

How New Zealand vapers might respond to e-liquid flavor bans, interest in vaping cannabinoids if legalized and current use of oral nicotine pouches. A survey of vape expo attendees.

INTRODUCTION

Lung injuries and deaths caused by use of a harmful oil in cannabinoid vaping liquid and e-cigarette bans in some US jurisdictions led the New Zealand (NZ) government to reconsider how it would regulate e-cigarettes and vaping. A referendum legalizing cannabis was also slated for late 2020.

NZ’s draft legislation (released February 23, 2020) imitates some of the US bans, for example, limiting generic retailers (stores other than approved vape stores) to selling only tobacco, menthol and mint flavors. Other heavy restrictions intended to “prevent the normalization of vaping” are proposed in response to concerns about the “risks associated with vaping and using smokeless tobacco products”.

A multinational longitudinal study (VERITAS) to determine the potential health effects of vaping nicotine, especially among people who have never smoked is planned. Though there were an estimated 200,000 vapers in NZ, it was not known if a sufficient number had never smoked to warrant NZ joining the study.

AIMS

- Provide data to help inform policy decisions about vaping e-cigarettes and legalizing cannabis.
- Estimate if there is a sufficient number of current vapers in Auckland with limited smoking history (less than 1000 cigarettes ever), making them eligible to enrol in the VERITAS cohort study. Auckland is NZ’s largest city accounting for 35% of the total 4.8 million NZ population.



METHODS

Attendees and staff at the (R18) 2019 Oceania Vape Expo held in Auckland (Dec 7-8) were approached by study personnel and asked to do an anonymous tablet-based survey.

An attempt was made to recruit every attendee, but the exact sampling properties are unknown. Data was analyzed using simple univariate statistics and a few pre-specified crosstabs. All results and the raw data will be published.

RESULTS



30% were female, 70% were male

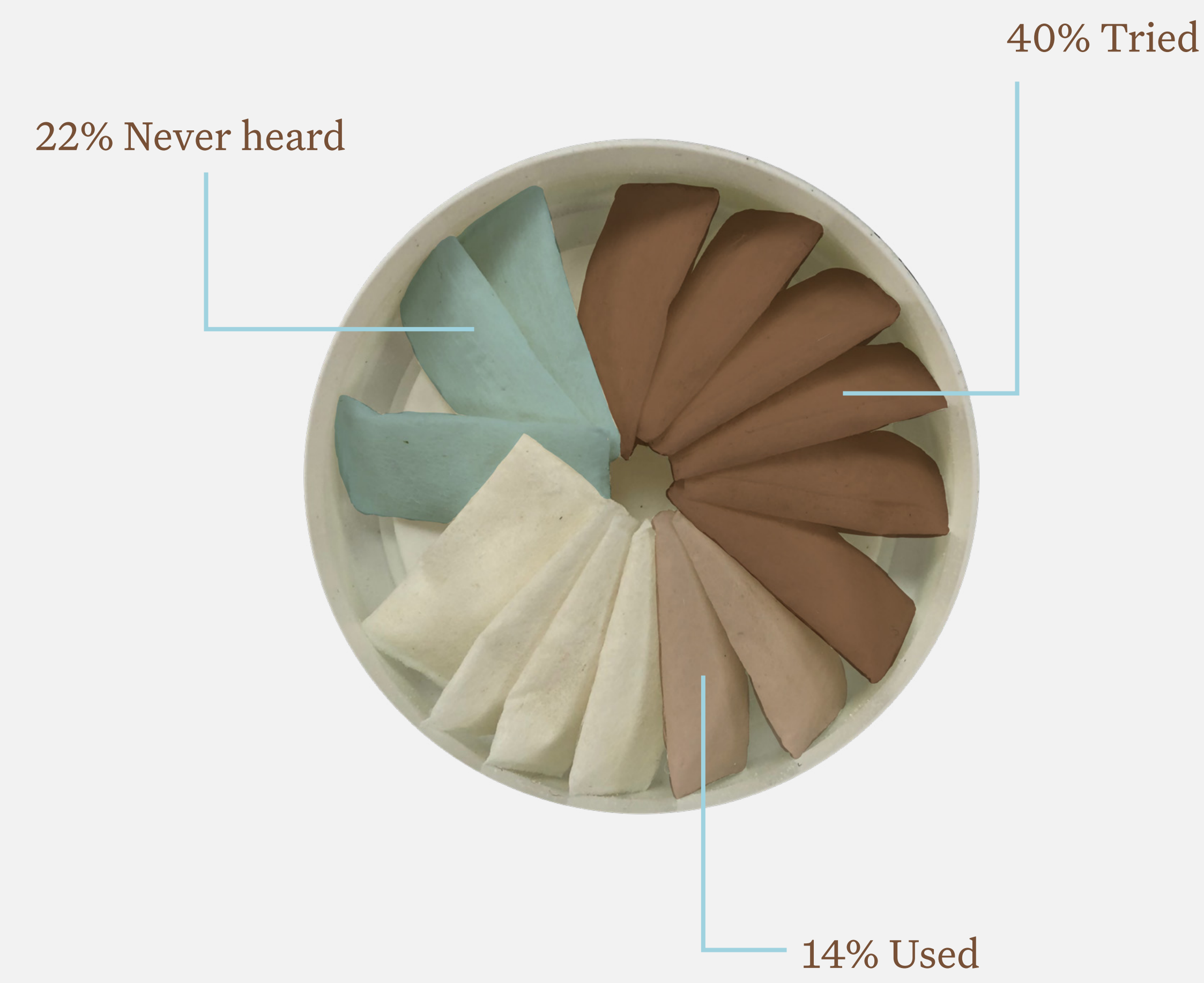
1/3 were Māori (Indigenous) or Pacific

Of all the vapers only 6% regularly vaped tobacco, menthol or mint flavors.

Only 10% of people who vaped other flavors said they would comply with a hypothetical flavor ban and switch to allowed flavors. The rest predicted they would instead buy from overseas or illicit markets, mix their own, and/or smoke. Almost none predicted they would try to quit vaping.

Results were similar for under 25yr olds (n=85).

Only 6% vaped tobacco, menthol or mint



Knowledge of pouched tobacco/nicotine products among NZ vapers:
40% had tried
14% already used
22% had never heard of them.

80 participants had never smoked more than 1000 cigarettes and almost all were interested in being part of a vaping health effects study. Of them, 52 lived in/near Auckland.

Among NZ residents there was substantial interest in vaping legalized cannabinoid liquid:



34% said they maybe would & 37% said they almost certainly would. This included over half of those who said they did not currently smoke cannabis (some may have vaped cannabinoids; they weren’t asked).

Of current cannabis smokers, half had vaped cannabinoid liquids, mostly in NZ. Results were similar for under 25yr olds.

CONCLUSIONS

- A nicotine e-liquid flavor ban would primarily drive vapers to seek/make unregulated nicotine liquids, as has been found in similar research elsewhere.
- A substantial black market in cannabinoid vaping products exists in NZ.
- Auckland appears likely to have enough vapers with limited smoking history to be part of the upcoming international VERITAS study.

AUTHORS

Marewa Glover PhD¹ / Carl V Phillips PhD² / Robin Shepherd PhD¹
Yolande Jeffares BAppSc³ / Andrew Thompson⁴ / Kyro Selket PhD¹
Kumar Paramanathan PhD¹

1. Centre of Research Excellence: Indigenous Sovereignty & Smoking
2. epiPhi Consulting Group, New Hampshire, USA
3. Independent researcher, Nelson, NZ
4. Independent vape advocate, Sydney, Australia

PREPARED FOR

SRNT, New Orleans, 11-14 March 2020

FUNDING STATEMENT

Produced with the help of a grant from the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World Inc. The contents, selection and presentation of facts, as well as any opinions expressed herein are the sole responsibility of the authors and under no circumstances shall be regarded as reflecting the positions of the Foundation for a Smoke-free World, Inc.

None of the authors have ever received research funding from any tobacco or vaping product company. Dr Glover has, in the distant past (over 10yrs+) received fees from pharmaceutical companies for consultancy re cessation medicines.

CONTACT

Centre of Research Excellence:
Indigenous Sovereignty & Smoking

PO Box 89186, Torbay
Auckland 0742, New Zealand
E: info@coreiss.com

www.coreiss.com