

Bans on flavored e-cigarettes could see some vapers return to smoking cigarettes

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Most adult vapers of non-tobacco flavored e-cigarettes overwhelmingly oppose flavor restrictions, according to a recent study.

The study, conducted by the International Tobacco Control Policy

Evaluation Project at the University of Waterloo, examined whether regular vapers from Canada, England and the United States who only use non-tobacco flavored e-cigarettes, would support or oppose a ban on all non-tobacco flavors and how they would potentially respond to such a policy.

"Our study helps to fill the gaps in evidence of the possible impact of [e-cigarette flavor](#) bans, following from other studies that have predicted how smokers respond to tobacco control policies such as tax increases and menthol bans," said Professor Geoffrey Fong, co-author and the principal investigator of the ITC Project.

The [vaping](#) industry produces thousands of flavored vaping products, such as tobacco, menthol, fruit, and candy. With rising rates of youth vaping, regulators in some countries are grappling with decisions on how to best regulate vaping product flavors to protect public health. A ban on flavored vaping products intends to discourage vaping among youth. But it is not clear whether a flavor ban would also discourage vaping among adult smokers who vape, who also like flavors. However, it is unknown whether there could be unintended effects of a flavor ban. For example, could those who have used flavored e-cigarettes to cut down or quit smoking risk relapsing to smoking if flavored e-cigarettes are no longer available?

In the study, 82 percent of the 851 vapers surveyed in the three countries say they oppose a flavor ban, 13 percent support it, and five percent are unsure.

Vapers were then asked what they might do if there was a ban on the flavors they were currently vaping. Of the 57 percent who reported they would continue vaping, half would vape an available legal flavor (tobacco flavor in the U.S., tobacco and menthol in Canada and England), and the other half reported that they would find a way to get

their preferred flavor(s) after the ban. About one in five vapers said they would stop vaping and smoke instead, with 13 percent reporting that they did not know what they would do.

"Our findings raise the possibility that banning some flavored vaping products may dissuade some adult smokers from vaping, with the possibility that they would return to [smoking cigarettes](#), which are clearly much more harmful than vaping products, given that we know that at least half of regular smokers die of a smoking-caused disease," said ITC research assistant professor Shannon Gravely, who was lead author of the study.

The study, "Responses to potential nicotine vaping product flavor restrictions among regular vapers using non-[tobacco](#) flavors: Findings from the 2020 ITC Smoking and Vaping Survey in Canada, England and the United States," was recently published in the journal *Addictive Behaviors*.

More information: Shannon Gravely et al, Responses to potential nicotine vaping product flavor restrictions among regular vapers using non-tobacco flavors: Findings from the 2020 ITC Smoking and Vaping Survey in Canada, England and the United States, *Addictive Behaviors* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2021.107152](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2021.107152)

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