



Prince Edward Island Youth Vaping Awareness Days: Evidence of Effective Knowledge Translation

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Background



Vaping continues to represent a significant public health concern among youth. In the most recent Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CSTADS), the rate for past 30-day vaping among youth in grades 7-12 was 17% [1]. In Prince Edward Island (PEI), vaping rates are slightly higher than the national average, with past 30-day e-cigarette usage for this demographic sitting at approximately 20% [1]. This prevalence rate illustrates that, despite sweeping legislation having been in effect for the past five years, a significant number of youths in PEI continue to access and use vaping products. As such, there is a need to determine what methods, aside from legislation, are able to impact these rates and prevent vaping uptake among youth.

In response to these above-average vaping rates, LungNSPEI and the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) came together in 2021 to create the Youth Vaping Awareness Days (YVAD) program. This program aims to increase knowledge among PEI youth in grade 7 (ages 11-12) of the health and social harms associated with vaping, with the end goal of helping these youth make informed choices about using or starting to use vaping products. Grade 7 was deliberately chosen as only 3% of grade 7 students in PEI have vaped in the past 30-days versus the 20% rate observed among PEI students in later grades [2].

The YVAD program is delivered through sessions administered in grade 7 classrooms across the province. Each session consists of three components. The first component is a 60-minute presentation delivered by UPEI Faculty of Nursing students. This presentation includes a 20-minute video title "Clearing the Cloud" which discusses the evidence-based health risks of vaping and presents interviews with youth sharing their personal experiences with vaping. The second component is a discussion period where the presenters lead the students in a discussion about the content of the session. The final component is a Bingo game that allows the students to test their knowledge on the material conveyed to them during the session. Following the completion of the session, students are given a short evaluation survey where they are asked to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the session in developing their understanding of the harms associated with vaping. To date, three rollouts of the YVAD program have been undertaken, with sessions having been carried out with over 3,000 students from across 50 schools in PEI.

The YVAD program is unique in that it is one of the first of its kind in Canada. Past research has found that other programs of this nature such as CATCH My Breath [3], CATCH My Breath Canada [4], and YES-CAN! [5] are quite effective at increasing students' knowledge of vaping-related harms and their likelihood to make informed choices about vaping. With three successful rollouts of the YVAD program having been completed to date, a proper evaluation of the program's performance is necessary to determine whether it is achieving the same outcomes observed in these other programs. As such, this report seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the YVAD program by summarizing findings from the evaluation surveys administered during the first three rollouts of the program.

Method



Upon completion of each session, students were presented with a short program evaluation survey where they were asked to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the session. A unique version of the survey was administered in 2021-2022 and was later updated for use in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 (where the survey remained unchanged between rollouts). The 2021-2022 evaluation survey consisted of five quantitative questions and one open-ended, qualitative question. The quantitative questions asked students about how the session impacted their attitude toward vaping (“Has your attitude towards vaping changed?”), their likelihood to try a vaping product in the future (“If offered a vaping product, do you think you would be less likely to try one?”), their understanding of the health effects of vaping (“Do you have a better understanding of how vaping can affect your health?”), their knowledge of someone they could go to for trusted information about vaping (“Do you have someone you can go to for trusted information on vaping (such as a teacher, parent or LungNSPEI)?”), and, if they were a current vaper, their likelihood to stop vaping (“If you are currently a vaper, are you more likely to consider stopping after today?”). These questions were all answered on a 3-point scale consisting of “No”, “Somewhat”, and “Yes”, with the exception of the final question which substituted “Somewhat” with “Maybe”. The qualitative question asked participants to share one thing that they learned from the session that would help them make healthy choices about vaping (“What is one thing you learned today that will help you make healthy choices when it comes to vaping products?”).

The 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 evaluation surveys consisted of five quantitative questions and one open-ended, qualitative question. Three of the quantitative questions were taken from the 2021-2022 survey (the questions about the health effects of vaping, having a trusted source for information, and likelihood to quit vaping after the session), as was the qualitative question. The two additional quantitative questions asked students to rate how important they felt it was for them to avoid using vaping products (“On a scale of 1-10, 10 being very important, how important is it for you to not use vaping products?”), as well as what they felt was the most important reason for them to avoid using vaping products (“To you, what’s the most important reason to avoid using vaping products?”). The first question was answered on a 10-point scale, with higher scores denoting a stronger importance. The second question consisted of five response options: “It’s addictive”, “It’s expensive”, “It harms our physical health”, “It harms our mental health”, and “All the above”.

Between 2021 and 2024, a total of $N = 3,053$ grade 7 students across PEI completed a program evaluation survey. Of these, $n = 949$ came from the 2021-2022 rollout, $n = 1,040$ from the 2022-2023 rollout, and $n = 1,064$ from the 2023-2024 rollout. To analyze the quantitative questions, descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviation, count and percentage) were generated for each question. Additionally, a content analysis was carried out to analyze the open-ended question. Content analysis is a statistical technique consisting of coding open-ended responses into themes and quantifying the number of times each theme appears in the data [6]. To determine whether responses to the quantitative questions differed significantly across program rollout years, a series of chi-square tests of independence and independent samples t-tests were also conducted. These were only conducted for questions asked in at least two of the evaluation surveys.

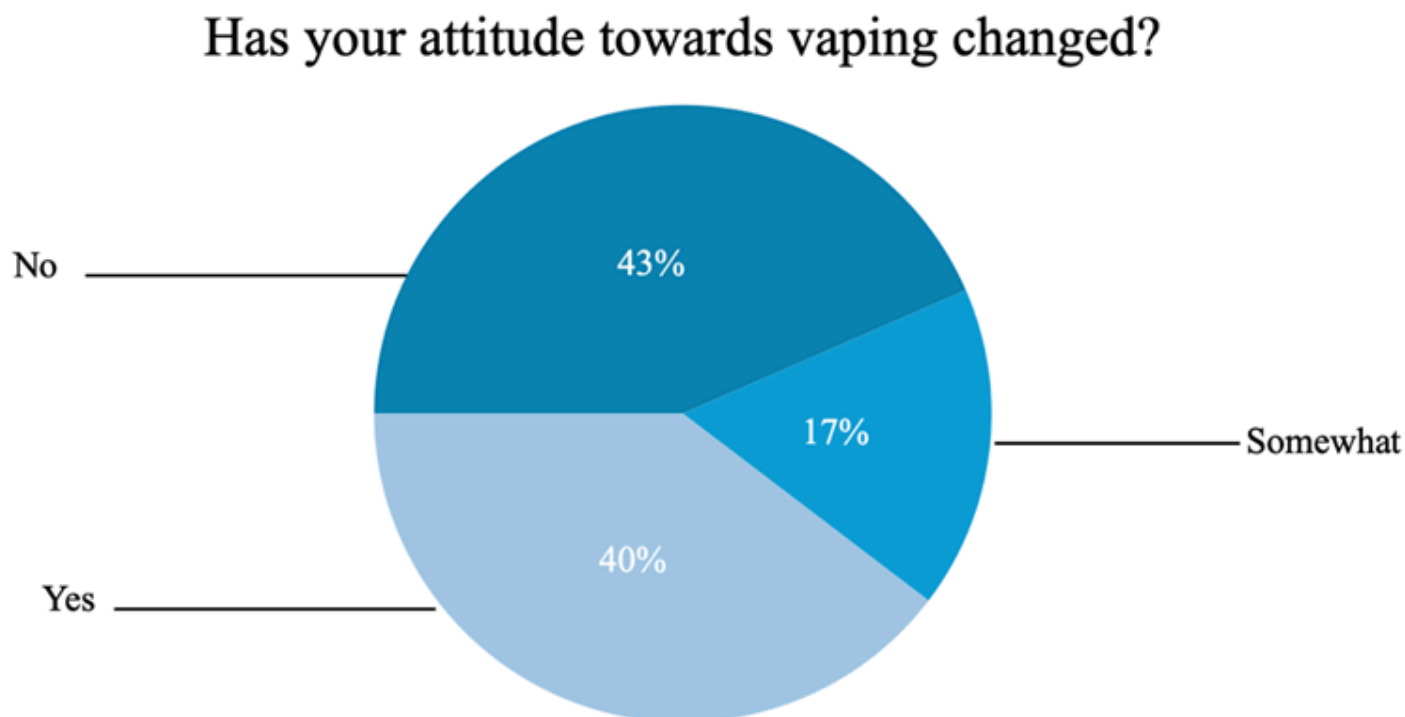


Has Your Attitude Toward Vaping Changed?

Students who completed the 2021–2022 YVAD program evaluation were asked to disclose whether their attitude toward vaping had changed by the end of the session. Figure 1 depicts the results of this question.

Overall, the largest proportion of students reported that their attitude had not changed from participating in the session ($n = 411, 43\%$). The second largest proportion reported that their attitude did change as a result of the session ($n = 357, 40\%$). The smallest proportion of students said that their attitude had only slightly changed ($n = 160, 17\%$).

Figure 1



Note. The data presented in this figure are from the 2021–2022 evaluation only.

Results

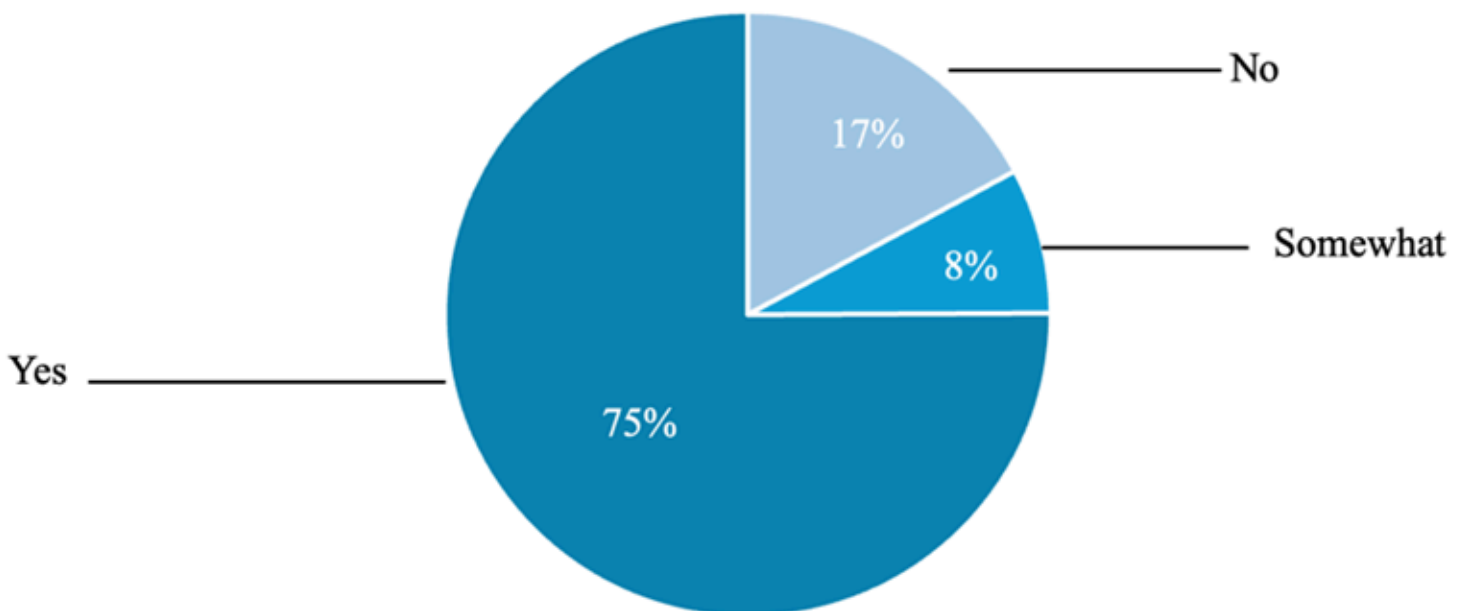


If Offered a Vaping Product, do You Think You Would be Less Likely to Try One?

Students who completed the 2021-2022 YVAD program evaluation were asked to disclose whether their likelihood to try a vaping product if offered had changed by the end of the session. Figure 2 depicts the results of this question. Most of the students reported that their likelihood to try a vaping product had decreased after taking part in the session (n = 705, 75%). The next largest proportion stated that their likelihood to try a vaping product had not decreased (n = 161, 17%), while only a small proportion said their likelihood had only decreased slightly (n = 73, 8%).

Figure 2

If offered a vaping product, do you think you would be less likely to try one?



Note. The data presented in this figure are from the 2021-2022 evaluation only.

Results

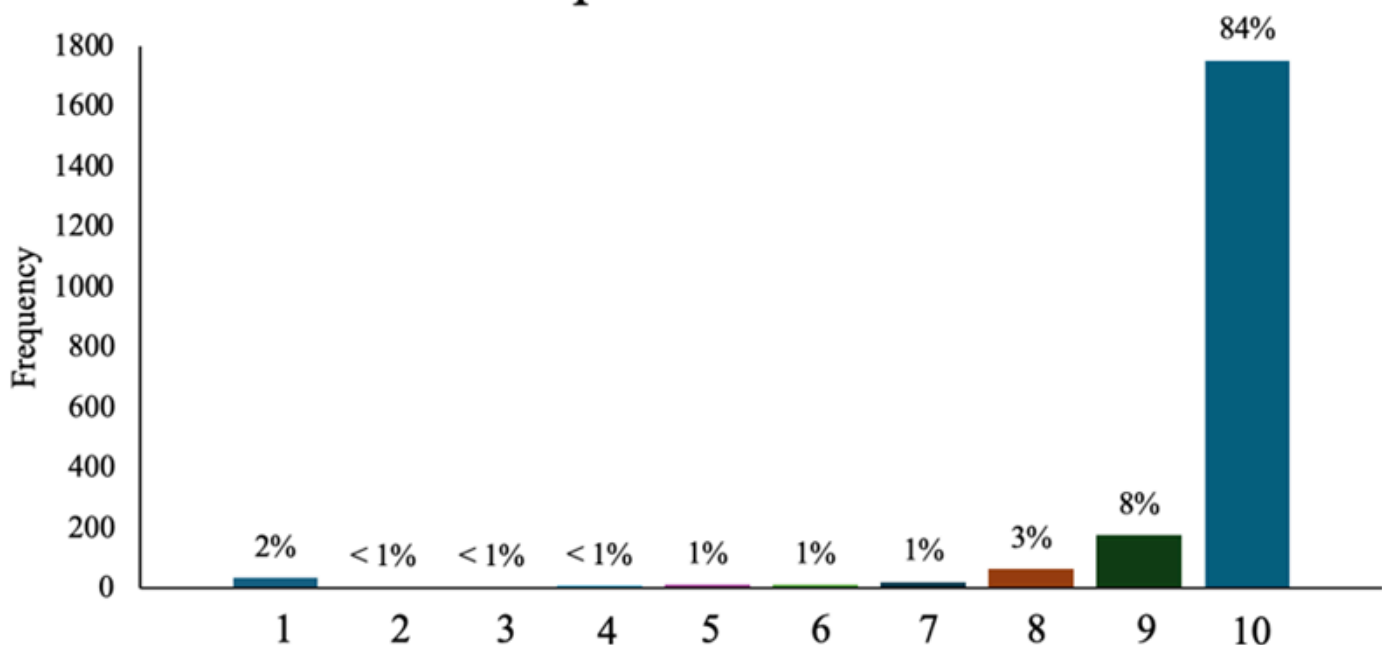


On a Scale of 1-10, 10 Being Very Important, How Important is it for You to Not Use Vaping Products?

Students who completed the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 YVAD program evaluations were asked to disclose how important it was for them to not use vaping products based on what they had learned in the session. Figure 3 depicts the results of this question. Most students rated the importance of avoiding vaping products as a 10-out-of-10 (84%). The average importance rating across the two evaluations was 9.58-out-of-10 ($SD = 1.42$), with near identical average importance ratings being given in both the 2022–2023 ($M = 9.57$, $SD = 1.39$) and the 2023–2024 ($M = 9.58$, $SD = 1.44$) evaluations. An independent samples t-test revealed no difference in the average importance rating given between the two evaluations, $t(2087) = -0.12$, $p = .90$, $d = 0.01$.

Figure 3

On a scale of 1-10, 10 being very important, how important is it for you to not use vaping products?



Note. The data presented in this figure are from the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 evaluations only.

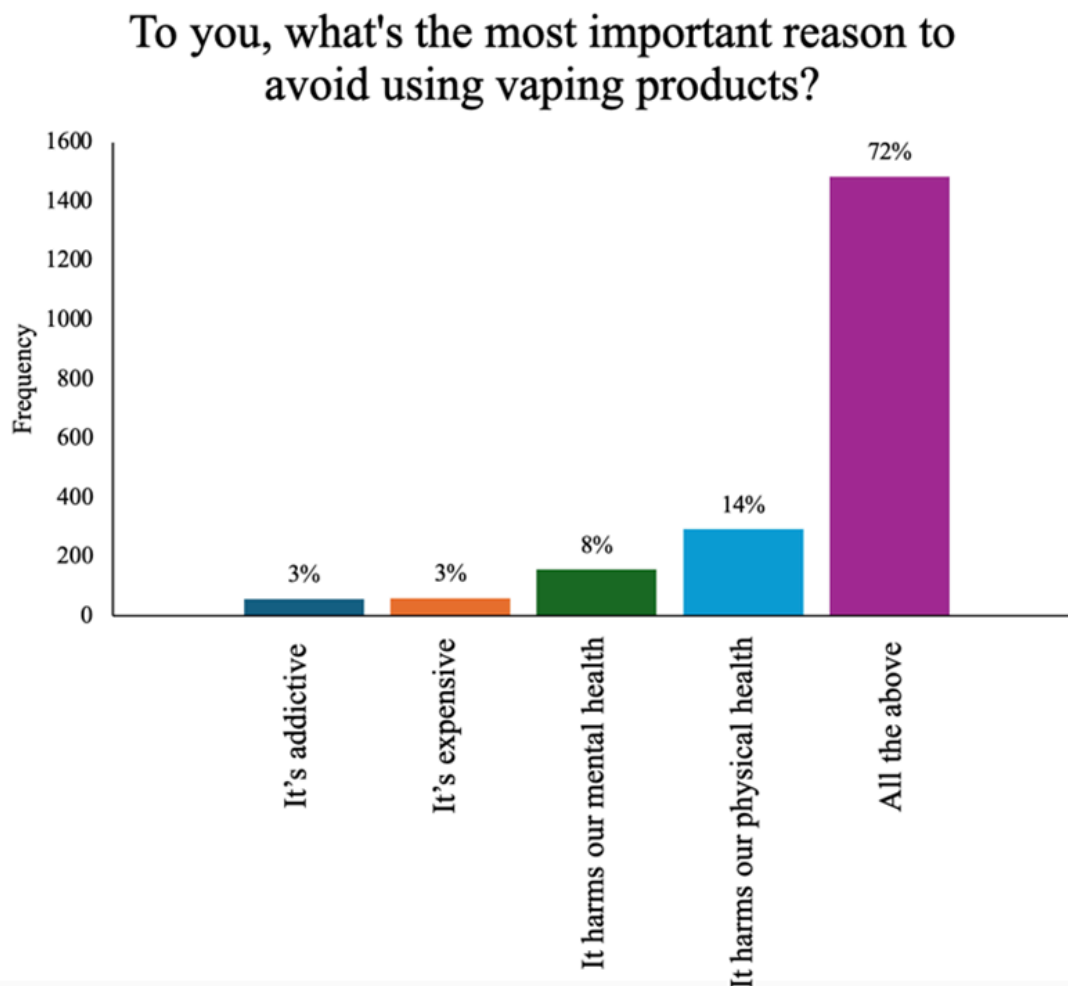
Results



To You, What's the Most Important Reason to Avoid Using Vaping Products?

Students who completed the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 YVAD program evaluations were asked to disclose what they felt was the most important reason for them to not use vaping products based on what they had learned in the session. Figure 4 depicts the results of this question. The largest proportion of students endorsed all the possible choices ($n = 1,484$, 72%). Of those who did not endorse all the options, the largest proportion endorsed harms to physical health ($n = 293$, 14%), followed by harms to mental health ($n = 158$, 8%), the expensiveness of vaping ($n = 61$, 3%), and the addictiveness of vaping ($n = 58$, 3%). This response pattern replicated when examining the two evaluations separately. A chi-square test of independence revealed no difference in the response pattern between evaluation years, $\chi^2(4, n = 2054) = 8.03, p = .09$, Cramer's $V = 0.06$.

Figure 4



Note. The data presented in this figure are from the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 evaluations only.

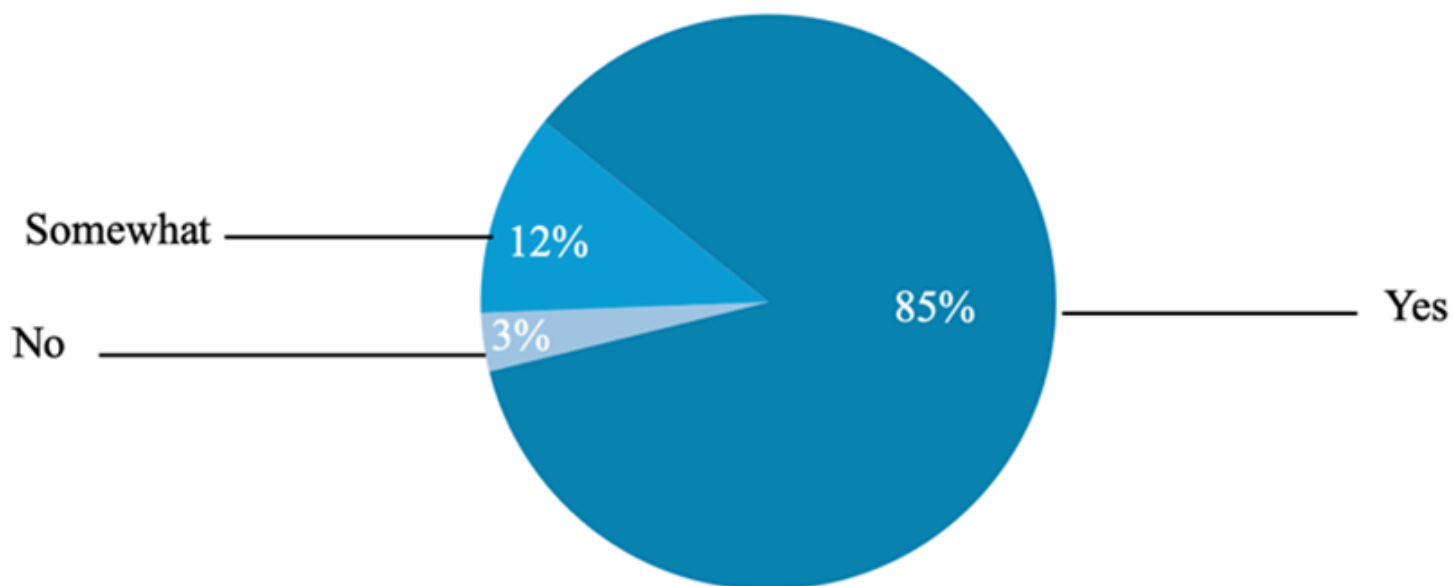


Do You Have a Better Understanding of How Vaping can Affect Your Health?

Students who completed all three YVAD program evaluations were asked to disclose whether they felt they had a better understanding of how vaping could affect their health after completing the session. Figure 5 depicts the results of this question. Most students reported that they felt their understanding had significantly increased after the session ($n = 2,589, 85\%$). The next largest proportion noted that their understanding had only somewhat increased ($n = 346, 11\%$), with only a small proportion stating that their understanding had not changed ($n = 100, 4\%$). When separating the responses by evaluation year, the proportions for each response option remain near identical. A chi-square test of independence revealed no difference in the response pattern between evaluation years, $X^2(4, n = 3035) = 9.06, p = .06, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.06$.

Figure 5

Do you have a better understanding of how vaping can affect your health?



Note. The data presented in this figure are from all three evaluations combined

Results

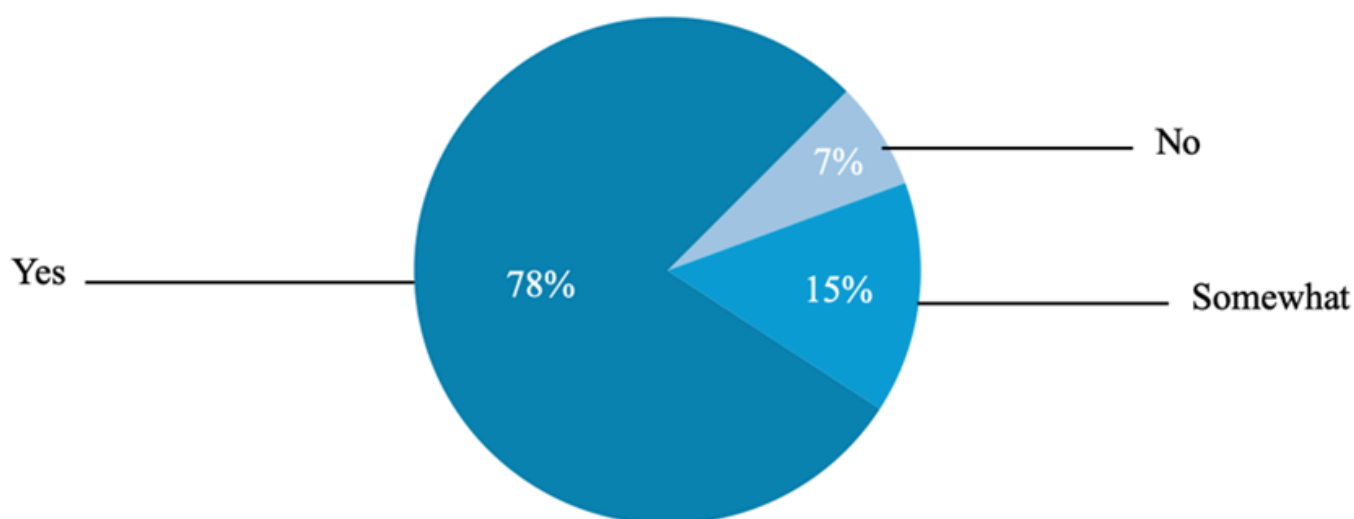


Do You Have Someone You Can Go to for Trusted Information on Vaping (Such as a Teacher, Parent or LungNSPEI)?

Students who completed all three YVAD program evaluations were asked to disclose whether, after receiving the information from the session, they felt they had someone they could go to for trusted information on vaping. Figure 6 depicts the results of this question. Most of the students reported that they felt as if they had someone they could go to ($n = 2,366, 78\%$). The next largest proportion reported that they were only somewhat certain they had someone to go to ($n = 447, 15\%$), with only a small proportion stating they felt they did not have someone to go to ($n = 208, 7\%$). A chi-square test of independence revealed there was a significant difference in the response pattern between evaluation years, $\chi^2(4, n = 3021) = 83.43, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.12$. More specifically, there was a significant increase in the proportion of students who felt they had someone to go to for trusted information between the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 evaluations. Additionally, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of students who felt they did not have someone to go to for trusted information between the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 evaluations.

Figure 6

Do you have someone you can go to for trusted information on vaping (such as a teacher, parent or LungNSPEI)?



Note. The data presented in this figure are from all three evaluations combined

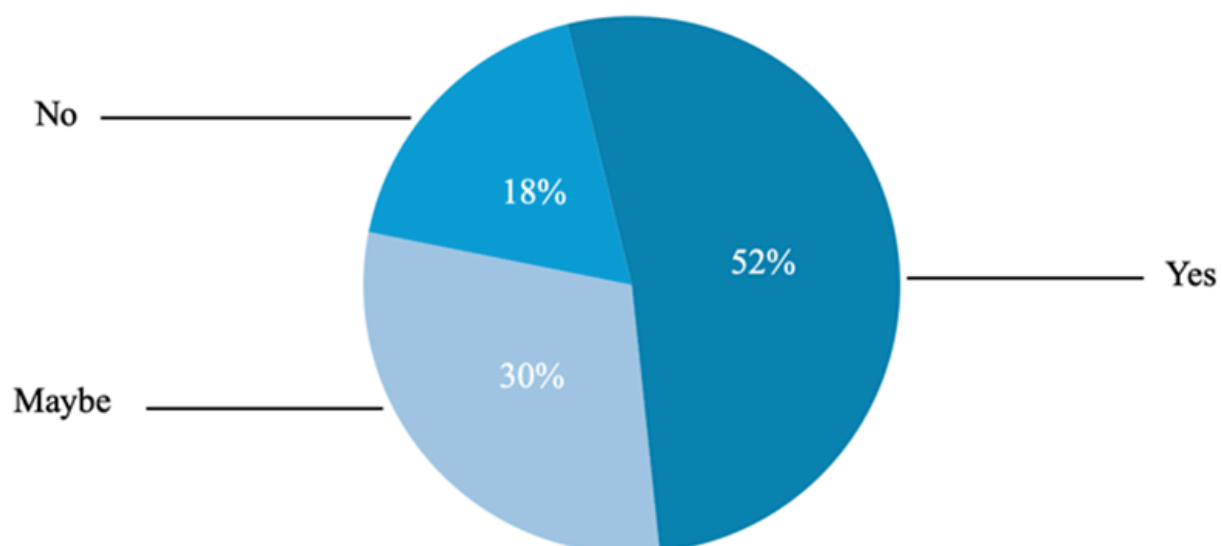


If You Are Currently a Vaper, Are You More Likely to Consider Stopping After Today?

Students who completed all three YVAD program evaluations were asked to disclose whether, if they were currently vaping, they felt they would be more likely to consider stopping after participating in the session. Figure 7 depicts the results of this question. Almost all the students said that they were not current vapers ($n = 2,871$, 94%). However, of those that were current vapers, most reported that they were more likely to consider stopping after participating in the session ($n = 119$, 52%). The next largest proportion stated that they were no more likely to consider stopping than they already were ($n = 68$, 30%), followed by a smaller proportion stating that they were uncertain ($n = 41$, 18%). A chi-square test of independence revealed there was a significant difference in the response pattern between evaluation years, $\chi^2(6, n = 2871) = 53.91, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = 0.10$. More specifically, there was a significant decrease between the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 evaluations in the proportion of students who felt they were no more likely to consider quitting vaping after the session than they were before the session. Additionally, there was a significant decrease between the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 evaluations in the proportion of students who were uncertain whether they were more likely to consider quitting vaping after the session.

Figure 7

If you are currently a vaper, are you more likely to consider stopping after today?



Note. The data presented in this figure are from all three evaluations combined

Results



What is One Thing You Learned Today that will Help You Make Healthy Choices when it Comes to Vaping Products?

Students who completed all three YVAD program evaluations were asked to disclose one thing they had learned from participating in the session that would help them make healthy choices around vaping products in the future. The content analysis of this question revealed 10 distinct categories of responses. Table 1 presents a more detailed description of each category, while Figure 8 provides a visual depiction of the frequency of each category. The first and most common category, *Health Effects*, consisted of responses surrounding the potential effects vaping can have on the health of users. Students discussed potential negative effects on both physical (e.g., lung damage, cancer, fatigue) and mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression, memory loss). A notable response given by many was that vaping could impact their ability to play sports. Several noted that any sort of product malfunction could also lead to negative health outcomes. A sizeable number compared the harms associated with vaping to those associated with cigarettes.

The second category, *Importance of Avoiding Vaping*, consisted of responses highlighting the reasons why not taking up vaping or quitting vaping were important. The most notable of these was to avoid any potential negative health outcomes (e.g., cancer, addiction, etc.). Students with pre-existing health conditions (e.g., asthma) also highlighted why avoiding vaping was particularly important for them. Several students noted that there is still little known about the long-term impacts of vaping, making it especially important to avoid it. Others mentioned that it is important to avoid being around others who vape and to avoid peer pressure.

The third category, *Cost of Vaping*, consisted of responses surrounding the high cost associated with vaping. Several students pointed out the steep yearly cost of vaping, as well as the things they could purchase if they saved that money. Many highlighted that they feared they would run out of money if they were regular vapers.

The fourth category, *Chemicals in Vaping Products*, consisted of responses highlighting the dangerous contents of vaping products and the potential consequences of consuming these chemicals. Many spoke about their disgust with the various chemicals added to vape juice (e.g., heavy metals, chemicals associated with gasoline, chemicals associated with nail polish remover, etc.). A sizeable number feared what inhaling these chemicals could do to the body. Several others highlighted the potential impact using these chemicals could have on the environment.

Results



What is One Thing You Learned Today that will Help You Make Healthy Choices when it Comes to Vaping Products? (cont.)

The fifth category, *Nicotine in Vaping Products*, consisted of responses surrounding the high concentrations of nicotine in vaping products and their potential consequences. Most students pointed out the addictive potential of vaping, as well as the potential negative health effects that could accompany vaping addiction (e.g., cognitive impacts, lung damage, mental health concerns, etc.). Several noted that many vaping products contain the same amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. Notably, several students mentioned that vaping can be a gateway to smoking through nicotine addiction.

The sixth category, *Impact of Vaping on Others*, consisted of responses highlighting the potential effects vaping has on those surrounding the user. Many spoke about the potential harms of second-hand smoke from vaping and how it could impact friends and family. Others highlighted that even pets can be impacted by vaping.

The seventh category, *Flavours*, consisted of responses discussing the large number of flavours vaping products are available in. Some discussed concern around the chemicals used to create the flavours and the potential consequences of inhaling those chemicals. A few noted that flavoured vapes are not available in PEI.

The eighth category, *Vaping Laws*, consisted of responses highlighting the various vaping legislation in PEI. Some discussed how many laws PEI had directed toward vaping. More specifically, some students highlighted the flavour ban, while others noted the higher-than-average age of legal purchase of 21.

The ninth category, *Asking for Help*, consisted of responses highlighting the importance of going to trusted adults for help with vaping concerns. Students noted that it is both acceptable and encouraged to go to trusted adults when looking for information about vaping. Some students pointed out that these individuals can help you avoid vaping or potentially help you quit if you are currently using.

The final category, *Other*, consisted of responses that did not fit into any of the above categories or were meaningless. For instance, responses grouped into "Other" included students who said they did not learn anything from the presentation, students who were unsure or could not remember what they learned, students providing background information about vaping that was not relevant to the presentation (e.g., the origin of vaping), and students making fun of those who vape.



What is One Thing You Learned Today that will Help You Make Healthy Choices when it Comes to Vaping Products? (cont.)

Table 1

Category	Code #	Code	Example
Health effects, N = 736 (44%)	1	Negative physical effects	"How terrible they are considering they can cause cancer"
	2	Negative mental effects	"How much vaping can impact mental health"
	3	Impact on sports	"If I vape it will be hard for me to play sports"
Importance of avoiding vaping, N = 336 (20%)	1	Avoid negative health outcomes	"Not to use them because they are harmful"
	2	Impact of pre-existing health concerns	"I will never vape because I have CF"
	3	Little known about the long-term impacts	"Do not do anything that might harm you without knowing for sure what it will do"
	4	Combatting peer-pressure/knowning how to say no	"Don't listen to your friends if they ask you to vape"
Cost of vaping, N = 168 (10%)	1	Vaping is expensive	"1800 dollars a year if you vape daily"
	2	Things one could purchase with money saved	"I learned that I can vape for one year or buy two PS5s"
	3	Fear of future financial insecurity	"It is a financial burden"
Chemicals in vaping products, N = 122 (7%)	1	Chemicals added to vape juice	"Some products in the vapour are in paint or gasoline"
	2	Potential health effects of inhaling chemicals	"You inhale lots of bad chemical that effects your mental and physical health"

Nicotine in vaping products, N = 89 (5%)	1	Addictive potential of vaping	"It is really addictive, more than I thought it was"
	2	Negative impacts of vaping addiction	"There's nicotine which can kill you"
	3	More nicotine than cigarettes	"1 pod is equal to 1 pack of cigarettes"
	4	Vaping can be a gateway to smoking	"Vaping can lead to you using cigarettes"
Impact of vaping on others, N = 34 (2%)	1	Harms vaping can have on those around you	"Anyone around me could be harmed by my actions"
	2	Harms of second-hand exposure on others	"It doesn't only harm you but it harms others too"
	3	Harms of second-hand exposure on pets	"I learned that vaping can harm your pets"
Flavours, N = 32 (2%)	1	Large number of flavours available	"I learned that there are over 7000 flavours of vapes"
	2	Relationship between flavours and chemicals	"There are so many flavours to hide the chemicals in them"
Vaping laws, N = 11 (1%)	1	Number of laws in PEI	"How many laws there are"
	2	Flavour ban in PEI	"PEI banned flavoured vapes"
	3	Age 21	"I learned that we can't vape until 21"
Asking for help, N = 5 (< 1%)	1	Importance of seeking help if you have concerns about vaping	"Tell a trusted adult if you do start vaping"
	2	Adults can help you quit	"Asking adults for help can make quitting easier"
	1	Learned nothing/unsure if learned anything	"I already knew all of this"
Other, N = 122 (7%)	2	Codes not fitting an above category	"Vapes were made in 2003"
	3	Meaningless responses	"sdfsd"

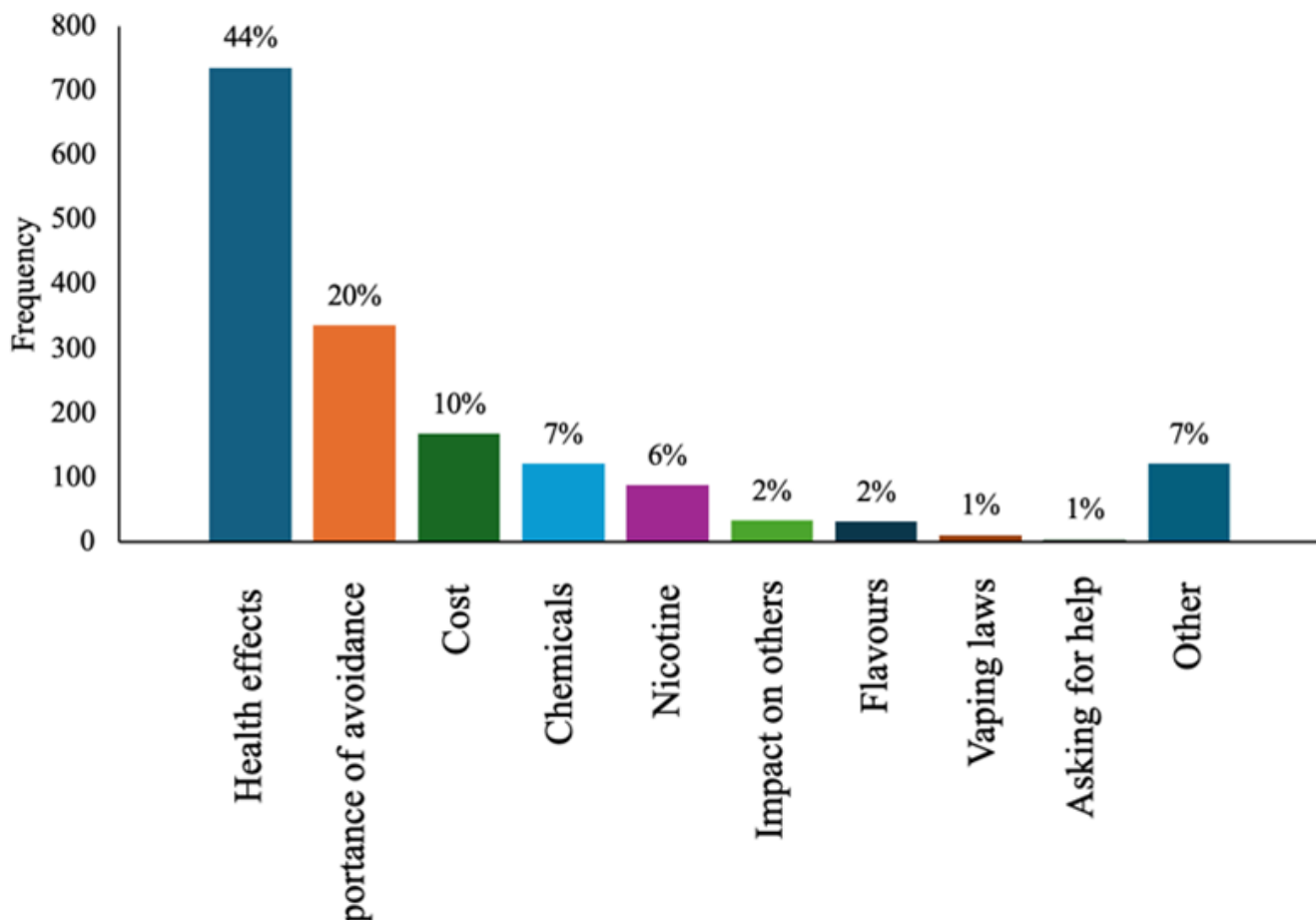
Results



What is One Thing You Learned Today that will Help You Make Healthy Choices when it Comes to Vaping Products? (cont.)

Figure 8

What is one thing you learned today that will help you make healthy choices when it comes to vaping products?



Note. The data presented in this figure are from all three evaluations combined.

Discussion



This report sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the YVAD program by summarizing findings from the evaluation surveys administered during the first three rollouts of the program. Analyses of the data collected provides clear evidence that the program is achieving its goals of increasing knowledge among grade 7 students in PEI of the health and social harms associated with vaping and helping them make informed choices about vaping. While the program does not appear to significantly alter grade 7 youth's explicit attitudes toward vaping, it does appear to have a significant impact on their likelihood to try vaping products, to rate vaping as being highly important to avoid, and to try and quit if they are currently vaping. Furthermore, based on the very high levels of endorsement, the program clearly increases students' knowledge of the harms associated with vaping, as well as who they can go to for support if they have concerns about vaping. The program also seems to work well at conveying the harms of vaping to students who participate in the sessions. For instance, most students recognize there are a plethora of reasons why one should avoid vaping, and students are likely to rate all of them as important. Furthermore, the statements from students on one thing they learned from the session convey a clear understanding that vaping is addictive, expensive, harmful, and important to avoid, both for oneself and those around you. Overall, the collective results from the three evaluation surveys provide evidence that this program is promising and should continue to be invested in going forward.

When split by evaluation year, several key findings emerge that are important to consider. First, there was a significant increase between the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 evaluations in the proportion of students who felt they had someone to go to for trusted information about vaping. In addition, the proportion of students who felt that they did not have someone to go to decreased significantly between these evaluations. This lends itself to two possible explanations. First, it may be that the program has improved in its ability to convey this message to students across its rollouts. Second, it may be that the general awareness of vaping resources among the public (and by extension, students) has improved throughout the duration of the program's existence. Irrespective of which explanation is more accurate, this finding illustrates that the program does a strong job conveying to students not only that there are people they can go to for trusted information about vaping, but also whom these people are (e.g., LungNSPEI, teachers, parents, etc.).

Discussion

(cont.)



Second, while the proportion of students more likely to consider quitting vaping after the session did not change between evaluation years, there was a significant decrease between the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 evaluations in both the proportion of students who felt they were no more likely to consider quitting vaping after the session than they were before it, as well as in the proportion of students who were uncertain whether they were more likely to consider quitting vaping after the session. This finding can also be explained in two different ways. First, it appears that the program is improving in its ability to convince students who are currently vaping that quitting is important. Second, and likely in tandem with the first, the health effects of long-term vaping seem to be becoming more salient with increased research, outreach, and programming. The mean importance of avoiding vaping rating of 9.58 in the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 evaluations, coupled with most students endorsing a variety of important reasons to avoid vaping, lends further credence to idea. Given the positive findings from the evaluations, it is likely that this program is at least in part responsible for this increase in salience among grade 7 PEI students.

Aside from the direct impacts of the program visible in the data, this program has the opportunity to make additional impacts in the community. For instance, the program can benefit students in university or college nursing and health promotion programs by providing the opportunity for internships or volunteer positions delivering the program content. Additionally, the program may serve to benefit parents and teachers as they will be exposed to the same content as students, some of which may be unknown to them. Consequently, they will be able to take that knowledge and share it with others, thereby promoting healthy behavioural choices on a larger scale.

Strengths & Limitations



There are several strengths of the program evaluation surveys that increase the reliability and utility of their findings. First and foremost, the number of students surveyed per year, as well as the overall number of students surveyed, was particularly large. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that the findings are representative of the grade 7 population in PEI. Second, the variety of questions asked means that all elements of the program could be properly evaluated. Finally, the inclusion of an open-ended question about things learned during the session allowed for a better understanding of students' main takeaways than would a question forcing them to select specific lessons. Strong convergence between these self-reported takeaways and the program content suggests students paid attention and retained the information presented.

There are also some limitations of the evaluations that are important to note. First, a lack of identical questions being asked between the 2021-2022 evaluation survey and the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 evaluation surveys made it impossible to assess whether certain outcomes changed or remained consistent between program rollouts. For instance, students who completed the 2021-2022 evaluation were asked about their likelihood to try a vaping product if offered after participating in the session. This question was not asked in subsequent evaluation surveys. To better track program performance over time, it is imperative that the evaluation questions remain consistent. Second, despite the breadth of questions allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of the overall program content, the evaluation survey would benefit from questions assessing specific elements of the program. For instance, it would be useful to ask students for feedback on the video and the Bingo game, as well as to what extent these specific activities influenced their attitudes and behaviours. This would allow for a better investigation into whether these elements are effective at achieving the program's goals or whether they could be modified or substituted to improve the program above and beyond its current performance.

Conclusion

In summary, this program appears to be achieving its primary goals of increasing knowledge among grade 7 students in PEI of the health and social harms associated with vaping and helping them make informed choices about vaping. That said, there remains work to be done to determine the extent to which the program has an impact on current and future behaviour. For instance, there is a need for additional studies examining the prevalence rate of vaping among this demographic to determine whether it has decreased in the years since the YVAD program's inception. With the release of the most recent CSTADS data sometime this year, the tangible impacts of the program may become more identifiable. Furthermore, given the apparent success of the program to date, there is a need to examine to what extent it can be expanded to cover additional content areas (e.g., teaching vaping prevention tactics, cessation tactics for those who are current users, etc.), as well as its applicability in other jurisdictions. As this program has now been adapted for use in Nova Scotia, there will soon exist the opportunity to evaluate its performance in this new jurisdiction and determine whether it can be easily adapted for broader use in Canada.

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