

A living lab approach to vaping in Trinity College Dublin from October 2022 to March 2025

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Background

- Trinity College Dublin became a tobacco-free campus after a six-year negotiation and showed a 79% reduction in observed smoking from 2016 to 2020.
- Smoking was observed using a Living Lab approach that employed student Ambassadors to count smokers in seven zones on campus 6-8 times per week during term.
- Post COVID-19, Ambassadors observed increased vaping but had no remit to approach vapers.

Intervention or Response

- **Prevalence survey:** An online vaping prevalence and attitudes survey was sent to students/staff.
- **Observed vaping:** The Living Lab approach was extended from October 2022 with Ambassadors adding a count of observed vaping to their weekly campus circuits.
- **Stop-smoking courses:** re-designed to incorporate quitting vapes.
- **Student led action:** social media campaigns delivered, anti-vaping assignments incorporated into curricula, vape recycling bins installed with downstream/upstream focused communications.
- **Legislative advocacy:** Institutional responses delivered to government consultations on e-cigarettes.

Results and Impact

**Vaping prevalence and attitudes survey:** 2,683 participants (12%) responded. Vaping is highly prevalent. 1539 (57%) had vaped at least once and 838 (31%) currently vaped. 42% of current vapers were dual cigarette and e-cigarette users. 57%, n=1013, supported on-campus restrictions. Factors for lifetime/current vaping included younger age, undergraduate status, cigarette smoking (AOR current=9.3, 95% CI 6.1, 14.2), and disposable vape use (AOR current = 3.18, 95% CI 1.6, 6.2)

**Observed vaping on campus:** (right) Increased from 0.9 vapers per check (609 checks) in 2022/2023 to 2.1 vapers per check in 2024/2025 (350 checks). In 2024/2025, 1,749 nicotine users were observed on campus, with 42% (n=728) using e-cigarettes. 59% of vapers (n=430) were using disposable vapes.

Upstream and downstream communications:

Students were engaged through:

- Paid work to create social media posts about quitting.
- 100 Social Marketing students creating campaigns as part of coursework.
- One Social Marketing student project (right) selected to create vape recycling campaign focused both upstream on the vape industry and downstream on individuals.

**Upstream advocacy:** The data and actions shown were incorporated into Trinity’s responses to government consultations on disposable vapes and e-cigarettes with Trinity calling for the government to phase out disposable vapes and e-cigarettes to protect people and the planet.

Conclusions

A Living Lab approach to Tobacco-Free Campus has been sufficiently flexible to incorporate vaping and is a recommended method of engaging partners from across the university to work together to deliver actions on vaping. Moreover, the Living Lab approach has enabled a cross-university response to government consultations to call for legislation to phase out e-cigarettes in Ireland.

