



Public submission from the World Vapers' Alliance to the Norwegian Health & Care Committee

About the World Vapers' Alliance

The World Vapers' Alliance (WVA) amplifies the voices of vapers worldwide and empowers them to make a difference in their communities. Our members are vapers associations and individual vapers from all over the world. More information can be found on www.worldvapersalliance.com

About this consultation and why the World Vapers' Alliance is responding to it

Proposition 125L, which promotes changes to the Tobacco Harm Law, includes banning vaping flavours. The World Vapers' Alliance considers this to be an erratic measure that could push a proportion of vapers to the black market back to smoking, thus increasing tobacco harm and damaging public health.

Therefore, the World Vapers' Alliance participates in this consultation and submits this text to the Norwegian Health & Care Committee to provide extensive scientific evidence on vaping flavours and explain how a flavour ban would hurt public health.

How to read this document:

We respond directly to each concern from the Norwegian Health & Care Committee (hereinafter NHCC) by providing the title of the section we are responding to followed by WVA's response on each selected section.

NHCC: BACKGROUND (2)

WVA:

1. Banning vaping flavours is unlikely to reduce their usage. The international evidence suggests that banning vaping flavours will drive users to the black market or back to smoking, which has been verified by previous experiences. The main evidence about this point can be reviewed here:

Friedman (2020) analyzed the effects of a flavour ban in San Francisco and found that it resulted in rising teenage smoking rates for the first time in decades.

The study can be found here:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2780248>

Rich (2022) analyzed the effects of a flavour ban in Massachusetts and concluded that it resulted in higher sales of cigarettes. The study can be found here:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.04.24.22274236v1>

The Tholos Foundation (2022) analyzed the effects of a flavour ban in Estonia and found that 60% of vapers kept using them by mixing their own liquids or obtaining them from the black market. The study can be found here:

<https://tholosfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Presentation-Estonia-.pdf>

Gravelly et al. (2020) surveyed users in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States and found that, in the case of a flavour ban, 5 out of 10 would get their flavours from the back market or take up smoking again. The study can be found here:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34695685/>

This evidence shows that, when banned, a good share of vapers either obtain flavours from the black market, make them at home or take up smoking again. None of these is a better alternative to keeping them legal. In the black market, products do not run safety and quality controls; there are no controls to prevent sales to minors, and products do not pay taxes. When made at home, products do not run safety and quality controls and can become dangerous when not produced right. And if vapers take up smoking again, their health suffer and public health expenses increase. In summary, a ban on flavours will not prevent those who want to use them from obtaining them, and public health will worsen.

2. Evidence shows that vaping flavours are key for smokers trying to quit. If flavours are banned, it will make it less likely for current vapers to keep away from cigarettes and make it more difficult for smokers to quit in the future. The main evidence about this can be reviewed here:

Friedman & Xu (2020), researchers from the Yale School of Public Health, associated the use of vaping flavours with a 230% increase in the odds of adult smoking cessation and concluded that: "Adults who vaped flavoured e-cigarettes were more likely to

subsequently quit smoking than those who used unflavored e-cigarettes. (...) Adults who began vaping non-tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes were more likely to quit smoking than those who vaped tobacco flavors.” The study can be found here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32501490/>

Mendelsohn (2017), on a submission to an Australian House of Representatives’ Committee, stated that flavours are more likely to keep people off traditional cigarettes since they help them forget the flavour of tobacco: “Flavours are an important part of the appeal of vaping for adult smokers and make the products attractive as an alternative to smoking, just as flavours are also used to enhance the appeal of nicotine gum. Banning flavours would likely undermine the use of e-cigarettes and public health.” The submission can be found here: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Health_Aged_Care_and_Sport/ElectronicCigarettes

Friedman, A.S. et al (2020) found that “Adults who vaped flavoured e-cigarettes were more likely to subsequently quit smoking than those who used unflavored e-cigarettes” and “adults who began vaping non-tobacco-flavoured e-cigarettes were more likely to quit smoking than those who vaped tobacco flavours”. The study can be found here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7275248/>

Vaping, while not completely harmless, is a way less harmful option than smoking, as we will explain later. It is important to keep flavours available to maximize the number and probability that smokers switch to vaping and improve their health.

NHCC: HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH E-CIGARETTES (2.1.)

WVA:

1. Regarding “composition and exposure of e-cigarette aerosols”:

The Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience (2022), in the largest literature review of its kind led by King’s College London academics, found that “the use of vaping products rather than smoking leads to a substantial reduction in exposure to toxicants that promote cancer, lung disease and cardiovascular disease.” The study can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update-main-findings>

Caruso, Emma & Distefano (2021) successfully replicated three key studies comparing the toxicity of cigarette smoke and vaping and found that vaping possesses “substantially reduced toxicity” compared to smoking. The study can be found here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-03310-y>

In summary, the composition of e-cigarettes is relatively harmless relative to that of smoking.

2. Regarding “respiratory diseases (excluding cancer)”:

The EVALI outbreak was not caused by legal vaping products. The CDC announced in January 2020 that the strongest link to the outbreak was illicit THC products tainted with Vitamin E acetate, not regular vaping. If this were the case, we would have seen EVALI cases around the world, but this was only happening in the US over a limited time. It was illegal vaping products sold in the black market that caused it. This is an example of how flavour bans can lead to the sale of dangerous products in the black market.

3. Regarding “cardiovascular diseases”:

Vaping nicotine, much like caffeine consumption, solely leads to a slight increase in blood pressure and heart rate.

George (2019) studied the cardiovascular effects of switching from smoking to vaping and found that those who switch improve their health whether they keep consuming nicotine or not. The study can be found here: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0735109719381938>

The Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience (2022), in the largest literature review of its kind led by King’s College London academics, found that “the use of vaping products rather than smoking leads to a substantial reduction in exposure to toxicants that promote cancer, lung disease and cardiovascular disease.” The study can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update-main-findings>

Yorkshire Cancer Research stated: “Nicotine is not the cause of death from smoking. Nicotine is not a carcinogen; there is no evidence that sustained use of nicotine alone increases the risk of cancer. Of the three main causes of death from smoking (lung cancer, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and cardiovascular disease), none are caused by nicotine. The harm from smoking comes from the thousands of other chemicals in tobacco smoke.” The report can be found here: <https://yorkshirecancerresearch.org.uk/news/the-truth-about-vaping>

Critchler & Siegel (2021) found that there is no association between daily vaping and risk of myocardial infarction. The study can be found here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34304940/>

4. Regarding “cancer”:

Yorkshire Cancer Research stated: “Nicotine is not the cause of death from smoking. Nicotine is not a carcinogen; there is no evidence that sustained use of nicotine alone increases the risk of cancer. Of the three main causes of death from smoking (lung cancer, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and cardiovascular disease), none are caused by nicotine. The harm from smoking comes from the thousands of other chemicals in tobacco smoke.” The report can be found here: <https://yorkshirecancerresearch.org.uk/news/the-truth-about-vaping>

Stephens (2018), a researcher at St. Andrews University, showed that the risk of cancer from e-cigarettes compared to that from smoking is less than half a per cent. The additional lifetime cancer risk for an e-cigarette user is 0,0095% compared to 2,4% of a smoker found by the same study. The study can be found here: <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/27/1/10>

The Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience (2022), in the largest literature review of its kind led by King’s College London academics, found that “the use of vaping products rather than smoking leads to a substantial reduction in exposure to toxicants that promote cancer, lung disease and cardiovascular disease.” The study can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update-main-findings>

Smoke-Free Sweden explained that, despite the broad use of alternative nicotine products in Sweden and with a nicotine intake similar to that of the other EU countries, Sweden’s incidence of cancer is 41% lower, and as a result, cancer-related deaths are 38% lower. Additionally, smoking-related deaths are almost 40% lower. The Swedish example proves that smokeless nicotine products can significantly improve public health and that nicotine is not the substance causing cancer in cigarettes. The report can be found here: <https://smokefreesweden.org/wp-content/themes/smokefreesweden/assets/pdf/reports/Report%20The%20Swedish%20Experience%20EN.pdf>

5. Regarding “poisonings and injuries”:

Accidental poisonings, intentional poisonings and injuries caused by explosions, thermal and chemical damage due to overheating of lithium batteries are very uncommon and very unlikely to happen with legal products that undergo quality and safety controls. In contrast, products coming from the black market or homemade will not run such checks and, therefore, will be more likely to cause such accidents. Regulation should ensure products undergo the necessary controls and are safe to use instead of pushing them to the black market.

WVA:

1. WVA agrees that preventing young people from starting to smoke and use e-cigarettes is an important public health goal, yet it is important to keep vaping products widely available for adult smokers who seek to quit and improve their health. In this regard, we do not agree with the WHO's recommendations of banning flavourings.

Although flavour use is more often reported in younger age groups, flavours are not just for young users and are definitely not targeted at underage people. Different studies show that flavours are commonly used among regular vapers of all age groups (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8023840/>).

In the United States and Canada, it is estimated that around two-thirds of adult vapers use flavours (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32449933/>).

In Europe, the latest Eurobarometer on the Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes (<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2240>) shows that almost half (48%) use fruity flavours, and 20% use candy flavours. Another recent study found that "only 2.1% reported tobacco as the single most often used" flavour.

As we have previously explained, the potential situations that can happen after the ban are worse than keeping the legal availability of vaping flavours in the market for adults while ensuring that minors do not have access to them.

2. It is not true that vaping flavours are a leading reason why young people try vaping and similar tobacco and non-tobacco products. Many studies show how other socio-economic and environmental factors are behind teenagers taking up vaping or cigarettes. Factors such as personality traits (<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/24/13248>), genetic predisposition (<https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1003555>), parental smoking habits, and household income must be considered when determining why teenagers vape or smoke.

Friedman & Xu (2020) found that "relative to vaping tobacco flavours, vaping non-tobacco-flavoured e-cigarettes was not associated with increased youth smoking initiation". The study can be found here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32501490/>

Lee, Coombs & Afolalu (2018) reviewed fifteen studies and concluded that "a true gateway effect in youths has not yet been demonstrated." In their opinion, factors such as anxiety, parental smoking habits, peer attitudes, and household income must be considered. The study can be found here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6652100/>

Polosa (2020) summarized the youth use pattern of vaping: "EC use has surged greatly among high school students and young adults over the last decade but fortunately has declined significantly since its peak in 2019. During the same time period, smoking

rates have constantly fallen to new low record levels. These trends argue against EC use as a gateway to smoking. Most EC usage is infrequent and unlikely to increase a person's risk of negative health consequences. Furthermore, the majority of EC usage has happened among those who have previously smoked". The study can be found here: [https://www.jaci-inpractice.org/article/S2213-2198\(22\)00584-0/pdf](https://www.jaci-inpractice.org/article/S2213-2198(22)00584-0/pdf)

All the evidence contradicts the idea that vaping flavours are the main reason to lead teenagers to smoke or use nicotine products.

NHCC: REGULATIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES (4.3.)

WVA:

1. The document fails to mention the flavour ban in Estonia and its results. Estonia banned flavours in 2020, and the result was that 60% of vapers kept using them by mixing their own liquids or obtaining them from the black market without any quality or safety control. The full report can be found here: <https://tholosfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Presentation-Estonia-.pdf>
2. In the case of the United States, the document fails to mention some of the evidence on the effects of the flavour ban in some of the states. We do provide it here:

Friedman (2020) analyzed the effects of a flavour ban in San Francisco and found that it resulted in rising teenage smoking rates for the first time in decades. The study can be found here: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2780248>

Yang et al. (2020) confirmed that cigarette smoking increased due to the flavour ban. The study can be found here: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352853220300134>

Rich (2022) analyzed the effects of a flavour ban in Massachusetts and concluded that it resulted in higher sales of cigarettes. The study can be found here: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.04.24.22274236v1>

Siegel & Katchmar (2022) ran a literature review on the evidence of the effects of flavoured E-cigarette bans in the United States and concluded that restrictions on e-cigarette use can lead to adult and youth cigarette use. The study can be found here: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743522001116?casa_token=9-xmuYeUsTIAAAAAA:osHAHfbghr6M-9MI5MdWojiuQlqmbW_kZBF1TEwItdMRPwSJSu8leLwPc4nsHy8cRc8jv30_w

WVA's conclusion remarks:

Vaping has been proven to be substantially less harmful than smoking and a great tool to quit smoking, with flavours playing a vital role in the process. Therefore, we urge the Norwegian



authorities to consider all the evidence and establish the necessary measures to keep vaping products (including all flavours) available for adult smokers while away from minors.

A comprehensive review of the literature can be found in our Vaping and Harm Reduction Factsheet here: <https://worldvapersalliance.com/harm-reduction-vaping-fact-sheet/>

For any questions or comments, please contact the submitter of the response.