



National Poll on Children's Health

Teens and Parents Agree: Place Restrictions on E-Cigarettes

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Report Highlights

92% of parents and 91% of teens think e-cigarettes should have health warnings like traditional cigarettes.

84% of parents and 81% of teens think allowing teens to use e-cigarettes will encourage them to use other tobacco products.

64% of parents and 71% of teens support banning candy- and fruit-flavored e-cigarettes.

Contact us

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit.

Electronic cigarettes (also called "e-cigarettes" or "vapes") were introduced in the United States in 2006. Our Polls in [2010](#) and [2013](#) found high levels of concern among U.S. adults about the potential for teens to become attracted to e-cigarettes. Other recent national data have confirmed that increasing numbers of teens are trying e-cigarettes.

In September 2015, we asked parents of teens age 13-18 and teens themselves about their opinions on e-cigarettes, and their views about various restrictions that have been suggested for these products.

Concerns about E-Cigarette Use

Fourteen percent of parents report currently using or previously trying e-cigarettes, compared to 9% of teens. About 40% of teens say they know other teens that have used e-cigarettes. Over half of parents (54%) and teens (62%) think it is easy for people under 18 to buy e-cigarettes. Both parents (84%) and teens (81%) think allowing minors to use e-cigarettes will encourage the use of other tobacco products.

Support for E-Cigarette Policies

The majority of parents of teens (81%) and teens themselves (85%) support restricting use of e-cigarettes in public spaces. Nearly two-thirds of parents and about 7 in 10 teens support banning candy- and fruit-flavored e-cigarettes (Figure 1). High proportions of parents and teens favor requiring child-proof packaging for e-cigarette liquid and restricting marketing of e-cigarettes on social networking sites.

The vast majority of parents of teens (92%) and teens (91%) think e-cigarettes should have health warnings like traditional cigarettes. Yet, 35% of parents and 40% of teens think e-cigarettes are safer for people to use than traditional cigarettes.

Figure 1. Parent and teen opinions about e-cigarettes

Proportion of parents and teens who agree/strongly agree

	Parents	Teens
Enforce laws restricting sales of e-cigarettes to people under 18	93%	87%
Restrict use of e-cigarettes in public spaces	81%	85%
Tax e-cigarettes like traditional cigarettes	80%	81%
Ban candy- and fruit-flavored e-cigarettes	64%	71%

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2015



This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by GfK Custom Research, LLC (GfK), for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered in September 2015 to a randomly selected, stratified group of parents age 18 and older with at least one child age 13-18 (n=1,517); among a subset of these parents, their teens also responded to teen-focused questions (n=636). Parents were selected from GfK's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 40% among panel members contacted to participate. The margin of error is ± 2 to 5 percentage points.

Implications

E-cigarettes are a relatively new tobacco product that have rapidly gained awareness and use among adults and teens over the last few years. In our Poll in 2010, only 37% of adults had ever heard of e-cigarettes. By 2013, 86% of adults had heard of e-cigarettes. In contrast, public support for restrictions on e-cigarettes has been strong and comparatively stable across our Polls on this topic. Such public support is reflected in state laws passed in recent years: 48 states have prohibited the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, with some others extending the restrictions to prohibiting vaping in areas that are already smoke-free and requiring child-proof packaging on e-cigarette liquid.

Use of e-cigarettes among teens has also been a consistent concern expressed by adults in past Polls. Reasons for concern include that the vaporized e-cigarette liquid contains nicotine, which is an addictive substance that can lead teens to experiment with other tobacco products as well. In addition, e-cigarette liquid can come in a variety of flavors like tobacco, menthol and even candy and fruit. In our past Polls, it is clear that adults are concerned that these flavors appeal to teens.

In this Poll, for the first time we included the voices of teens themselves regarding e-cigarettes. Their views are remarkably consistent with those of the parents of teens across the U.S. To some, these findings may be surprising, because teens are often seen as more resistant to restrictions on the use of new products – even products that may be hazardous to health.

On the other hand, the high degree of agreement between parents of teens and the teens themselves regarding e-cigarettes may indicate deeply shared mutual concern about tobacco-containing products as clear health hazards. Moreover, the high proportions of parents of teens and teens who agree with the idea of restrictions on e-cigarettes in various forms offer strong evidence for support of states' efforts to curtail access of these products to minors, and to the broader public as well.

Director: Matthew M. Davis, MD, MAPP
Associate Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Manager & Editor: Dianne C. Singer, MPH
Data Analyst: Amilcar Matos-Moreno, MPH
Web Editor: Anna Daly Kauffman, BA
Research Associate: Sara L. Schultz, BA
Website: MottNPCH.org



**Child Health Evaluation
and Research Unit**
University of Michigan

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