



2019-2021 SURVEY FINDINGS REPORT

Share The Air, a tobacco prevention initiative of the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY) supported by its statewide youth-led program Y Street, aims to create 100% tobacco-free and e-cigarette-free outdoor recreational areas and public events across the commonwealth. During the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year, Y Street youth members collected surveys in-person and online from community members to assess their perceptions of tobacco use and the harms of secondhand smoke and vape aerosol outdoors.

PARTICIPATION PROFILE

- **7,017** participants completed the Share The Air Opinion Survey from July 2019 to June 2021
- **22%** of participants indicated they are parents of children under the age of 18
- **15%** of participants reported using any tobacco products (including vapes or e-cigarettes, like JUUL or Suorin) in the past 30 days



PERCEPTIONS OF TOBACCO-RELATED RISKS

Participants were asked about their level of agreement with statements related to tobacco use and the harm it presents to others and the environment (Figures 1a-1e). Participants agreed that tobacco poses a variety of serious risks, with all statements receiving high agreement. Among the overall sample, as well as among tobacco users specifically, there were especially high levels of agreement with statements concerning the poisonous risks to children, pets, and wildlife (91% and 79% respectively) and damage to the environment (91% and 76% respectively). Tobacco users indicated the lowest agreement with the harms of secondhand exposure to e-cigarette aerosol (70%), however a majority of users still endorsed this statement.

Figure 1a: Cigarette butts and e-cigs (like JUUL or Suorin) liquids/vape cartridges are poisonous to children, pets and wildlife.

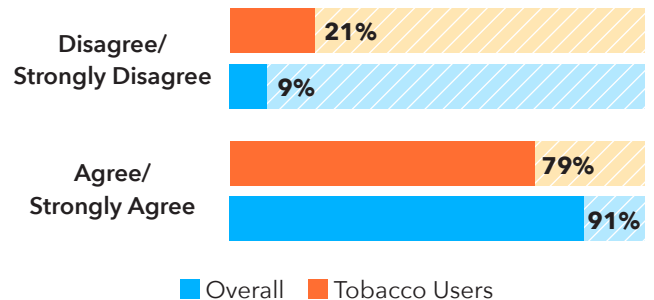


Figure 1b: Cigarette butts and e-cigs (like JUUL or Suorin) liquids/vape cartridges damage the environment.

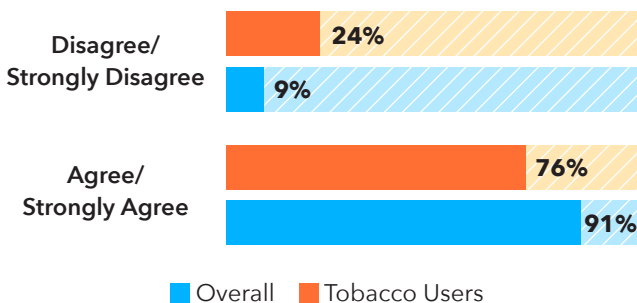


Figure 1c: Secondhand smoke outdoors is a health hazard.

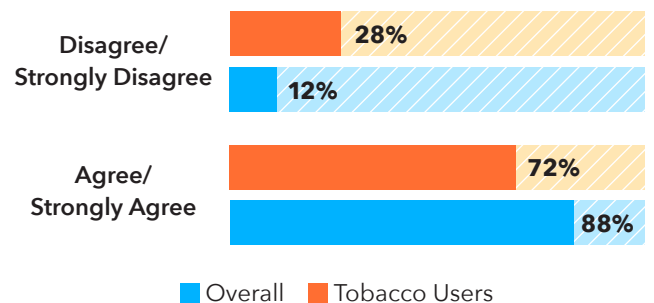


Figure 1d: Aerosol from electronic cigarettes (“e-cigs”) (like JUUL or Suorin) is harmful to people exposed to it.

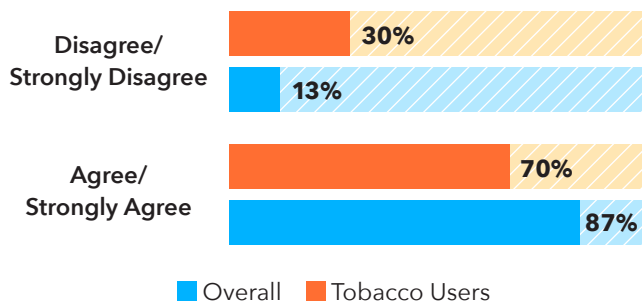
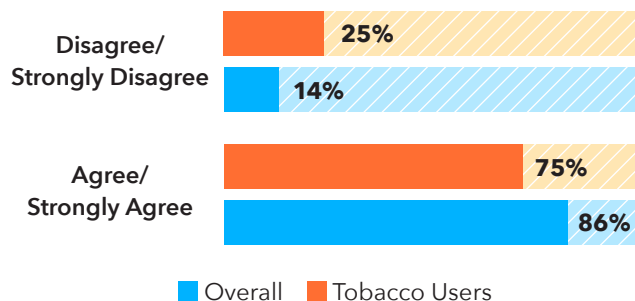


Figure 1e: When children see adults using tobacco or e-cigs (like JUUL or Suorin) in family-friendly places such as playgrounds, they see the behavior as acceptable and are more likely to use tobacco or e-cigs in the future.



TOBACCO-FREE AND E-CIGARETTE-FREE PUBLIC SPACES:

Participants shared their opinions and perceptions about tobacco-free and e-cigarette-free public spaces. Over half of the participants (54%) were concerned about secondhand smoke or e-cigarette aerosol in outdoor spaces. However, less than half of tobacco users shared this concern (42%) (Figure 2).

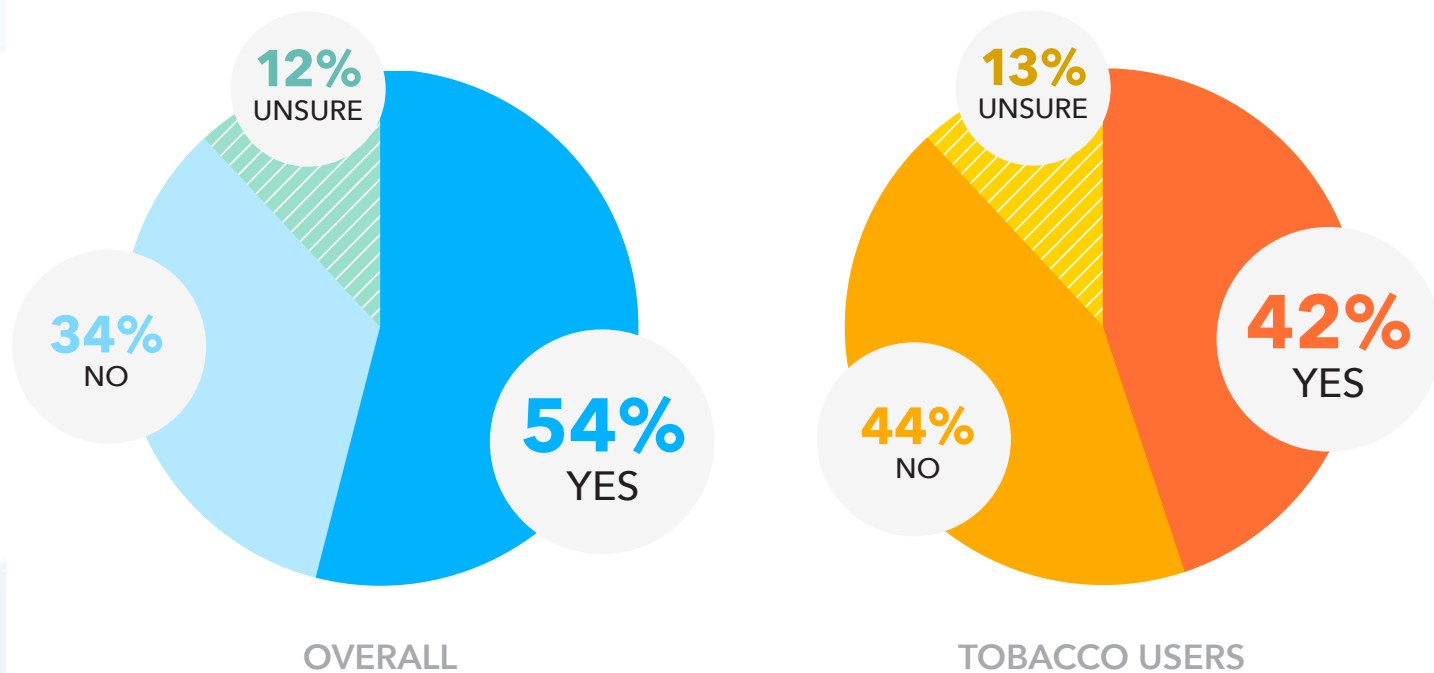


Figure 2: Have you been bothered by secondhand smoke or e-cigs (like JUUL or Suorin) aerosol in outdoor areas - such as park, playground, beach, or festival - in the past 3-6 months?



PERCEPTIONS OF TOBACCO-RELATED RISKS

Participants indicated their level of agreement with various statements related to tobacco-free spaces. Among all participants, a majority agreed that parks and playgrounds (89%), outdoor spaces/recreation areas and public events (83%), and public beaches (82%) should be tobacco-free. Among tobacco users, a majority agreed with these same statements, however to a lesser degree (Figures 3a-3c).

Figure 3a: Parks and playgrounds should be tobacco-free and vape/e-cigarette-free.

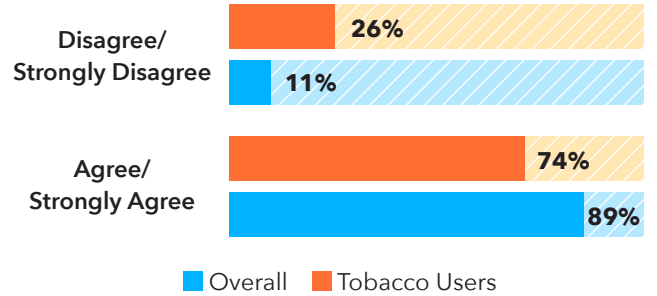


Figure 3b: Outdoor spaces/recreation areas and public events should be tobacco-free.

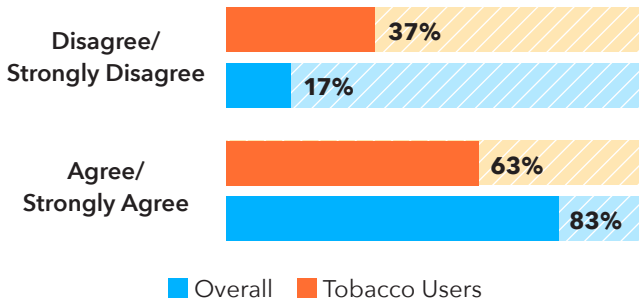
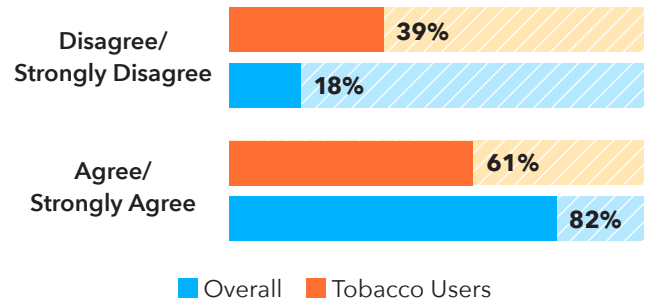


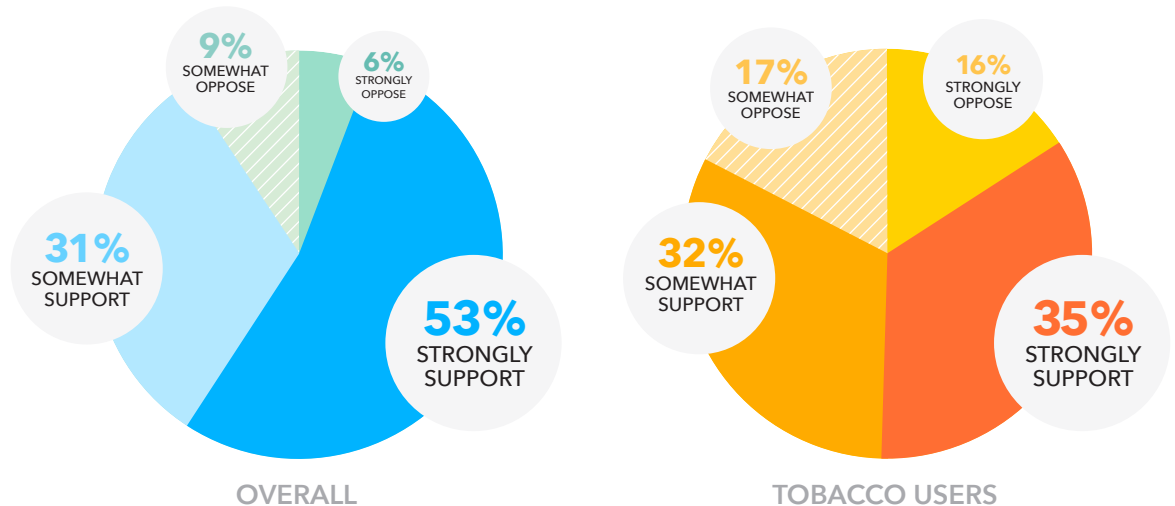
Figure 3c: Public beaches should be tobacco-free and vape/e-cigarette-free.



SUPPORT LEGISLATION FOR SMOKE-FREE AND E-CIGARETTE-FREE POLICY:

Participants were asked for their level of support of legislation that would allow counties, cities, or towns to pass stronger smoke-free policies. Overall, support for local control was reported by 85% of participants. Among tobacco users, 67% endorsed such legislation (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Do you support or oppose legislation that would give back local control so that counties and cities/towns are able to pass stronger smoke-free policies?





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DATA SUMMARY

Over 85% of the overall sample agreed or strongly agreed with all five statements regarding perceptions of tobacco-related risk. This indicates the risks that cigarettes and e-cigarettes pose to health, to children and others, and to the environment are well-known. Room for improved education and awareness lies mainly with tobacco users, as 30% disagreed that aerosol from e-cigarettes is harmful to people exposed to it.

It is encouraging to note that the majority of the overall sample supported tobacco-free, smoke-free, and vapor-free parklands and playgrounds (89%), recreational areas and events (83%), and public beaches (82%). This indicates that communities are aware of factors that can have a detriment to their health or the health of their loved ones, including secondhand smoke and vape aerosol in outdoor recreational areas and events. However, between 26% to 39% of tobacco users felt that outdoor spaces should not be tobacco and e-cigarette free, showing that at least one in four of those actively using tobacco maintain values or beliefs that allow for public tobacco or e-cigarette use.

The majority of respondents (85%) reported support for legislation that would give back local control to counties, cities, and towns to pass stronger smoke-free policies, including 67% of tobacco users who also support such legislation. This data shows tangible evidence that there is a strong demand for localities to have the ability to protect their constituents from the dangers that tobacco use poses, supporting our case for advocating for state tobacco laws to include non-preemptive language.

NEXT STEPS

Share The Air is seeking partnerships with Parks and Recreation Departments and Event Organizers across Virginia to create tobacco-free and e-cigarette-free outdoor recreational areas and public events through voluntary policy adoption. Adopting a tobacco-free and e-cigarette-free outdoor policy, voluntarily, allows Parks and Recreation Departments and Event Organizers to respond to their communities' concerns and demand for protection from secondhand smoke and vape aerosol, without municipalities and private entities exceeding the scope of their authority.

The Share The Air campaign will be distributing free tobacco-free signage, as part of its Comprehensive Toolkit, to municipalities and event organizers in Virginia, who adopt a tobacco-free outdoor policy that meets Share The Air's comprehensive policy standard.

To request signage and review and download the comprehensive policy checklist and Toolkit, visit ShareTheAirVA.com.

