

Policy Tip Sheet



POLICY ANALYSIS FROM
THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

Tobacco Harm Reduction 101: Maine

Since their introduction to the U.S. market in 2007, e-cigarettes and vaping devices—tobacco harm reduction products that are 95 percent safer than combustible cigarettes—have helped more than three million American adults quit smoking.

1. Economic Impact

According to the Vapor Technology Association, in 2018, the industry created 313 direct vaping-related jobs, including manufacturing, retail, and wholesale jobs in Maine, which generated \$6.6 million in wages alone.¹ Moreover, the industry has created hundreds of secondary jobs in the Pine Tree State, bringing the total economic impact in 2018 to \$51,426,100. In the same year, Maine received more than \$4 million in state taxes attributable to the vaping industry. These figures do not include sales in convenience stores, which sell vapor products including disposables and prefilled cartridges. In 2016, sales of these products in Maine eclipsed \$4.2 million.²

2. State Health Department Data

As of January 2, 2020, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (MCDCP) has reported nine confirmed cases of vaping-related lung illnesses.³ According to MCDCP, six of the patients are over the age of 21. MCDCP claims that tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is present in “most samples” and “most patients” report vaping THC. Although MCDCP notes the role of THC in recent vaping-related lung illnesses, the agency does not provide specific information including percentage of patients reporting using THC. *The Heartland Institute gives MCDCP a grade of C for information available on vaping-related lung illnesses.*

3. More Information Needed

The most recent report on youth e-cigarette use in Maine is from the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, which found that 28.7 percent of Maine high school students reported using a vapor product at least once, in the 30 days prior to the survey.⁴ There is no information on frequent and/or current use, but according to the 2017 Maine Youth Risk Behavior Survey, in 2017, 34.8 percent of Maine high school students had reported using an e-cigarette in the past 30 days, and only 1.7 percent reported daily use,⁵ indicating youth e-cigarette use has decreased. More data is needed to understand the effects of public health campaigns on youth e-cigarette use.

4. Youth Sales Miniscule

From January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) administered 3,154 tobacco age compliance inspections in Maine, in which the agency used a minor in an attempt to purchase tobacco products.⁶ Of those, 175, or 5 percent, resulted in a sale to a minor. Of the violations, 150 (33 percent of violations and 1 percent of all compliance checks) involved the sale of e-cigarettes or vaping devices. The number of violations involving sales of cigars and cigarettes were 39 and 76, respectively, during the same period.

5. Misspent Money

In 2019, Maine received an estimated \$188.5 million in tobacco taxes and tobacco settlement payments. In the same year, the state spent only \$4.8 million, or 2 percent, on funding tobacco control programs, including education and prevention.⁷

Policy Solution

Electronic cigarettes and vaping devices have proven to be tremendous tobacco harm reduction tools, helping many smokers transition away from combustible cigarettes. Despite recent fearmongering, their use is significantly safer than traditional cigarettes, as noted by numerous public health groups including the Royal College of Physicians,⁸ Public Health England,⁹ and the American Cancer Society.¹⁰ Rather than restricting their use, and undoubtedly reducing public health gains and millions of dollars in economic output, lawmakers should dedicate existing tobacco funds on programs that actually reduce youth usage.

Key Points

1

Maine’s vaping industry provided more than \$51 million in economic activity in 2018 while generating 313 direct vaping-related jobs. Sales of disposables and prefilled cartridges in Maine exceeded \$4.2 million in 2016.

2

As of December 31, 2019, MCDCP has reported nine cases of vaping-related lung illness, with most patients reporting having vaped THC, but no specific details. MCDCP earns a C for its reporting on vaping-related lung illnesses.

3

In 2019, only 28.7 percent of Maine high school students reported using vapor products on at least one day in the previous 30 days, a decrease from 34.8 percent in 2017. More data is needed.

4

Only 1 percent of FDA retail compliance checks in Maine resulted in sales of e-cigarettes to minors from January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019.

5

Maine spends very little on tobacco prevention. In 2019, Maine dedicated only \$4.8 million on tobacco control, or 2 percent of what the state received in tobacco settlement payments and taxes.

Notes

Tobacco Harm Reduction 101: Maine

References

- ¹ Vapor Technology Association, “The Economic Impact of the Vapor Industry MAINE,” 2019, <https://vta.guerrillaeconomics.net/reports/2027bdfd-f427-4bfa-a57b-5258c91973d1?>
- ² Teresa W. Wang et al., “National and State-Specific Unit Sales and Prices for Electronic Cigarettes, United States, 2012-2016,” *Preventing Chronic Disease*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, August 2, 2018, https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2018/17_0555.htm.
- ³ Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “Lung Injury Associated with E-Cigarette Use or Vaping,” Maine Department of Health and Human Services, January 2, 2020, <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/vaping.shtml>. Accessed January 11, 2020.
- ⁴ Maine Department of Health and Human Services, “Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey,” 2019, https://data.mainepublichealth.gov/miyhs/files/2019_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2019_Detailed_Reports_HS_State/Maine_High_School_Detailed_Tables.pdf.
- ⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “High School YRBS Maine 2017 Results,” 2017, <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Results.aspx?LID=ME>.
- ⁶ U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “Compliance Check Inspections of Tobacco Product Retailers,” September 30, 2019, https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/oc/inspections/oc_insp_searching.cfm.
- ⁷ Truth Initiative, “Tobacco use in Maine,” June 28, 2019, <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/smoking-region/tobacco-use-maine-2019>.
- ⁸ Royal College of Physicians, Nicotine without Smoke: Tobacco Harm Reduction, April 2016, <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/nicotinewithout-smoke-tobacco-harm-reduction-0>.
- ⁹ A. McNeill et al., “Evidence review of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products 2018,” Public Health England, February 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684963/Evidence_review_of_e-cigarettes_and_heated_tobacco_products_2018.pdf.
- ¹⁰ The American Cancer Society, “What Do We Know About E-Cigarettes?” June 19, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190806152535/https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/tobacco-and-cancer/e-cigarettes.html>.

For More Information, please refer to:

Tobacco Harm Reduction 101: A Guidebook for Policymakers

<https://www.heartland.org/publications-resources/publications/latest-heartland-policy-booklet-addresses-vaping-myths>

This booklet from The Heartland Institute aims to inform key stakeholders on the much-needed information on the benefits of electronic cigarettes and vaping devices. *Tobacco Harm Reduction 101* details the history of e-cigarettes, including regulatory actions on these products. The booklet also explains the role of nicotine, addresses tax policy and debunks many of the myths associated with e-cigarettes, including assertions about “popcorn lung,” formaldehyde, and the so-called youth vaping epidemic.

Nothing in this *Policy Tip Sheet* is intended to influence the passage of legislation, and it does not necessarily represent the views of The Heartland Institute. For further information on this and other topics, visit the [Budget & Tax News](#) website, [The Heartland Institute’s website](#), and [PolicyBot](#), Heartland’s free online research database.

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