

SINGLE USE : MANY VOICES

Scottish young people's views on the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes.



Emma Prach MSYP

Marcus Flucker MSYP

Table of Contents

Foreword	01
Recommendations	02
Introduction	03
Who took part?	04
Addressing the Environmental Impacts	05, 06
Young Person's Comment	07
Understanding the Environmental Impacts	08, 09
Young Person's Comment	10
Accessibility of Information	11, 12, 13, 14
Young Person's Comment	15
Meaningful Youth Participation	16
SYP Policy and Further Work	17
Acknowledgements	18
Appendix	19

Foreword



Emma Prach MSYP

(They/Them)

'It's great to have so many young people sharing their experiences and opinions around the environment and single-use disposable vapes. I'm proud of this work so far and look forward to seeing how young people will be meaningfully engaged with in all future work on this topic. Young people have the right to be heard on issues that affect them'



Marcus Flucker MSYP

(He/Him)

'This piece of work shows that when young people are engaged with on an issue important to them they will make their views known. I am pleased that we heard the voices of young people right across Scotland through this consultation. I look forward to seeing the positive impact our work will hopefully have going forward.'

At the time of the publication of this report Emma Prach was the democratically elected Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. Marcus Flucker was the democratically elected Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament for Angus South. That information may no longer be correct after November 19th 2023.

Recommendations...



Young people should be **meaningfully** engaged with by decision-makers when creating legislation around single-use disposable vapes.



The Scottish Government should **legislate for a ban** on Single-Use Disposable Vapes as soon as possible.



The Scottish Government should work with stakeholders to implement **interim measures** to mitigate the environmental impacts of Single-Use Disposable Vapes.

"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it."

- Robert Swan

Introduction

In early 2023, Zero Waste Scotland carried out an urgent review into the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes on behalf of the Scottish Government. This review made nine recommendations to address concerns around this issue. However, there has so far, been **a lack of research on young people's perspectives**.

It has been suggested that single-use disposable vape use amongst young people is **increasing**. According to a report produced by ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) in August 2022, among 18 to 24 year olds in the UK, almost half of current e-cigarettes users (48%) use disposables as their main kind of e-cigarette, an increase from only 2.8% in 2021. This reinforces the need for the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making around single-use vapes.

Our research seeks to provide insights into the views of Scottish young people on the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes. By conducting a consultation we have captured some opinions, concerns, and most importantly **solutions**. Our survey, which was shared with the help of members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) from across Scotland, ensured meaningful engagement. We have since used this research to inform the development of a policy motion which was proposed to SYP at its' 79th National Sitting. You can learn more about how SYP policy is made at: www.syp.org.uk/our-work/political-work/ Find out more about our further work on page 17 of this report.

Our research revealed that young people in Scotland are frustrated with the lack of engagement with them on this topic so far. Many expressed that they were **concerned that decision-makers would not listen to their views**. They said it is crucial for decision-makers to engage with them on this issue meaningfully. We hope our reports' findings will be utilised as **a basis for further action**. Involving young people in co-designing any future legislation and initiatives will ensure their voices are heard directly throughout the decision-making process.

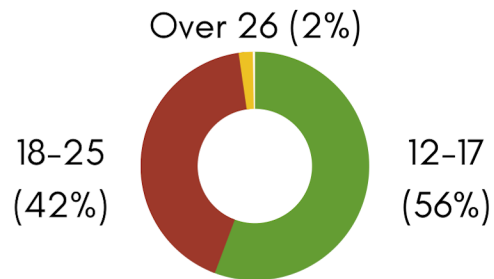
It was also expressed that any kind of future public awareness campaign cannot be framed to young people as punishing them for vaping. Instead, it must work to **empower** them to make more environmentally conscious choices.

Who took part?

Our consultation aimed to explore young people's views and experiences of the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes. They were consulted via a survey open from the 8th to the 17th April 2023. We received responses from 702 people of which 686 were young people (aged 12-25).

We received consultation responses from all 32 Local Authority areas in Scotland. The highest number of responses came from North Lanarkshire Council (17%), followed by Angus Council (10%) and then Dundee City Council (8%).

In line with research aims, this report will focus on the results from consultation respondents within the young people demographic (respondents aged 12-25).



Pictured above - Age distribution of survey responses



52% of participants identified as female



43% of participants identified as male



4% of participants identified as non-binary



1% answered prefer not to say

We included Female, Male and Non-Binary options as well as an option for respondents to self-describe or prefer not to say their gender. This is in line with Scottish Youth Parliament Policy;

'The Scottish Government should allow non-binary gender identities to be recognised by law'.



There isn't enough places to get rid of your vapes responsibly. If I did it the proper way and went to a electrical recycling place, which is normally the dump, I can't just walk in, I would need a car. It's not accessible, especially to young people.

Addressing the Environmental Impacts

This section covers young people's views on proposed ways to tackle the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes.

We asked..."A number of measures are currently being explored to regulate the sale/use of single-use disposable vapes. Which of the following options do you feel would be the most effective?"

Respondents could choose **up to 3** options.

- **73% of young people thought a complete ban of single-use disposable vapes would be the most effective.**
- 48% of young people thought that increasing the number of electrical recycling bins in our towns and cities would be an effective measure.
- 40% of young people thought that a multi-media public awareness campaign (e.g. a mix of digital, social media and physical marketing) would be an effective measure.
- 38% of young people thought that restrictions on the sale and marketing of single-use disposable vapes (similar to the restrictions on the sale of cigarettes) would be an effective measure.

0.4% of people selected 'I believe no action is required' - all of these individuals were aged 12-25. 0.4% of people selected 'I believe action should be taken but I am not sure what actions would be best' all were aged 12-25.



I think a complete ban is needed because all other things should already be in place and they're not. I would only have confidence in a complete ban. It means people can still vape if they choose to - they just use a type that's better for the environment and won't start house fires.

Majority support for a complete ban: This question revealed that a remarkable 73% of young people aged 12-25 expressed their belief that a complete ban on single-use disposable vapes would be the **most effective measure**. This strong endorsement highlights the concern amongst young people regarding the environmental impacts associated with these products. Decision-makers should take into account this overwhelming support for a ban and consider it as a crucial factor during policy making.

Inclusive engagement with young people: These results also emphasise the importance of meaningfully engaging with young people on this issue. A mere three individuals believed that no action was required, indicating a strong consensus among young people that proactive measures are necessary.

The insights gathered from Scottish young people regarding measures to address the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes provide valuable guidance for decision-makers. The overwhelming support for a complete ban shows the need for urgent action.

To successfully tackle this issue, decision-makers must meaningfully engage with young people, actively seek their opinions and involve them in the development of policies and initiatives from beginning to end. Our survey shows that Scotland can harness the passion and knowledge of its young people to create a more sustainable future, where the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes are effectively mitigated.



I vape quite a lot but the only reason I do is because my friends do. Everyone does it and there's this pressure that if you stop you won't be cool anymore. I wish they got banned so that I didn't have to feel like this anymore.

I think that too often the people in charge treat young people as the perpetrators on this issue, young people are a lot more climate aware and literate than others.

We are actually the victims of branding targeted at young people to make vapes appealing. We could've been the generation to not be addicted to nicotine but capitalism wouldn't allow that. It's time the people in charge actually include us in decisions which affect us.

Getting young people involved in change makes the change more effective. Our politicians shouldn't work for us or against us but WITH us.



Young Person's
Survey Comment

Understanding the Environmental Impacts

This section covers young people's knowledge of the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes including the impacts of lithium-ion batteries.

We asked... "Are you aware of the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes?"

- **65% of young people answered 'Yes'**
- 24% of young people answered 'Somewhat'
- 11% of young people answered 'No'

We asked... "Due to the lithium-ion batteries, they contain, single-use disposable vapes must be recycled in electrical bins. Before reading this question, were you aware of this?"

- **61% of young people answered 'No'**
- 39% of young people answered 'Yes'

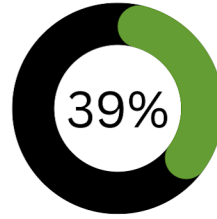
The notable difference in response when young people were specifically asked about the need to recycle these devices in electrical bins due to the lithium-ion batteries they contain and when asked about their overall awareness of the environmental impacts highlights an important finding. While young people generally consider themselves knowledgeable about the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes, their understanding of the specific concerns associated with lithium-ion batteries is relatively lower. This suggests that the existing information and messaging regarding the correct disposal of these vapes, particularly in relation to the risks posed by the batteries, may not be effectively reaching and empowering young people.



Alongside the environmental impacts and need for a full ban, awareness-raising needs to be done in schools. However this cannot involve shaming or blaming young people; it should focus solely on the impacts of vapes and instructions for safe use. Ideally this awareness-raising would be co-designed by young people.



Percentage of young people who believed they had some level of understanding of the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes.



Percentage of young people who knew how to correctly recycle lithium-ion batteries – which are found in single-use disposable vapes.

It is evident that further efforts are required to ensure that young people are equipped with accurate and comprehensive information about the environmental implications of single-use disposable vapes. **Rather than placing blame on young people for their lack of awareness, it is essential to focus on proactive measures that promote education, awareness, and accessible disposal options.**

Awareness-raising campaigns should be designed **by young people for young people**. This is supported by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which says that young people should have their views considered and given due weight on issues that affect them.

“

Restrictions on marketing and manufacture probably wouldn't work because they already exist and aren't being enforced.

A ban on single-use vapes is a solution that works to empower young people to use a more environmentally conscious product. The way I understand it is we can still vape and still have the right to choose to however we won't be able to purchase the type that is harming the world and people!



Young Person's Survey
Comment

Accessibility of Information

This section covers young people's knowledge of how to correctly dispose of single-use disposable vapes, where they've seen that information and where they would like to see that information.

Another significant aspect of Scottish young people's views on single-use disposable vapes is the accessibility of information, particularly regarding their proper disposal and recycling.

We asked... "Have you seen any information on where and how to recycle a single-use disposable vape?"

- **84% of young people answered 'No'**
- 16% of young people answered 'Yes'

Of the 16% of young people who answered 'Yes', Social Media was the most common place they found this information followed by word of mouth then School/College/University. 1% of all young people consulted found information on how to correctly dispose of single-use disposable vapes at their local recycling centre, GP surgery or health centre, in a newspaper or local government or council website

This finding further reinforces the theme that existing efforts to inform young people on correct disposal methods for single-use disposable vapes are falling short and are ineffective. The lack of visibility and accessibility of this information can hinder young people's ability to make informed decisions. It is evident that more needs to be done to ensure young people have easy access to clear and comprehensive guidelines on how and where to recycle these devices responsibly.



It's good that people are doing surveys on this because I hadn't seen anyone actually asking young people about it. Most of the time decisions get made that don't take into account our opinions.

It is essential to adopt approaches that are user-friendly, inclusive, and widely accessible, considering the diverse channels and platforms young people engage with in their daily lives.

To address the problem of inaccessible information already discussed, we analysed a question from our consultation that was focused on young people's views on the most effective locations to display this information.

We asked...

"Where do you think are the best places to display information on how to correctly recycle single-use disposable vapes?"

Respondents could choose **up to 3** options.

- **79% of young people selected 'Social Media'.**
- 57% of young people selected 'In places which sell single-use disposable vapes'.
- 56% of young people selected 'On Public Transport'.
- 48% of young people selected 'On billboards in towns and cities'.

Other options included (in no particular order): *At public transport stops, Schools/Colleges/Universities, TV and Radio, Newspapers, Smoking areas, leaflets or any other physical publication, Local Council and Scottish Government websites, Your local recycling centre, Your place of work, Local advice or support centres, Local community centre or libraries, At GP surgeries or health centres, Not sure.*

However, none of these options received more than 50% support from the young people we consulted.



It's good that people are doing surveys on this because I hadn't seen anyone actually asking young people about it. Most of the time decisions get made that don't take into account our opinions.

The data from this question provides valuable insights into where young people believe the information would have the most impact. Looking at these findings in conjunction with the findings already mentioned allows for a comprehensive understanding of young people's views on the accessibility of information and their meaningful participation. Find out more about meaningful youth participation at www.TheRightWay.scot.

Among the options presented, social media emerged as the top choice, with a significant 79% of young people selecting it as one of the best places to display recycling information. It reflects the widespread influence and reach of these digital channels in their lives, making them a powerful tool for disseminating accurate and engaging information.

57% of young people indicated that they believe information should be displayed in places that sell single-use disposable vapes. This suggests a recognition that information should be accessible at the point of purchase, where individuals are making decisions regarding their vape usage. This provides an opportunity to collaborate with vape retailers to provide educational materials and clear recycling instructions to customers, fostering a culture of responsible consumption.



Example image of a Young Scot national entitlement card.

Furthermore, 56% of young people identified public transport as a valuable location for displaying recycling information. This finding shows the potential of using public transport networks to reach a wide audience. Young people under the age of 22 are entitled to free bus travel with their Young Scot national entitlement card, *pictured left*.

According to Intelligent Transport, 60.7% of eligible young people are using the scheme. This would be an effective way, in accordance with our findings, to display information on single-use disposable vapes to young people.



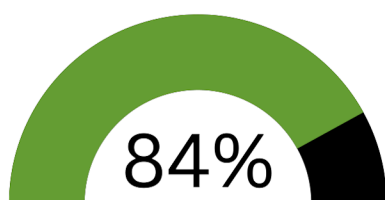
Vapes are everywhere! It's out of control and I think that only a ban would fix it.

There is value in considering a multi-channel approach. Young people's preferences for different platforms and locations indicate the need for a diverse range of communication strategies. Combining social media campaigns with targeted displays in vape retail locations, public transport, and billboards in towns and cities can maximise the visibility and impact of recycling information.

The opinions of young people on the accessibility of information, along with the previous findings, highlights the need for meaningful participation of young people in shaping future environmental campaigns and initiatives. It demonstrates their want for information to be accessible in the spaces where they spend their time. By taking these preferences into account, future work and campaigns can be designed to meet young people's needs.

Moving forward, the following questions can inform the development of future campaigns:

- How can we utilise social media platforms more effectively to ensure accurate recycling information reaches young people and encourages their meaningful participation?
- In what ways can we collaborate with vape retailers to display recycling information and promote responsible consumption at the point of purchase?
- How can public transport networks be utilised as a platform to display recycling information in a manner that captures the attention and engagement of young people?



The number of young people who have never seen information on where and how to recycle a single-use disposable vape.

“

A lot of people stand outside where disabled people are coming in and all I get is puffs of flavoured air in my face.

I'm anxious about vapes. Me and my pals are actually addicted now but it started as a cool thing everyone is doing. I don't know what to do or who to ask because adults just give us into trouble. If they do get banned then I hope young people feed into the process somehow.



Young Person's Survey
Comment

Meaningful Youth Participation

The right for young people to have their views heard on matters that affect them and for those views to be taken seriously is one of the general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). For many young people in Scotland, there is work to be done to ensure this right is fully realised. The process through which this right is respected, protected, and fulfilled in decision-making is called meaningful participation.

For participation to be meaningful, young people need to not only be listened to but also to be taken seriously. One model which explains how to make participation meaningful is the Lundy Model of Participation which was developed by Professor Laura Lundy. It is based on the legal text of Article 12 of the UNCRC. For more information on the Lundy Model of Participation please visit: www.TheRightWay.scot/Resources-Database/Training

The model explains that to avoid tokenism young people must be engaged with throughout the decision-making process. This should begin with any design and development stages and only end with the final implementation.

Young people's views must also be given due weight. This means young people must be given the opportunity to share their views with the most appropriate decision-maker and that their views should be considered, taken seriously and held in parity to the views of other groups or stakeholders.

Finally, to make participation meaningful young people must be provided feedback on how their views have been used. This should be done as change happens and in a format agreed with the young people involved.

SYP Policy and Further Work

At the 79th National Sitting of the Scottish Youth Parliament, we proposed the motion;

'The Scottish Youth Parliament recognises the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes and calls upon the Scottish Government to ban these devices; further calls upon the Scottish Government to take interim actions to mitigate these impacts while working towards a ban and to meaningfully engage with young people throughout this process.'

This was passed with the agreement of 84% of members. Members collectively reported that 4,893 young people had been consulted prior to voting on the motion. This considerable support from MSYPs further strengthens the case for young people to be heard, and meaningfully engaged with, on this issue.

We are now entering a second stage of our work. To ensure young people are meaningfully engaged in conversations around single-use disposable vapes we are consulting young people via focus groups to better understand what they think makes an effective and engaging awareness campaign. We are particularly focusing on aesthetics, tone, language and media style.

We aim to continue working on this topic with key stakeholders and established campaigners.

Acknowledgements

Consultation and report on young people's views on the environmental impacts of single-use disposable vapes by [Emma Prach](#) and [Marcus Flucker](#).

A huge thank you to current and former [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) staff members [Holly Owens](#), [Matt McDonald](#), [Rosy Burgess](#), [Ben McKendrick](#) and [Ryan Coelho](#) for their support of our work. In addition to the SYP staff team, thank you to all of the MSYPs who helped to share our consultation.

We are grateful to [Laura Young](#), widely known as [LessWasteLaura](#), for taking the time to engage in discussions with us regarding her work in this field. Her support in promoting our consultation through her social media channels has been invaluable and has ensured that a diverse range of young people had the opportunity to contribute their voices.

Thank you to [Dr. Morag Greer](#), for reviewing this report and providing her insights into the scientific aspects of our research. Her expertise enhanced the accuracy and clarity of our findings.

Finally, thank you to all of the young people from across Scotland who responded to our consultation.

Appendix

Zero Waste Scotland Review Report

'Scoping policy options for Scotland focusing on understanding and managing the environmental impact of single-use e-cigarettes - technical report'

Available at: <https://cdn.zerowastescotland.org.uk/managed-downloads/mf-thteewjk-1688050310d> [Accessed: 23/07/2023]

ASH (Action on Smoking and Health)

'Use of e-cigarettes (vapes) among adults in Great Britain'

Available at: <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-e-cigarettes-vapes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2022.pdf?v=1661865959> [Accessed: 18/07/2023]

BBC Bitesize

'Reactions of Alkali Metals'

Available at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zdykw6f/revision/2#:~:text=All%20the%20alkali%20metals%20react,you%20go%20down%20Group%201.> [Accessed: 17/05/2023]

Zero Waste Scotland

'What to do with batteries'

Available at: <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/what-do-batteries#:~:text=You'll%20see%20the%20crossed,buy%20a%20solar%2Dpowered%20recharger!> [Accessed: 13/05/2023]

The Right Way Project

'The Right Way to meaningful participation from the Scottish Youth Parliament'

Available at: <https://www.therightway.scot/> [Accessed: 12/05/2023]

Intelligent Transport

'Nearly 45 million journeys made since Scottish government introduced free bus travel for under 22s'

Available at: <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-news/143441/nearly-45-million-journeys-scottish-government-free-bus-travel-under-22s/> [Accessed: 04/06/2023]

Single-Use: Many Voices

Scottish Young People's Views on the
Environmental Impacts of Single-use Disposable
Vapes
July 2023



EMMA PRACH MSYP | MARCUS FLUCKER MSYP

At the time of the publication of this report
Emma Prach was the democratically elected Member of the Scottish
Youth Parliament for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. Marcus Flucker was the
democratically elected Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament for
Angus South. That information may no longer be correct after
November 19th 2023.