

Vaping and Teens: Key Findings and Toplines

Key Findings

Prevalence

Vaping is popular among teens, and it is happening regularly at school. One-third (33%) of teens say they see classmates vaping in school a few times a week or daily. More than half (54%) say they see it monthly. Nearly eight in 10 (78%) say vaping is popular among people their age where they live.

Mixed messages

Most teens think vaping is as harmful as smoking. Just over half of teens (52%) say vaping is “about as harmful as smoking,” while 31% say it’s more harmful, and 17% say it’s less harmful. Among those teens who say vaping is less harmful than smoking, 43% say they’ve gotten messages online telling them that “vaping is healthier than smoking cigarettes.”

Social media and vaping

One in four teens first learned about vaping on social media. A plurality of teens (44%) say they first learned or heard about vaping from someone they know, while 23% first heard about it on social media, 9% from TV or a movie, and less than that from outdoor ads, in a store, on a website, on the radio, or on a podcast.

Vaping is common in teens’ social media experiences. When thinking about their typical experience using social media, 59% of teens say they’re likely to see a post that mentions or shows vaping.

Instagram and Snapchat users are most likely to see vaping content. About three-quarters of teen Instagram (76%) and Snapchat (73%) users report seeing posts that include vaping on each of those respective platforms. Slightly fewer—64%—who visit YouTube say they’ve seen vaping content on the site.

More teens now use TikTok than Facebook, and more than half of teens on TikTok see vaping-related posts. More than four in 10 teens have used TikTok in the last year, compared with 39% who’ve used Facebook in the same time period. More than half of teens (56%) on TikTok say they’ve seen posts that include vaping on the platform, compared with 40% of teens who use Facebook.

Most of the vaping-related content online is advertising. Most of the vaping-related content that teens are seeing, according to them, is advertisements (61%) rather than content shared by a friend (40%) or shared by celebrities, personalities, or influencers (25%).

Anti-vaping information

More often than not, the messages teens are seeing online are against vaping rather than promoting or glorifying it. More than twice as many teens say they’ve learned about “risks or harms associated with vaping” as say they’ve heard that “vaping is healthier than smoking cigarettes” (72% vs. 34%). Similarly, more than twice as many teens say they’ve seen content related to “how to stop vaping” as “how to use vaping devices” (38% vs. 15%).

Summary

Vaping popularity among teens

Regardless of its original purported intended use as a cigarette replacement for adult smokers, there is now no doubt that vaping is widespread among teens. Nearly eight in 10 (78%) say vaping is popular among people their age where they live, and one-third (33%) say they see classmates vaping in school a few times a week or more often.

How popular is vaping among people your age where you live?

	Total	Male	Female
Net popular	78%	72%	84%
Very popular	41%	31%	51%
Somewhat popular	37%	41%	33%
Net not popular	21%	27%	15%
Not so popular	13%	15%	11%
Not popular at all	8%	11%	4%

Girls are more likely than boys both to say that vaping is popular and to say they more frequently see classmates vaping.

How often do you see classmates vaping in your school?

	Total	Male	Female
Daily	17%	14%	21%
A few times a week	15%	14%	17%
Once a week	7%	7%	6%
A few times a month	11%	12%	10%
Once a month	4%	4%	3%
Less than once a month	8%	8%	8%
Never	30%	33%	28%
Not applicable	7%	8%	6%

A plurality of teens (44%) say they first learned or heard about vaping from someone they know, while 23% first heard about it on social media, 9% from TV or a movie, and less than that from outdoor ads, in a store, on a website, on the radio, or on a podcast.

But, teens are following the recent news on vaping. A majority (61%) say they've heard "a lot" about vaping in the news recently, while 26% have heard "a little," 8% have heard "not much," and 4% "not at all."

Vaping on social media

YouTube (90%), Instagram (74%), and Snapchat (67%) remain the top social media platforms among teenagers. TikTok, a newcomer, already surpasses Facebook among teens (45% vs. 39%), though still fewer than half use either of those sites. About one in five or fewer teens say they've used Reddit (21%), Twitch (21%), or WhatsApp (14%) in the last month.

As prevalent as vaping is in real life, that popularity carries over to the online world as well. When thinking about their typical experience using social media, 59% of teens say they're likely to see a post that mentions or shows vaping. When asked specifically, 11% say they see posts that mention vaping "almost every time" they use social media, 25% say they see them "often," 30% "occasionally," 23% "rarely," and 10% "never."

Teens don't report seeing the same amount of vaping content on all platforms. About three-quarters of teen Instagram (76%) and Snapchat (73%) users report seeing posts that include vaping on each of those respective platforms. Slightly fewer—64%—who visit YouTube say they've seen vaping content on the site. Among those who use TikTok, 56% say they've seen vaping posts on the app. Of teens who use Facebook, just 40% say they've seen posts that include vaping on that platform.

Most of the vaping-related content that teens are seeing, according to them, is advertisements (61%) rather than content shared by a friend (40%) or shared by celebrities, personalities, or influencers (25%).

Online exposure and teen attitudes on teen vaping

More often than not, the messages teens are seeing online are against vaping rather than promoting or glorifying it. More than twice as many teens say they've learned about "risks or harms associated with vaping" as say they've heard that "vaping is healthier than smoking cigarettes" (72% vs. 34%). Similarly, more than twice as many teens say they've seen content related to "how to stop vaping" as "how to use vaping devices" (38% vs. 15%).

Just over half of teens (52%) say vaping is "about as harmful as smoking," while 31% say it's more harmful and 17% say it's less harmful than smoking.

The exposure that teens get to vaping-related content on social media clearly affects their perceptions. Among those teens who say vaping is less harmful than smoking, 43% say they've gotten messages online telling them that "vaping is healthier than smoking cigarettes," compared with just 26% among teens who think vaping is more harmful than smoking or 35% who think vaping and smoking are equally harmful.

What messages have you received about vaping online? (Select all that apply.)

	All teens	Teens who think vaping is ...		
		More harmful than smoking	About as harmful as smoking	Less harmful than smoking
Risks or harms associated with vaping	72%	69%	77%	65%
How to stop vaping	38%	36%	40%	35%
Vaping is healthier than smoking cigarettes	34%	26%	35%	43%
Where to buy vaping-related products	27%	27%	28%	26%
Vaping is cool	26%	25%	26%	30%
How to use vaping devices	15%	17%	14%	17%
How to hide vaping (for example, in school)	15%	14%	13%	20%

Though most have seen vaping-related content on various social media channels, just 10% of teens say they themselves have shared a post that mentioned or showed vaping on social media.

Methodology

This **SurveyMonkey Audience** survey was conducted September 23 to October 4, 2019, among 1,062 teens age 13 to 17 in the United States. Respondents for this survey were selected from more than 2 million people who take surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform each day. The modeled-error estimate for the full sample is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Data has been weighted for age and sex using the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to reflect the demographic composition of the United States age 13 to 17. Full results are available at www.common sense media.org/research/quarterly-survey-series.

Toplines

How popular is vaping among people your age where you live?

	Total (N = 1,062)
NET popular	78%
Very popular	41%
Somewhat popular	37%
NET not popular	21%
Not so popular	13%
Not popular at all	8%
No answer	1%

How much have you heard about vaping in the news recently?

	Total (N = 1,062)
A lot	61%
A little	26%
Not much	8%
Not at all	4%
No answer	1%

Do you think vaping is less harmful, more harmful, or about as harmful as smoking cigarettes?

	Total (N = 1,062)
More harmful than smoking	31%
About as harmful as smoking	52%
Less harmful than smoking	17%
No answer	0%

Thinking back, how did you first learn or hear about vaping?

	Total (N = 1,062)
From someone I know	44%
On social media	23%
On TV or in a movie	9%
Outdoor ads (such as billboards or bus ads)	4%
In a store	3%
On a website	2%
On the radio or a podcast	2%
Other (please specify)	12%
No answer	1%

How often do you see classmates vaping in your school?

	Total (N = 1,062)
Daily	17%
A few times a week	15%
Once a week	7%
A few times a month	11%
Once a month	4%
Less than once a month	8%
Never	30%
Not applicable	7%
No answer	0%

Which of the following social media platforms have you used in the last 12 months? (Select all that apply.)

	Total (N = 1,062)
YouTube	90%
Instagram	74%
Snapchat	67%
TikTok	45%
Facebook	39%
Reddit	21%
Twitch	21%
WhatsApp	14%
None of the above	2%
No answer	0%

Thinking about your typical experience using social media, how likely are you to see a post that mentions or shows vaping?

	Total (N = 1,034)
NET likely	59%
Very likely	25%
Somewhat likely	34%
NET not likely	40%
Not so likely	25%
Not likely at all	15%
No answer	1%

On which platforms have you seen posts that include vaping? (Select all that apply.)

	Total (N = 929)
Instagram	63%
YouTube	62%
Snapchat	57%
TikTok	33%
Facebook	21%
Reddit	11%
Twitch	6%
WhatsApp	3%
None of the above	6%
No answer	1%

On which platform have you most frequently seen posts that include vaping? (Select all that apply.)

	Total (N = 929)
Instagram	44%
YouTube	43%
Snapchat	36%
TikTok	17%
Facebook	13%
Reddit	10%
Twitch	2%
WhatsApp	2%
None of the above	3%
No answer	1%

Where have the vaping-related posts that you've seen on social media come from? (Select all that apply.)

	Total (N = 929)
Advertisements	61%
Shared by friend	40%
Shared by celebrities, personalities, or influencers who I follow	25%
Other (please specify)	9%
No answer	2%

What messages have you received about vaping online? (Select all that apply.)

	Total (N = 929)
Risks or harms associated with vaping	72%
How to stop vaping	38%
Vaping is healthier than smoking cigarettes	34%
Where to buy vaping related products	27%
Vaping is cool	26%
How to use vaping devices	15%
How to hide vaping (for example, in school)	15%
No answer	1%

Have you ever shared a post that mentioned or showed vaping?

	Total (N = 929)
Yes	10%
No	89%
No answer	1%