The 2019 Kentucky Health Issues Poll asked Kentucky adults their opinions about taxing e-cigarettes and about their experience using e-cigarettes. KHIP is sponsored by Interact for Health and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

Majority of Kentucky adults favors excise tax on e-cigarettes

Currently, e-cigarettes are the only nicotine-containing product sold in Kentucky that are not subject to an excise tax.1 Given this, along with the increasing popularity of these products among youth and young adults, a bill was filed in advance of the Kentucky General Assembly’s 2020 session to impose an excise tax of 27.5% on the sale of e-cigarettes.2 KHIP asked Kentucky adults, “Do you favor or oppose the Commonwealth of Kentucky placing an excise tax on the sale of e-cigarettes so that e-cigarettes are taxed at a rate similar to a pack of cigarettes?” Three in 4 Kentucky adults (75%) reported they favor such a tax. Support has increased since KHIP last asked this question in 2014 when only half of Kentucky adults (53%) favored such a tax. Support was high across all political parties. More than 7 in 10 Democrats, Republicans and Independents favor an e-cigarette tax.

1 in 4 Kentucky adults have tried an e-cigarette

Electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes are also known as vapes, vape pens or e-hookahs. Many are known by their brand names.3 In 2019, about 1 in 4 Kentucky adults (26%) reported they had ever tried an e-cigarette. This is unchanged since KHIP first asked this question in 2016.

E-cigarettes are more popular among youth and young adults than among older adults. KHIP found that adults between the ages of 18 and 45 are more likely than older adults to have ever tried an e-cigarette. (See graph on next page.) Similarly, the Kentucky Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that the percentage of high school students who had ever tried an e-cigarette rose from 44% in 2015 to 53% in 2019.4

These findings, unless otherwise noted, are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and Interact for Health. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Oct. 16-Dec. 6, 2019, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,559 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 468 landline interviews and 1,091 interviews with cell phone users. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to ±2.5%. There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as nonresponse, wording or context effects that can introduce error or bias. For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit www.healthy-ky.org or www.interactforhealth.org/about-khip/.

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1 An excise tax is paid when a specific good or product is purchased. Generally, excise taxes are included in the price of the product.


KHIP asked adults who had tried an e-cigarette, “Do you now use e-cigarettes or other electronic ‘vaping’ products every day, some days or not all?” About 1 in 10 Kentucky adults (9%) reported currently using e-cigarettes every day or some days. This is unchanged from 2017 (7%).

**Half think e-cigarettes just as harmful as regular cigarettes**

E-cigarettes are not safe for children, youth or pregnant women. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, those who have never smoked should not begin using e-cigarettes.

KHIP asked Kentucky adults whether they believed e-cigarettes were less harmful, more harmful or just as harmful as traditional cigarettes for youth ages 11 to 17 and for adults. About half of Kentucky adults said that e-cigarettes are **just as harmful** as traditional cigarettes for both youth (45%) and adults (54%). Four in 10 said e-cigarettes are **more harmful** than regular cigarettes for youth (40%). Just 2 in 10 said this for adults (21%). About 1 in 10 reported that e-cigarettes were **less harmful** than traditional cigarettes for youth (9%), while about 2 in 10 said this for adults (19%).

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7 KHIP asked “in your opinion, are e-cigarettes or vaping products less harmful, more harmful or just as harmful as regular cigarettes for young people between the ages of 11 and 17?” and “in your opinion are e-cigarettes or vaping products less harmful, more harmful or just as harmful as regular cigarettes for adults?”