



Key Findings from the Online California Adult Tobacco Survey: 2019-2020 Results

Revised: August 2021

Overview

The Online California Adult Tobacco Survey (Online CATS) is an online survey that gathers data on tobacco use behavior and tobacco-related beliefs among California residents age 18 to 64. Online CATS is primarily used to help prioritize interventions and guide specific tobacco control related campaigns.

Since 2019, the survey has been administered by Gallup Inc. with funding from the California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program. As of January 2021, four waves of Online CATS have been conducted by Gallup Inc.:

- Wave 1 (n=3,172): June 2019.
- Wave 2 (n=3,405): October to December 2019, during the e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) outbreak.
- Wave 3 (n=3,486): April to May 2020, during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.
- Wave 4 (n=3,165): October to November 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estimates have been weighted to account for the sampling design. Data in this factsheet is of California's adult population age 18 to 64, unless otherwise stated.

Key Findings

Tobacco and Cannabis Use

- Cigarette and vaping has decreased since the EVALI outbreak and COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 1). Cigarette use was at 14.1% in wave 1, 12.9% in wave 2, 11.3% in wave 3, and 9.6% in wave 4. Electronic cigarette ("e-cigarette") or vape use was at 17.2% in wave 1, 10.4% in wave 2, 10.3% in wave 3, and 13.1% in wave 4. The decrease in vaping between wave 1 and wave 2 is likely attributed to the EVALI outbreak.
- Emerging tobacco products, such as heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches, are gaining in popularity (see Table 1). In wave 4, 4.2 percent reported using heated tobacco products and 5.3 percent reported using nicotine pouches.

- In wave 4, 67.4 percent of cigarette smokers smoked menthol cigarettes in the past 30 days (see Table 2). African American/Black had the highest rate of menthol cigarette use at 94.5 percent, followed by Asian at 83.2 percent, White at 74.4 percent, and Hispanic/Latino at 57.9 percent.
- In wave 4, 83.6 percent of e-cigarette or vape users ("vapers") used mint, menthol, fruit, candy, sweet, or liquor-flavored vapes in the past 30 days (see Table 2). Young adult vapers age 18 to 24 had the highest rate of flavored vape use at 91.0 percent. This is followed by adults age 25 to 34 at 88.9 percent, adults age 35 to 44 at 82.5 percent, and adults age 45 to 54 at 77.7 percent. Data for adults age 55 to 64 is not available due to statistically unstable estimates.

Tobacco Cessation

- Cigarette quit intention has fluctuated between 32.8 percent and 44.9 percent among past 30-day cigarette smokers between waves 1 and 4 (see Table 3).
- Vape quit intention is estimated to be 46.3 percent among past 30-day vapers in wave 4 (see Table 3).
- The COVID-19 pandemic had influenced current cigarette smokers and vapers in their intent to quit according to wave 4 data. Among adults intending to quit smoking in the next six months, 59.3 percent reported that the pandemic influenced their decision. Among adults intending to quit vaping in the next six months, 59.5 percent reported that the pandemic influenced their decision.

Secondhand Exposure

- Exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, vape aerosol, and cannabis smoke have decreased substantially during the COVID-19 pandemic (waves 3 and 4) (see Table 4). For secondhand tobacco smoke, the rate of exposure was 66.1 to 67.3 percent pre-pandemic and 41.9 to 44.5 percent during the pandemic. For secondhand vape aerosol, the rate of exposure was 48.4 to 52.4 percent pre-pandemic and 30.3 to 31.5 percent during the pandemic. For secondhand cannabis smoke, the rate of exposure was 52.9 to 56.6 percent pre-pandemic and 35.0 to 41.8 percent during the pandemic.
- Among adults reporting past two-week secondhand exposure, the top location of exposure reported was on the sidewalk or at home (see Table 5).

Tobacco-Related Beliefs

- In wave 4, a majority of adults agreed that smoking and vaping increases the risk of viral lung infections (83.9 percent) and weakens the immune system and makes people more at risk of getting viruses (85.1 percent).
- In advancing California's goal of ending the commercial tobacco epidemic, data from wave 4 indicates that 56.0 percent were supportive of gradually banning the sale of cigarettes and 50.1 percent agreed that smoking in public places should be illegal.

Suggested Citation

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Tables

Table 1. Past 30-day use among adults age 18 to 64, California, 2019 to 2020

Product used	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Cigarette	14.1%	12.9%	11.3%	9.6%
Vapes ^a	17.2%	10.4%	10.3%	13.1%
Little cigars or cigarillos	10.1%	8.0%	not asked	7.7%
Big cigars	9.4%	7.3%	not asked	6.9%
Smokeless tobacco ^b	5.8%	5.1%	not asked	5.7%
Pipe tobacco	5.2%	3.6%	not asked	4.6%
Hookah	7.7%	6.5%	5.9%	5.9%
Heated tobacco	not asked	1.9%	3.1%	4.2%
Nicotine pouches	not asked	not asked	4.4%	5.3%
Cannabis ^c	27.2%	22.2%	26.7%	27.1%

^aFor waves 2 and 3, include respondents who reported using vapes that contain nicotine or just flavoring in the past 30 days. Starting in wave 4, respondents were instructed not to include vapes used exclusively for cannabis.

^bIncludes chewing tobacco, snuff, and snus.

^cFor waves 2 and 3, include respondents who reported using vapes that contain cannabis in the past 30 days.

Table 2. Flavored tobacco use among past 30-day tobacco users age 18 to 64, California, 2019 to 2020

Product used	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Cigarette	not asked	50.7%	52.3%	67.4%
Vapes ^a	66.9%	68.5%	84.5%	83.6%
Little cigars or cigarillos	69.1%	53.6%	not asked	67.0%
Big cigars	48.4%	35.7%	not asked	56.6%
Smokeless tobacco	72.3%	55.2%	not asked	80.8%
Pipe tobacco	not asked	30.7%	not asked	66.2%
Hookah	82.9%	59.0%	67.0%	83.8%
Heated tobacco	not asked	suppressed ^b	81.8%	70.1%
Nicotine pouches	not asked	not asked	76.9%	75.8%

^aSpecific vape flavors were asked starting in wave 3. For waves 1 and 2, it is possible respondents may have reported flavored use if they only used tobacco-flavored vapes. For waves 2 and 3, restricted to respondents who reported using vapes that contain nicotine or just flavoring in the past 30 days. Starting with wave 3, flavored vapes only include mint, menthol, fruit, candy, sweet, or liquor flavors.

^bData did not meet reporting requirements for statistical stability and has been suppressed.

Table 3. Quit attempt in the past year and quit intention in the next six month among adults age 18 to 64, California, 2019 to 2020

Measure	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Cigarette quit attempt ^a	56.1%	48.6%	56.8%	60.1%
Cigarette quit intent ^b	44.9%	35.8%	32.8%	39.2%
Vape quit attempt ^a	not asked	not asked	not asked	50.9%
Vape quit intent ^{b,c}	not asked	not asked	41.6%	46.3%

^aRestricted to past year users.

^bRestricted past 30-day users.

^cFor wave 3, restricted to respondents who reported using vapes that contain nicotine or just flavoring in the past 30 days.

Table 4. Past two-week exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, vape aerosol, or cannabis smoke, California, 2019 to 2020

Secondhand exposure	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Tobacco smoke	67.3%	66.1%	41.9%	44.5%
Vape aerosol	52.4%	48.4%	30.3%	31.5%
Cannabis smoke	56.6%	52.9%	35.0%	41.8%

Table 5. Reported location of secondhand tobacco smoke, vape aerosol, or cannabis smoke in past two weeks, California, October 2020 to November 2020 (wave 4)

Location	Secondhand tobacco smoke	Secondhand vape aerosol	Secondhand cannabis smoke
Sidewalk	50.0%	49.0%	41.1%
Home	37.9%	37.4%	58.4%
Recreational space, includes parks and beaches	24.8%	35.9%	30.2%
Workplace	19.9%	21.6%	10.0%
Outdoor dining area	18.7%	23.3%	17.6%
Car or vehicle	18.6%	24.0%	19.1%
Store or shopping mall	14.5%	22.7%	11.6%
Public transit	4.8%	5.2%	5.1%
School campus	2.8%	5.5%	3.5%

Restricted to adults who reported past two-week secondhand exposure. Data will not add up to 100 percent as multiple selections was allowed.