

CENTRAL VALLEY DATA ON FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCT RESTRICTIONS

MENTHOL USE

The NCPC Research Core has been collecting data within the community on tobacco use behaviors since 2019. In partnership with local community groups and public health departments, the NCPC found that in 2019, **31%** of identified smokers reported smoking menthols.

In a follow-up study, the Research Core collected online data of San Joaquin Valley (SJV) smokers from March-May in 2020. Among 2,739 smoking participants, **45.6%** of respondents reported smoking menthols.

The researchers also found that Latinx smokers were significantly more likely to use menthols, with approximately **65%** reporting menthol use.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

As a part of our *Community Core*, the American Heart Association commissioned a Flash Poll on flavored tobacco product restrictions in August 2020 focusing our community's beliefs about flavored tobacco products. Consistent with what our Rapid Research Core found, approximately **26%-35%** of our SJV participants were unsure about important facts about flavored tobacco products, including whether it is easy for minors to buy flavored tobacco, whether these products are more addictive, and whether their local government is doing enough to address flavored tobacco product issues. In this regard, almost one third of our community members do not have information to form an opinion about flavored tobacco policies.

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ACTION IS NEEDED

In June 2020, we asked participants in the Bay Area, LA County, and the SJV whether they would support restrictions on menthol and mint tobacco products. In general, people supported restrictions on the sale of menthol tobacco but, there was considerably less support in the SJV. However, most importantly, about **25%** our SJV community members responded that they didn't know or needed more information to form an opinion. *This is important because messaging and industry efforts can easily sway a good portion of those 20-25%, making opposition to restrictions the majority.* Now, more than ever, our community members need to hear about the science about the addictiveness of menthol and mint tobacco products and how they are used to target youth and minoritized communities.

KEY FINDINGS

There is a large portion of the population that is undecided regarding flavored tobacco product restrictions. As menthol/mint restrictions are being considered, there is an opportunity to significantly sway the public, which means that monitoring industry tactics is even more important in the coming months.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IN THE COMMUNITY

The NCPC is here to help. The Community Core actively provides workshops and consultations for local communities who are moving towards flavored tobacco restrictions. NCPC's Training Core, in partnership with the California Health Collaborative, has also developed a series of infographics on tobacco flavored products. Visit our website to download any of these resources:

<https://ncpc.ucmerced.edu/resources/flavored-tobacco-info>