

Minnesota Teens Vape Sweet and Minty Flavors

REGULATION OF SWEET AND MINTY E-CIGARETTE FLAVORS COULD HELP REDUCE E-CIGARETTE USE AMONG TEENS

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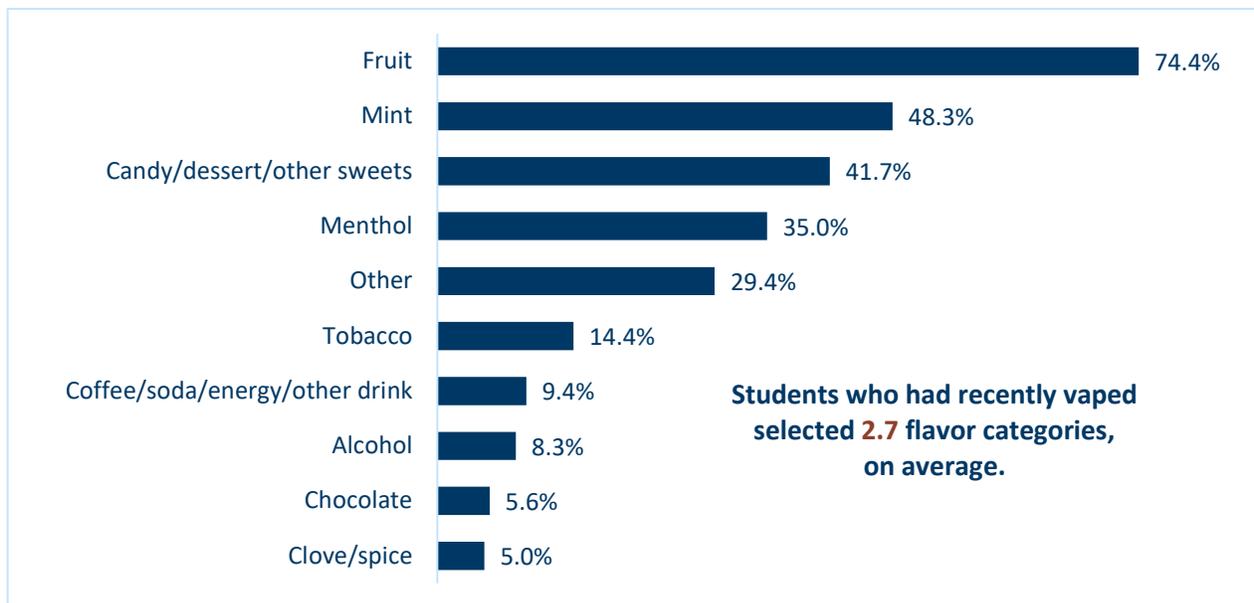
Decades of research shows that flavors added to commercial tobacco products appeal more to teens than adults.¹ To help address the teen vaping epidemic,² the FDA banned all flavors other than tobacco and menthol in cartridge- or pod-based e-cigarettes³ (e.g., JUUL) in 2019. Refillable open-tank systems and disposable e-cigarettes (e.g., Puff Bar) are not included in the ban. As a result, e-cigarettes in thousands of flavors remain on the market, and teens continue to use them.



Which e-cigarette flavors do teens use?

We asked a representative sample of Minnesota teens which e-cigarette flavors they had used during the past 30 days. Among teens who had recently vaped, 74.4% reported having used fruit flavors, 48.3% had used mint, and 41.7% used candy, dessert, and other sweets. In contrast, only 14.4% reported having used an e-cigarette that tastes like conventional tobacco (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Percentage of teens who reported having used different e-cigarette flavors in the past 30 days



Source: 2020 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey; denominator: students who reported having used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days (grades 6-12)

Older adults choose tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes over fruit- or candy-flavored

In 2018, a representative sample of U.S. and Canadian adult smokers and former smokers who regularly vape were asked which e-cigarette flavors they had used in the past 30 days. Their responses showed

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that flavor preferences depend on one's age: older adults were more likely than younger adults to have used tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes (**Figure 2**); while younger adults were more likely to have used fruit-flavored e-cigarettes (**Figure 3**). Similarly, a larger share of young adults (ages 18 to 24) than older adults (ages 55 or older) in the study reported having used e-cigarettes that taste like candy or dessert (19.2% vs. 7.0%).⁴

Figure 2. Percentage of adults who vaped tobacco flavor

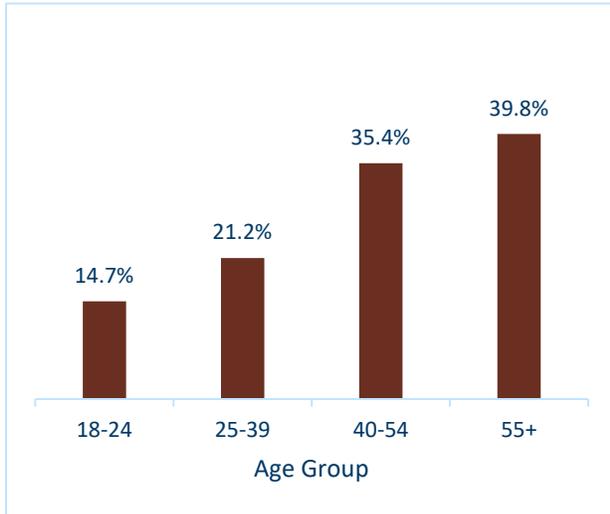
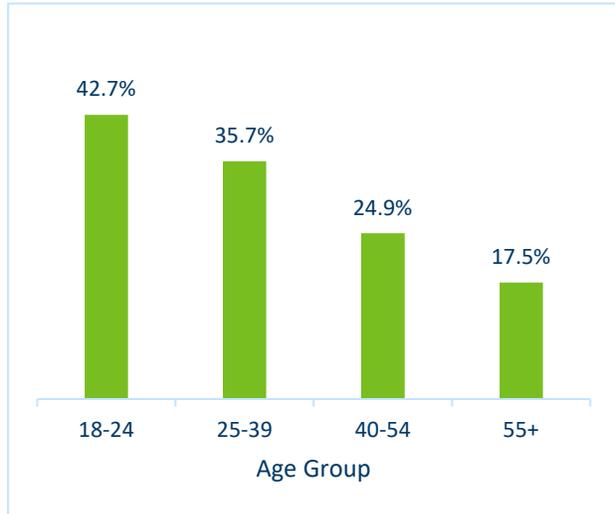


Figure 3. Percentage of adults who vaped fruit flavor



Source: Adapted from Gravely et. al (2020); denominator: US and Canadian adult smokers or former smokers who vape one or more times per week, 2018

Implications

Flavors make e-cigarettes more appealing to new users. They can taste sweet and feel cooling, which hides the unpleasant taste and harsh feeling of inhaling nicotine. Teens and young adults are more likely than older adults to use fruit- and candy-flavored e-cigarettes. Policies that limit teens' access to sweet and minty flavored e-cigarettes are needed to address the teen vaping epidemic.

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1. Helgertz S. *Minnesota teens prefer commercial tobacco products with flavors*. Minnesota Department of Health; 2022. *Tobacco NUMBRS*. Accessed 3/25/2022. https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/data/docs/03-24-2022_flavors.pdf

2. US Food and Drug Administration. Statement from FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D., on new steps to address epidemic of youth e-cigarette use. Updated September 12, 2018. Accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm620185.htm>
3. FDA finalizes enforcement policy on unauthorized flavored cartridge-based e-cigarettes that appeal to children, including fruit and mint. 2020. Accessed 3/25/2022. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-finalizes-enforcement-policy-unauthorized-flavored-cartridge-based-e-cigarettes-appeal-children>
4. Gravely S, Cummings KM, Hammond D, et al. The association of e-cigarette flavors with satisfaction, enjoyment, and trying to quit or stay abstinent from smoking among regular adult vapers from Canada and the United States: Findings from the 2018 ITC Four Country Smoking and Vaping Survey. *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*. 2020;22(10):1831-1841.