truth initiative
freedom from nicotine addiction

900 G Street, NW
Fourth Floor
Washington, DC 20001

truthinitiative.org
202 454 5555

New Federal Study Highlights Progress on Youth E-Cigarette Use, but Nicotine Addiction Risks for Young People Remain

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 24, 2026) – The latest published federal study analyzing National Youth Tobacco Survey data shows that current youth e-cigarette use has declined to its lowest level in nearly a decade, giving reason to be encouraged and underscoring the impact of sustained prevention efforts.

This progress reflects years of collective action, including public education campaigns and quit resources like those from Truth Initiative, to prevent youth nicotine addiction and inform young people about the risks of nicotine use. However, this progress should not obscure the risks that remain for young people who are still using nicotine in an increasingly more complex marketplace amid a pop culture resurgence. Nicotine products are showing up across social media, streaming content, music, fashion, and celebrity culture, where they can be portrayed as stylish, harmless, or appealing rather than as addictive products with real health risks.

While data do not show an increase in use, e-cigarettes remain the top tobacco product used by youth with 5.2% or 1.44 million middle and high school students reporting current use. Of those who use e-cigarettes, the study shows that more than 1 in 4 (27.5%) used an e-cigarette product daily and more than 4 in 10 (41.2%) used an e-cigarette least 20 of the last 30 days. Additionally, 2.7% of students (740,000) reported using multiple products at once, including e-cigarettes, cigarettes, and nicotine pouches.

These new data underscore findings in a recent Truth Initiative report, which showed that more than 45% of youth and nearly 53% of young adults who report past-month e-cigarette use also report using at least one additional tobacco product, raising the risk of nicotine addiction and making quitting more challenging. This is also concerning as nicotine is often one of the first substances used by young people and may put youth at higher risk for addiction to other substances and riskier behaviors in the future.

Troubling signs that nicotine dependence is deepening among young users are also emerging. Truth Initiative research found that 76% of teens who vape report using their device within 30 minutes of waking, a key marker of dependence. Recent research also shows that the share of daily middle and high school students who vape daily and have tried but failed to quit has nearly doubled, from about 28% in 2020 to 53% in 2024.

The nicotine marketplace has evolved rapidly. Many products today — like the flavored disposable vapes most popular with youth — deliver higher concentrations of nicotine, more puffs per device, and formulations that make it easier for young people to consume large amounts of nicotine, often at lower cost and with continued ease of access. New “smart vapes” raise additional concerns by using digital features and behavior modification tactics — such as games like puffing to feed avatars — that can reinforce repeated consumption. These products are designed to keep users hooked and pose serious risks to young people, whose developing brains are especially vulnerable to nicotine’s effects on attention, learning, mental health, and risk of future addiction.

Emerging products like oral nicotine pouches, including Zyn, VELO, and On!, warrant close attention. These products are among the fastest-growing segments of the nicotine market, with sales nearly quadrupling from $146 million to $539.5 million between January 2023 and December 2025. While youth use remains low, their rapid growth, youth-appealing flavors, and increasing visibility raise serious concerns about future uptake.

Declines in youth e-cigarette use doesn’t eliminate the need to address the widespread availability of illegal, youth-appealing products. The vast majority of products on the market lack authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, yet many continue to be sold in flavors and designs that appeal to young people. More must be done by FDA and states to prevent them from reaching youth and to hold retailers accountable for pulling them from store shelves.

Progress also doesn’t change the bottom line: no youth should be using any tobacco or nicotine product, whether authorized or unauthorized. FDA-authorized products may have a role for adults who smoke and switch completely to less harmful alternatives but maintaining their role in an appropriately regulated marketplace depends on keeping them out of the hands of young people. Together, these findings make clear that prevention, enforcement, and access to cessation support must work hand in hand. We must ensure that every young person who is struggling with nicotine addiction has access to proven, evidence-based support to quit that meets them where they are.

EX Program by Truth Initiative, developed in collaboration with Mayo Clinic, provides free, personalized, text-based and online support to help people quit nicotine. Research shows the program can increase the odds of quitting by up to

40%, and it has already helped millions of individuals, including more than one million young people ages 13 to 24, on their journeys to quit.

The decline in youth e-cigarette use shows that progress is possible. Sustaining that progress and protecting young people from all forms of nicotine addiction will require stronger action to remove illegal, youth-appealing products from the market, ongoing surveillance and greater access to quit resources. Every young person deserves the chance to live free from addiction, and we must continue working together to make that future possible.

About Truth Initiative

Truth Initiative® is a national nonprofit public health organization committed to a future free from lifelong addiction, fostering healthier lives and a more resilient nation. Our mission is to prevent youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empower quitting for all. Through our evidence-based, market-leading cessation intervention, EX® Program, and national public education campaigns, we lead the fight against youth and young adult tobacco use. Learn more at truthinitiative.org.

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