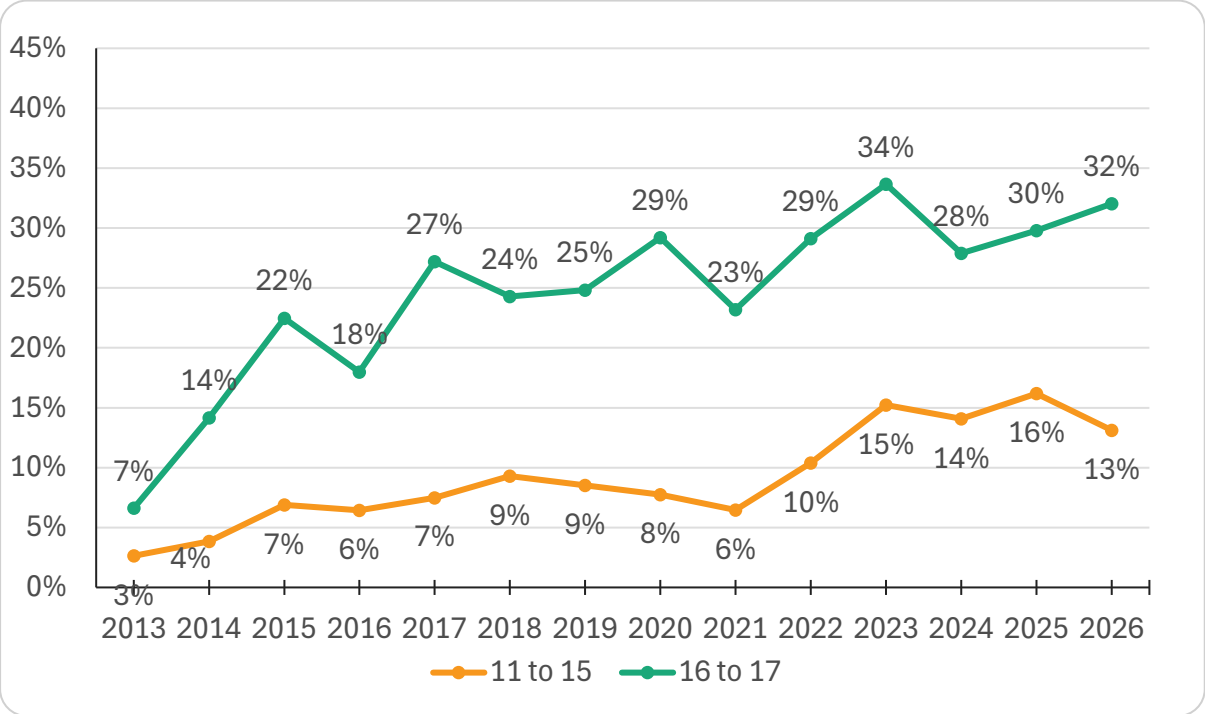


**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2013=1,895, 2014=1,817, 2015=1,834, 2016=1,735, 2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019 =1,982, 2020 =2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2023=2,028, 2024=2,587, 2025=2,746, 2026=2,926)*

## 1.2 Vaping by age

The prevalence of regular use and experimentation increases with age. Ever use is lower in younger children, with 13% of 11-15 year olds ever having vaped compared with 32% of 16-17 year olds (Figure 5).

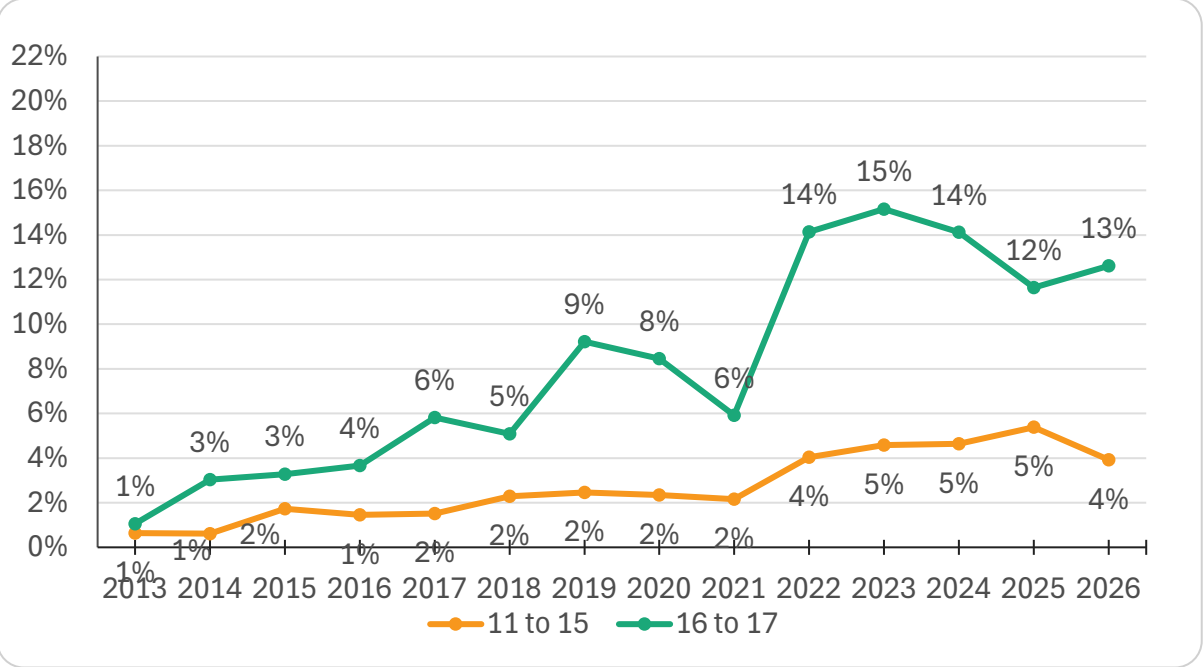
**Figure 5.** Ever use of vapes by age, GB youth (aged 11-15 and 16-17), 2013-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted bases: 11-15 year olds and 16-17 year olds (see counts in Table 1 in Appendix 1).*

Current use follows a similar pattern. Of 11-15 year olds only 4% currently vape compared to 13% of 16-17 year olds (Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Current use of vapes by age, GB youth (aged 11-15 and 16-17), 2013-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted bases: 11-15 year olds and 16-17 year olds (see counts in Table 1 in Appendix 1)*

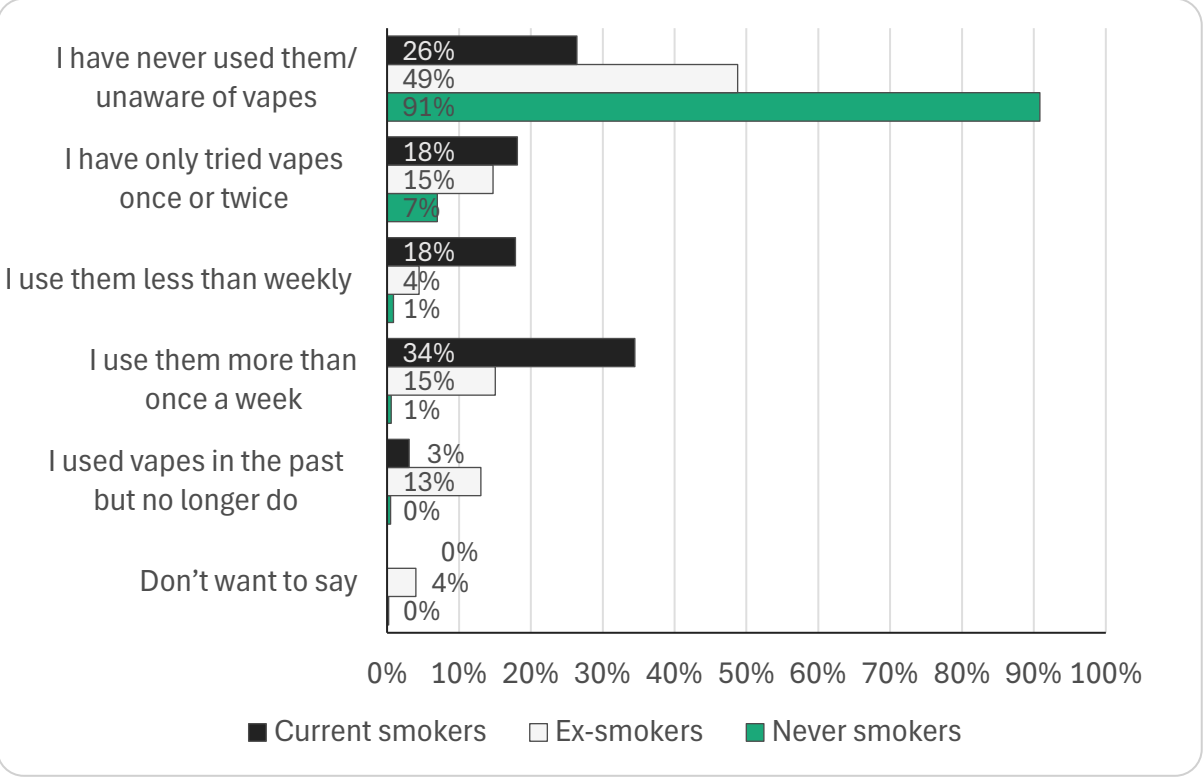
## 1.3 Vaping by smoking status

Use of vapes remains much more common among current or former smokers with 91% of never smokers never having vaped, including those saying they are unaware of vapes. (Figure 7).

In total, 74% of current smokers and 47% of ex-smokers have ever used vapes. Around one in ten never smokers have ever tried vaping (9%). However, never smokers account for nearly four in ten (39%) children who have ever tried vaping, as the majority of children (81%) have never smoked a cigarette.

Current use of vapes among 11-17 year olds is considerably higher among current smokers (52%) than former smokers (19%) or never smokers (1%).

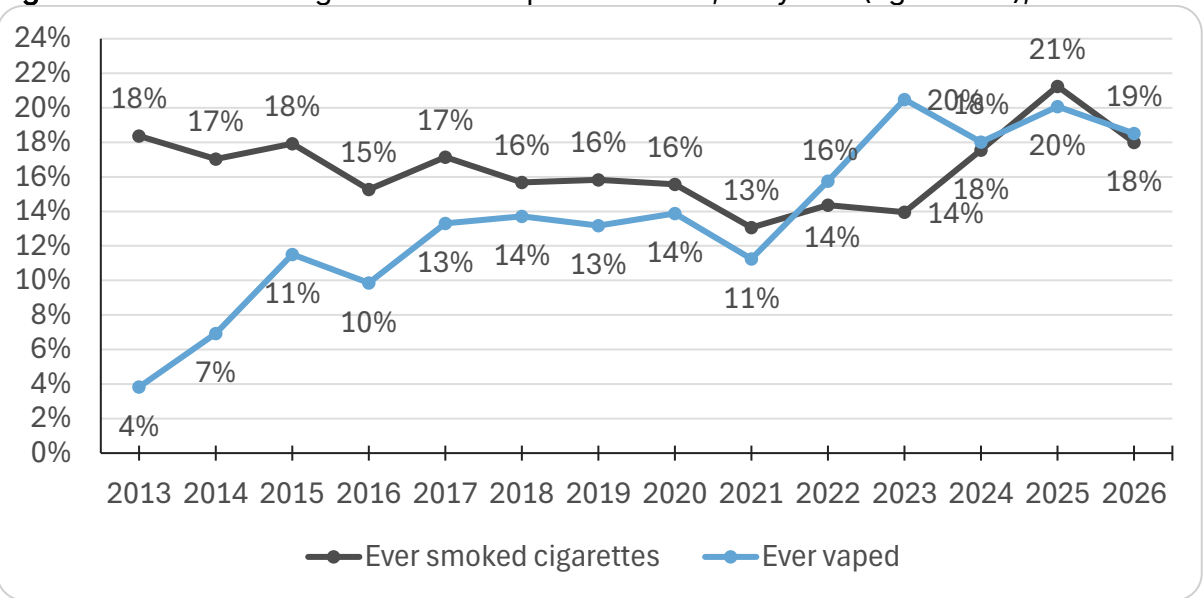
**Figure 7.** Use of vapes by smoking status, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2026.** *Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (never smokers=2,324, former smokers =141, current smokers =151)*

Ever having tried smoking had increased from 14% in 2023 to 21% in 2025 (Figure 8). This increase followed a period of increase in ever having tried vaping between 2021 and 2023. However in 2026 ever smoking has decreased from 21% to 18%.

**Figure 8.** Ever use of cigarettes and vapes over time, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2013-2026

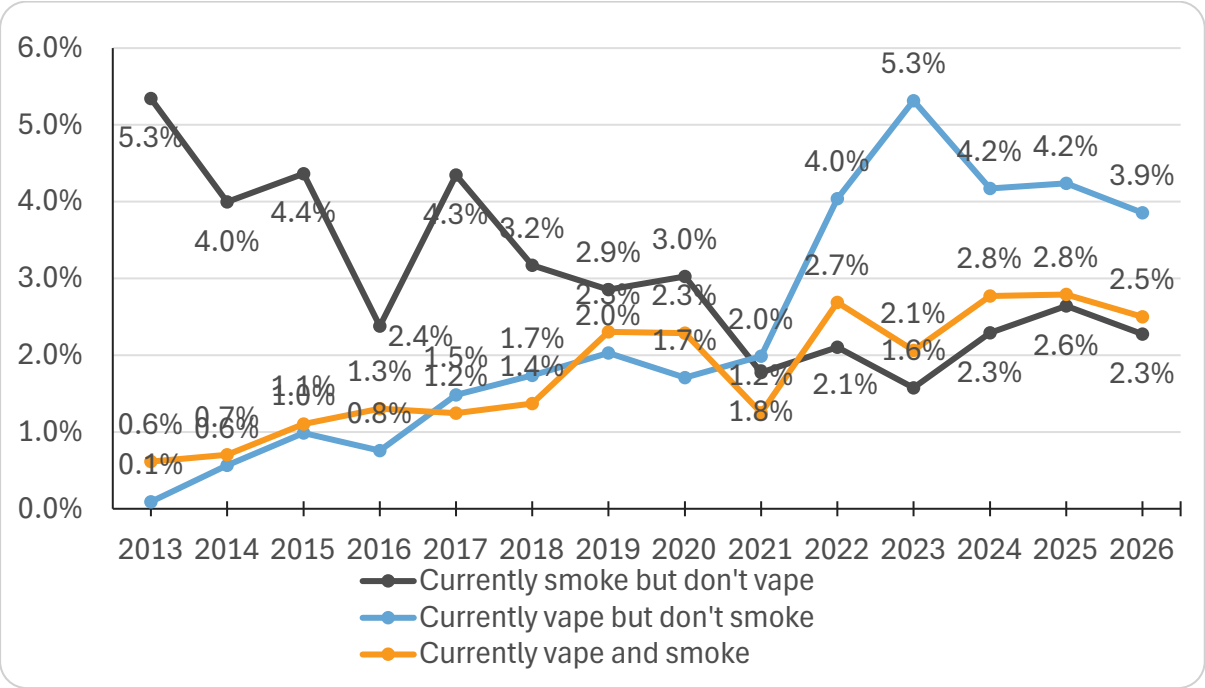



**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2013=1,895, 2014=1,817, 2015=1,834, 2016=1,735, 2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019 =1,982, 2020 =2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2023=2,028, 2024=2,587, 2025=2,746, 2026=2,926)*

One in 40 11-17 year olds (2.5%) currently use both cigarettes and vapes (dual use), which was similar to 2024 and 2025 (2.8%) but an increase from 0.6% in 2013. (Figure 9)

In 2013, it was very unusual for 11-17 year olds who don't smoke to vape (0.1%). The proportion has risen to 3.9% of 11-17 year olds in 2026. At the same time, it has become less common for 11-17 year olds to smoke but not vape (2.3%, down from 5.3% in 2013).

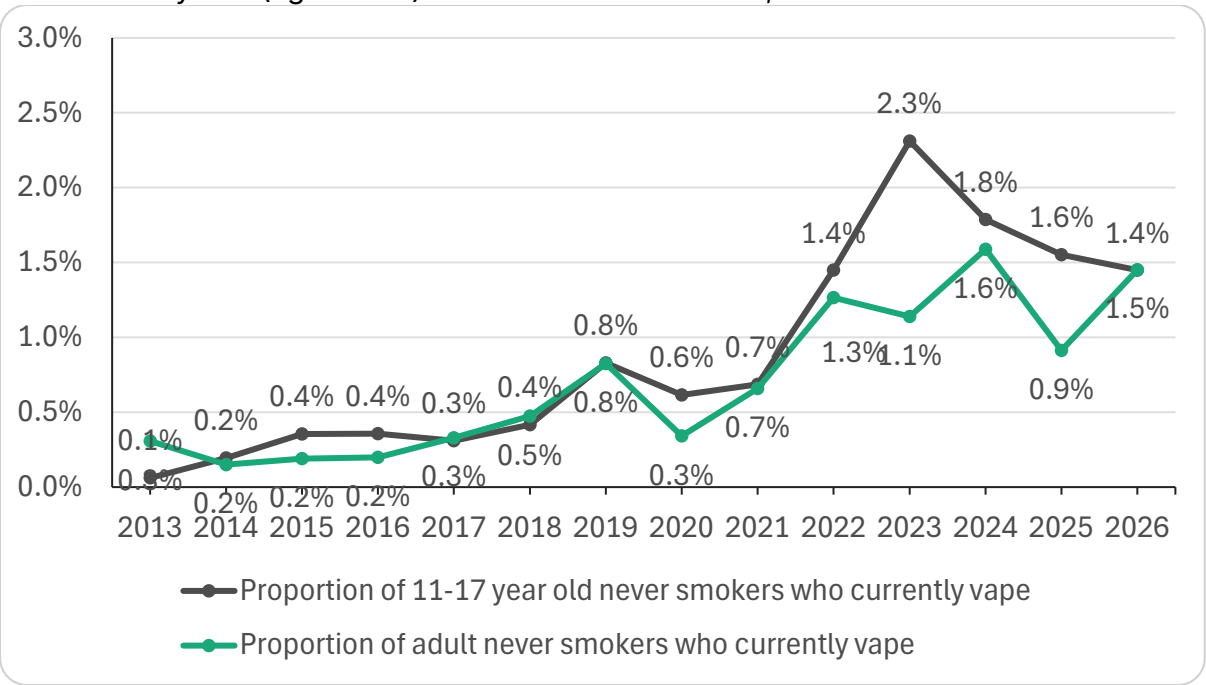
**Figure 9.** Current use of cigarettes and vapes over time, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2013-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2013=1,895, 2014=1,817, 2015=1,834, 2016=1,735, 2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019 =1,982, 2020 =2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2023=2,028, 2024=2,587, 2025=2,746, 2026=2,926). 'Don't vape' and 'don't smoke' includes never vaper/smokers, once or twice vaper/smokers and ex-vaper/smokers. Young people who didn't want to say their vaping/smoking status are not included in any of the groups shown in this figure.*

In 2023 a significantly higher proportion of youth never smokers vaped (2.3%) than adult never smokers (1.1%, Figure 10). Vaping among young never smokers is now at a more similar level to adults (1.4% in 11-17 year olds and 1.5% in adults in 2026). However, vaping among underage never smokers remains higher than in 2020. For more information on vaping among adults see Use of vapes (e-cigarettes) among adults in Great Britain.

**Figure 10.** Proportion of never smokers who currently vape, GB adults who have never smoked and youth (aged 11-17) who have never smoked, 2013-2026

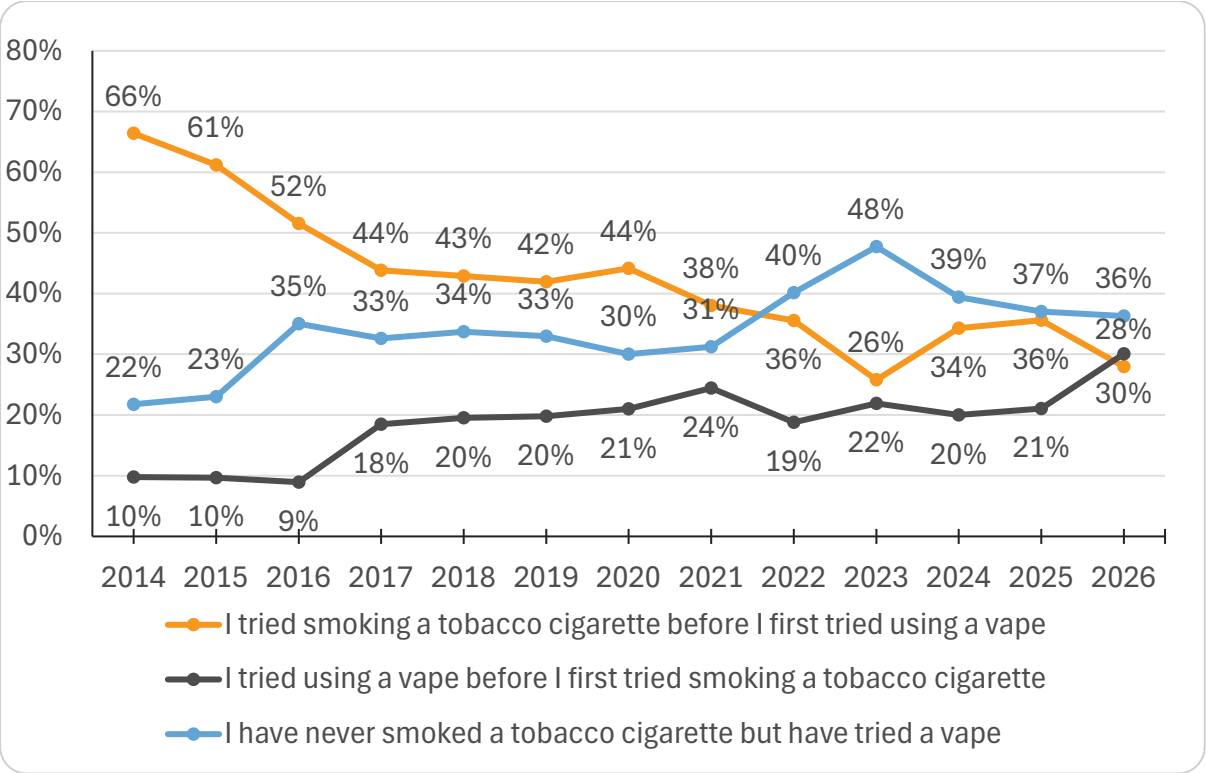



**ASH Smokefree GB Adult & Youth Surveys, 2013-2026.** *Unweighted base: adult & youth never smokers (see counts in Table 2 in Appendix 1)*

A concerning trend last year was a significant increase in those reporting that they intend to smoke in the future, from 0.9% in 2024 to 2.0% in 2025. However, the proportion of young never smokers saying they intended to try cigarettes soon has dropped back to 0.9% in 2026.

The proportion of 11-17 year olds who report they first tried vaping and then tried smoking has increased from 21% in 2025 to 30% in 2026 (Figure 11).

**Figure 11.** Order of use of cigarettes and vapes, GB youth (aged 11-17) who have ever tried vapes, 2014-2026

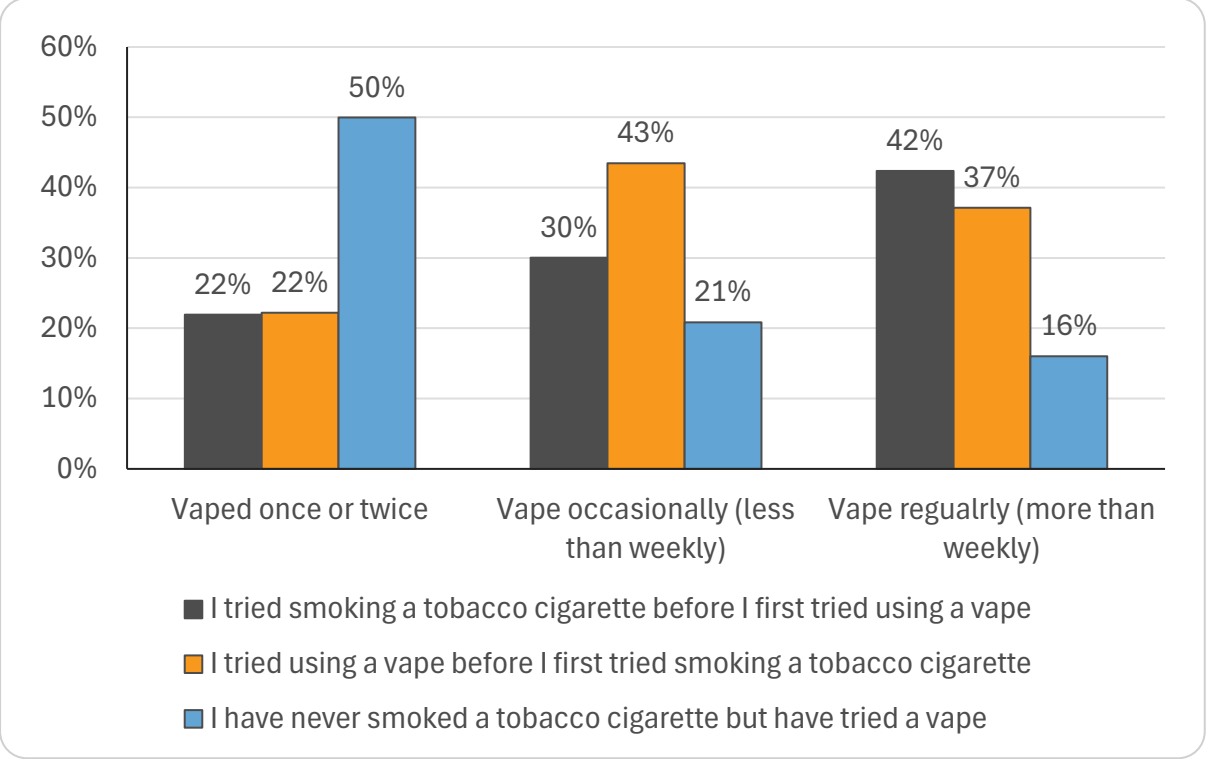



**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys, 2014-2026.** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year old respondents who said they have tried vaping (2014=118, 2015=210, 2016=168, 2017=279, 2018=254, 2019=301, 2020=327, 2021=266, 2022=390, 2023=472, 2024=528, 2025=623, 2026=640). In 2014 to 2023, the wording was "real cigarette". In 2024, wording was split to compare "real cigarette" and "tobacco cigarette", and from 2025 the wording is "tobacco cigarette". The 2024 results are combined in this graph.*

Figure 12 shows the order of use of cigarettes and vapes by different degrees of vaping. Half of those who said 'I have only tried vapes (e-cigarettes) once or twice' had never tried cigarettes (50%). They were equally likely to have tried a cigarette before vaping (22%) as trying a vape before smoking (22%).

The more frequently people vaped the more likely they were to have smoked. Only 21% of occasional vapers had never tried smoking and 16% of regular vapers.

**Figure 12.** Order of use between cigarettes and vapes, GB youth who have ever tried vaping (aged 11-17), 2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2026.** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year old respondents (Vaped once or twice=355, Vape occasionally (less than weekly)=95, Vape regularly (more than weekly)=130)*

# 2. Motivation and Attitudes

**Reasons for use**

- Main reason: 'Just to give it a try' (45% overall; 63% of never smokers).
- Other reasons: Peer influence (15%), flavours (8%), enjoyment (6%).
- Use of vapes as a smoking quit aid is less common among 11-17 year olds than among adults. In 2026 23% of underage ex-smokers report they used a vape in their last quit attempt compared to 58% of adults who quit smoking in the last 5 years.

**Perceptions of harm**

- 62% believe vaping is equally or more harmful than smoking (up from 41% in 2022). This includes 51% of those who have tried vaping.
- Misperceptions mirror trends among adults, where 54% believe vaping is as/more harmful than smoking.

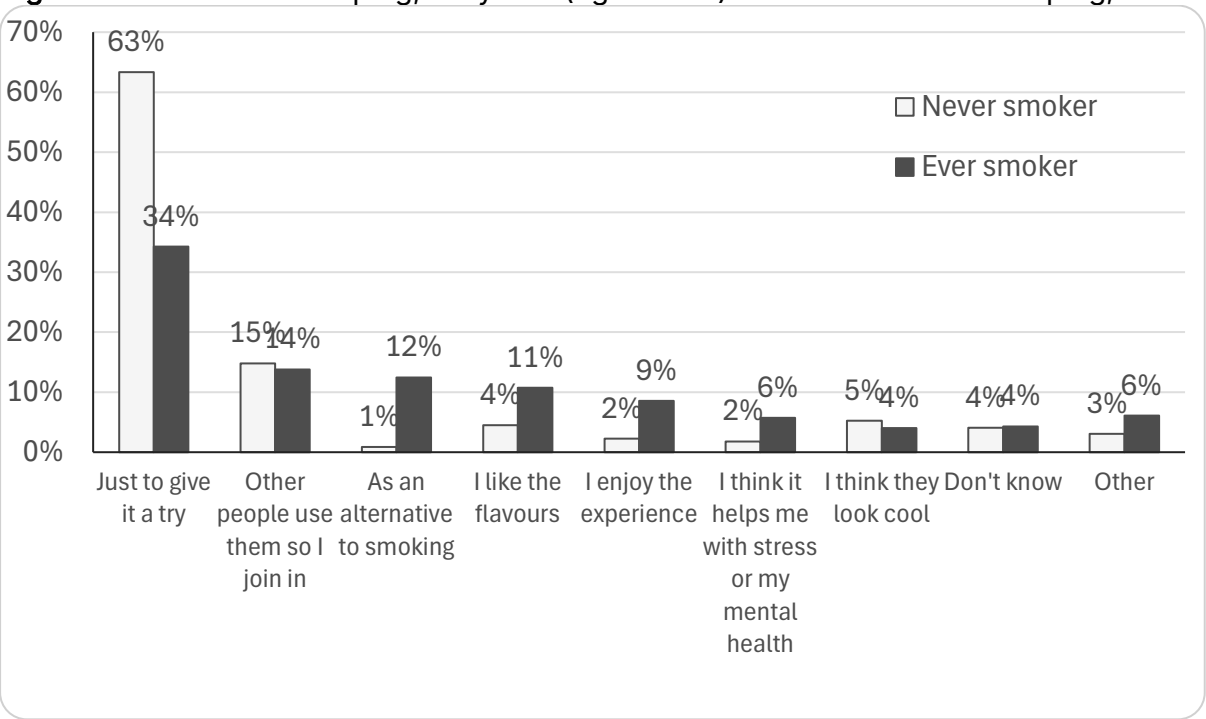
## 2.1 Reasons for use

Respondents who had ever used a vape (including current, ex-users and those who had tried them at least once) were asked what reason best described why they vape or had vaped. Overall, the most common reason was '*Just to give it a try*' (45%), followed by '*Other people use them so I join in*' (15%), '*I like the flavours*' (11%), and as an alternative to smoking (8%). These are similar results to 2025.

The most frequent reason chosen by never smokers was *'Just to give it a try'* (63%, Figure 13). The next most common reason was *'Other people use them, so I join in'* (15%).

Ever smokers were also most likely to say they vape *'Just to give it a try'* (34%) or to join in with others (14%). Using vapes as an alternative to cigarettes was the main reason given for vaping by a higher proportion of ever smokers (12%) than never smokers (1%), as were liking the flavours (11% of ever smokers, 4% of never smokers) and enjoying the experience (9% of ever smokers, 2% of never smokers).

**Figure 13.** Reasons for vaping, GB youth (aged 11-17)who have ever tried vaping, 2026



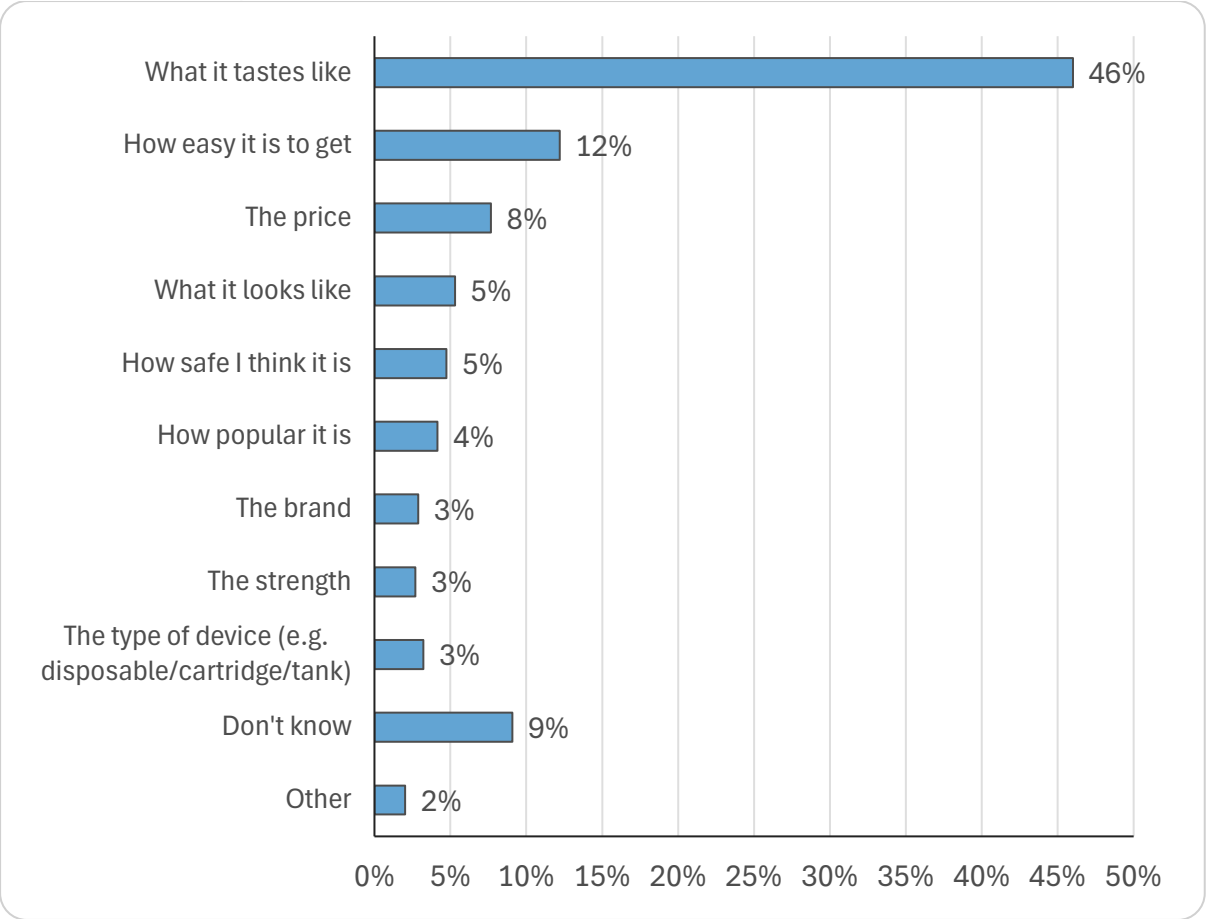

**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey 2026.** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year old respondents who have tried vaping (Never smokers = 261, Ever smokers = 367). Only reasons chosen by 5% or more of at least one group are shown. The reason 'As an alternative to smoking' groups together the following reasons: 'I use them instead of smoking', 'I am trying to quit smoking', 'They are cheaper than smoking' and 'They are easier to get hold of than tobacco cigarettes'*

Young people who have only tried vaping once or twice mostly say they do so 'just to give it a try' (65%), a reason given less often by ex-vapers (23%) and current vapers (19%). Young people who currently vape are more likely to report vaping because they enjoy the experience (15%) than ex-vapers (4%). The most common answer given by ex-vapers is 'other people use them so I join in' (31%), which is given less often by current vapers (14%).

Using vapes as an aid to stop smoking appears to be more common among adults than 11-17 year olds. Among those who are now ex-smokers 23% of 11-17 year olds reported they used a vape in their last quit attempt compared to 58% of adults who have stopped smoking in the last 5 years.

Young people who vape are most likely to cite how a vape tastes as their reason for choosing the products they vape (42%, Figure 14). Access and price are also popular reasons.

**Figure 14.** Most important consideration when deciding which vape to use, GB youth (11-17) current vapers, 2026



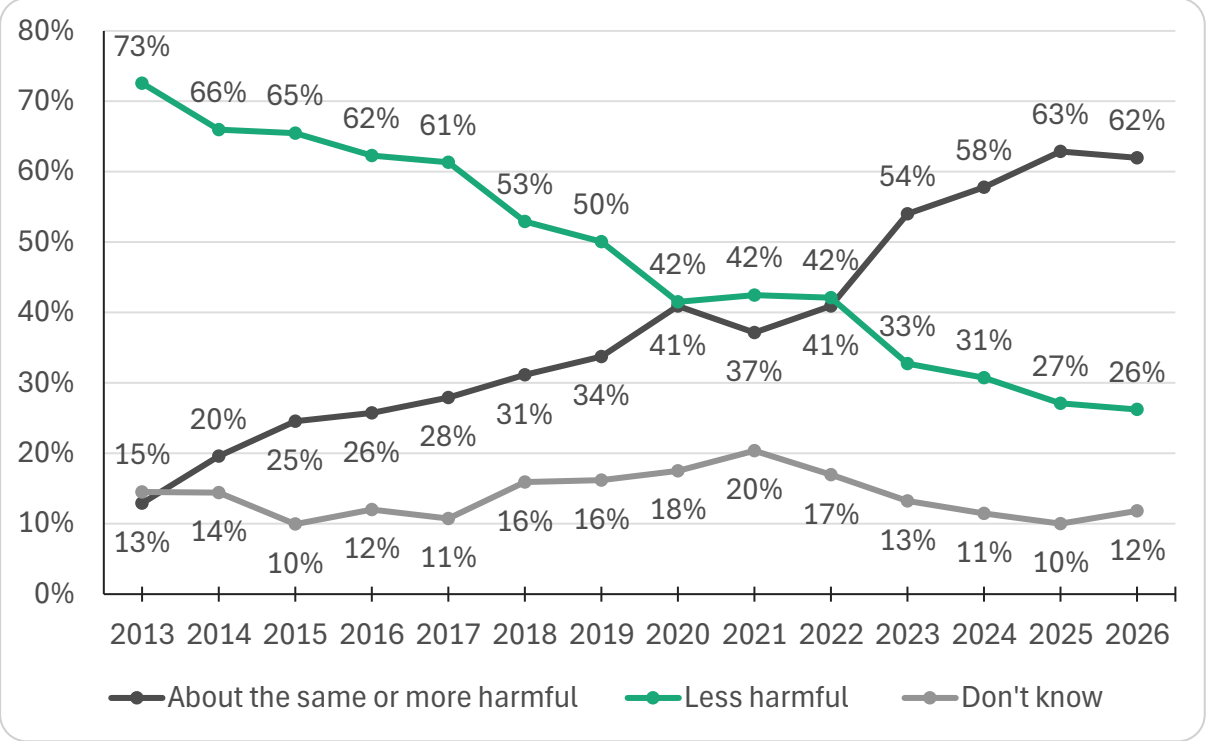

**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey 2026.** *11-17 year old respondents who currently vape (n=225)*

## 2.2 Perceptions of harm

Since 2013 there has been a steady fall in the number of young people who correctly identify vaping as being relatively less harmful than tobacco smoking. In 2013, 73% of young people correctly said that vaping is less harmful than smoking, falling to just over a quarter (26%) in 2026 (Figure 15).

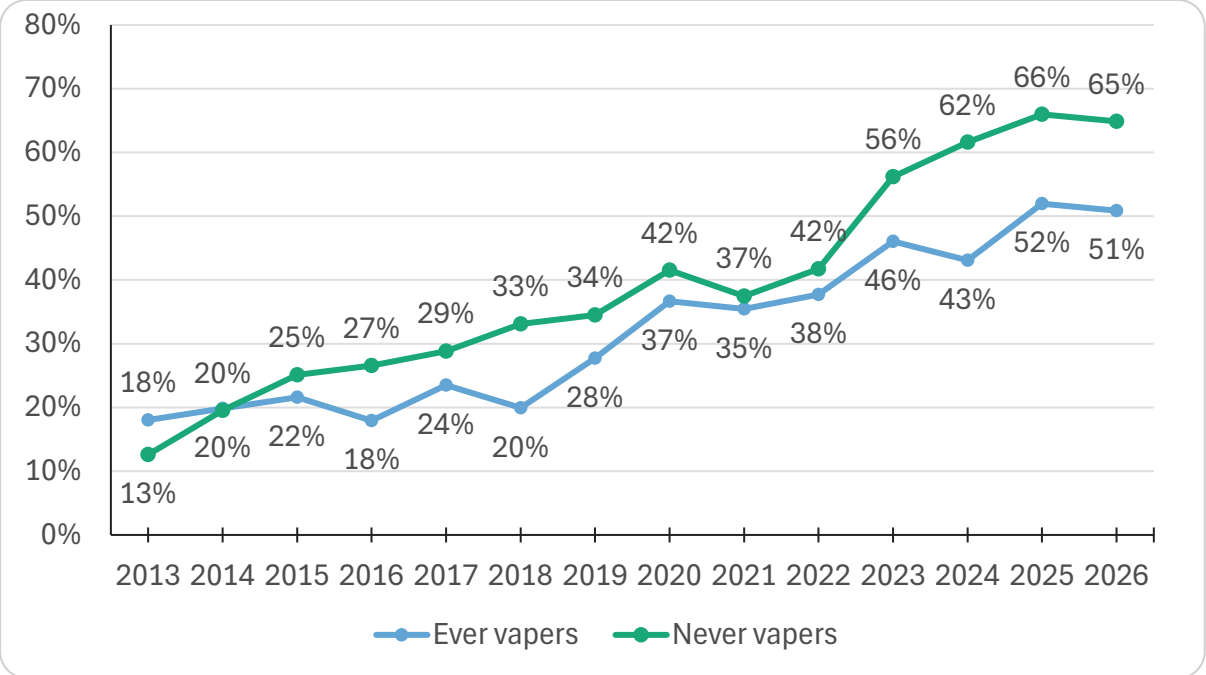
The proportion of young people incorrectly saying that vapes are more or equally harmful as tobacco cigarettes has grown from 13% in 2013 to nearly two-thirds (62%) in 2026. This includes over half (51%) of those who have tried vaping (Figure 16), so believing vaping is at least as harmful as smoking does not appear to be putting children off trying vaping. There are similar misconceptions among adults, with over half (54%) of GB adults believing that vaping is equally, more or much more harmful than smoking.

**Figure 15.** Perceptions of harm of vapes compared with cigarettes, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2013-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2013-2026.** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds aware of vapes (2013=1,190, 2014=1,483, 2015=1,700, 2016=1,607, 2017=1,968, 2018=1,687, 2019=1,863, 2020=1,909, 2021=1,905, 2022=1,916, 2023=1,917, 2024=2,336, 2025=2,533, 2026=2,832)*

**Figure 16.** Belief that vaping is equally or more harmful compared with smoking, GB youth (aged 11-17) ever vaped and never vaped, 2013-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2013-2025.** *Unweighted base: Ever and never vapers (counts in Table 3 in Appendix 1)*

# 3. Devices, flavours and dependence

**Device Types**

- 13% of youth who vape primarily use disposables (down from 69% in 2023 and 42% in 2025). The disposable vapes ban came into force on 1st June 2025, shortly after the 2025 survey fieldwork was conducted.

**Brand Popularity**

- Among youth who currently vape and have tried disposables, the most common brands reported were: Lost Mary (56%), followed by Elf Bar (52%) and Crystal Bar (46%).

**Flavour Preferences**

- Most popular: Fruit (61%), Other sweet flavours (16%).
- Youth much less likely to use tobacco (2%) or menthol/mint (8%) flavours compared to adults.
- 47% of 11-17 year olds report they use ice flavours, not significantly different to the 43% of adult vapers.

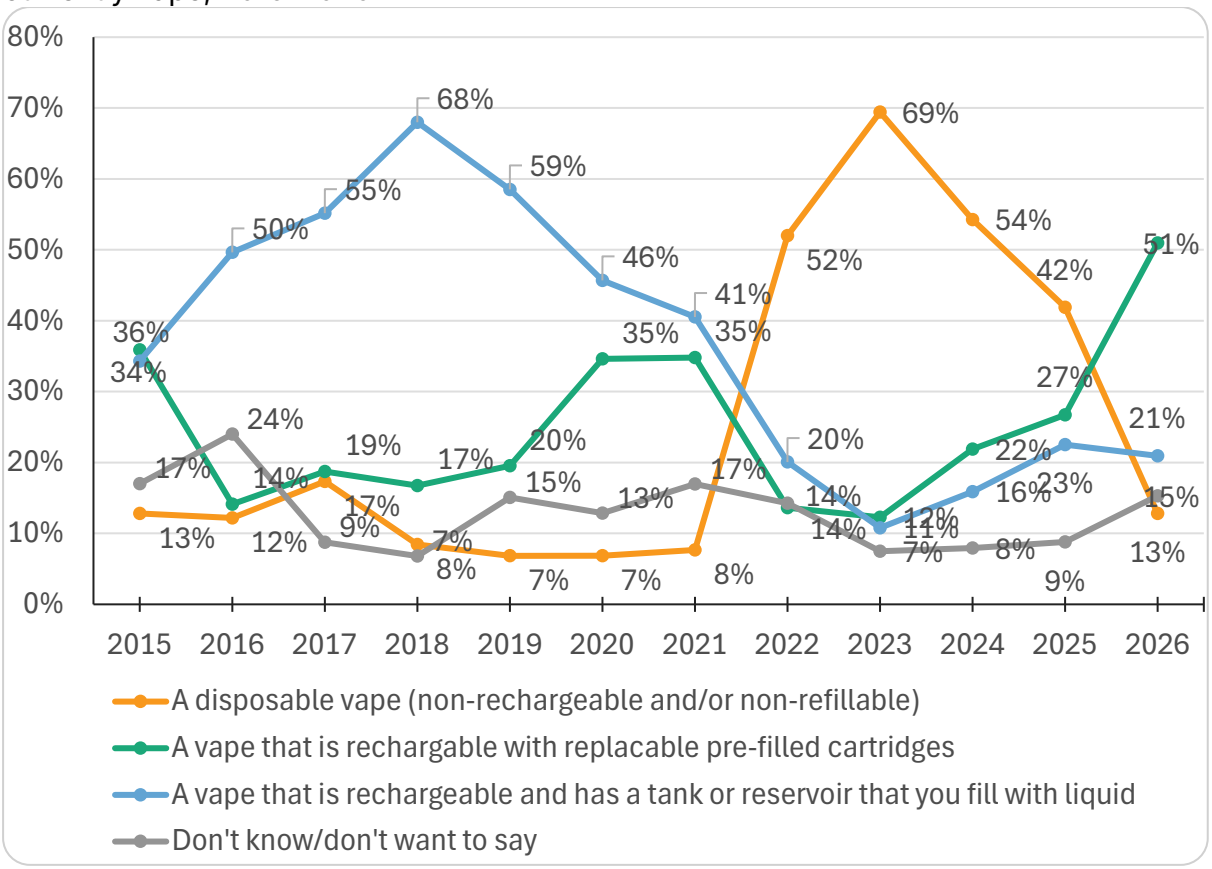
## 3.1 Device types

The most frequently used device has changed significantly over time. In 2026, 13% of young people aged 11-17 chose the disposable type (Figure 17). This is a decrease since 2025 (42%) and even more since the peak in 2023 (69%). Before 2021, disposable vapes were much less popular. There was more than a 7-fold increase between 2020 and 2022.

A disposable vape ban come into force on 1st June 2025. The fieldwork for the 2025 survey was therefore conducted prior to the ban coming into force.

Following the ban, cartridge devices have increased in relative popularity and are now the majority choice of young people who currently vape (51%). Tank type devices are the main choice of 21% of young people who currently vape and 15% don't know or don't want to say what their most often used type of device is.

**Figure 17.** Most frequently used vapes by device type, GB youth (aged 11-17) who currently vape, 2015-2026



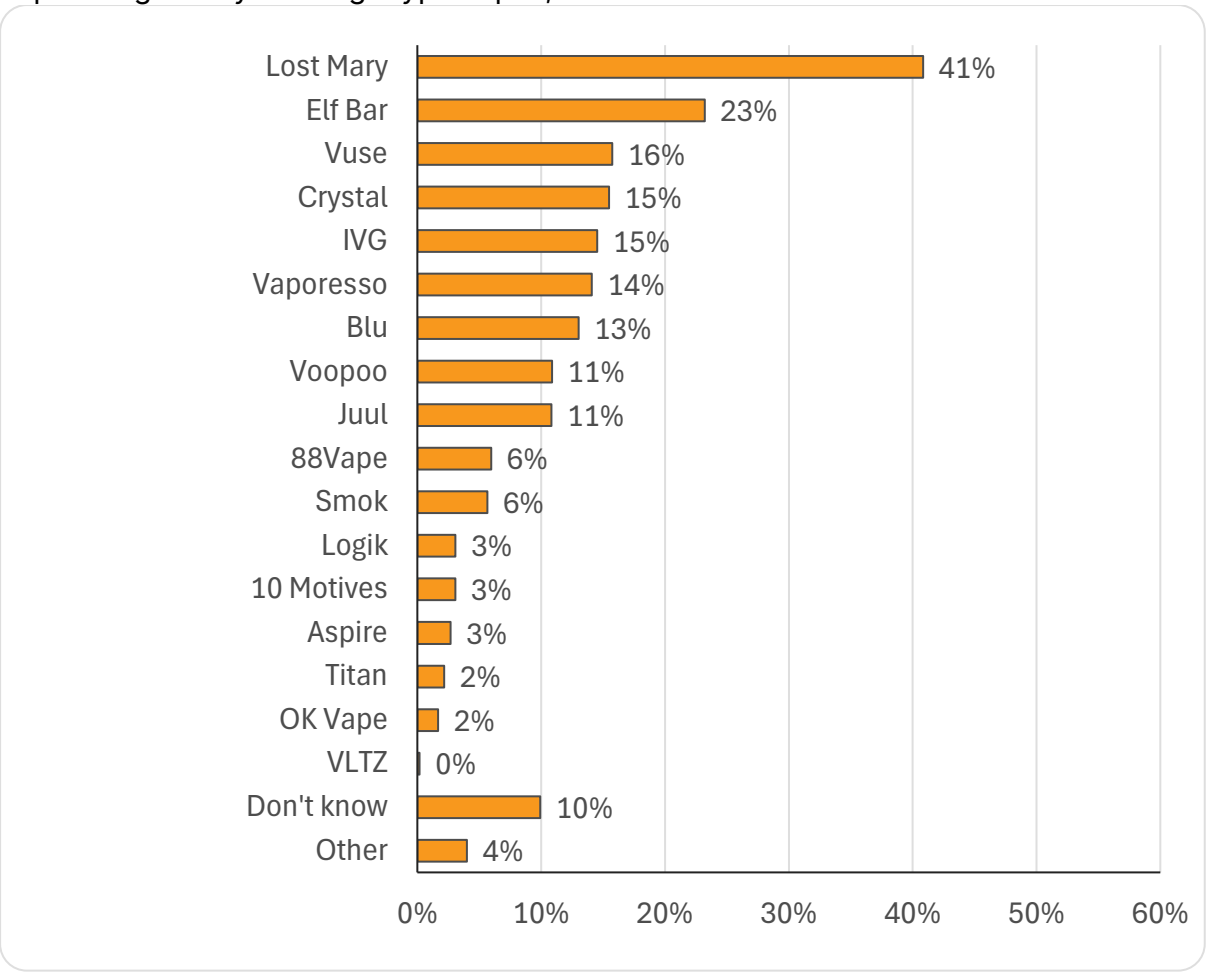

**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2015-2026.** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year old current vapers (2015=41, 2016=36, 2017=60, 2018=59, 2019=94, 2020=94, 2021=76, 2022=172, 2023=187, 2024=213, 2025=231, 2026=225)*

## 3.2 Brand preferences

Among youth aged 11-17 who currently vape and had ever used disposable vapes the most popular disposable brand to have tried is Lost Mary (56%), followed by Elf bar (52%) and Crystal Bar (46%). It is possible that young people are confused about whether the brand they are purchasing is disposable or reusable. All the 'disposable' brands reported as popular have very widely available reusable products that resemble previous disposable products.

Among current vapers who mainly use cartridge type devices, the most common brand types in 2026 were Lost Mary (41%), Elf Bar (23%) and Vuse (16%, Figure 18). Other brands that had been used by more than 10% were Crystal (15%), IVG (15%), Vaporesso (14%), Blu (13%), Voopoo (11%) and Juul (11%).

**Figure 18.** Brand of cartridge type devices used by GB 11-17 year olds who currently vape using mainly cartridge type vapes, 2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2026.** Unweighted base: 11-17 year old respondents who currently vape and who mainly use cartridge type devices (n=110). Respondents asked to select every brand they have used.

Not enough young people mainly used tank type devices to collect information on the brands.

## 3.3 Predicted vs actual behaviour change following disposables ban

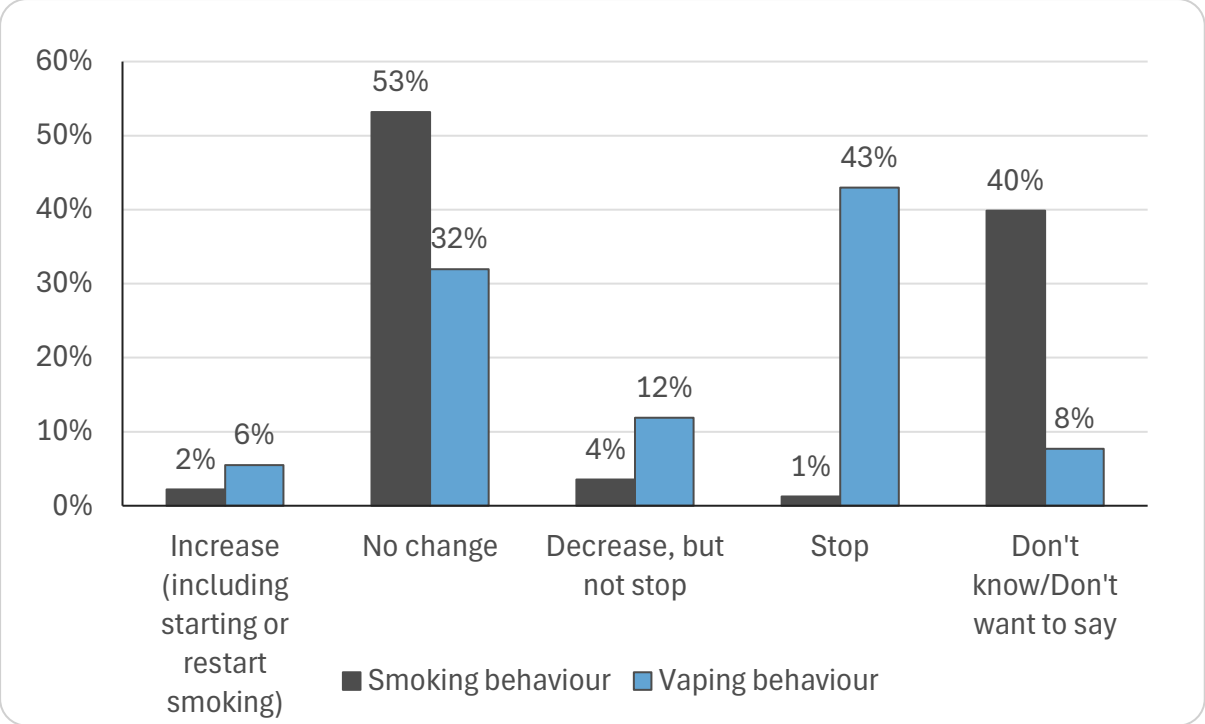
While it is difficult for people to accurately predict what their behaviour will be in the future in response to policy changes it is a way to assess what impact policies may have. In the 2026 survey ASH asked vapers how they responded to the implementation of a regulatory change (ban on disposable vapes) and one hypothetical regulation (restrictions on vape flavours, section 3.5).

In 2026, we asked young people who had ever vaped what type of device (if applicable) they had mainly used at the time of the 2025 survey. Those who reported that they had mainly used disposables were asked how their smoking and vaping

behaviour had changed in the three months following the ban. They were most likely to say they had either stopped (43%) or not changed (32%) their level of vaping. It was less common to report a decrease in vaping without stopping (12%). Only 6% reported an increase in vaping and 6% didn't know (Figure 19).

The survey also asked how, if at all, their smoking behaviours had changed following the disposables ban. A majority reported that their smoking had not changed (53%), with most of the rest being unsure (40%).

**Figure 19.** Behaviour immediately after disposables were banned, GB youth (aged 11-17) vapers who mainly used disposables in March/April 2025 (2026)




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey 2026.** Unweighted base: Youth aged 11-17 who mainly vaped using disposables in March/April 2025 (n=165)

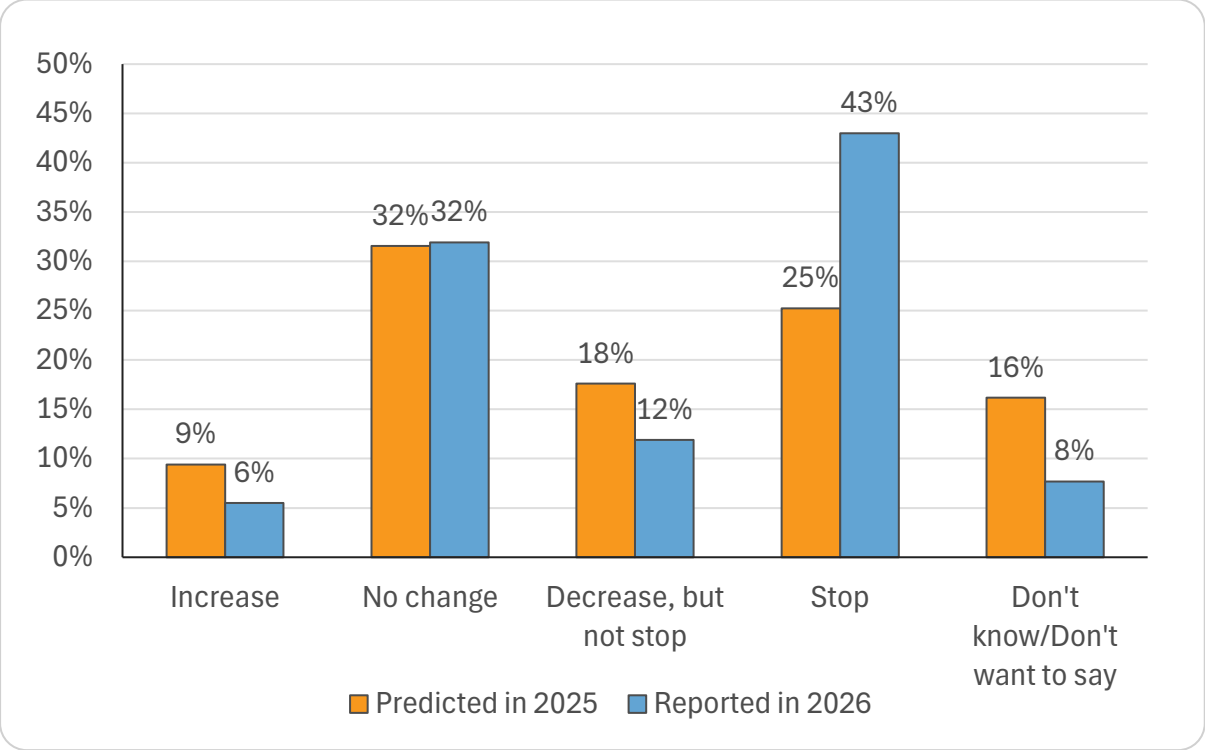
Nearly half of those who were using disposable vapes before the ban and continued vaping in the three months after it reported that they continued to get and use disposable devices (47%). It is possible that some young people regard devices that could be reused as 'disposable' given that many popular brands had reusable products available that resembled disposable devices.

One in three had switched to using a reusable type of device (35%), and 13% said that they used disposable vapes that they had stockpiled prior to the ban.

The previous year, in 2025 we asked the equivalent group of vapers how they expected to respond to the disposables ban. Most predicted that they would switch to a reusable type of vape (68%) with 44% saying they would still try to get disposable vapes. The option to stockpile vapes ahead of the ban was not suggested in 2025.

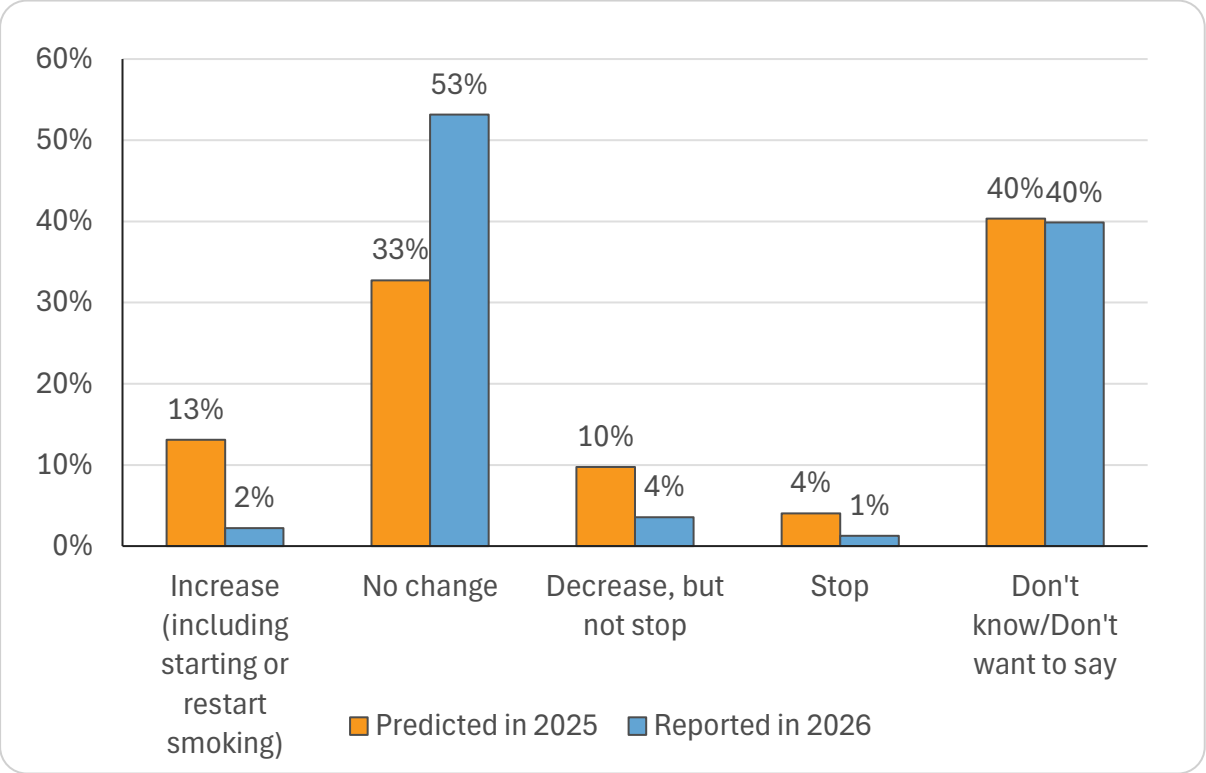
Figures 20 and 21 below show the predicted and actual reported behaviour change in people who vaped using mainly disposables ahead of the disposables ban. The disposable vapes ban appears to have had less of an impact on smoking than young people expected, with 53% reporting no change in smoking levels after the ban compared with the 33% predicted.

**Figure 20.** Predicted and actual reported **vaping** behaviour immediately after disposables were banned, GB youth (aged 11-17) who vaped immediately before the disposables ban (2025 and 2026)




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2025 and 2026.** Unweighted base: Youth (aged 11-17) current vapers (2025, n=102); Youth (aged 11-17) who mainly vaped using disposables in March/April 2025 (2026, n=165)

**Figure 21.** Predicted and actual reported **smoking** behaviour immediately after disposables were banned, GB youth (aged 11-17) who vaped immediately before the disposables ban (2025 and 2026)




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2025 and 2026.** Unweighted base: Youth (aged 11-17) current vapers (2025, n=102); Youth (aged 11-17) who mainly vaped using disposables in March/April 2025 (2026, n=165)

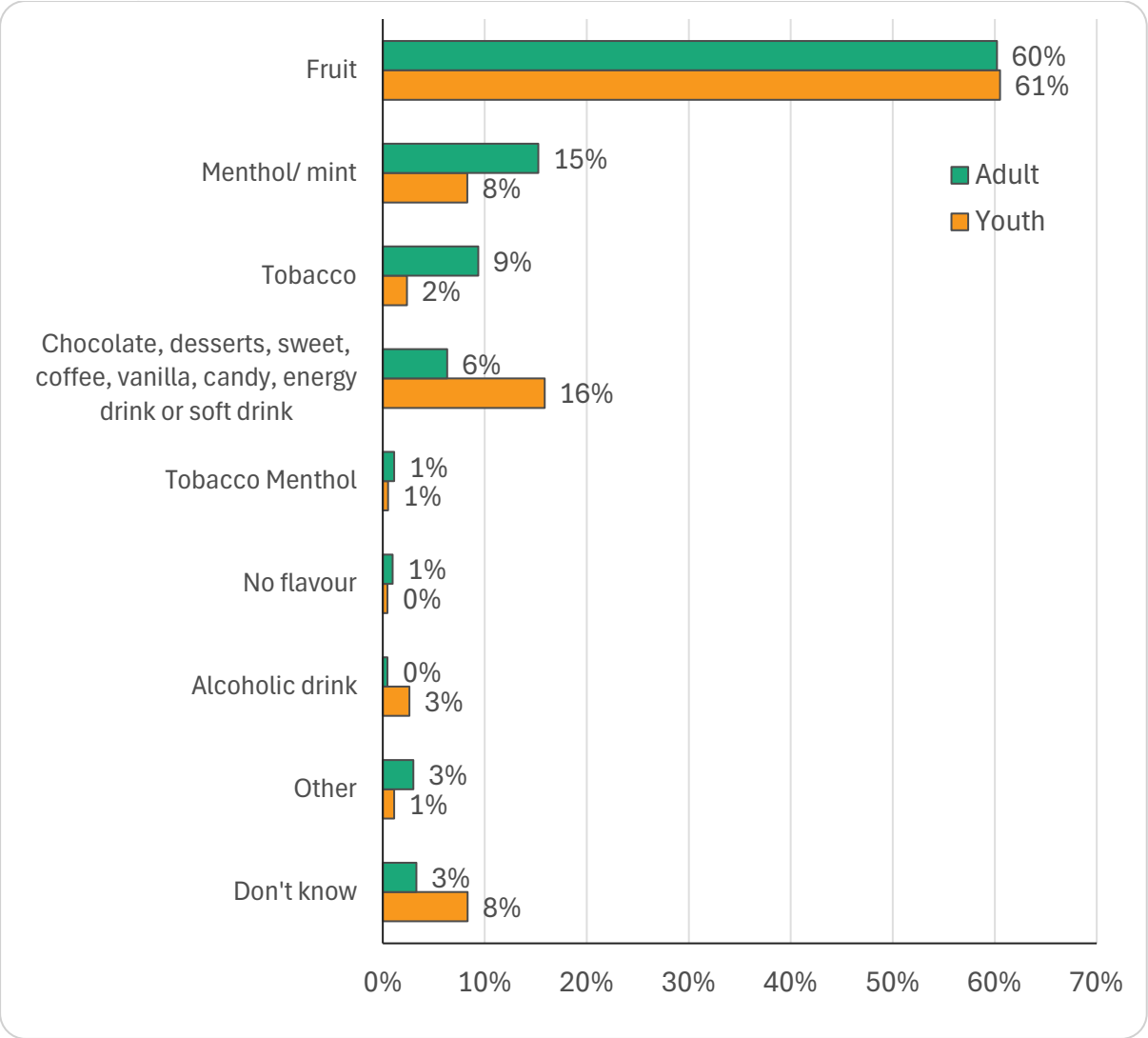
## 3.4 Flavour preferences and nicotine strength

In 2026, 5% of current vapers said they usually use nicotine-free vapes. A further quarter (23%) used vapes below the maximum legal nicotine strength for adults (20mg/ml or 2%), another quarter (24%) used vapes at that limit and 5% report using vapes above the limit. The remaining 42% didn't know or didn't want to say their usual vape strength.

The most frequently used vape flavouring for young people is 'fruit flavour' chosen by 61% of current vapers. The next most popular are sweet flavours, including chocolate, candy, coffee, vanilla, energy drink and soft drink flavours, chosen by 16%. Menthol or mint is preferred by 8% of young people who vape. Tobacco (2%) and tobacco menthol (1%) are unpopular choices. (Figure 22).

Fruit is also the most popular flavour among adults (60%), but children are more likely than adults to choose sweet flavours (16% children, 6% adults) and less likely to choose tobacco (2% children, 9% adults) or mint/menthol flavours (8% children, 15% adults).

**Figure 22.** Most frequently used vape liquid flavour, GB adult and youth (aged 11-17) current vapers, 2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Adult and Youth Surveys 2026.** Unweighted base: Current vapers (Adults=1,318, Youth aged 11-17=225)

'Ice' flavours are products with ingredients designed to give a cooling sensation when used. They are usually added to another flavour (e.g. fruit, menthol). These flavourings have been shown to increase the appeal of products[2]. Among all current 11-17 year old vapers, 47% use ice flavours sometimes (39%) or always (8%). This is similar to the proportion of 43% adult vapers who sometimes (34%) or always (9%) use ice flavours.

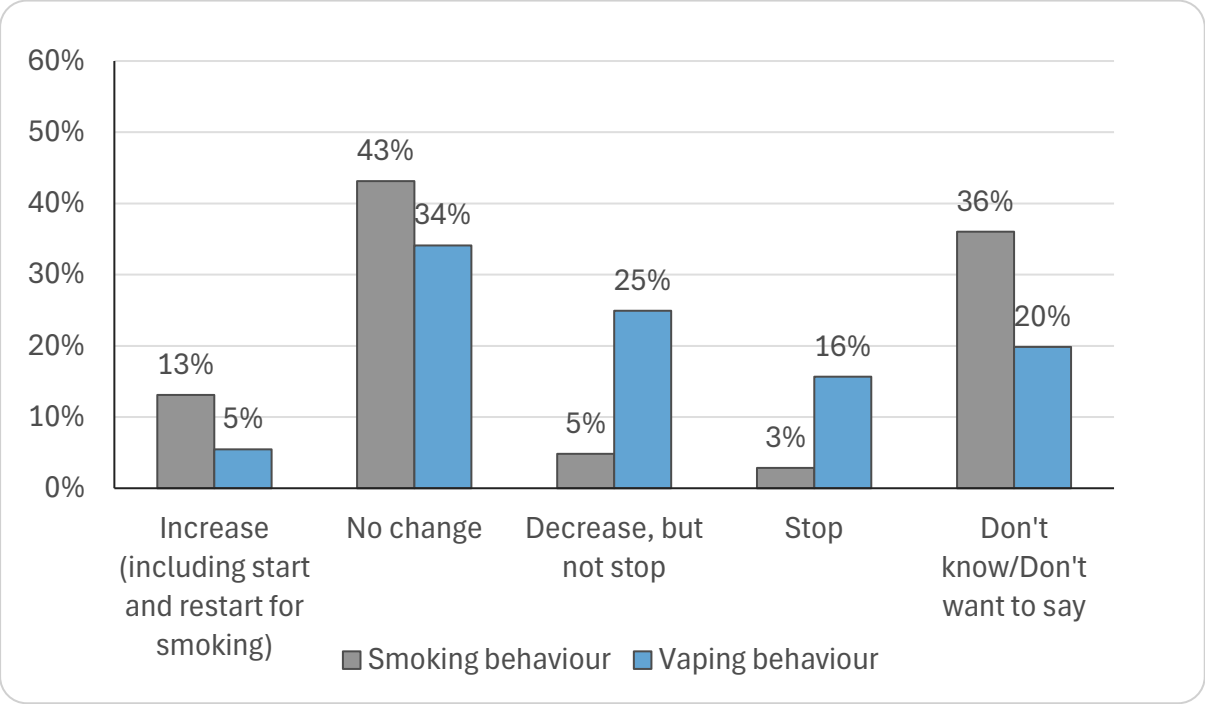
## 3.5 Response to a hypothetical ban on vape flavours

Young vapers were asked how they would respond to a hypothetical ban on flavours that limited the options to tobacco, menthol and mint. A third said it wouldn't change their vaping behaviour and 25% said they would decrease their vaping but not stop (Figure 23). Over a third of those who smoked said it would not change their smoking behaviour (37%) but 14% said it would increase their smoking (14% said it would

decrease or stop their smoking). Among those who said they would continue to vape half said they would use the flavours available and 38% said they would try to access illegal flavours.

Among those who report they would continue to vape about half report they would use legal flavours (48%). However, others also report that they would stockpile other flavours before the ban is implemented (35%), access illegal flavours (18%) or that they would make their own liquids (7%), the last two of which could expose users to greater risks. Only 6% said that they would use unflavoured vapes.

**Figure 23.** Predicted behaviour if vape flavours are limited to tobacco, menthol and mint, GB youth vapers (aged 11-17), 2026



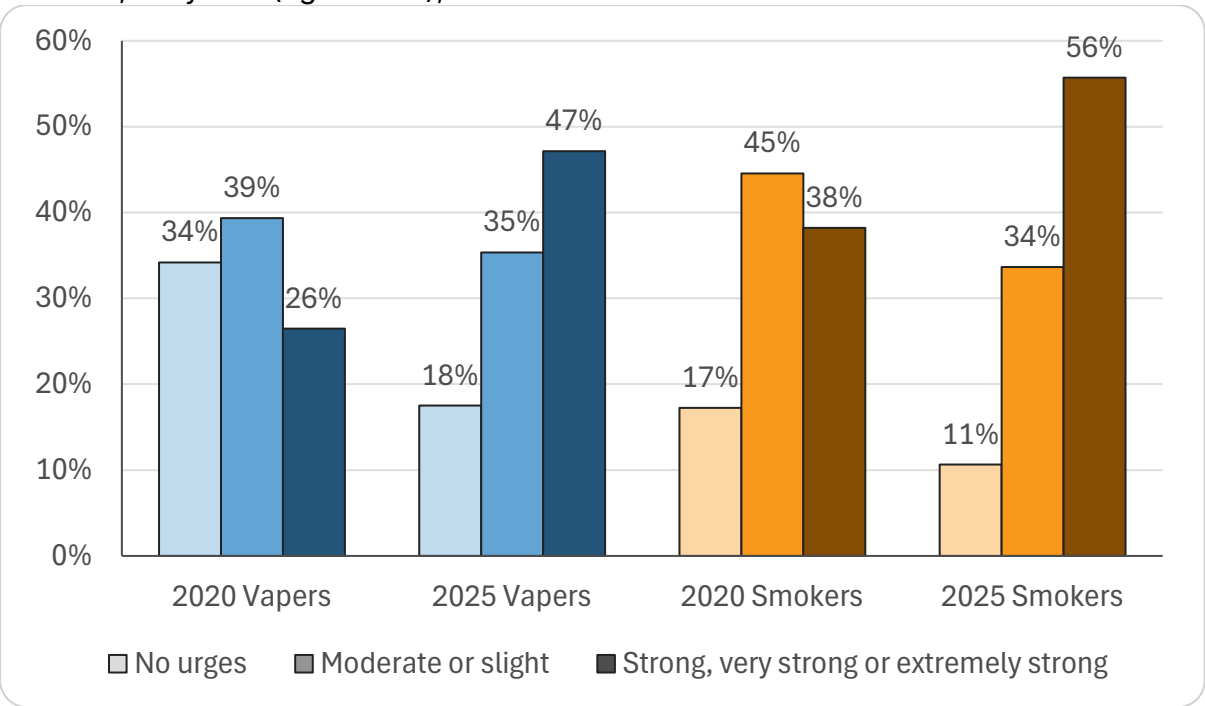

**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey 2026.** Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds current vapers (n=225).

## 3.5 Indicators of dependence

As the number of young smokers and vapers are quite small, it is quite difficult to draw many conclusions about patterns in their behaviour. However, there is reason to think vapers are becoming more dependent on vapes than they have reported a few years ago. A quarter of vapers (26%) reported strong, very strong or extremely strong urges to vape in 2020, compared with nearly half (47%) in 2025 (Figure 24). The increase is significant.

In 2020, vapers were significantly more likely to report no urges to vape (34%) than smokers were to report no urges to smoke (17%) (Figure 24). However, in 2025, the distribution of vapers' urges to vape is more similar to smokers' urges to smoke.

**Figure 24.** Reported urge to vape among vapers and reported urge to smoke among smokers, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2020 & 2025




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2020 & 2025** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds, (current vapers 2020=94, current vapers 2025=231, current smokers 2020=76, current smokers 2025=163)*

## 3.6 Use of drugs other than nicotine in vapes

Current vapers aged 16-17 were asked about whether they had used any drug other than nicotine in a vape in the last 12 months. More than one in five reported using THC (22%). An additional 7% reported using CBD and another 7% synthetic cannabinoids (eg spice). Less than one percent reported using a non-nicotine drug in a vape other than THC/CBD/a cannabinoid, caffeine or alcohol.

Among 16-17 year olds who currently vape and who said they had used non-nicotine drugs in vapes in the past year, 41% said they knew the vape contained the drug before using it every time, 20% sometimes and 23% never.

# 4. Access and promotion

**Sources of products**

- Most common sources:
  - Most vapers (72%) were given their first vape
  - Buying vapes from shops (47%) and informal sources (20%) are common despite age restrictions
  - About one in ten (9%) say that they usually get their vapes online
- 1.4% of vapers say they were given their first vape by a company promoting the product

**Ease of access**

- Most young people who vape (77%) and smoke (73%) say that it's easy to access vapes or cigarettes.

**Exposure to promotion**

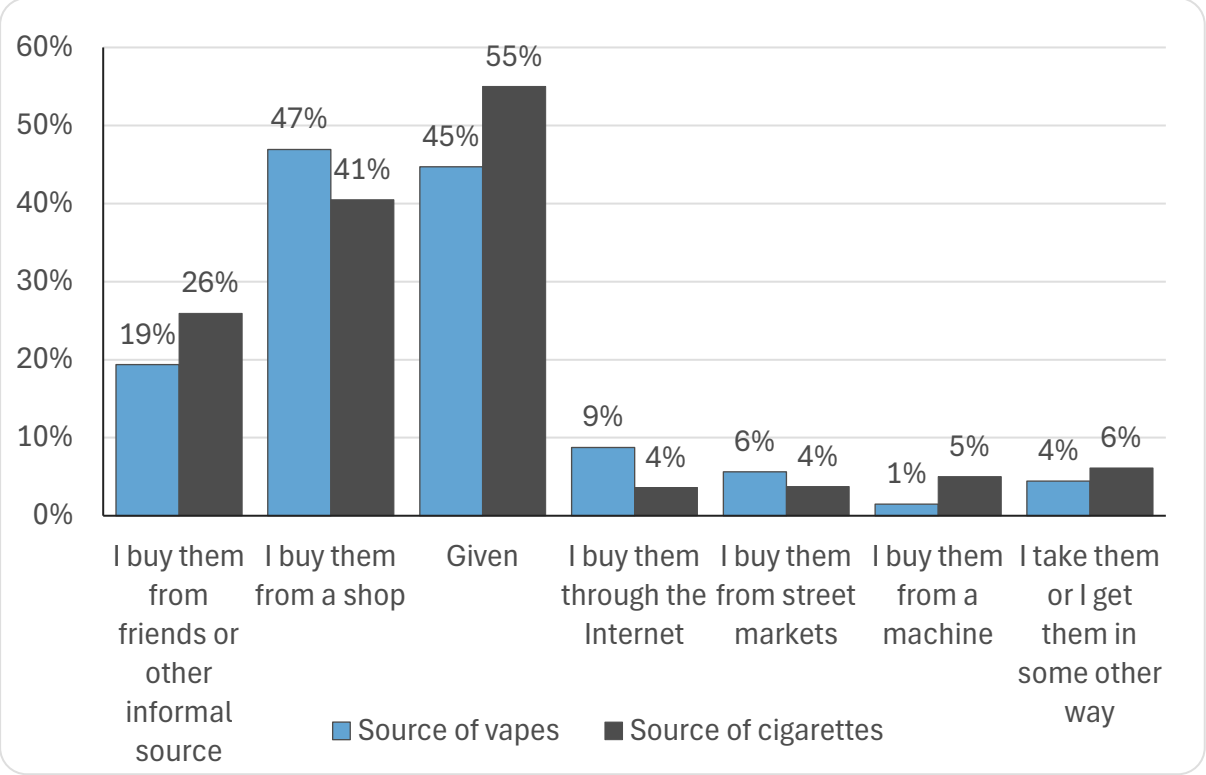
- 75% reported seeing vape promotion.
  - 55% in shops.
  - 29% online, mainly on TikTok (42%), YouTube (33%), and Instagram (30%).

## 4.1 Sources of products

The sale of tobacco and vapes to people under the age of 18 is an offence, however purchase from shops is common with 47% of 11-17 year olds who currently vape purchasing from shops, and 41% of smokers (Figure 25). A substantial proportion of current vapers buy from an informal source (19% for vapes and 26% for cigarettes) even though proxy purchase, buying on behalf of someone else, is also illegal.

Online purchases are much less frequent, with 9% of current vapers citing this as a source and 4% of smokers.

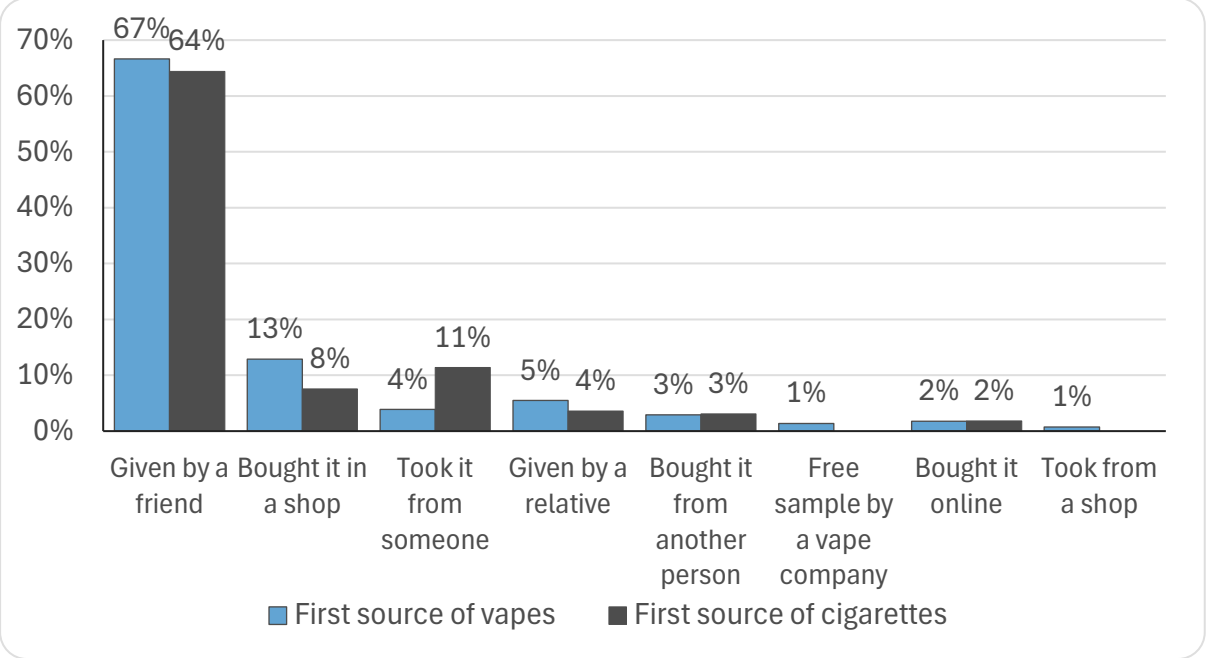
**Figure 25.** Usual sources of cigarettes and vapes, GB youth (aged 11-17) current smokers & current vapers, 2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2026.** Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds who currently smoke or vape (respondents who currently smoke=151, respondents who currently vape=225). Respondents allowed to tick more than one box if more than one usual source.

Children are most likely to be given their first cigarette (68%) and vape (74%), primarily by friends (Figure 26). Around one in 70 (1.4%) ever vapers say they were given their first vape by an e-cigarette company. At the current time, unlike selling vapes to children, giving them vapes is not illegal whatever their age.

**Figure 26.** Source of first vape or cigarette, GB youth (aged 11-17) ever smokers & ever vapers, 2026

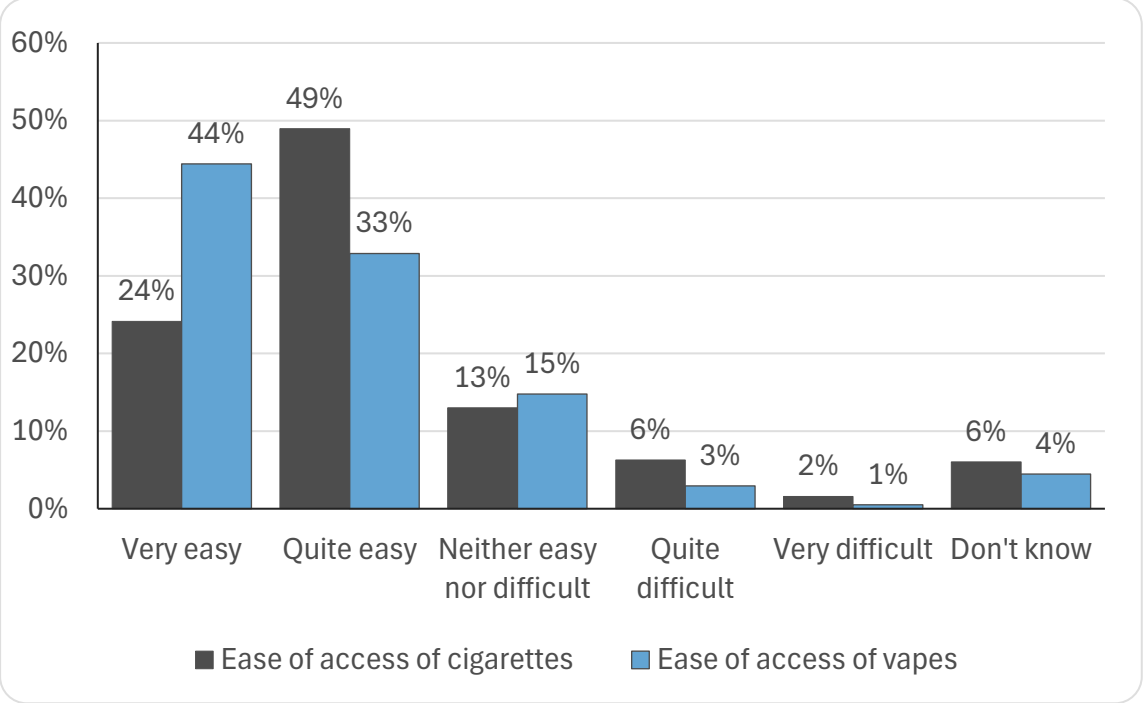



**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2026.** Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds (ever tried vapes=640, ever tried cigarettes=559). Note: Ever cigarette smokers were not offered 'Free sample by a vape company' or (due to an oversight) 'Took it from a shop'.

## 4.2 Ease of access

In 2026, for the first time in the youth survey, young people were asked about how easy they found it to obtain vapes and cigarettes. Over three quarters (77%) of young vapers found it ‘very easy’ (44%) or ‘quite easy’ (33%) to access vapes (Figure 27). A similar proportion (73%) of young smokers found it easy to access cigarettes, although they were less likely to find it ‘very easy’ (24%) and more likely to say it was ‘quite easy’ (49%).

**Figure 27.** Ease of access of cigarettes and vapes, GB youth current smokers & current vapers aged 11-17 (2026)



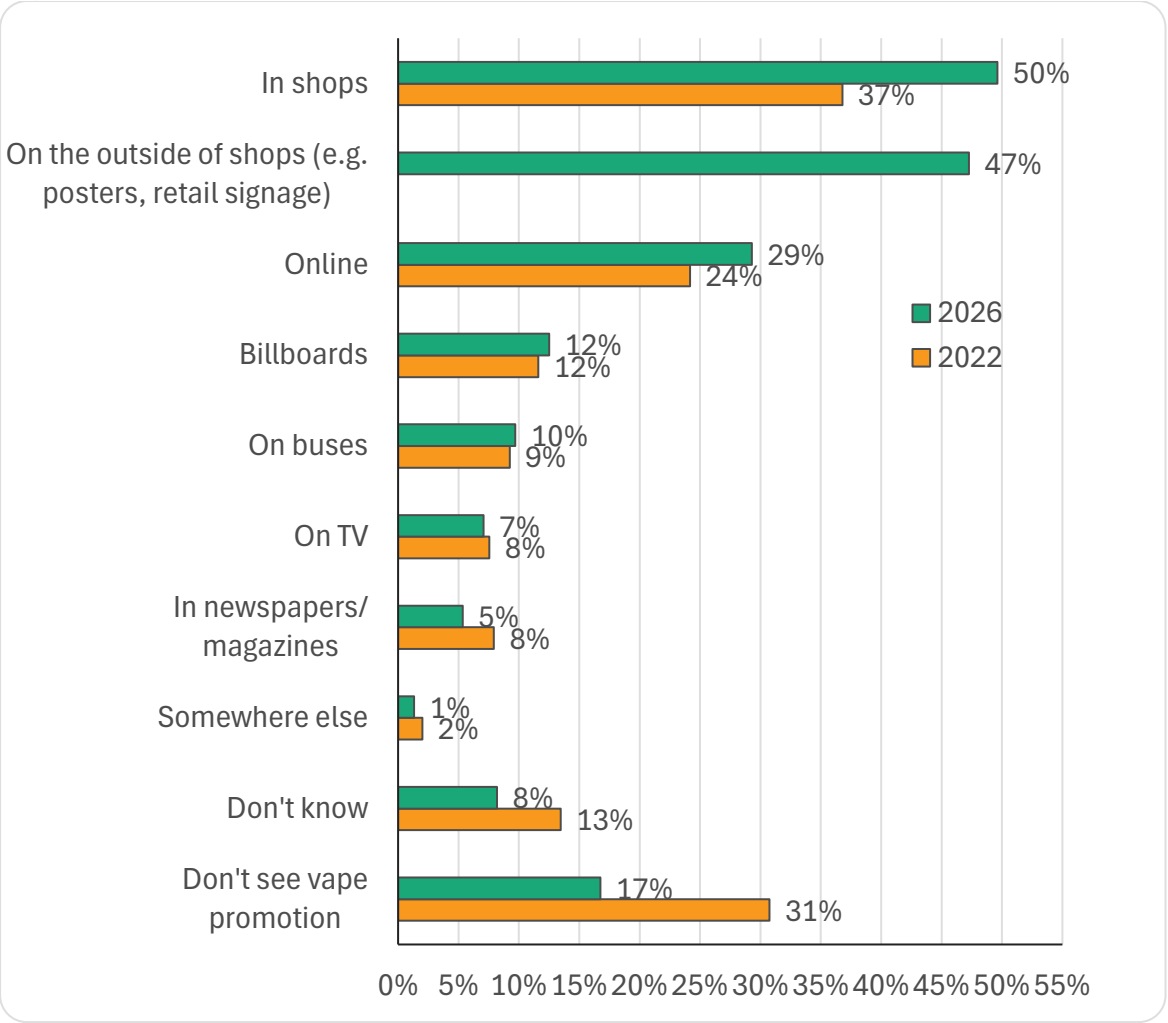

**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey, 2026.** Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds who currently smoke or vape (respondents who currently smoke=151, respondents who currently vape=225).

Although many young people who vape or smoke are given their vapes or cigarettes (Figure 25), buying them from shops is also a frequent route to obtaining them.

## 4.3 Exposure to promotion

Figure 28 shows how the awareness of vaping promotion has grown among 11-17 year olds between 2022 and 2026. There has been a significant increase in awareness of promotion of vapes over these years, particularly in shops (37% in 2022, 50% in 2026) and a decline in those saying they don't see vapes being advertised. In 2022, 56% of 11-17 year olds who were aware of vapes reported they were exposed to some form of vape promotion. In 2026, 75% reported having seen vape promotion, the most common type being in shops (50%) and online (29%).

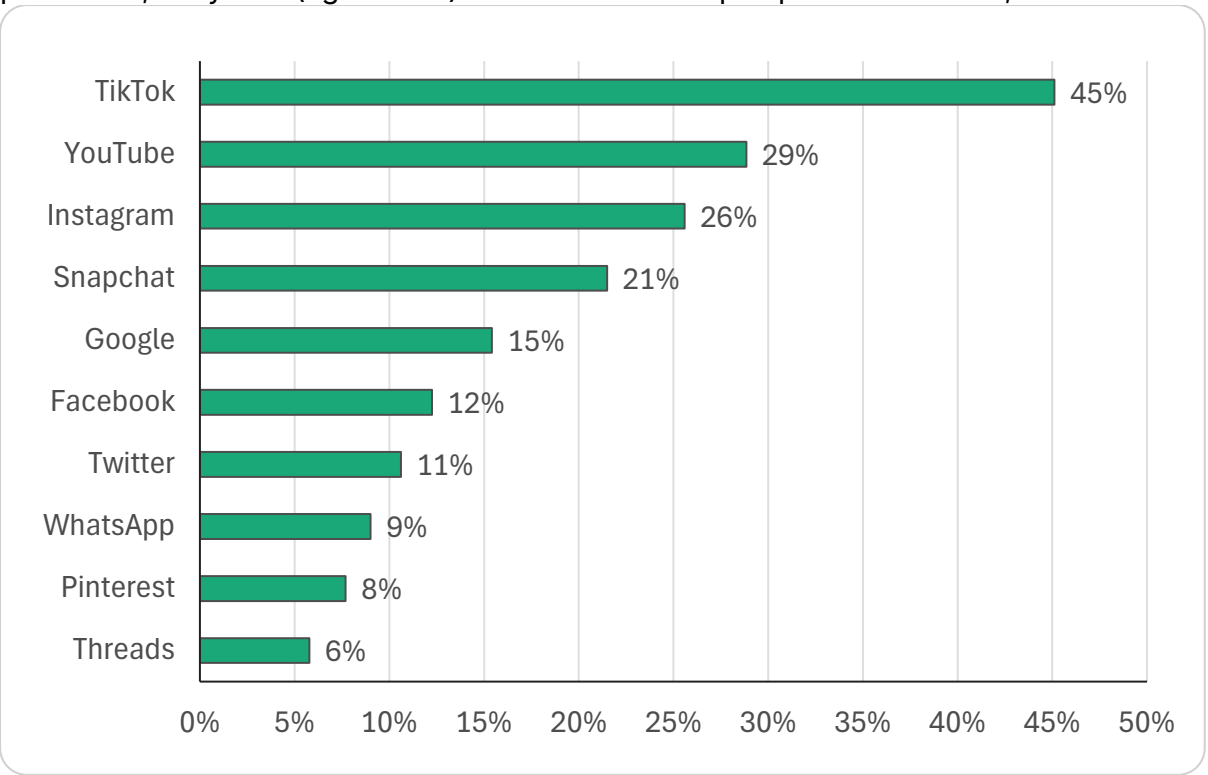
**Figure 28.** Awareness of vape promotion among GB youth (aged 11-17) who are aware of vapes, 2022 & 2025




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2022 & 2026.** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds aware of vapes (2022=1,916, 2026=2,832). 'On the outside of shops' was first offered as an option in 2026.*

Of those who reported seeing vapes promoted online the most common place was on TikTok (45%), followed by YouTube (29%) and Instagram (26%) (Figure 29).

**Figure 29.** Top 10 most common places young people reported seeing online vape promotion, GB youth (aged 11-17) who have seen vapes promoted online, 2026



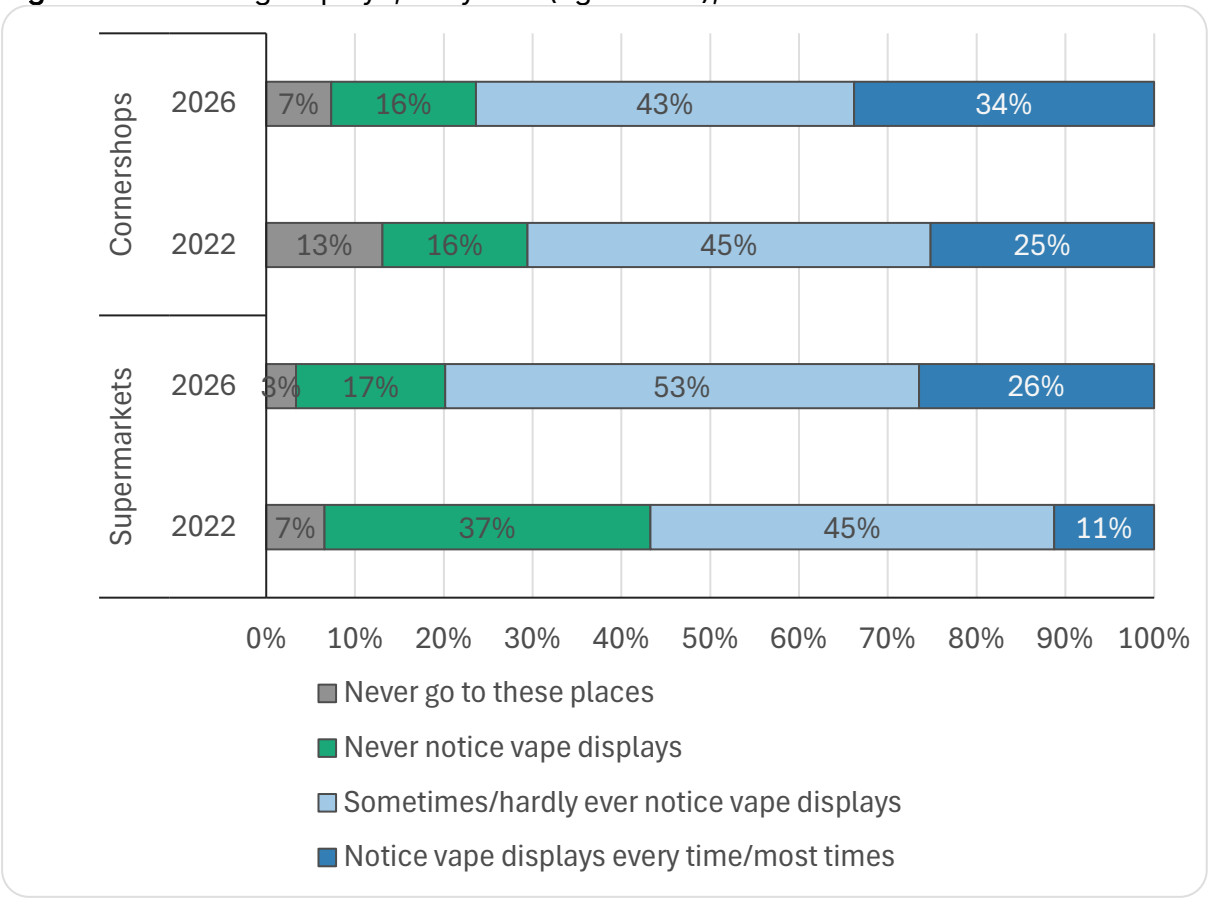

**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2026.** *Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds aware of vapes who have seen them promoted online (n=882)*

There are differences in awareness of vape promotion between those who have and haven't vaped. While all 11-17 year olds are equally likely to report in-store promotion, those who have tried vaping are more likely to report awareness of online promotion (never vaped 27%, ever vaped 40%).

In a new question in 2026, 32% of young people said that they had seen an image or footage of a celebrity or influencer smoking in the past 12 months. Similarly, 32% had seen a celebrity or influencer vaping.

The increase in awareness of vape promotion in shops is most pronounced in supermarkets. Between 2022 and 2026 there has been a 20 percentage point drop in young people who report they never see vapes displayed in supermarkets and increase in those who sometimes or often do (Figure 30).

**Figure 30.** Noticing displays, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2022 & 2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2022 & 2026**. *Unweighted base: all 11-17 year olds who are aware of vapes (2022=1,916, 2026=2,832)*

# 5. Experiment to evaluate the impact of standardising vape packaging

In the 2021 survey[3], images of different e-cigarette starter packs were shown to 11-18 year old respondents to our survey who were asked to tell us which packs they would be interested in trying. Respondents were randomly allocated either to packs with their usual brand imagery or packs with the brand imagery removed, but the brand name retained. The experiment sought to assess if young people were more likely to be interested in packs with brand imagery than those without.

Among those shown the branded packs 40% expressed a preference for one of the brands. Among those shown packs without brand imagery 32% expressed a preference – a statistically significant difference. Among the children who had never tried an e-cigarette the difference was slightly larger with 37% expressing a preference when shown the fully branded packs and 27% expressing a preference when shown the packs without brand imagery.

We showed the same packs to respondents in our survey of adult (18+ years). Among current smokers there was no statistically significant difference in trying an e-cigarette starter pack whether it had brand imagery (31%) or not (27%). Smokers who had never vaped were less likely to express a preference for packs with brand imagery removed than smokers who had tried vaping (13% compared to 36%). However, again there was no statistically significant difference between packs with brand imagery (14%) and those without (12%).

These findings suggest that removing brand imagery could have an impact in reducing the appeal of e-cigarettes to young people without compromising their appeal to adult smokers.

# 6. Other nicotine/tobacco products

**Nicotine pouches**

- About one in a hundred young people aged 11-17 currently use nicotine pouches (1.1%, an estimated 63,000 young people)
- Nearly half of young people are aware of nicotine pouches (48%)
- Use of nicotine pouches is much higher among young people who currently smoke or vape than those who have never smoked or vaped

**Heated tobacco products**

- Current use is 0.5%
- 19% of young people are aware of heated tobacco products

**Shisha**

- Current use is 5%
- 0.3% use shisha more than once a month
- 45% of young people are aware of shisha

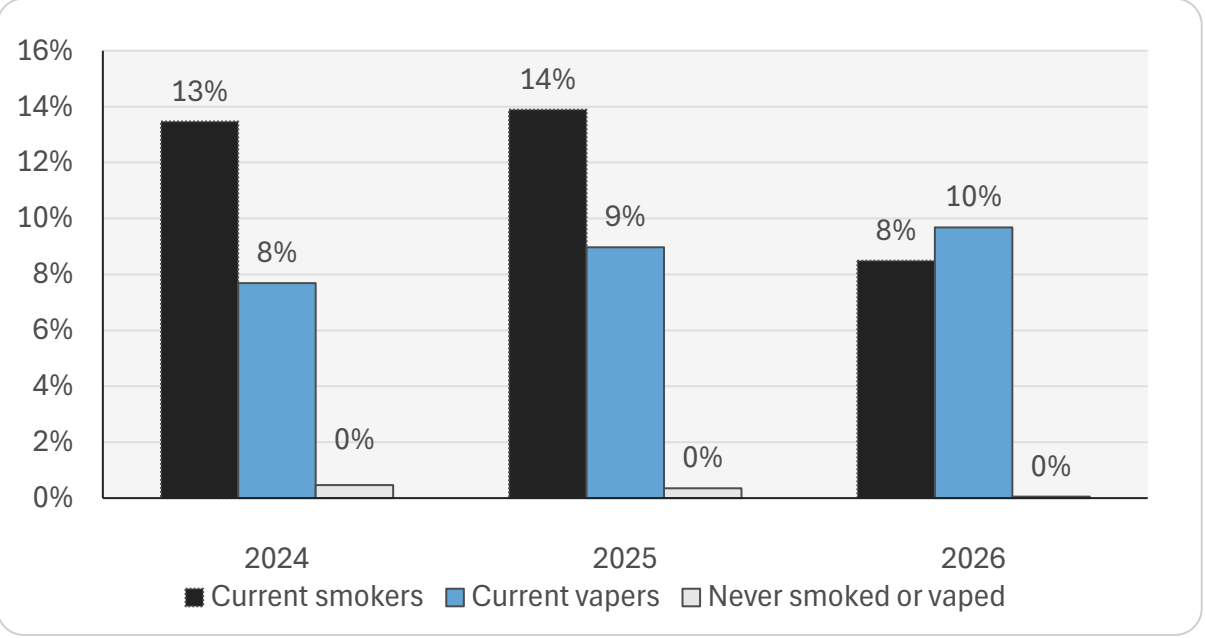
## 6.1 Nicotine pouches

About one in a hundred young people aged 11-17 currently use nicotine pouches (1.1%). This is equivalent to around 63,000 young people. A further 2.1% of young people have tried them in the past but no longer use them. Nearly half of young people surveyed were aware of nicotine pouches (48%).

Boys are twice as likely as girls to have ever tried nicotine pouches (4.1% of boys, 2.2% of girls).

The use of nicotine pouches is much higher among current smokers (8%) and current vapers (10%) than those who have never smoked or vaped (0.1%, Figure 31).

**Figure 31.** Current use of nicotine pouches, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2024-2026



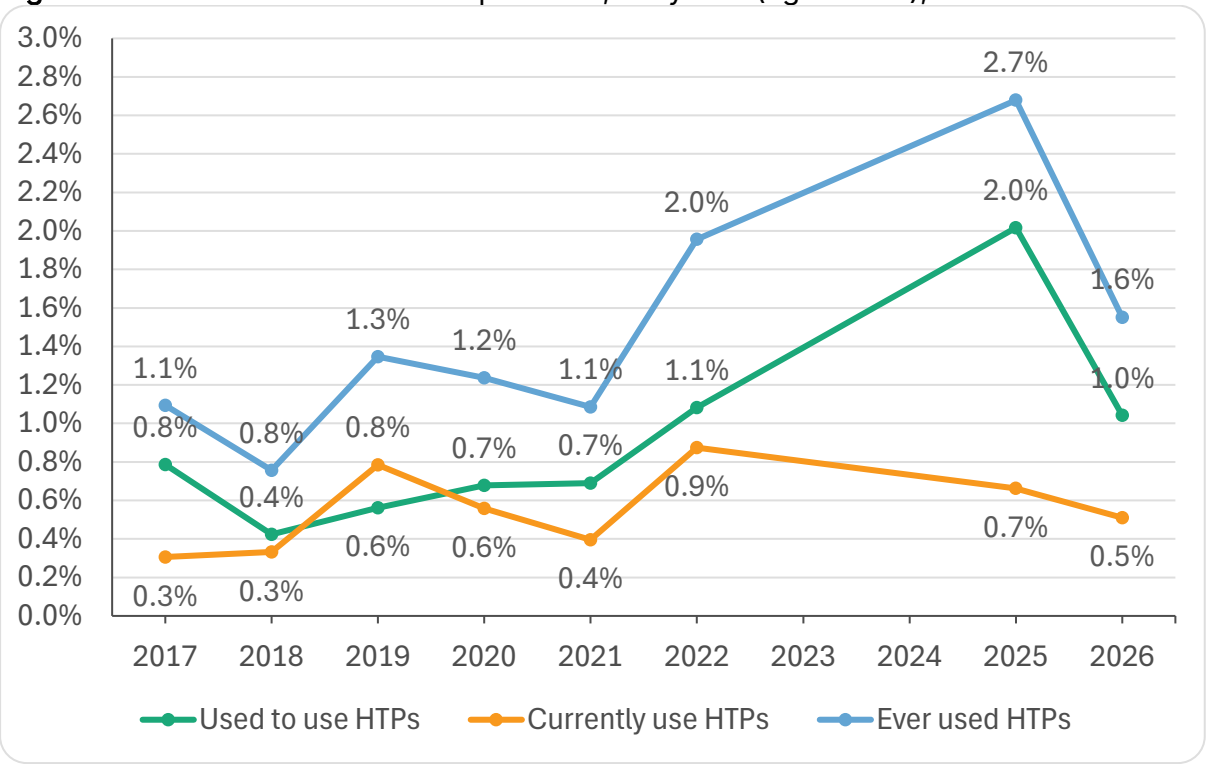

**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2024-2026.** Unweighted base: GB youth aged 11-17 (2024: Smokers 138, Vapers 213, Never 1,824. 2025: Smokers 163, Vapers 231, Never 1,823, 2026: Smokers 151, Vapers 225, Never 2,054)

See also: ASH Key topic: Nicotine pouches

## 6.2 Heated tobacco products

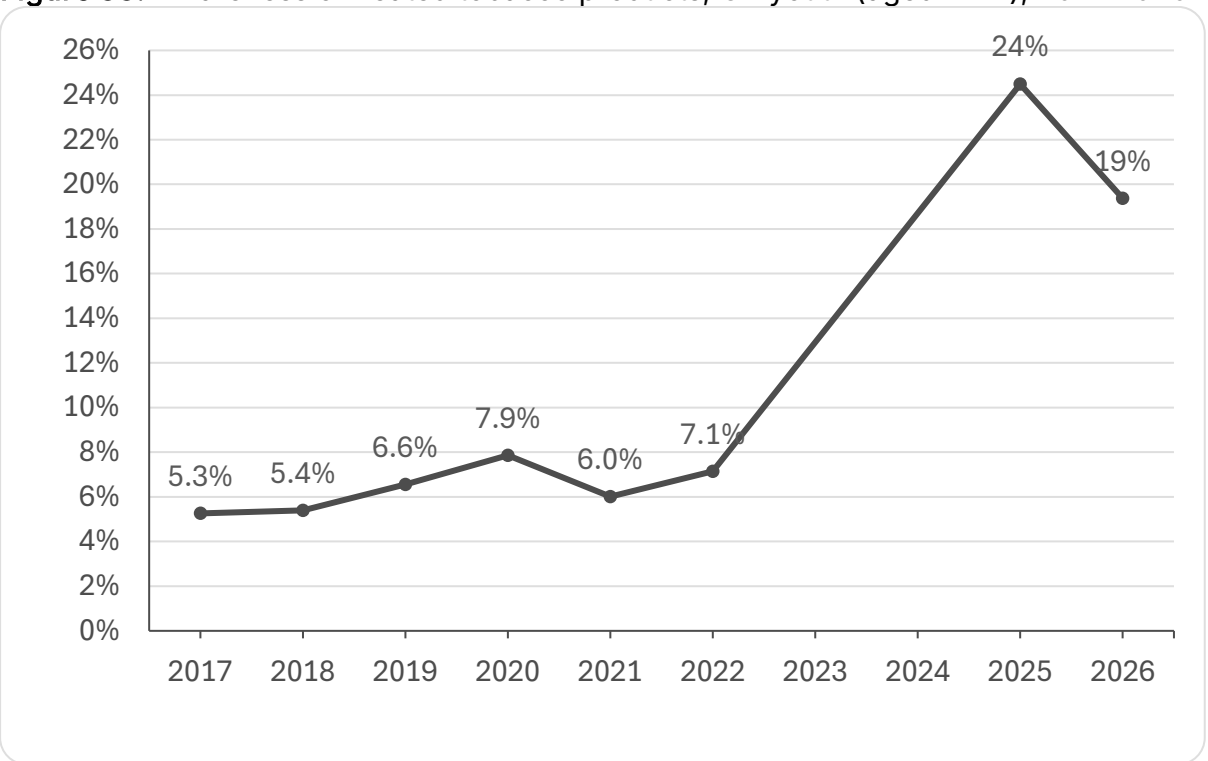
About one in two hundred young people (0.5%) currently use heated tobacco products (sometimes called heat not burn products), and a further 1.0% have used them in the past (Figure 32). One in five young people are aware of heated tobacco products (19%, Figure 33).

**Figure 32.** Use of heated tobacco products, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2017-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2017-2026.** Unweighted base: Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019=1,982, 2020=2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2025=2,746, 2026=2,926). Question was not asked in 2023 or 2024.

**Figure 33.** Awareness of heated tobacco products, GB youth (aged 11-17), 2017-2026




**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2017-2026.** Unweighted base: Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019=1,982, 2020=2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2025=2,746, 2026=2,926).

Question was not asked in 2023 or 2024.Question was not asked in 2023 or 2024.

See also: ASH Key Topic Heated tobacco

## 6.3 Shisha

About one in twenty young people report having tried shisha (5%), most of whom have tried it only once or twice (3.4%). Only 0.3% of young people use shisha more than once a month. Less than half of young people (45%) have heard of shisha.

# Appendix 1: ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey methodology

The ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey is an annual survey of young people in Great Britain ages 11-18 which has been running since 2013. The survey is carried out online by YouGov and is commissioned by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). ASH receives core funding from the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK.

Since 2021, the analysis in the factsheet focuses on 11-17 year olds as it enables a clear picture to be presented of underage use (since 2015 it has been illegal to sell e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18). With no legal distinctions in tobacco or e-cigarette usage within this age bracket, the relative group homogeneity allows greater analysis power. From 2026 onwards, the sample is restricted to only 11-17 year olds.

Results have been weighted and are representative of GB children aged 11 to 17. As the survey is cross sectional, it does not prove causality in any direction. Calculations of the total number of children who vape are by ASH. In each of the years we applied the proportions of current and ever vapers in the YouGov survey to the most recent available ONS mid-year GB population estimates for 11-17 year olds at the time the YouGov data was gathered.[4] In 2025 and 2026 the 2024 population estimate was used.

Percentages in this report are given to the nearest whole number, or to one decimal place if under 10%. As a result, some sums may appear out by ±0.1 percentage points due to rounding error.

## Confidence intervals

Where 95% confidence intervals overlap, the differences could be due to chance. Not reaching significance means that differences are uncertain, not that the difference is proven not to be real.

**Table 1.** ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey Participant Counts

| Year | Age 11-15 | Age 16-17 | Age 18 | Age 11-17 | Ages 11-18 (full sample) | Dates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2026 | 1,749 | 1,177 | 0 | 2,926 | 2,926 | 3rd April – 6th May |
| 2025 | 1,778 | 968 | 298 | 2,746 | 3,044 | 14th March – 24th April |
| 2024 | 1,644 | 930 | 298 | 2,574 | 2,872 | 21st March – 18th April |
| 2023 | 1,280 | 748 | 628 | 2,028 | 2,656 | 21st March - 18th April |
| 2022 | 1,335 | 776 | 502 | 2,111 | 2,613 | 1st – 29th March |
| 2021 | 1,347 | 762 | 404 | 2,109 | 2,513 | 25th March – 16th April |
| 2020 | 1,295 | 734 | 476 | 2,029 | 2,505 | 11th – 31st March |
| 2019 | 1,243 | 739 | 541 | 1,982 | 2,523 | 12th March – 3rd April |
| 2018 | 1,288 | 519 | 484 | 1,807 | 2,291 | 28th February – 17th March |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2017 | 1,538 | 613 | 472 | 2,151 | 2,623 | 10th March – 5th April |
| 2016 | 1,326 | 409 | 596 | 1,735 | 2,331 | 11th March – 10th April |
| 2015 | 1,291 | 543 | 457 | 1,834 | 2,291 | 6th -22nd March |
| 2014 | 1,348 | 469 | 251 | 1,817 | 2,068 | 21st March - 1st April |
| 2013 | 1,422 | 473 | 283 | 1,895 | 2,178 | 21st - 28th March |

**Table 2.** Counts for Figure 10

| | Youth never smokers | Adult never smokers |
|---|---|---|
| 2013 | 1,552 | 5,973 |
| 2014 | 1,496 | 5,995 |
| 2015 | 1,478 | 6,129 |
| 2016 | 1,466 | 6,099 |
| 2017 | 1,764 | 6,626 |
| 2018 | 1,486 | 6,746 |
| 2019 | 1,600 | 6,466 |
| 2020 | 1,640 | 6,832 |
| 2021 | 1,785 | 6,507 |
| 2022 | 1,723 | 7,130 |
| 2023 | 1,673 | 6,649 |
| 2024 | 2,043 | 7,339 |
| 2025 | 2,070 | 7,490 |
| 2026 | 2,324 | 7,699 |

**Table 3.** Counts for Figure 16

| | Ever vaper | Never vaper |
|---|---|---|
| 2013 | 72 | 1,113 |
| 2014 | 118 | 1,361 |
| 2015 | 210 | 1,478 |
| 2016 | 168 | 1,434 |
| 2017 | 279 | 1,677 |
| 2018 | 254 | 1,423 |
| 2019 | 301 | 1,543 |
| 2020 | 327 | 1,567 |
| 2021 | 266 | 1,626 |
| 2022 | 390 | 1,514 |
| 2023 | 472 | 1,427 |
| 2024 | 528 | 1,788 |
| 2025 | 623 | 1,881 |
| 2026 | 640 | 2,168 |

# Appendix 2: Evolution of the regulatory framework

From October 2015 a minimum age of sale for e-cigarettes of 18 was introduced in England and Wales, making it illegal to sell e-cigarettes containing nicotine to under 18s or to purchase them on behalf of under 18s.[5] However, a loophole in the law does not make it illegal to give free samples of e-cigarettes to under 18s. Scotland implemented their own age of sale and proxy purchasing regulations in April 2017,[6] and Northern Ireland in February 2022.[7]

From 20th May 2016, a regulatory framework for e-cigarettes was introduced in the UK under the EU Tobacco Products Directive (TPD).[8] From that date, the advertising or promotion, directly or indirectly, of electronic cigarettes and re-fill containers on a number of media platforms, including on television, radio, newspapers and magazines, was prohibited. The only advertising still allowed is at point of sale and other local advertising such as billboards. Scotland is currently in the process of consulting on whether to tighten its regulations to further limit the way vape products can be advertised and promoted.[9]

The new product rules under the TPD for e-cigarettes introduced a notification process for manufacturers and importers in May 2016.[10] Non-compliant stock was allowed on sale for a further year until 20th May 2017.

Following the passage of the Tobacco and Vapes Act in April 2026 the regulation of vapes is set to change in the coming years. No changes were in place at the time of the fieldwork. See below for a summary of the key product standards as at date of publication of this factsheet:

### Nicotine strength of e-liquid

Electronic cigarettes which contain up to 20 mg per ml of nicotine are regulated as consumer products.
Products containing over 20mg per ml of nicotine are not legal unless they have a medicinal licence.[11]
Zero nicotine products are not covered by the TPD and do not require a medicinal licence. They are covered by general product safety rules.

### Quantity of e-liquid

Disposable electronic cigarettes, cartridges and tanks can contain a maximum of 2ml of e-liquid, while dedicated refill containers can contain up to 10ml.

### Safety

Products must be child-resistant and tamper evident.

### Health warnings

The pack must carry a health warning covering 30% of the surfaces of the unit packet and any outside packaging stating '*This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance.*'

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is the competent authority for the notification scheme for e-cigarettes and refill containers in the UK. Consumers and healthcare professionals can report side effects and safety concerns with e-cigarettes or refill containers to the MHRA through the Yellow Card reporting system.[12] They can also report products suspected to be defective or non-compliant to their local Trading Standards service or to TPDsafety@mhra.gov.uk.

The MHRA assesses all reports received in associated with nicotine-containing e-cigarettes and works with local Trading Standards teams to investigate as needed.

ASH uses its annual online survey to ask vapers questions about the type of product they use to inform our understanding of the impact of the current regulations and how the market for e-cigarettes is evolving.

# Appendix 3: Definitions

## Vaping

Vaping is assessed in two parts:

Part 1:
**Have you heard of vapes, also called electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes?**
Yes, I have
No, I haven't
Don't know

Those who answer, "Yes I have' are then asked Part 2:
**Which ONE of the following is closest to describing your experience of vapes (e-cigarettes)?**

1) I have never used a vape (e-cigarettes)
2) I have only tried a vape (e-cigarettes) once or twice
3) I used vapes (e-cigarettes) in the past but no longer do
4) I use vapes (e-cigarettes) sometimes, but no more than once a month
5) I use vapes (e-cigarettes) more than once a month, but less than once a week
6) I use vapes (e-cigarettes) more than once a week but not every day
7) I use vapes (e-cigarettes) every day
8) Don't want to say

Current vaping
4), 5), 6) or 7)

Ever vaping
2), 3), 4), 5), 6) or 7)

Never vaping
Answered 'No I haven't' or 'Don't know' to part 1, or 1) to part 2 (although for some questions, such as the comparative harms of vaping and smoking, it is necessarily

limited to only those answering 1) to part 2).

## Smoking

**Which ONE of the following BEST applies to you?**

1. I have never smoked cigarettes, not even a puff or two
2. I have only ever tried smoking cigarettes once
3. I used to smoke sometimes but I never smoke cigarettes now
4. I sometimes smoke cigarettes now but less than one a week
5. I usually smoke between one and six cigarettes a week
6. I usually smoke more than six cigarettes a week
7. Don't want to say

Current smoking
4), 5), or 6)

Ever smoking
2), 3), 4), 5) or 6)

Never smoking
1)

# References

Data collected by YouGov for ASH.

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Prof Jamie Brown, UCL

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