



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Kirsten L. Johnson, Secretary

May 1, 2024

Ms. Lindsay Hale
Acting Senate Chief Clerk
Post Office Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Mr. Edward A. Blazel
Assembly Chief Clerk
17 West Main Street, Room 401
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Ms. Hale and Mr. Blazel:

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is pleased to submit the 2023 Annual Commercial Tobacco Use Cessation Report to the Governor and the Legislature per Wis. Stat. §255.15 (4).

The Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) acknowledges the cultural significance of traditional or sacred tobacco. Commercial tobacco differs from traditional tobacco, which has been used by American Indian communities for sacred purposes for generations. Unless otherwise noted, when “tobacco” is referenced within this report, it refers to *commercial tobacco* not *traditional tobacco*.

Despite gains in certain populations, commercial tobacco continues to take a devastating toll on the health of Wisconsinites. Nationally, smoking is deadlier than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined.¹ Wisconsin is no exception, with tobacco causing the deaths of approximately 7,900 residents annually—all preventable deaths. Nearly 30% of Wisconsin’s cancer deaths are attributable to smoking. In addition, tobacco products cause an estimated \$3.09 billion in annual health care expenses, \$624.9 million in Medicaid claims, and \$5.6 billion in lost worker productivity in Wisconsin.¹ This amounts to about \$1,025 in state and federal tax burden per household from smoking-caused government expenditures.¹

Everyone in Wisconsin deserves to live their best and healthiest life. To this end, TPCP strives to protect and promote the well-being and safety of all Wisconsinites through the equitable application of best practices in commercial tobacco prevention and control.

This report is organized in the following sections that highlight TPCP's work in 2023: State of Current Tobacco Use, Youth Access, Smoke-free Air, and Disparities. Within these three sections, we further detail challenges faced, actions taken, and opportunities for forward progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirsten L. Johnson".

Kirsten L. Johnson
Secretary-designee

¹ [Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids | The Toll of Tobacco in Wisconsin, 2023](#)

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High-Level Summary

The following outlines the main points in the report's four sections. Please refer to the full text in the respective section for more detailed information. Minor notes are also included below this table.

NOTES:

- Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment programs are included throughout the sections as WI Strategies. In the table of contents, these program or initiative names are followed by "(Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)".
- More details about each data point (including year, caveats, etc.) can be found in the respective theme section. References are also available in the main text.
- More details about programs and acronyms are also found in the respective section.
- For consistency throughout this report, electronic vaping products will be referred to as e-cigarettes in most cases. Refer to footnote 8 on page 11 for additional details.

SECTION I. STATE OF CURRENT TOBACCO USE

1. Tobacco Consumption in Wisconsin

- Commercial tobacco and nicotine products continue to harm the health of Wisconsin residents.
- Over **177.9 million cigarette packs** were sold in 2023 (**30 packs per Wisconsinite**).
- Over **141.2 million milliliters (mL) of vaping product liquid** were purchased in 2023 (**24 mL of vaping product per Wisconsinite**).
- Thanks to control strategies at the local, state, and federal level, Wisconsin has seen a decrease in tobacco consumption, but there has been a concerning rise in vaping product use in the last two decades.

2. Tobacco Use Among Youth

- The epidemic of e-cigarette use among youth continues.
- The strategies to address this crisis are evidence-based, common-sense, effective, and attainable. This includes policies such as Tobacco 21, tobacco flavor prohibition, tax increases, and comprehensive smoke-free air laws.
- Nicotine exacerbates anxiety and depression, significantly impacting brain development and mental health.
- **16%** of high school (HS) students in Wisconsin use tobacco and **15%** use e-cigarettes.
- **1 out of every 20** HS students are current cigarette smokers in Wisconsin.
- For Wisconsin HS seniors, **46%** have tried using e-cigarettes and **25%** are current e-cigarette users.

3. Tobacco Use Among Young Adults (18–24-Year-Olds)

- **8%** of young adults (YA) smoke cigarettes.
- **19%** of YAs use e-cigarettes.
- YAs make up **34%** of e-cigarette users among all adult age groups.
- **41%** of YAs who ever tried conventional cigarettes or e-cigarettes started by using e-cigarettes.

4. Tobacco Use Among Adults

- **22%** of Wisconsin adults currently use tobacco products.
- Wisconsin adult cigarette smoking prevalence is **14%**.
- Although adult current e-cigarettes use is **7%**, 18-39-year-olds comprise **75%** of all adult current e-cigarette users

SECTION II. YOUTH PREVENTION & ACCESS

1. Barriers & Opportunities: Menthol & Other Tobacco Flavors

- Menthol and all flavored tobacco products should be prohibited in Wisconsin.
- Tobacco products come in many sweet flavors to attract teens and young adults.
- Nationally, almost **90%** of middle and high schoolers who currently use e-cigarettes use flavored products.
- **48%** of YAs in Wisconsin used e-cigarettes because of the flavors in which they come.
- The American Lung Association **graded Wisconsin an F** for not restricting flavored tobacco products.
- Menthol in tobacco products specifically poses a risk to youth.
- **58%** of HS students who ever tried cigarettes would probably or definitely not try unflavored tobacco products; the same for **68%** of students who ever tried e-cigarettes.
- **26%** of HS students who were current cigarette smokers and **59%** of current e-cigarette users would probably or definitely not try unflavored tobacco products.

2. Barriers & Opportunities: Align with Federal Tobacco 21 Sales Law

- Implement Tobacco 21 law at the state level to help prevent youth access and initiation, eliminate confusion in the marketplace, and empower local law enforcement to enforce the minimum legal sales age law.
- Wisconsin's legal sales age for tobacco and nicotine products (including e-cigarettes) is still 18, despite the federal legal sales age being raised to 21.
- This discrepancy creates confusion among retailers, local leaders, and the general public, including law enforcement that is unable to enforce the federal Tobacco 21 law.
- Raising the legal tobacco purchase age to 21 in Wisconsin is an essential tobacco prevention measure because each year a young person delays commercial tobacco use, there is a significant decrease in the chance of ever starting tobacco use.

3. WI TPCP Strategies

- **WI Wins** - Program educating retailers and communities on federal tobacco minimum legal sales age (MLSA) Tobacco 21 law. Enforces compliance with state law (age 18).
- **Statewide Tobacco 21 Paid Media Campaign** - In 2023, a media campaign was implemented to increase the awareness of the federal Tobacco 21 law with two series of advertising buys. Media tactics included television, newspaper, digital out-of-home, online video, etc. The campaign resulted in 102 million impressions and substantial traffic to the Tobacco 21 page on the DHS website.
- **Youth Engagement - FACT Movement** - Partnered with UW-Population Health Institute to conduct a mixed method evaluation to better understand the barriers and facilitators to active youth engagement in tobacco prevention.
- **SPARK** - Community collaboration for tobacco-free policies in colleges and universities. Since its start in 2011, SPARK has awarded 119 mini and micro grants to 30 college campuses in Wisconsin.
- **Youth Prevention Paid Media Campaign** - TPCP implemented a "Behind the Haze" media campaign in 2023 with two series of advertising buys. It reached out to youth ages 13–18 through digital out-of-home, streaming audio, online video, and paid social. The campaign resulted in **45.1 million** impressions and was particularly successful in reaching individuals in the Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian communities.

SECTION III. SMOKE-FREE AIR

1. State of Secondhand Smoke Exposure & Support for Smoke-Free Policies in Wisconsin

- There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke or aerosol, and these are especially harmful to infants, children, pregnant individuals, and those with respiratory conditions.
- Comprehensive Smoke-Free Air policies prevents commercial tobacco use, helps users quit, and protects workers and consumers.
- **69 municipalities** in Wisconsin have passed local smoke-free air ordinances to include e-cigarettes.
- **19.2%** of Wisconsin adults have some exposure to cigarette smoke.
- Only **43.1%** of multi-unit building adults in Wisconsin indicate that smoking was prohibited in their building and **73.5%** of these residents prefer that smoking not be allowed.

2. Opportunities: Protecting & Strengthening WI's Smoke-Free Air Law

- Strengthening and preserving Wisconsin's smoke-free air law is the strongest way to protect people from involuntary secondhand smoke exposure.
- Currently, Wisconsin's smoke-free air law does not include e-cigarettes or cannabis.
- **Over 75%** of adult Wisconsinites support the prohibition of smoking in most public places, **including workplaces, offices, restaurants, and bars.**
- **Over 60%** of adults support the prohibition of vaping in public places.

3. WI TPCP Strategies

- **Support Smoke-Free Multi Unit Housing** - TPCP will continue to support coalitions, property managers, and landlords in implementing smoke-free air policies within their lease agreements through the resources within the Clear Gains Initiative.
- **Education on Best-Practice Smoke-Free Air Policies** - TPCP continues to work with national technical assistance agencies to provide information on best practice smoke-free air policies to partners across the state. This includes information about including e-cigarettes and cannabis in smoke-free air laws and tobacco-free outdoor spaces.

SECTION IV. DISPARITIES

- Commercial tobacco efforts focus on youth, at-risk communities, people from racial and ethnic minority groups, and other communities (e.g., rural communities, LGBTQ+ communities, veterans, and those with behavioral health conditions).
- Because of predatory marketing, certain populations have drastically higher tobacco use rates than the average adult smoking rate of **14%** and adult e-cigarette rate of **7%** in Wisconsin. For example, the following populations use cigarettes and/or e-cigarettes at higher rates:
 - People with lower levels of education and income
 - Rural residents
 - Black or African American people
 - American Indian or Alaska Native people
 - People of more than one race
 - People with behavioral health concerns
 - LGBTQ+ people

1. *WI TPCP Strategies*

- **WiNTiP** (*Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment*) – A University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI)-coordinated program that works with behavioral health systems on tobacco prevention and treatment initiatives across the state.
 - i. In 2023, UW-CTRI responded to **483** technical assistance requests and **31** training requests to substance use facilities as they implemented the DHS 75 standards.
 - ii. Through December 2023, a total of **1,800** clinicians had enrolled in training to help patients quit using tobacco, including **1,078** people from Wisconsin.
- **WI Tobacco Quit Lines** (*Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment*) - Offering coaching services and medication to Wisconsin residents who wish to quit using tobacco.
 - i. From March –June 2023, the services expanded to offer an eight-week supply of nicotine patch, gum, lozenge, or a combination of treatment, as well as up to five proactive coaching support calls for free, up from the customary two weeks of NRT and no proactive calls.
 - ii. In 2023, the Quit Line saw:
 - **5,514** inbound calls
 - **134** chat conversations
 - **67** group sessions
 - **4,476** people successfully enrolled for services.
 - **1,945** registrations for personalized coaching tips delivered via text messages.
- **Wisconsin American Indian Quitline** (*Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment*) - Culturally-tailored quit resources for American Indians that balances support for quitting commercial tobacco products while respecting traditional (sacred) tobacco use. In 2023, the AIQL enrollment increased to **127** people of American Indian descent.
- **Live Vape Free** - An interactive vaping cessation program to support youth to quit the use of e-cigarettes. This program provides text support to Wisconsin youth 13 to 17 years of age.
 - i. In 2023, there were **17** youth enrollments.

- ii. A media campaign was carried out to promote Live Vape Free enrollment in early 2023.
 - iii. To better direct efforts in this area, TPCP shifted focus to implementing a youth survey about vaping behaviors and messaging preferences to better support young people in their attempts to quit tobacco and nicotine.
- **First Breath (Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)** - Supports treatment opportunities for substance use (including tobacco) for pregnant and postpartum people.
 - i. In 2023, sites referred 868 individuals to First Breath: 95% pregnant or postpartum individuals, and 5% caregivers.
 - ii. 697 people enrolled in texting services.
 - iii. 188 enrolled in one-to-one coaching services
 - iv. By the end of their pregnancies, 80% of participants made positive changes:
 - 50% quit and 30% cut down on tobacco use.
 - v. By six months postpartum, 79% made positive changes:
 - 56% quit and 23% cut down on tobacco use.
 - vi. 79% of participants achieved fully smoke-free homes.
 - vii. 89% achieved zero infant exposure to tobacco smoke.
 - viii. 99% of participants would recommend First Breath to others.
 - **No Menthol Sunday** - Led by the Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network each May, No Menthol Sunday engages faith and community leaders to raise awareness about the negative impact of menthol and other flavored tobacco on Black communities, including working with retailers to halt sales of menthol products on that day and promote free tobacco cessation services to those who are ready to quit.
 - i. In 2023, 44 Milwaukee tobacco retailers agreed not to sell menthol tobacco products on No Menthol Sunday.
 - ii. Over 20,000 people were reached through hosted events.
 - iii. 100,200 people were reached via radio.
 - **Addressing Cigarette Smoking Among Medicaid Beneficiaries (Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)** - Collaboration continued between TPCP, the DHS Division of Medicaid Services, and UW-CTRI that promotes cessation benefits for Medicaid recipients. From 2021 to 2023, marketing campaigns promoted the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line's free tobacco cessation services in low-income neighborhoods and zip codes.
 - **The White House Cancer Moonshot** - The Biden-Harris Administration's White House Cancer Moonshot, a national initiative working to end cancer, held a Smoking Cessation Forum in June 2023. In addition to TPCP leadership contributing to the live forum in June, additional TPCP staff were asked to attend a follow-up forum to share and expand on narrative recommendations.
2. **Opportunities: Sacred Tobacco, Tribal Sovereignty, & Public Health Collaboration**
- Acknowledging the sovereignty and independence of tribal nations, as well as the role that sacred (or traditional) tobacco plays in American Indian communities, TPCP is committed to fostering positive state-tribal relationships between the state of Wisconsin and Tribal Nations and communities and collaborate in promoting our communities'

health, as well as addressing the harm that commercial tobacco has on American Indian communities.

- One area in which TPCP may support American Indian communities is through the promotion of smoke-free air policies, as well as continuing the Wisconsin American Indian Quitline.
- American Indians in Wisconsin have one of the highest rates of commercial cigarette use at **28%**.

3. *Opportunities: Menthol & Other Tobacco Flavors Prohibition*

- The prohibition of menthol would constitute a major health equity win.
- The tobacco industry has advertised flavored tobacco products to new users, people of color, and other marginalized communities.
- **43%** of all adult smokers smoke menthols nationally, more than **83%** of Black smokers do.
- **43.8%** of all Wisconsin adults who currently or ever tried cigarettes smoked menthols, while **88%** of Black current or ever smokers did.
- In the US between 1980 to 2018, African American deaths made up about **40%** of deaths due to menthol cigarette smoking, while being about **12%** of the population.
- If menthols were banned, the gap between Black and White lung cancer deaths would close within five years.
- Nationally, when considering deaths due to cigarettes and vaping products, a menthol prohibition would save **560,000** lives, including **255,000** Black American lives.

SECTION IV. LOOKING FORWARD

- TPCP is proactively strategizing how best to address the unique needs of Wisconsinites.
- TPCP will continue to implement the 2020-2025 tobacco prevention and control movement state plan that was developed with statewide partners.
- TPCP will continue to fund **16** local Alliances, **13** Tobacco Prevention and Control Alliances and **3** Catalyst Alliances.
- TPCP will be supporting the expansion of our network and partnerships and will continue to provide technical assistance to grantees of JUUL Settlement funding.
- TPCP is committed to promoting best-practice policy options that reduce tobacco and e-cigarette use, initiation, dependence, and disparities. These include raising Wisconsin's tobacco sales age to 21, prohibiting tobacco product flavors (including menthol), including e-cigarettes and cannabis in the Smoke-Free Air Law, and increasing Wisconsin's overall tax on all tobacco products (including e-cigarettes).

CONCLUSION

- In 2023, the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program made great progress on priority projects to protect the populations hardest hit by commercial tobacco products, including young people and marginalized populations, which are disproportionately targeted by the commercial tobacco industry.

- We at the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program have a vision of a healthy, equitable, resilient Wisconsin, but there is still much to do. Together, our healthiest Wisconsin is yet to come.

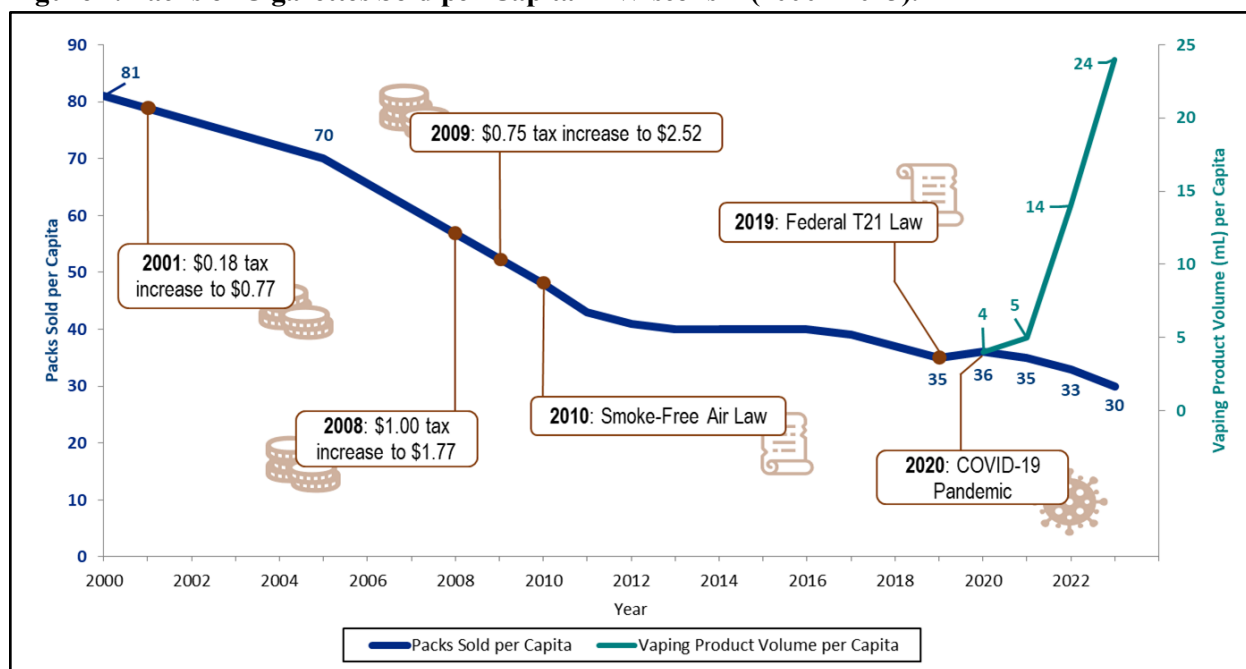
State of Current Tobacco Use (Consumption, Adults, Youth)

Tobacco Consumption

Commercial tobacco and nicotine products continue to harm the health of Wisconsin residents. Per capita, cigarette consumption has declined from 81 packs in 2000 to 30.1 packs in 2023 (this is more than 177.9 million packs of cigarettes in 2023).² This positive trend, however, did not occur on its own. Tobacco prevention and control strategies at the local, state, and federal level helped implement measures such as commercial tobacco tax increases and other policies key to decreasing the use of tobacco in Wisconsin.

Tax increases on tobacco products and evidence-based, comprehensive tobacco policies work to protect Wisconsin residents. They reduce youth initiation and protect non-tobacco users from secondhand smoke. Figure 1 shows that, while Wisconsin has seen a decrease in commercial cigarette use, vaping product use has increased since vaping products were first introduced and reported. In 2023, more than 141.2 million milliliters (mL) of vaping product liquid were purchased in Wisconsin (equivalent to 24 mL of vaping product per resident).³

Figure 1. Packs of Cigarettes Sold per Capita in Wisconsin (2000 - 2023).



Notes:

1. 2000-2019 Data: [CDC | The Tax Burden on Tobacco, 1970-2019](#)
2. 2020-2023 Data: [DOR | Cigarette & Other Tobacco Product Report](#) & [US Census](#) WI annual population estimate.
3. Effective October 1, 2019, an excise tax is imposed on the liquid, gel, or other substance used in vaping devices, regardless of whether the liquid or other substance contains nicotine.

² [Wisconsin Department of Revenue Cigarette Tobacco Tax Report](#)

³ Ibid.

Tobacco Use Among Youth

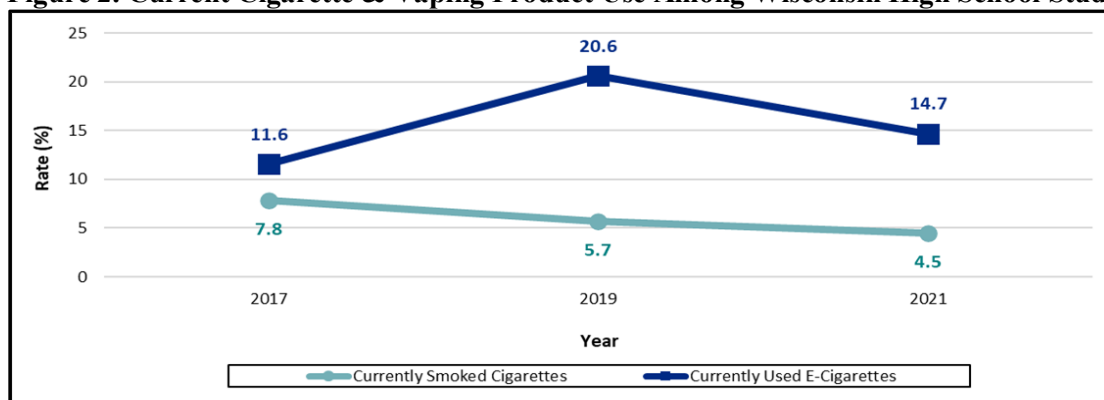
We are experiencing an epidemic of commercial tobacco and nicotine use among young people in Wisconsin that will negatively affect their long-term health, mental health, finances, brain development, learning, and workplace productivity. The strategies to address this crisis are evidence-based, effective, and attainable. Wisconsin risks backsliding on its hard-won progress in youth tobacco prevention due to development in tobacco products like e-cigarettes, heated tobacco, and synthetic nicotine, among others. However, with an understanding of how tobacco affects young people in our state, Wisconsin can return to the path of eliminating youth commercial tobacco and nicotine use.

Nicotine addiction creates mental health concerns for users, and this effect on youth is important to note. While touted as a stress reliever, nicotine exacerbates anxiety and depression for users as they get caught in a vicious cycle of addiction. Tobacco use has a negative impact on the structural development of young brains, including areas related to mood, focus, learning, and impulse control.⁴

Nationally, e-cigarettes (also known as electronic vaping products or vapes) remain the most popular tobacco product among U.S. youth since 2014, with 4.6% of middle schoolers and 10% of highschoolers reporting current use of e-cigarettes.⁵

In Wisconsin, 15.9% of high school students reported current use of any tobacco product.^{6,7,8} While high school youth current conventional cigarette use is 4.5%, their current e-cigarette use is at 14.7%. This is also notable since 32.4% of highschoolers stated ever having tried an e-cigarette product, suggesting that commercial tobacco companies are successful in making e-cigarettes as appealing and addictive as possible. As seen in Figure 2, although youth e-cigarette use has increased and then decreased over the last several years, e-cigarette use remains high and conventional cigarette use has been generally stagnant.

Figure 2. Current Cigarette & Vaping Product Use Among Wisconsin High School Students



⁴ [CDC | Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults, 2023](#)

⁵ [CDC, Tobacco Product Use Among U.S. Middle and High School Students - National Youth Tobacco Survey, 2023](#)

⁶ Defined as the use of cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, or electronic vapor products by the Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (WI YRBS).

⁷ WI YRBS, 2021

⁸ For consistency throughout this report, electronic vaping products will be referred to as e-cigarettes for references to YRBS data. The YRBS inquires youth about the use of electronic vapor products (including e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods).

Older students in Wisconsin are at particular risk of using tobacco and nicotine, with more than one in four (25.9%) of 12th graders reporting current use of any tobacco product.⁹ Moreover, 46.0% of high school seniors stated having ever tried an e-cigarette and a quarter of seniors (25.3%) are current e-cigarette users.

By implementing best practice policies that prevent smoking initiation at the source, including eliminating social connections to older tobacco purchasers through policies like Tobacco 21, establishing clean indoor air policies, prohibiting flavors in tobacco products, and making tobacco products less affordable through tax increases; Wisconsin can address the epidemic of youth tobacco use and improve the health of communities who have been disproportionately targeted by the commercial tobacco industry.

Tobacco Use Among Young Adults (18–24-Year-Olds)

Although the current smoking rate among 18-24-year-olds is 8.2%, e-cigarette use is prominent in this age group.¹⁰ Current e-cigarette use among 18–24-year-olds rose from 17.6% in 2021 to 18.9% in 2022. This age group has the highest rate of e-cigarette use among all adult age groups, representing more than one-third (34.4%) of all current adult e-cigarette users in Wisconsin. When it comes to initiation, 41.0% of 18-24-year-olds who ever tried conventional or e-cigarettes stated that they began using e-cigarettes.

The higher prevalence in e-cigarette use among Wisconsin young adults is better understood when considering the historical context of e-cigarette marketing campaigns aimed at youth over the last two decades. E-cigarettes became commercially available in the late 2000s, and through strong advertising to youth, e-cigarettes became the most widely used tobacco product by youth in the US.¹¹ In 2019, e-cigarette use among Wisconsin high school students reached 20.6%.¹² This group has aged into the current young adult cohort.

Tobacco Use Among Adults

About one quarter (22.0%) of Wisconsin adults currently use tobacco products, with the adult cigarette smoking prevalence at 14.3%.¹³ Additionally, cigarettes play a major role in tobacco initiation behavior, with conventional cigarettes being the first tobacco product for 89.2% of adults ever trying cigarettes and e-cigarettes first using. Although the current use of e-cigarettes among adults is 6.7%, use is highest in the youngest groups of adults, with current smoking rates of 18.9% among 18-24-year-olds, 15.5% in 25-29-year-olds, and 10.1% in 30-39-year-olds. This makes 18-39-year-olds 75.1% of all adult current e-cigarette users.

⁹ WI YRBS, 2021

¹⁰ Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (WI BRFSS), 2022

¹¹ [CDC | Surgeon General's Advisory on E-cigarette Use Among Youth, 2018](#)

¹² WI YRBS, 2019

¹³ WI BRFSS, 2022

Youth Prevention & Access (Teens & Young Adult)

Barriers to Youth Health:

Menthol & Other Tobacco Flavors

Commercial tobacco companies understand that young individuals are the most susceptible to experimenting with and becoming addicted to tobacco products. Although there are numerous types of flavors available in tobacco products, menthol is of particular concern. Menthol masks the taste and smell of cigarettes and anesthetizes the throat, making it easier to inhale the smoke.¹⁴ It also enhances the effects of nicotine on the brain and can make cigarettes even more addictive. For these reasons, menthol makes people more likely to start smoking, boosts addiction, and makes it harder to quit.¹⁵

Nationally, almost 90% of middle and high schoolers who currently use e-cigarettes use flavored products.¹⁶ Among current e-cigarette users, the most popular flavors were fruit (63.4%), candy (35%), mint (27.8%), and menthol (20.1%). Only 5.6% of vaping product users only used tobacco-flavored or unflavored liquid.

When looking at 18-24-year-old Wisconsin adults who ever tried e-cigarettes, 47.5% stated that they used these products because they liked the flavors in which they come.¹⁷

Opportunities: Prohibit Menthol & Other Tobacco Flavors

As of February 2024, the American Lung Association graded Wisconsin an F on the Flavored Tobacco Products category because the state has no state law or regulation that restricts flavored tobacco products.¹⁸ Menthol and other flavors are specifically used to appeal to youth. Studies point to significant health benefits to prohibiting menthol and other tobacco flavors, including saving hundreds of thousands of people from early death over the next few decades.¹⁹

As noted, menthol is a prominent additive used by the commercial tobacco industry to get young people addicted to tobacco products. In Wisconsin, 68.2% of high school youth agree the commercial tobacco industry tries to get people their age to use tobacco and nicotine products, and 87.7% of high school youth reported they would probably or definitely not use unflavored tobacco products.²⁰ For highschoolers who ever tried cigarettes in Wisconsin, 58.1% would probably or definitely not try tobacco products if they were not flavored; the same for 67.6% of students who ever tried e-cigarettes. Even among current e-cigarette high school users in Wisconsin, 58.8% stated that they would probably or definitely not try any kind of tobacco product if it did not have any flavor.

To protect and promote the health of our youth and our future, menthol and all flavored tobacco products should be prohibited in Wisconsin.

¹⁴ [CDC | Menthol and Cigarettes | Smoking and Tobacco Use, 2023](#)

¹⁵ [CDC | Menthol Tobacco Products are a Public Health Problem, 2023](#)

¹⁶ [CDC | MMWR | Tobacco Product Use Among U.S. Middle and High School Students - NYTS, 2023](#)

¹⁷ WI BRFSS, 2022

¹⁸ [American Lung Association | State of Tobacco Control | Wisconsin, 2024](#). Note: Grade for 2023 not available.

¹⁹ [Levy et al. Public Health Impact of a US Ban on Menthol in Cigarettes and Cigars: A Simulation Study, 2023](#)

²⁰ WI YTS, 2018

Federal T21 & State Law Discordance

Wisconsin's legal sales age for cigarettes, other tobacco products, and products containing nicotine (including e-cigarettes) is still 18, despite the federal legal sales age being raised to 21 at the end of 2019. This discrepancy creates confusion among retailers, local leaders, and the general public. It also causes confusion for local law enforcement who can only enforce state law, unable to enforce the federal Tobacco 21 law. Additionally, current state statute prevents local municipalities from increasing the age to 21.

Tobacco 21 is consequential because each year a young person delays commercial tobacco use, there is a significant decrease in the chance of ever starting tobacco use. More than 80% of adult smokers started before the age of 18 and about 95% of them before turning 21, according to analysis on data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.²¹ For this reason, raising the legal tobacco purchase age to 21 is an essential measure in tobacco prevention.

Opportunities: Alignment with Federal T21

The confusion surrounding legal purchasing age in Wisconsin and confusion over who enforces the legal sales age of 21 allows youth continued access to tobacco and nicotine products. This is an obstacle in Wisconsin's obligation to promote the health of teens and young adults. About 76.2% of high schoolers agree that it would be at least somewhat easy for them to get tobacco products.²² In fact, 10.2% of high schoolers reported being offered, sold, or given any illegal drug (including tobacco products) on school property.²³ Addressing this discrepancy would reduce youth access to commercial tobacco products and result in an important public health victory.

High Underage Tobacco Sales

Underage tobacco sales remain high in Wisconsin. According to the 2023 Synar Survey, the rate at which retailers sold tobacco products to underage customers was 13.6%, more than double the pre-pandemic rate of 5.5%.²⁴ If the retailer violation rate continues on this trend and goes above 20%, the state could risk losing 10% of the federal Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funding.

Lack of Comprehensive Tobacco-Free Policies & Alternative to Suspension Programs in Schools

Schools play an important role in youth tobacco and nicotine prevention efforts. As of early 2024, 329 school districts (78%) throughout Wisconsin have comprehensive tobacco-free school policies, which also include e-cigarettes.²⁵ Despite this, nearly 33.9% of high schoolers in Wisconsin report knowledge of commercial tobacco being smoked on school property and 19.8% of these students are still exposed to secondhand smoke at school.²⁶

²¹ [American Lung Association | Tobacco Use Among Children and Teens, 2023](#)

²² WI YTS, 2018

²³ WI YRBS, 2021

²⁴ [Annual Synar Report FFY2022 Wisconsin](#)

²⁵ Per [Neola | Wisconsin](#). Note: Historical number for 2023 not available.

²⁶ WI YTS, 2018

In addition to tobacco-free policies, there is a need for districts to offer evidence-based Alternative to Suspension (ATS) interventions and cessation programs to students in violation of the district's tobacco-free policy. TPCP funds the American Lung Association's INDEPTH (Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health) program and provides direct training and technical assistance to schools on best ways of addressing these violations. Local alliances that are supported by TPCP also collaborate with school administrators to provide best-practice policy language that includes alternatives to suspension approaches.

WI TPCP Strategies (Prevention & Control)

As the commercial tobacco and nicotine landscape evolves at a rapid pace, the implementation of comprehensive tobacco prevention and control strategies at the national, state, and local levels, coupled with Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations, are critical to prevent and reduce youth access to and use of e-cigarettes.

WI Wins

The WI Wins program educates retailers and communities on the federal Tobacco 21 sales law; however, the program may only check compliance on the state (age 18) law. Local law enforcement cannot enforce federal legislation.

Statewide Tobacco 21 Paid Media Campaign

In 2023, a media campaign was implemented to increase the awareness of the federal Tobacco 21 law among Wisconsin tobacco retailers and Wisconsin's general population, with special placements for young people aged 15–21 and 18–21. Media tactics included television, newspaper, gas pump toppers and posters, digital out-of-home, online video, streaming audio, online display, and paid social. There were two advertising periods, or “flights,” in 2023: January-March and June-December.

The first Tobacco 21 campaign flight included a Super Bowl ad placement within the state of Wisconsin that catapulted the Tobacco 21 page on the DHS website to the number-one most visited web page in the flight period. During this timeframe, YouTube also led to the highest rate of engagement on the Tobacco 21 website and visitors stayed for an average of 2 minutes 21 seconds.

Table 1 shows the performance metrics for both campaign flights in 2023. Flight 1 had more than 58 million impressions, surpassing the set goal by 45.5%. The first campaign flight also had a Click-Through Rate (CTR) of 1.11%, a 106% increase from the previous phase of the Tobacco 21 campaign. The second campaign flight had over 43 million impressions and a 0.72% CTR, a decrease due to budget constraints.

Table 1. Metrics for Statewide Tobacco 21 Media Campaign in 2023 (Flight 1 & 2).

Metric	Flight 1 (January-March)	Flight 2 (June-December)
Impressions	58.2 million	43.8 million
Click-Through Rate (CTR)	1.11%	0.72%

Tobacco 21 Landing Page	114,500	76,900
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Combined, the two campaign flights achieved 121,400 total landing page views. During this time, the web page was enhanced to include an online order form for Tobacco 21 in-store signs, palm cards, buttons, and other resources for tobacco retailers.

Youth Engagement - FACT Movement

FACT, managed by the American Lung Association (ALA), is a youth-driven movement of Wisconsin teens (grades 7-12) communicating the truth about tobacco since 2001. TPCP partnered with the UW-Population Health Institute to evaluate its youth engagement strategy in 2023. Through quantitative and qualitative means, TPCP gained valuable insights from youth and adults as to how to meaningfully engage youth and turn the curve of nicotine addiction in Wisconsin. As a result of this evaluation process, TPCP will collaborate with the ALA, local alliances, FACT adult advisors, and 33 FACT members to modify the program to decrease barriers and develop facilitating factors for youth engagement throughout Wisconsin.

SPARK

SPARK groups perform outreach on the importance of tobacco-free college and university campuses and the harms of secondhand smoke and other tobacco products, with special focus on e-cigarettes. Since its start in 2011, SPARK has awarded 119 micro grants to 30 college campuses in Wisconsin.

There are of 29 tobacco-free campus policies protecting 180,656 students; 22 of the 29 were passed after SPARK started in 2011. Twelve campuses passed or updated policies based on their involvement with SPARK, protecting 80,857 students.

Youth Prevention Paid Media Campaign

To prevent and decrease the use of e-cigarettes among Wisconsin youth, TPCP implemented a “Behind the Haze” media campaign. This campaign reached youth ages 13–18 through digital out-of-home, streaming audio, online video, and paid social. There were two statewide campaign advertising, or “flight,” periods in 2023: January–March and August–December.

Table 2 shows the performance metrics for both “Behind the Haze” campaign flights in 2023. Flight 1 had more than 26 million impressions, 34.4% more than the set goal. The second campaign flight had over 18 million impressions, 40.4% over the set goal for the campaign period.

Table 2. Metrics for Statewide “Behind the Haze” Media Campaign in 2023 (Flight 1 & 2).

Metric	Flight 1 (January-March)	Flight 2 (August-December)
Impressions	26.5 million	18.6 million
Behind the Haze Landing Page	133,300	81,800

Engaged Sessions	NA	72,700
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During the second flight, the campaign continued to specifically reach Communities of Color. These efforts resulted in nearly 30% of digital impressions delivered to, and 20% of clicks coming from, individuals in the Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian communities.

Tobacco is Changing Campaign

Since 2018, DHS’s *Tobacco is Changing* campaign has engaged and informed parents and other trusted adults about the dangers of tobacco and nicotine use. The campaign has run statewide media campaigns to reach these audiences and drive parents and caregivers to learn more, take action, and talk to their children and teens. Informed by research, year five’s focus remained on disparities and youth mental health. Campaign ads ran across a variety of media, including TV, print, streaming audio, online display, online video, and paid social media.

There were two statewide campaign flight periods in 2023: January–March and October 2023–February 2024. The midpoint (mid campaign) for the second flight was 12/20/23 and is what is discussed in this section. Flight 1 had more than 15 million campaign impressions. Through the 12/20/23 midpoint, the second campaign flight had over 8 million impressions. These campaigns had over 36,000 web page visits combined, continuing the overall annual trend of increased web page views.

Table 3. Metrics for Statewide “Tobacco is Changing” Media Campaign in 2023 (Flight 1 & Flight Mid Campaign).

Metric	Flight 1 (January-March)	Flight 2 Mid Campaign (Oct - 12/20/23)
Impressions	> 15 million	> 8 million
Tobacco is Changing Landing Page	> 23,000	> 13,000

For 2023, ad placements in Facebook and Instagram represented the highest-performing digital tactic. There were more than 871,000 impressions, with 4,693 new users who spent an average of 13 seconds on the site. Of note, Milwaukee was the top-performing city from which the campaign saw the highest number of engaged sessions, a total of 257. The broadcast television schedule in Milwaukee provided broad awareness, which helped lift other tactics, and indicates the campaign was successful in reaching communities of color.

Smoke-Free Air

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.²⁷ Secondhand smoke from tobacco affects the health of everyone who is exposed, but is especially harmful to infants, children, pregnant individuals, and those with respiratory conditions. Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause and trigger chronic and acute diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and may also result in early death.

²⁷ [CDC | Smoking & Tobacco Use: Health Problems Caused by Secondhand Smoke, 2022](#)

Evidence also shows that secondhand exposure to aerosol from e-cigarettes can be harmful, as the aerosols contain nicotine, heavy metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and ultrafine particulates that are known to cause cancer.

Establishing comprehensive smoke-free air policies for indoor and outdoor spaces protects individuals from involuntary exposure to hundreds of toxic and cancer-causing chemicals, prevents youth from starting to use tobacco products, and helps people successfully quit.

State of Secondhand Smoke Exposure & Support for Smoke-Free Policies in Wisconsin

Table 4 provides an overview of secondhand smoke exposure in Wisconsin indoor, outdoor, and multi-unit housing spaces.

Table 4. Secondhand Smoke in Indoor, Outdoor, and Multi-Unit Housing Spaces in Wisconsin.

WI Spaces	Current State
Indoor	As of 2023, TPCP is aware that 69 municipalities in Wisconsin have passed local smoke-free air ordinances to include e-cigarettes.
Outdoor	Wisconsinites are also exposed to secondhand smoke in outdoor settings. 19.2% of Wisconsin adults are sometimes or often exposed in outdoor settings. ²⁸
Multi-Unit Housing	Wisconsinites are exposed to secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing settings. Only 43.1% of adult multi-unit building residents indicate that smoking is prohibited in their building and 73.5% of these residents preferred that smoking not be allowed. ²⁹

Opportunities: *Protecting & Strengthening WI's Smoke-Free Air Law*

Strengthening and preserving Wisconsin's smoke-free air law is the most impactful way to protect people from involuntary secondhand smoke and vapor exposure. Currently, Wisconsin's smoke-free air law does not include e-cigarettes or cannabis. Secondhand aerosols from e-cigarettes and secondhand smoke from cannabis can pose the same health risks as secondhand smoke from tobacco. Strengthening the law would protect more individuals from involuntary exposure and subsequent health issues.

Wisconsinites support these strong smoke-free measures. Over 75 percent of adult Wisconsinites support the prohibition of smoking in most indoor public places, including workplaces, offices, restaurants, and

²⁸ WI BRFSS, 2022

²⁹ Ibid.

bars.³⁰ In addition, over 60% of adult residents also support the prohibition of vaping in public indoor places.

WI TPCP Strategies

Support Smoke-Free Multi Unit Housing

To strengthen the protection from secondhand smoke, TPCP will continue to support coalitions, property managers, and landlords in implementing smoke-free air policies within their lease agreements through the resources within the Clear Gains Initiative.

TPCP will also continue ongoing maintenance of the housing finder on the Clear Gains housing website for people in search of residence in smoke-free properties.

TPCP is also committed to attending trainings, conferences, and networking events related to smoke-free multi-unit housing.

Education on Best-Practice Smoke-Free Air Policies

To fortify protection from secondhand smoke, TPCP continues to work with national technical assistance agencies to provide information on best practice smoke-free air policies to partners across the state. This includes information on including e-cigarettes and cannabis into smoke-free air laws and tobacco-free outdoor spaces.

Disparities

To achieve the goals of the TPCP, it is crucial to understand that the burden that tobacco causes is not equally distributed; certain segments of the population are more impacted than others. Sustainable progress in tobacco prevention and control can only occur by making concerted efforts to support those who experience higher degrees of underlying environmental and societal pressures.

Commercial tobacco companies are well aware of existing health disparities but work to undermine and exploit communities as profoundly as possible. Predatory marketing practices employed by the commercial tobacco industry are not new, and in recent years have focused on people in LGBTQ+, Native American, and Hispanic communities, as well as youth, veterans, and people with behavioral health conditions.^{31,32}

With this in mind, TPCP commits to approaching all its work through a health equity lens to ensure that those most impacted by commercial tobacco are provided with the tools to reach their full health potential.

State of Current Tobacco Use Among People at Higher Risk of Tobacco Use

Certain populations are targeted by the commercial tobacco industry to take advantage of environmental factors including a lack of comprehensive tobacco-free policies and sociocultural forces like systemic

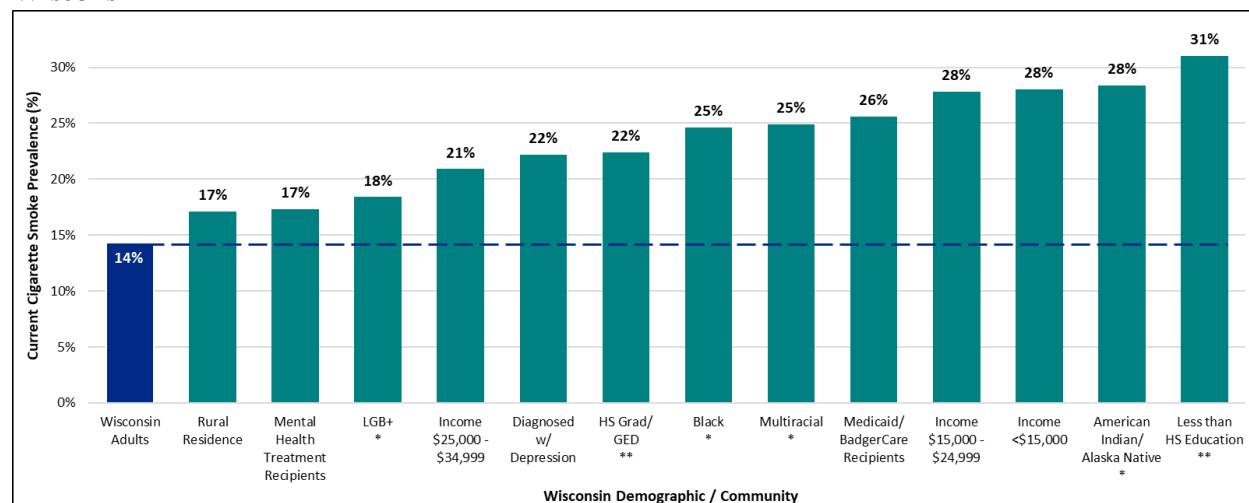
³⁰ WI BRFSS, 2022

³¹ [CDC | Tobacco-Related Disparities, 2022](#)

³² [CDC | Tobacco Industry Marketing, 2021](#)

racism. This results in some populations having a higher rate of commercial tobacco use compared to the average Wisconsinite. Figure 3 depicts some of these demographics and communities in Wisconsin.

Figure 3. Current Cigarette Smoking in Different Adult Demographic & Communities in Wisconsin



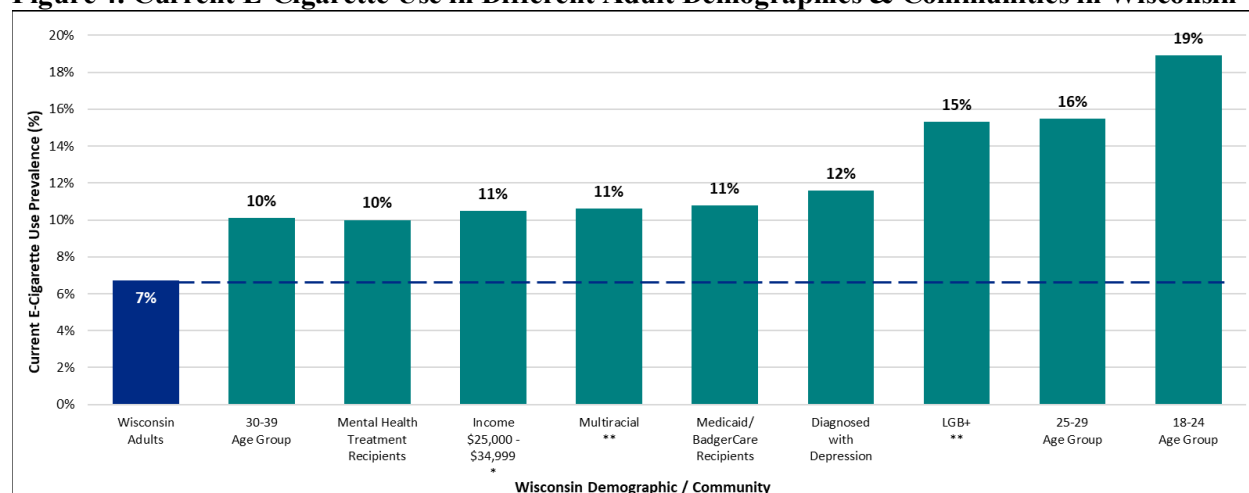
Notes: Main Data Source: WI BRFSS, 2022

* Analysis limited to 25+ year old adults to control for confounding of age with level of education. Source: [Palmerheim KA. Wisconsin Tobacco Facts: Adults \(December 2023\). Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Population Health; 2023 \(December\).](#)

** Five years of data were merged to increase sub-sample sizes, thereby improving the reliability of estimates. Average Adult Current Cigarette Rate for Aggregated 5 Years (2018-2022): 14.9%. Source: [Same as "*" above.](#)

As with conventional cigarette use, e-cigarettes have also had a disproportionate impact on certain communities across Wisconsin, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Current E-Cigarette Use in Different Adult Demographics & Communities in Wisconsin



* Analysis limited to 25+ year old adults to control for confounding of age with level of education. Source: [Palmerheim KA. Wisconsin Tobacco Facts: Adults \(December 2023\). Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Population Health; 2023 \(December\).](#)

** Five years of data were merged to increase sub-sample sizes, thereby improving the reliability of estimates. Average Adult Current Cigarette Rate for Aggregated 5 Years (2018-2022): 6.1%. Source: [Same as "*" above](#).

State of Current Tobacco Use by Those with Behavioral and Mental Health Disorders

People with behavioral health conditions, including mental illness and substance use disorders, are at high risk for tobacco use and its associated morbidity and mortality. In Wisconsin, 36.7% of current adult smokers have been told at some point that they had/have a depressive disorder, and 26.6% are currently taking medication or receiving treatment for some type of mental health or emotional condition.³³ Of adults having been told they had or have a depressive disorder, 49.4% have tried a cigarette and 37.9% have tried an e-cigarette. Of adults who are currently taking medication or receiving treatment for some type of mental health or emotional condition, 44.1% have tried a cigarette and 31.3% have tried an e-cigarette.

WI TPCP Strategies

Wisconsin Nicotine Treatment Integration Project (WiNTiP) (Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)

To address the disproportionate use of commercial tobacco among people with mental health and substance use disorders, TPCP has worked with partners to support the health facilities that serve these populations.

WiNTiP is coordinated by the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI) and is funded by and receives support from TPCP. This program works with behavioral health systems and providers across Wisconsin to adopt evidence-based tobacco prevention and control policies to help behavioral health patients and staff quit commercial tobacco use, as well as help their organizations and campuses be tobacco-free.

UW-CTRI and WiNTiP continue to increase awareness about language in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Administrative Code ch. DHS 75 that requires substance use facilities to formulate plans to assess and treat tobacco use and have a policy about their smoke free environment.³⁴ In 2023, UW-CTRI responded to 483 technical assistance requests and 31 training requests to these facilities as they implemented the DHS 75 standards. In addition, UW-CTRI developed webinars that are available online at [HelpUsQuit.org](https://www.helpusquit.org) for substance use providers who work with special populations to integrate tobacco treatment. These special populations are pregnant women and people who are involved in the justice system.

UW-CTRI partnered with TPCP and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections to increase tobacco dependence treatment delivery to people who are justice-involved. UW-CTRI provided training and technical assistance to 16 correctional facilities in Wisconsin. The training provided information about how to assess tobacco use, treatment options, and how to provide relapse prevention support.

³³ WI BRFSS, 2022

³⁴ [DHS 75.24\(7\)](#)

WiNTiP promotes the Bucket Approach Training, which was developed by WiNTiP and UW-CTRI staff in 2019 and develops the skills clinicians need to help patients quit using tobacco. Through December 2023, a total of 1,800 people had enrolled in the training, including 1,078 people from Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Lines (Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)

In 2023, the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW) continued to support residents across the state and implemented an expansion of services to accommodate modern communication methods. This expansion included offering one-on-one coaching through online chat, text, and virtual video in addition to the traditional phone call modality.

For a limited time, during the months of March 2023 through June 2023, the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line expanded its free services from the usual two-week supply of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and counseling at no cost by offering one 8-week shipment of nicotine patch, gum, or lozenge, or combination patch + gum, or patch +lozenge as well as up to five proactive calls from the Quit Line for free coaching support. The University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI) coordinates the program with funding and administrative support from TPCP.³⁵

In terms of metrics, the WI Tobacco Quit Line saw 5,514 inbound calls, 134 chat conversations, 67 group sessions, and 9 text interactions. 4,476 people were successfully enrolled for services (65 being re-enrollments). 1,945 members opted into receiving personalized coaching tips and strategies received via text message. 82.9% of members were sent NRT supplies. Regarding the related tobacco product type, 81.3%, 9.6%, and 8.8% of participants were trying to quit tobacco only, tobacco and e-cigarettes, and e-cigarettes only, respectively.

Wisconsin American Indian Quitline (AIQL) - (Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)

Since 2021 the Wisconsin American Indian Quitline (AIQL) (1-888-7AI-QUIT) has provided free, culturally tailored cessation services for commercial tobacco. Funded by TPCP, the AIQL provides seven free phone calls with dedicated American Indian Quit Coaches, as well as 12 weeks of NRT at no cost.

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quitline provider, Red Venture Optum Health, collaborated with the American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) to gather Tribal input on building a culturally supportive program that balances support for quitting commercial tobacco products while respecting traditional tobacco use. The University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI) manages the AIQL.

To increase Tribal Nations' awareness of AIQL, the Wisconsin Native American Tobacco Network (WNATN) Program Director formed a workgroup that developed and implemented paid and earned media campaigns featuring cultural imagery and messaging. TPCP funded strategically placed billboards, advertisements (tv, radio, newspaper, social media, movie theaters, gas pumps), promotional materials (flyers, matchbooks, keychains, stress balls), and letters to the editor to promote community health through traditional tobacco preservation and commercial tobacco cessation. TPCP also performed

³⁵ Wisconsin Tobacco Quitline Demographic Report, 2023

outreach through in-person cultural events and inclusion in Tribal Nations health services. In 2023, the AIQL enrollment increased to 127 people of American Indian descent.

Live Vape Free

In 2021, TPCP rolled out an interactive vaping cessation program to support youth quit the use of e-cigarettes called Live Vape Free. This program provides text support to Wisconsin youth 13 to 17 years of age.

In 2023, there were 17 youth enrollments (compared to 52 youth enrollments in 2022). A media campaign promoted Live Vape Free enrollment in early 2023. To better direct efforts in this area, TPCP shifted focus to implementing a youth survey about vaping behaviors and messaging preferences to better support young people in their attempts to quit tobacco and nicotine.

First Breath (Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)

First Breath is a free, statewide program that helps people make positive changes to their tobacco, alcohol, and other substance use during pregnancy and beyond. First Breath is operated by the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation and funded, in part, by TPCP and other DHS programs. The program partners with local agencies such as OB/GYN clinics, WIC sites, PNCC programs, local health departments, Tribal Nations health centers, and federally qualified health centers that provide direct services to perinatal populations. Providers at these agencies are trained by First Breath to use the Ask-Advise-Refer model to assess and address perinatal substance use as part of existing perinatal care.

In 2023, First Breath partnered with 281 sites and maintained 99% county coverage with at least one site in 71 of the 72 counties. During this period, sites referred 868 individuals to First Breath, 95% pregnant or postpartum individuals, and 5% caregivers. Approximately half of First Breath participants were BIPOC, 86% were Medicaid recipients, and 72% had a diagnosed mental or behavioral health disorder with an additional 2% that had a suspected mental health disorder but not diagnosed.

In terms of services provided and progress achieved, 697 people enrolled in low-intensity services (texting) and 188 enrolled in intensive, one-to-one coaching services. By the end of their pregnancies, 80% of participants made positive changes to their tobacco use; 50% quit and 30% cut down. By six months postpartum, 79% made positive changes; 56% quit and 23% cut down. 79% of participants achieved fully smoke-free homes and 89% achieved zero-infant exposure to tobacco smoke. Additionally, 94% of participants made positive changes to their alcohol use and 63% made positive changes to their cannabis use during pregnancy. Of all participants who completed a satisfaction survey, 99% stated that they would recommend First Breath to others.

No Menthol Sunday

An international event led by the Center for Black Health and Equity at the national level and by the Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network regionally, No Menthol Sunday is an important opportunity to engage faith leaders and their communities in a discussion about the impact of menthol and other tobacco products on the African American community and promotes free tobacco cessation services available to those who are ready to quit.

In 2023, the campaign engaged 44 Milwaukee tobacco retailers that agreed not to sell mentholated tobacco products on No Menthol Sunday. Over 20,000 people were reached through hosted events and 100,200 people were reached via radio. Churches in the community reached congregants through online sermons, Sunday school classes, church announcements, newsletters, and other activities. Local mayors participated in the kick-off event and others recorded personal videos encouraging their constituents to support the event. No Menthol Sunday was featured on radio interviews, in newspaper and online stories, and through television news coverage.

Addressing Cigarette Smoking Among Medicaid Beneficiaries (Tobacco/Nicotine Treatment)

Access to adequate health care, or lack thereof, influences the health and health behaviors of communities, and tobacco use and access to smoking cessation services are no exceptions. The current cigarette smoking rate for adult Wisconsin Medicaid or BadgerCare members is 25.6% and 51.0% have ever tried smoking.³⁶ Moreover, 10.8% of these adults are current e-cigarette users and 35.7% have tried e-cigarettes.

TPCP works with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Division of Medicaid Services and the UW-Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention to promote the Medicaid cessation benefit. The benefit is also promoted by Medicaid providers and TPCP state and local partners through advertising and promotional materials. Of note, from 2021 to 2023, marketing campaigns focused on low-income neighborhoods and zip codes in Wisconsin to raise awareness and utilization of the free tobacco cessation services provided by the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line (800-QUIT-NOW).

The White House Cancer Moonshot

In 2023, TPCP made a notable connection with the Biden-Harris Administration's White House Cancer Moonshot, a national initiative working to end cancer that held a Smoking Cessation Forum in June 2023. Tobacco use is one of the leading factors of preventable cancers, with smoking and secondhand smoke comprising around 80% to 90% of lung cancer deaths.³⁷ The forum highlighted the importance of commercial tobacco prevention, as well as the provision of quality and tailored cessation services to decrease tobacco-related cancers. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also announced that they are releasing a plan for new smoking cessation efforts, with a central focus on advancing equity. TPCP attended the event virtually and Dr. Michael Fiore from the UW-Center for Tobacco Research (UW-CTRI) attended in person. The Cancer Center Cessation Initiative (C3I), part of the Cancer Moonshot initiative, is headed by UW-CTRI, and collaborates with 52 cancer centers across the nation. In addition to TPCP leadership contributing to the live Forum in June, additional TPCP staff were asked to attend a follow-up forum to share and expand on narrative recommendations.

Opportunities: Sacred Tobacco, Tribal Sovereignty, & Public Health Collaboration

It is important to recognize the role that sacred (or traditional) tobacco has in American Indian communities and how this relationship to sacred tobacco aligns with TPCP's prevention and control goals as they relate to commercial tobacco.

³⁶ WI BRFSS, 2022

³⁷ [CDC | Cancer, 2022](#)

American Indian communities consist of diverse people, tribes, and nations across Wisconsin. Furthermore, different American Indian communities have a distinct history and relationship with sacred tobacco. Although there are different ingredients and preparation methods across communities, sacred tobacco is usually hand-made and used for prayer, healing, and ceremony. When used in this manner, sacred tobacco poses no threat to public health.

Commercial tobacco is intrinsically different from traditional tobacco. Commercial tobacco contains additives and is produced or advertised by tobacco companies for the sole purpose of making a profit in defiance to any and all negative effects to public health and the environment.

As the National Congress of American Indians states, “the essence of tribal sovereignty is the ability to govern and to protect and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of tribal citizens within tribal territory.”

³⁸ Acknowledging the sovereignty and independence of Tribal Nations, TPCP is committed to foster positive state-tribal relationships between the state of Wisconsin and Tribal Nations and communities and collaborate in promoting our communities’ health, as well as addressing the harm that commercial tobacco has on American Indian communities.³⁹

One area in which TPCP may support American Indian communities is through the promotion of smoke-free air policies. Wisconsin’s smoke-free air law does not apply to sovereign Tribal Nations’ land. Due to decades of industry targeting, American Indians in Wisconsin have one of the highest rates of commercial cigarette use at 28%.⁴⁰

Opportunities: Menthol & Other Tobacco Flavors Prohibition

The tobacco industry has advertised flavored tobacco products to new users, people of color, and other marginalized communities. This includes campaigns specifically targeting Black Americans and individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ through tactics like event sponsorships, free tobacco product distribution, and more point-of-sale efforts in neighborhoods where these communities reside. Unfortunately, efforts to aggressively market menthols toward these groups have paid off, as evident when considering the impact of menthol in the Black community.

A 2020 study showed that although 43% of all adult smokers smoked menthols nationally, more than 83% of Black smokers did.⁴¹ Similarly, 43.8% of all Wisconsin adults who currently or ever tried cigarettes smoked menthols, while 88% of Black current or ever smokers did.⁴²

This disproportionate use translates to a detrimental toll on Black lives. A study estimated that, nationally, between 1980 to 2018, African American deaths made up about 40% of excess deaths due to menthol

³⁸ [National Congress of American Indians | Tribal Nations & the United States: An Introduction, 2020](#)

³⁹ [Tribes of Wisconsin, 2011](#)

⁴⁰ WI BRFSS, 2022

⁴¹ [Goodwin et al. | Menthol Cigarette Use Among Adults Who Smoke Cigarettes, 2008–2020, 2022](#)

⁴² [Palmerheim KA. Wisconsin Tobacco Facts: Menthol Cigarette Use Among Wisconsin Adults \(May 2022\). Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Population Health; 2022 \(May\)](#)

cigarette smoking in the U.S., while Black Americans made up around 12% of the population.⁴³ Excess deaths is the difference between the observed mortality in a specific location and timeframe and the estimated deaths expected if a particular event or factor were absent in that same population and period.

The prohibition of menthol would constitute a major health equity win. If menthols were prohibited, the gap between Black and White lung cancer deaths would close within five years, a Council on Foreign Relations study found.⁴⁴ Other analyses have shown that implementation of a menthol prohibition would prevent the death due to cigarettes and vaping products of 560,000 people in a window of less than 40 years, including 255,000 Black American lives.^{45,46}

TPCP will continue with initiatives that support the prohibition of flavorings in tobacco products, including menthol. This will be in collaboration with alliances dedicated to addressing the harm of menthol-flavored tobacco products in marginalized communities.

Looking Ahead

TPCP is proactively strategizing how best to address the unique needs of Wisconsinites. This is continually done by partnering with local and state partners to reduce the significant impact that tobacco use has on the people of Wisconsin. It also involves incorporating tobacco prevention (best practices, data, health equity experience, etc.) into intersecting spaces.

- TPCP will continue to implement the five-year tobacco prevention and control movement state plan was developed for 2020-2025 with statewide partners to ensure that strategic and measurable efforts are made to decrease tobacco-related disparities related to secondhand smoke, youth prevention, and cessation and treatment services.
- TPCP will continue to fund 16 local Alliances, 13 Tobacco Prevention and Control Alliances and 3 Catalyst Alliances. TPC Alliances focus solely on tobacco prevention and control activities to decrease tobacco-related disparities, while Catalyst Alliances integrate tobacco prevention and control activities into already established public health coalitions in communities across Wisconsin to decrease tobacco-related disparities.
- At the end of 2022 and 2023, TPCP received payments from the JUUL multi-state settlement. The settlement came after a multi-year investigation into JUUL's marketing and sales practices of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). The first payment was used in 2023 to expand upon current efforts of state and local partners to address the vaping epidemic. In 2023 TPCP released a grant funding opportunity for vaping prevention intervention, and cessation activities to be awarded in 2024.

In addition to the WI TPCP Strategies outlined throughout the report and the ones listed above, TPCP is committed to promoting best practice policy options that reduce tobacco and e-cigarette use, initiation, dependence, and disparities. These recommended, evidence-based policy measures include:

⁴³ [Mendez & Le | Consequences of a Match Made in Hell..., 2022](#)

⁴⁴ [How New Tobacco Control Laws Could Help Close the Racial Gap on U.S. Cancer, 2023](#)

⁴⁵ [Levy et al. | Public Health Impact of a US Ban on Menthol in Cigarettes and Cigars: A Simulation Study, 2023](#)

⁴⁶ [Issabakhsh et al. | Public Health Impact of a US Menthol Cigarette Ban on the Non-Hispanic Black Pop..., 2022](#)

Table 5. Evidence-Based Tobacco Prevention & Control Policy Measures & Benefits

Policy Measure	Benefit
Raising Wisconsin’s tobacco sales age to 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduces or delays tobacco use initiation.⁴⁷ ● Reduces access to tobacco products to peers under 18. ● Lowers tobacco use among youth and adults.
Prohibiting Flavors (including menthol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduces health disparities among populations targeted by tobacco companies.⁴⁸ ● Prevents youth from initiating tobacco use. ● Improves the success of tobacco users to quit use. ● Reduce appeal of commercial tobacco use.
Including E-cigarettes and cannabis in the Smoke-Free Air Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protect community members from involuntary exposure to second-hand smoke and aerosols.
Increasing Wisconsin’s Overall Tax on ALL Tobacco products (including e-cigarettes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduces tobacco use among young adults. ● Saves money by lowering health care costs related to tobacco-products, including Medicaid expenses. ● Every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes reduces consumption by about four percent among adults and about seven percent among youth.⁴⁹ ● Helps improve WI’s current grade on tobacco taxes (grade: D).⁵⁰
Closing the tax loophole on little cigars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce tobacco use among young adults. ● Reduce health disparities among populations targeted by tobacco companies.
Moving ALL Tobacco Products Behind the Counter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protects children and youth from easy access to tobacco and vape products. ● Improves the success of tobacco users to quit use. ● Widely supported, including by current tobacco and vape users. ● Help limit shoplifting.
Making All Wisconsin Schools Tobacco-Free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protects students, teachers, school staff, and community members from second-hand smoke and vapor exposure. ● Reduces tobacco and nicotine use among students. ● Improves the success of tobacco and vape users to quit use.
Making All Wisconsin State-Funded College Campuses Tobacco-Free (2-year, 4-year, & Tech Colleges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduces tobacco and nicotine use among young adults.⁵¹ ● Economic and environmental benefits.

⁴⁷ [Glover-Kudon et al., 2019 | Association of Peer Influence and Access to Tobacco Products...](#)

⁴⁸ [Truth Initiative | Why Ending Menthol Cigarette Sales Would Benefit..., 2023](#)

⁴⁹ [ALA | Cigarette & Tobacco Taxes, 2020](#)

⁵⁰ [ALA | State of Tobacco Control | Wisconsin, 2024](#) (Note: Grade for 2023 not available)

⁵¹ [Truth Initiative | 3 Benefits of Tobacco-free policies at colleges and universities, 2017](#)

NOTE: In all the items listed above, tobacco products include all commercial tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

In 2023, TPCP made great progress on priority projects to protect the populations hardest hit by commercial tobacco products, including young people and marginalized populations, both of which are disproportionately targeted by the commercial tobacco industry. At TPCP, we know that the health of all Wisconsinites is connected, and we believe that everyone in our state should have the opportunity to live their healthiest life. As such, we will continue to advance efforts toward a more equitable and healthy future for all. These priorities include:

- Valuing and supporting all youth and young adults in our state to get them the educational access they need to prevent starting tobacco and the help they need to address their addiction. Working together, with schools, we will continue to promote treating addiction to commercial tobacco through interventions based in best practices that center the physical and mental well-being of Wisconsin's young people, our greatest state resource and future.
- Protecting our youth and young adults from the harms of commercial tobacco and lifelong addiction by educating on Tobacco 21. We will do outreach on the federal tobacco sales age of 21, and education on the need to align the state law with the federal Tobacco 21 law.
- Addressing systematic disparities among populations and offering culturally tailored, community-based solutions. In Wisconsin, we take care of each other, and we refuse to leave any population unprotected from the commercial tobacco industry.
- We continue to emphasize and grow equitable, diverse partnerships throughout the state. We know that community problems have community solutions and we have implemented innovative strategies for getting funding to the people that need it most.
- Our greatest asset as a state is the health of our people. When we take care of each other we can live our healthiest, most resilient future. We will continue to stand up for Smoke Free Air, the restriction of harmful tobacco flavorings and Smoke Free housing initiatives.

We have accomplished so much in 2023 toward our vision of a healthy, equitable, resilient Wisconsin, but there is still much to do. Together, our healthiest Wisconsin is yet to come.

Appendix A: External Funding and Donations for Tobacco Prevention

Funder	Contract Totals
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention Cooperative Agreement	\$1,588,681.00
Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Contract	\$1,454,528.00
Division of Care & Treatment Services (DCTS)/SAMHSA	\$2,961,328
JUUL Settlement Funds	\$1,380,538.81

Appendix B: Tobacco Program Budget Breakdown

Cessation Services	
UW-CTRI (Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention) - (Quitline)	\$672,792
UW-CTRI (Outreach)	\$194,000
UW-CTRI (WiNTiP)	\$150,000
Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation - First Breath	\$300,000
WI Wins	
Chippewa County Health Department	\$4,466
Clark County Health Department	\$2,079
Eau Claire City/County Health Department	\$4,312
Fond du Lac County Health Department	\$9,471
Juneau County Health Department	\$8,701
La Crosse County Health Department	\$16,709
Marathon County Health Department	\$13,398
Oneida County Health Department	\$11,088
Washington Ozaukee Health Department	\$2,618
Polk County Health Department	\$19,943
Public Health Madison & Dane County	\$19,327
City of Franklin Health Department	\$924
American Lung Association (Dodge, Jefferson, Waukesha, Milwaukee Suburban Counties)	\$32,802
American Lung Association (NW)	\$13,013
Arbor Place (Dunn County)	\$2,464
Community Action Healthy Living	\$40,040
Family Services of Rock County	\$15,400
Hope Council	\$24,101
Jump At the Sun (City of Milwaukee)	\$13,706
Community Advocates (City of Milwaukee)	\$13,706
UMOS (City of Milwaukee)	\$6,853
PARCC - Lodi School District - Columbia County	\$3,619

Northeastern WI Area Health Ed Center (NEWAHEC)	\$9,933
Elevate - Washington County Agency	\$5,082
Youth Programs	
American Lung Assoc (N-O-T)	\$48,800
American Lung Assoc - (SPARK) 18-24 (OTP)	\$96,000
American Lung Assoc (FACT)	\$189,344
Department of Public Instruction	\$70,000
Media & Counter Marketing	
Knupp & Watson & Wallman	\$325,800
Community Interventions	
City of Franklin Health Department - FACT	\$3,500
Eau Claire City/County Health Department	\$50,000
Fond du Lac County Health Department	\$121,000
Juneau County Health Department	\$121,000
La Crosse County Health Department	\$121,000
Marathon County Health Department	\$121,000
Oneida County Health Department	\$121,000
Polk County Health Department	\$121,000
Public Health Madison & Dane County	\$121,000
American Lung Association (NW)	\$121,000
Building a Safer Evansville - FACT	\$3,500
Community Action Healthy Living	\$121,000
Family Services of Rock County	\$121,000
Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council	\$250,000
Hope Council	\$121,000
Jump At the Sun (City of Milwaukee)	\$250,000
PARCC - Lodi School District	\$50,000
UMOS (City of Milwaukee)	\$125,000
Community Advocates (City of Milwaukee)	\$125,000
Northeastern WI Area Health Ed Center (NEWAHEC)	\$50,000
Training & Technical Assistance	

American Lung	\$162,600
UW Population Health Institute	\$300,000
Surveillance Evaluation & Research	
UW Milwaukee CUPH	\$432,000
Tobacco Program GPR Budget (Total)	\$5,473,091