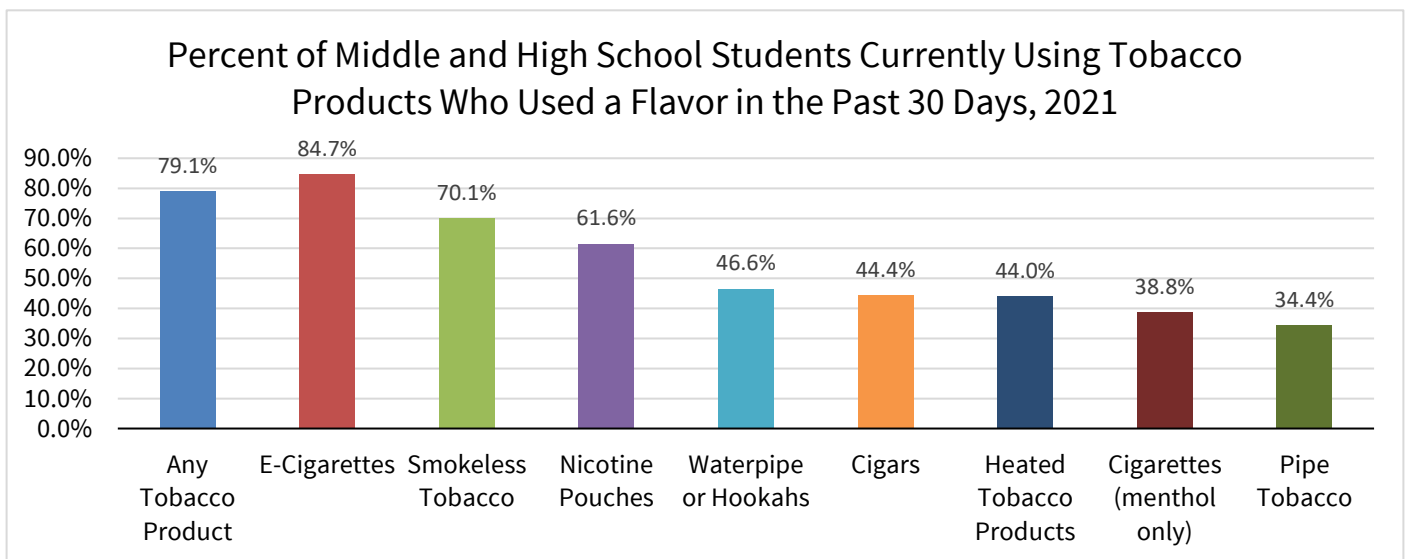


## Flavors in Tobacco Products: Attracting & Addicting Youth

Flavors are a marketing weapon the tobacco manufacturers use to target youth and young people to a lifetime of addiction. Altering tobacco product ingredients and design, like adding flavors, can improve the ease of use of a product by masking harsh effects, facilitating nicotine uptake, and increasing a product’s overall appeal.<sup>i</sup> Candy, fruit, mint and menthol flavorings in tobacco products are a promotional tool to lure new, young users, and are aggressively marketed with creative campaigns by tobacco companies.<sup>ii</sup> Products with flavors like cherry, grape, cotton candy, and gummy bear are clearly not aimed at established, adult tobacco users and years of tobacco industry documents confirm the intended use of flavors to target youth.<sup>iii</sup> **Furthermore, youth report flavors as a leading reason why they use tobacco products and perceive flavored products as less harmful.**<sup>iv,v</sup> The use of any flavored tobacco product among youth is concerning because it exposes them to a lifetime of nicotine addiction, disease, and premature death.

## Flavored Tobacco Products

Tobacco manufactures sell a variety of flavored tobacco products and youth, and young adults are the primary users of these addictive products. Unfortunately, some youths are starting to use several new and emerging tobacco products, such as nicotine pouches and heated tobacco products, because of the appealing flavors and easy to conceal designs. According to the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 80.2% of high school students and 74.6% of middle school students who used tobacco reported using a flavored product.<sup>vi</sup>



Many tobacco product flavors are also often combined with other flavors, like pineapple mint, melon milkshake, mint ice, or can be ambiguously labeled with “concept flavors” such as purple, jazz, cool blue frost, or lush ice, among others.

## E-Cigarettes

- E-cigarettes continue to be the most commonly used tobacco product and the most frequently used flavored tobacco product among middle and high school students.<sup>vii</sup>
  - The 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey reported fruit (71.6%), mint (30.2%), and menthol (28.8%), followed by desserts, candy, and other sweets (34.1%) as the most frequently used flavors among middle and high school students who were currently using e-cigarettes.
- Flavored e-cigarettes also contain high concentrations of liquid nicotine, which the EPA classifies as an acute hazardous waste.<sup>viii</sup>
- Despite the FDA Center for Tobacco Products issuing thousands of marketing denial orders to e-cigarette manufacturers over the past year, unauthorized flavored e-cigarettes continued to be illegally sold.

## Smokeless Tobacco

- Chewing tobacco, snuff, dip, snus, and dissolvables are types of non-combustible tobacco products that are sold in a variety of flavors. Many dissolvables look like regular candy, cough drops, or toothpicks – however these products contain flavored nicotine, which is addictive.
- Smokeless tobacco companies have a long history of using flavorings, such as mint, cherry, apple, and honey, and other product manipulation to gradually get new, young users addicted to “starter” products, keep them using, and shift them on to more potent smokeless tobacco products.
- In 2019, 48% of middle and high school students who used smokeless tobacco had used a flavored product in the last month.<sup>ix</sup>

## Nicotine Pouches

- Nicotine pouches are an emerging type of non-combustible tobacco products that contain flavored nicotine powder, that tends to include nicotine salts. Users place the flavored pouches, that typically contain high concentrations of nicotine, in their mouth and the pouch dissolves.
- Since entering the marketplace in 2016, flavored nicotine pouch sales have steadily increased.<sup>x</sup>
- The National Tobacco Youth Survey first reported on youth use of nicotine pouches in 2021 and 61.6% of students who use flavored tobacco products reported using flavored nicotine pouches.<sup>xi</sup>

According to the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey, **fruit**, **mint**, and **menthol** were the three most commonly used flavor types among middle and high school students who reported past 30-day use of flavored tobacco products:



### **FRUIT**

- 71.6% - e-cigarettes
- 73.5% - hookahs
- 65.0% - cigars
- 46.4% - heated tobacco products

### **MINT**

- 69.2% - smokeless tobacco
- 53.5% - nicotine pouches



### **MENTHOL**

- 50.2% - nicotine pouches
- 38.8% - cigarettes
- 38.2% - smokeless tobacco
- 28.8% - e-cigarettes
- 26.5% - heated tobacco products
- 21.0% - cigars
- 17.0% - hookahs

## Hookah or Waterpipe

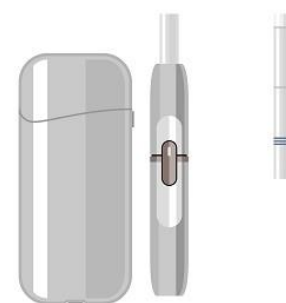
- Hookah, or waterpipe, smoking involves burning tobacco, passing it through a bowl filled with water or other liquids and inhaling the smoke through a long hose.
- Hookah or waterpipes are known by a variety of other names, including boory, goza, narghile, argileh, and hubble-bubble.
- Among middle and high school students that used a flavored product, 46.6% reported using a waterpipe or hookah in 2021.<sup>xii</sup>
- Particularly troubling is that the flavorings used in waterpipe tobacco, the sweet aromas and use of water give users misperception the practice as safer than cigarette smoking.<sup>xiii</sup>
- In fact, hookah tobacco and smoke are as dangerous as cigarettes, and contain carcinogens and other substances that can cause cancer and other diseases.<sup>xiv</sup>
- An hour-long waterpipe or hookah session typically involves 200 puffs of smoke, whereas smoking a single cigarette typically involves 20 puffs of smoke.

## Cigars (Cigars, Cigarillos & Little Cigars)

- So-called “little cigars” have the look and feel of a cigarette, and are smoked like a cigarette, yet are often sold individually and are available in a variety of flavors. Large cigars and cigarillos, can resemble either “little cigars” or large cigars, are also available in multiple flavors.
- Flavored cigars, in particular, make up a substantial portion of the cigar market. In 2020, cigarillos constituted the largest market share (94.2%) of cigars sold in the U.S., followed by little cigars (3.1%), and large cigars (2.7%).<sup>xv</sup>
- The 2009 prohibition on characterizing flavors in cigarettes (excluding menthol), without a prohibition on characterizing flavors in cigars, opened the door for cigar manufacturers to recruit new users to its products.

## Heated Tobacco Products or Heat-Not-Burn Products

- Heated tobacco products involve the heating of the tobacco leaf, which is why these products are also known as “heat-not-burn” products or non-combustible cigarettes.
- Heated tobacco products are available in a variety of flavors, unless the product meets the federal definition of a cigarette. When a specific heated tobacco product meets the federal definition of a cigarette, those products can only be sold in either menthol or tobacco flavors.
- As currently written, the FDA proposed rule to prohibit menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes would prohibit the manufacture, distribution, or sale of menthol flavored heated tobacco products that meet the federal definition of a cigarette.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## MENTHOL

Long before cigarette companies started adding fruit, candy, and alcohol flavorings to cigarettes, they were manipulating levels of menthol to addict new, young customers. Menthol acts to mask the harsh taste of tobacco with a minty flavor and by reducing irritation at the back of the throat with a cooling sensation. Additionally, menthol may enhance the delivery of nicotine. Knowing that youth who experience less negative physiological effects of smoking are more likely to continue smoking regularly, the tobacco industry has spent decades manipulating its menthol brand-specific product line to appeal to youth.

The FDA's preliminary scientific investigation on menthol cigarettes concluded that menthol cigarette smoking increases initiation and progression to smoking, increases dependency, and reduces cessation success, particularly among African Americans who smoke.<sup>xvi</sup> Non-Hispanic Black/African Americans who smoke are more than 2.5 times more likely to smoke menthol than non-Hispanic white Americans. Adding insult to injury, tobacco manufacturers have aggressively targeted certain communities with their menthol products, leading to an unequal burden of death and disease. Internal tobacco industry documents show that the tobacco companies were intentionally targeting African-Americans, other communities of color and the LGBTQ+ community through advertising in magazines with high readership by these populations, including youth, and by targeting specific neighborhoods with higher Hispanic and African-American populations with more advertising and promotions.<sup>xvii</sup>

### ACS CAN's Position:

The aggressive use of flavors and marketing tactics by the tobacco industry rapidly increased the use of flavored products by youth and young adults and under regulation of these products requires the public health community to take action to protect youth and young adults and the public health at-large. ACS CAN supports several strategies:

- ❖ **Federal Restrictions:** Congress or the FDA should prohibit the use of flavors, including menthol, in all tobacco products. A manufacturer should be required, through premarket review, to prove that the use of a flavor is appropriate for the protection of public health.
- ❖ **State and Local Sales Restrictions:** Many states and localities are moving forward and enacting restrictions on the sale of flavored tobacco products and winning legal challenges to its laws. The Family Smoking and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 does not permit a state or locality from requiring a product standard, such as the removal of a flavor, but the law does preserve the ability for states and localities to end the sales of tobacco products. States and localities should pursue policy options to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, while taking into consideration what is permitted in a specific jurisdiction.

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