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## Truth Initiative announces results from first study to show relationship between anti-vaping campaign awareness and reduced e-cigarette use among young people

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 11, 2023)** – A new study published in [Tobacco Control](#) found that higher awareness of the “*It’s Messing with Our Heads*” public education effort from [truth](#)®, the proven-effective and nationally recognized youth smoking, vaping, and nicotine prevention campaign from [Truth Initiative](#), led to significantly lower e-cigarette use among youth and young adults. The study found that the campaign, which connected the dots between vaping nicotine and increased feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress among young people, led to lower odds of youth both using and intentions to use e-cigarettes in the future. This is the first time a study has shown a relationship between e-cigarette prevention messaging exposure and lowered e-cigarette use among youth and young adults.

Youth vaping remains a serious public health threat, with data from the [2022 Monitoring the Future Survey](#) showing noteworthy upticks among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders and increases in daily use among those who vape in all grades. According to the 2022 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 14.1% of high school students [report current e-cigarette use](#) with 46% of those students reporting frequent use. These findings underscore the persistence of the youth e-cigarette crisis as tobacco companies flood the market with cheap, youth appealing, flavored disposable e-cigarettes that remain easily accessible on shelves across the country.

The study surveyed more than 18,000 respondents aged 15-24 from September 2021 to October 2022. When 65-70% of respondents said they were aware of **truth** ads in a given week, there were 14% lower odds of current e-cigarette use. In weeks with 70-75% campaign awareness, there were 16% lower odds, and weeks with greater than 75% awareness had 18% lower odds, indicating a dose-response relationship as well as the overall efficacy of the messaging campaign.

“This new study reinforces the powerful impact that the **truth** campaign has by giving young people the facts, exposing the tactics of the tobacco industry, and helping youth and young adults make their own informed decisions to never use or stop using nicotine. This has always been the unique and special value of the **truth** campaign,” stated [Robin Koval](#), CEO and President of Truth Initiative. “With 2.5 million middle and high school students in the U.S. using e-cigarettes last year alone, our work today is as important as ever. Faced with a worsening youth mental health crisis and the tobacco industry’s continued efforts to hook a new



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generation to nicotine, we remain deeply committed to provide education and quitting resources to help young people live their best and healthiest lives.”

In [September 2021](#), **truth** launched the “*It’s Messing with Our Heads*” campaign to expose nicotine’s role as a contributor to the worsening youth mental health crisis and the tobacco industry’s ongoing attempts to distort public perception about the health effects of vaping products.

In addition to finding that awareness of **truth**’s e-cigarette prevention messaging is linked to significantly lower odds of youth and young adults vaping nicotine, the study found that higher weekly campaign awareness made it less likely that young adults would want to use e-cigarettes in the future as well.

Findings from the paper have indicated an even greater and more direct impact on keeping youth safe from nicotine use. Using the results, researchers estimated that 3% fewer young people reported vaping in the past month during weeks where campaign awareness was above 65%. By using data from the U.S. Census, they calculated that the campaign prevented 1.3 million 15- to 24-year-olds from starting to vape between September 2021 to October 2022, slowed progression among those who use e-cigarettes, and promoted quitting overall.

The “*It’s Messing with Our Heads*” campaign brought light to the two colliding crises affecting youth today – mental health and vaping. In addition to the harm nicotine inflicts on developing brains, it also can negatively impact mental health. With U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy recently calling attention to declining youth mental health, numerous peer-reviewed studies have revealed troubling links between the issue and nicotine, including that nicotine can increase symptoms of depression and anxiety. More information on these interlinked issues can be found in the Truth Initiative white paper, “[Colliding Crises: Youth Mental Health and Nicotine Use](#).”

Mass media campaigns like the ones employed by **truth** have historically been effective tools for addressing youth cigarette use, contributing to the decline in prevalence from nearly 30% in 1997 to 2% in 2022. The **truth** public education campaign has been proven to have prevented millions of young people from becoming smokers, including 2.5 million between 2015 and 2018 alone. And past research has found that young people with [strong truth brand awareness and loyalty](#) had much lower odds of vaping and intending to vape a year and a half later, as well as that young people with [higher awareness of truth campaigns](#) were more likely to know certain facts about e-cigarettes. With a [new study from](#)



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[the CDC](#) stating that e-cigarette sales increased by more than 46% between January 2020 and December 2022, there is a clear need for public education campaigns such as these to continue alerting and educating a new generation at risk for nicotine addiction.

The full study, “Reducing e-cigarette use among youth and young adults: evidence of the **truth**® campaign’s impact,” can be found [here](#).

### **About Truth Initiative®**

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all young people reject smoking, vaping and nicotine and a future where tobacco and nicotine addiction are a thing of the past. Our impact has helped drive youth smoking prevalence down from 23% in 2000 to a historic low of 2% in 2022. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**® public education campaign. As youth e-cigarette use threatens to put a new generation at risk for addiction to nicotine, we are leading the fight against tobacco and nicotine addiction in all forms. Our first-of-its-kind, text message quit vaping program This is Quitting® has enrolled more than 610,000 young people nationwide and our youth e-cigarette prevention curriculum *Vaping: Know the truth* is being used in more than 6,000 schools nationwide. Our rigorous scientific research and policy studies, community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco, and innovation in tobacco dependence treatment are also helping to end one of the most critical public health battles of our time. Based in Washington D.C., our organization, formerly known as the American Legacy Foundation, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more, visit [truthinitiative.org](https://truthinitiative.org).

### **About truth®**

**truth** is the longest-running proven effective national tobacco prevention campaign for youth and young adults. The campaign delivers the facts about tobacco use and the marketing tactics of the tobacco industry so that young people can make informed choices and influence others to do the same. We are credited with preventing millions of young people from becoming smokers and are committed to achieving the same results with the youth e-cigarette crisis. As part of this effort, our first-of-its-kind, text message quit vaping program for teens and young adults This is Quitting® has enrolled more than 610,000 young people nationwide since its launch in 2019. **truth** is part of Truth Initiative®, a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where young people



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reject smoking, vaping, and nicotine. Learn more about truth and the organization behind it at [thetruth.com](http://thetruth.com) and [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).

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