The Facts About Big Tobacco

These jokers think they can fool us? Think again. Equip yourself with the facts to call their bluff.

E-CIGARETTES

- E-cigarettes have been the most commonly used tobacco product among youth since 2014.
  — In 2022, over 2.5 million middle and high schoolers were current e-cig users.

- E-cigarettes have driven a massive surge in youth nicotine addiction.
  — In 2022, 42% of high school e-cigarette users vaped most days or daily — a strong sign of addiction.

- E-cigarette manufacturers continue to sell products in thousands of kid-friendly flavors that lure kids.
  — In 2022, 85% of youth e-cigarette users used flavored products. The most popular flavors were fruit, candy/desserts/other sweets, mint and menthol.

- E-cigarettes pack massive doses of highly addictive nicotine. One Juul pod contains as much nicotine as a whole pack of cigarettes — and many products today can contain much more.
  — Youth exposure to nicotine causes addiction and can harm developing brains, impacting attention, memory and learning.

- E-cigarettes pose serious risks to young people’s health.
  — E-cigarettes aerosol delivers nicotine, toxic chemicals, volatile compounds, heavy metals and ultrafine particles that can reach deep into the lungs.

- E-cigarettes are designed in shapes and sizes that blend in with school supplies.
  — They can look like flash drives, pens, highlighters and other everyday items, making them easy to conceal.

- E-cigarette companies exploit loopholes in tobacco advertising regulations to target young people on social media and other digital platforms.
  — E-cigarette companies and influencers market their products extensively and maintain a strong presence across social media sites.

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• The tobacco industry has followed the cigarette marketing playbook in marketing e-cigarettes to kids.
  — E-cigarettes have been marketed to youth through celebrity/influencer endorsements, social media, TV and magazine ads, and sports and music sponsorships.

• E-cigarettes are hooking a new generation on nicotine and threatening decades of progress in reducing youth tobacco use.
  — Studies show young people who use e-cigarettes are more likely to become smokers, including many who would not have otherwise smoked cigarettes.

• Big Tobacco is behind some of the largest e-cigarette brands most popular with kids.
  — Altria (maker of Marlboro) bought a 35% stake in Juul and Reynolds American (maker of Newport and Camel) owns Vuse.

MENTHOL CIGARETTES & FLAVORED CIGARS

• Menthol cigarettes are more addictive than regular cigarettes.
  — The menthol masks the harsh cigarette smoke, making it easier for kids to start and become addicted and harder for smokers to quit

• Studies estimate banning menthol cigarettes would result in a 15% smoking reduction over 40 years in the U.S.
  — These studies also estimate that banning menthol cigarettes would save up to 654,000 lives, including 238,000 Black lives, over 40 years.

• For decades, Big Tobacco has targeted Black communities with marketing for menthol cigarettes.
  — In the 1950s, less than 10% of Black smokers used menthol cigarettes. Today, it’s 85%.

• Big Tobacco has marketed menthol cigarettes to Black communities with magazine and store ads, event sponsorships, free samples and other tactics.
  — Menthol cigarettes continue to be heavily advertised, widely available and priced cheaper in Black communities.

• Smoking claims 45,000 Black lives each year and is a major contributor to high rates of cancer, heart disease and stroke in the Black community.
  — Black Americans have a harder time quitting smoking and die at higher rates from tobacco-related diseases, in large part due to the high rates of menthol use.

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Menthol cigarettes increase the number of young people who start smoking and ultimately become addicted.
— 41% of high school smokers use menthol cigarettes. Menthol cools and numbs the throat, masking the harsh tobacco smoke for new users.

Use of menthol cigarettes is disproportionately higher among the LGBTQ+ community, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations and pregnant women.
— Eliminating menthol cigarettes will improve the health of these vulnerable groups that have suffered at the hands of the tobacco industry.

The tobacco industry has funded organizations and spokespeople to try to leverage real concern about law enforcement abuses into opposition to prohibiting menthol cigarettes.
— This cynical fearmongering is intended to conceal the harm that the industry itself has caused to Black Americans with menthol cigarettes.

Tobacco companies target kids with cheap, flavored cigars, which are sold in hundreds of sweet flavors.
— Over 70% of youth cigar smokers report that they smoke cigars “because they come in flavors I like.”

Cigars are most popular among Black high school students and the second most popular among all high schoolers.
— In 2020, 9.2% of Black high school students smoked cigars, compared to 5.0% of all high school students.

Despite great progress in reducing smoking, tobacco use is still the #1 cause of preventable death in the U.S.
— Tobacco kills more than 480,000 people in the U.S. annually – more than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders and suicides combined.

Most smokers start as kids, lured by the tobacco industry’s targeted marketing.
— 90% of U.S. adult smokers begin while in their teens or earlier, and 2/3 become daily smokers before they reach age 19.

Tobacco use imposes huge financial costs on individuals, families, businesses and governments.
— In the U.S., smoking-related health care costs total over $241 billion a year. Worldwide, smoking is estimated to cause about $1.4 trillion in annual economic damages.

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• Smoking causes over a dozen types of cancer and harms nearly every organ of the body. — Smoking is responsible for about 1/3 of all deaths from cancer and heart disease in the U.S. It also causes lung diseases, diabetes and other debilitating health conditions.

• Tobacco use is the #1 cause of preventable death among Black Americans, claiming 45,000 Black lives each year. — From 1980-2018, menthol cigarettes were responsible for 1.5M extra smokers, 157,000 smoking-related deaths and 1.5 million additional years of life lost among Black Americans.

• Globally, the burden of tobacco use is greatest in low- and middle-income countries that are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. — Over 80% of the world’s 1 billion tobacco users live in low- and middle-income countries.

• Tobacco use kills more than 8 million people worldwide each year. — 7 million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use, while about 1.2 million are caused by secondhand smoke.

• Secondhand smoke is a poisonous mix of over 7,000 chemicals, including at least 69 that cause cancer. — Secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, heart disease and stroke in non-smoking adults. Among babies and children, it causes sudden infant death syndrome, respiratory and ear infections, and more severe asthma attacks.

• Tobacco use kills about half of all lifetime users. On average, smokers lose 15 years of life. — 100 million people died from tobacco use in the 20th century. If current trends continue, 1 billion people will die from tobacco use in the 21st century.

TARGETING KIDS AND COMMUNITIES

• Tobacco companies have a long history of developing cigarette brands and marketing campaigns that target women and girls. — The industry uses themes of beauty, sophistication, weight loss, fashion and freedom, while ignoring or downplaying serious health harms.

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• Big Tobacco has been targeting women for over a century. A 1920s ad for Lucky Strike marketed the cigarette as a diet aid.  
  — They continue to target young women and girls through social media influencers, parties and events, and celebrity endorsements.

• The tobacco industry targets low-income populations with price discounts and promotions, while fighting efforts to increase the price of tobacco products.  
  — Thanks to the tobacco industry’s targeted marketing efforts, low-income people smoke more, suffer more, spend more, and die more from tobacco use.

• Both youth and adult LGBTQ+ Americans smoke at higher rates than their straight peers, due in large part to the tobacco industry’s targeted marketing.  
  — Big Tobacco has targeted the LGBTQ+ community with magazine ads, sponsorships and promotions at bars and Pride events, and other tactics.

• Big Tobacco began targeting Hispanic and Latino communities in the 1970s and 1980s.  
  — Tobacco industry documents reveal they targeted Hispanics and Latinos because they were “lucrative,” “easy to reach,” and “undermarketed.”

• American Indians and Alaska Natives have the highest smoking rate of any racial or ethnic group in the U.S.  
  — Tobacco companies target native communities through extensive promotions, event sponsorships and ad campaigns. Cigarette brands like Natural American Spirit appropriate American Indian imagery.

• Tobacco companies have manipulated and designed cigarettes to make them even more addictive.  
  — Tobacco companies precisely design their products to create and sustain addiction. Among other things, they add ammonia to cigarettes, which results in a quicker and more intense nicotine hit.

• The tobacco industry spends huge amount of money to market their deadly and addictive products, much of it targeting youth and other vulnerable groups.  
  — In the U.S. alone, the industry spends more than $9.1 billion a year to market its products. That’s $25 million every day and more than $1 million every hour.
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