

Policy Tip Sheet



POLICY ANALYSIS FROM
THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

Tobacco Harm Reduction 101: Georgia

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 2,532 direct vaping-related jobs, including manufacturing, retail, and wholesale jobs in Georgia, which generated \$87 million in wages alone.¹ Moreover, the industry has created hundreds of secondary jobs in the Peach State, bringing the total economic impact in 2018 to \$644,293,500. In the same year, Georgia received more than \$38 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 Georgia eclipsed \$18.8 million.²

2. State Health Department Data

As of January 10, 2020, the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH) has reported 40 cases of vaping-related lung illnesses in Georgia, including five deaths.³ The age of patients ranges from 14 to 68 years-old, with a median age of 32 years old, and 61 percent of the patients are male. GDPH notes patients report using nicotine, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), and cannabidiol (CBD), but does not offer specific case counts. *The Heartland Institute gives GDPH 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 Georgia is from the 2018 Georgia Youth Tobacco Surveillance Report.⁴ According to the survey, in 2018, 12.7 percent of Georgia high school students reported using a vapor product at least once, in the 30 days prior to the survey. Only 3.4 percent of Georgia high school students reported daily e-cigarette use in 2018. 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 5,749 tobacco age compliance inspections in Georgia, in which the agency used a minor in an attempt to purchase tobacco products.⁵ Of those, 213, or 3 percent, resulted in a sale to a minor. Of the violations, 76 (35 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 109 and 27, respectively, during the same period.

5. Misspent Money

In 2019, Georgia received an estimated \$393.3 million in tobacco taxes and tobacco settlement payments. In the same year, the state spent only \$750,000, or less than 1 percent on funding tobacco control programs, including education and prevention.⁶ The lack of funding is most notable in the state's telephone quit line, of which Georgia invests only \$1.06 per smoker, lower than the national average of \$2.21.

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,⁷ Public Health England,⁸ and the American Cancer Society.⁹ 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 Georgia's vaping industry provided more than \$644 million in economic activity in 2018 while generating 2,532 direct vaping-related jobs. Sales of disposables and prefilled cartridges in Georgia exceeded \$18.8 million in 2016.
- 2 As of January 10, 2020, GDPH has reported 40 cases of vaping-related lung illnesses, including five deaths. GDPH notes patients report using THC and CBD, but does not give official case counts. GDPH earns a C for its reporting on vaping-related lung illnesses.
- 3 In 2018, only 3.4 percent of Georgia high school students reported daily e-cigarette use. More data is needed.
- 4 Only 1 percent of FDA retail compliance checks in Georgia resulted in sales of e-cigarettes to minors from January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019.
- 5 Georgia spends very little on tobacco prevention. In 2019, Georgia dedicated only \$750,000 on tobacco control, or less than 1 percent of what the state received in tobacco settlement payments and taxes.

Notes

Tobacco Harm Reduction 101: Georgia

References

- ¹ Vapor Technology Association, “The Economic Impact of the Vapor Industry GEORGIA,” 2019, <https://vta.guerrillaeconomics.net/reports/1f5d0d89-5b93-4d32-806c-0cd4335f64e6?>.
- 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 Georgia Department of Public Health, “Severe Lung Disease among People Who Reported Vaping,” January 10, 2020, <https://dph.georgia.gov/vapinglunginjury>. Accessed January 14, 2020.
- ⁴ Georgia Tobacco Use Prevention Program, “2018 Georgia Youth Tobacco Surveillance Report,” July 2018, <https://dph.georgia.gov/sites/dph.georgia.gov/files/2018%20Georgia%20Youth%20Tobacco%20Surveillance%20Report.pdf>.
- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ Truth Initiative, “Tobacco use in Georgia,” June 28, 2019, <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/smoking-region/tobacco-use-georgia-2019>.
- ⁷ 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>.
- ⁸ 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.
- ⁹ 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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