

# Kids Aren't Stupid

A bunch of people are clamoring to ban vaping, ostensibly because young people are doing it and it's bad for their health.

Young people aren't stupid. They know it's not good for their health. Neither are sugar, caffeine, alcohol, sitting around all day, or school. Driving a car dramatically increases chance of death or injury. They know all this too. And, just like all humans, they choose a level of risk they are comfortable with.

If you ban one form of risk, they'll make it up with another. People tend toward their acceptable risk level. See the **Peltzman Effect**.

I tend to think kids do things like sneak off to smoke or vape or drink alcohol in part because they have so little freedom. They are force-fed through a prison-like school system their entire lives. Even using the bathroom freely is prohibited. So they look for ways to flex their freedom. When productive ways aren't on the table – say skipping school to create YouTube videos – they go to the more dangerous or destructive stuff. In fact, the more self-proclaimed authorities tell them something is bad, the more attractive it becomes as a form of maintaining and expressing some small sliver of freedom and rebellion.

I'm particularly surprised by the concern over vaping. Kids mostly do it out in the open. Its negative effects seem fairly mild compared to most risky youth activities. When it's banned, it gets pushed to the shadows, where other shadowy stuff is also going on. This is not a preferable situation if your concern is for kids well-being.

Kids aren't stupid. Your busybody efforts to control them are.