

WHO WE ARE: Rights 4 Vapers is Canada’s largest vapour consumer advocacy group. We represent the vape consumer, 98% of whom are former smokers. We have collected the largest survey data set of Canadians who vape, with over 5,000 respondents. We are dedicated to the advancement of Canadian-based research on vaping. Rights 4 Vapers is a volunteer collective of committed tobacco harm reduction advocates. Our work is guided by unpaid academic advisors.

ABOUT: The data summary and conclusions provided within the following pages are in response to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health’s consultation on the best approach to address flavoured vapour products in Saskatchewan.

SAMPLE: This submission is based on the results of an on-line survey conducted between April 26th and March 3rd 2020. Responses were provided by a convenience sample of 5,279 Canadian adult vapers. Links to the survey were shared in online vaping forums and email list serves dedicated to the subject of vaping. Responses were received from all provinces and territories (see Figure 1). Respondents ranged in age from 19-55+ years (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Respondents by Geographic Location

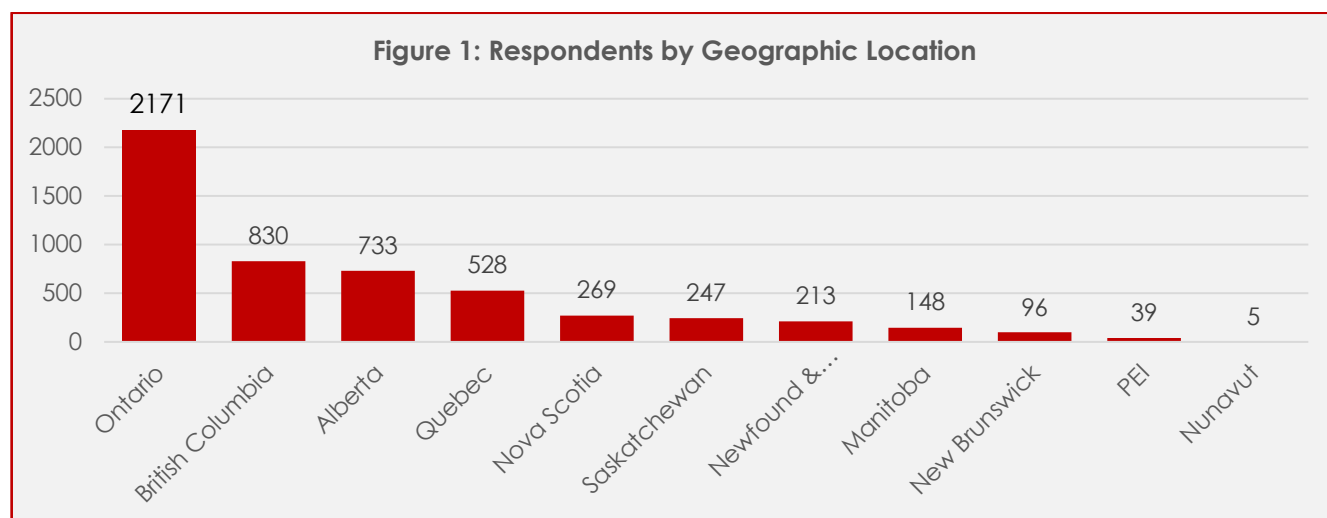


Figure 2: Respondents by Age Group

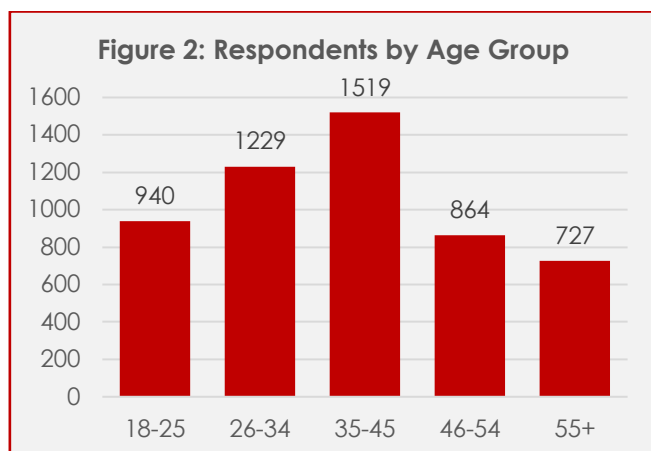
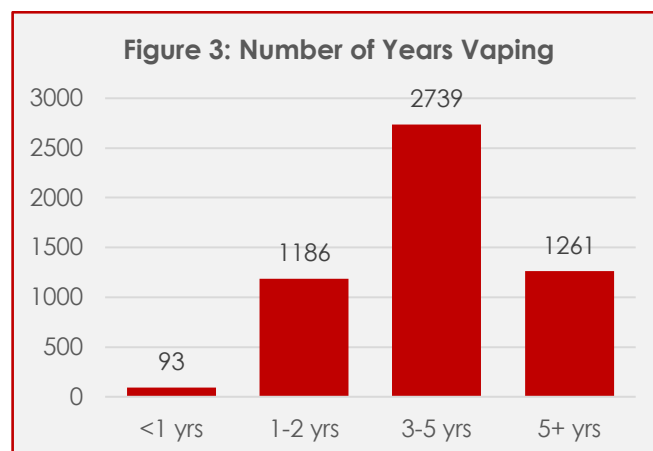


Figure 3: Number of Years Vaping



Respondents provided information on the number of years they have been vaping (see Figure 3), whether or not they had quit smoking because of vaping (see Figure 4) and whether they smoke less because of vaping (see Figure 5).

Figure 4: Quit Smoking

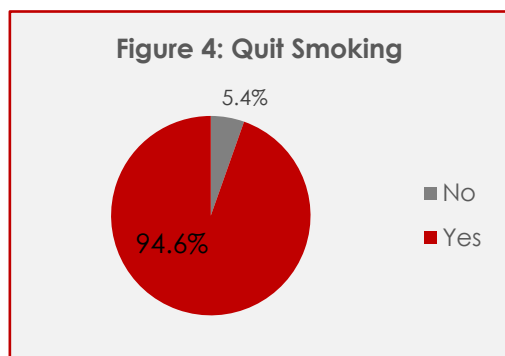
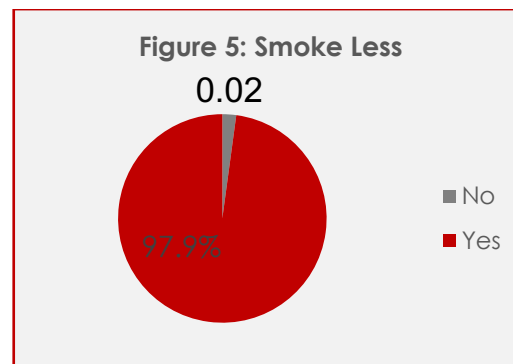


Figure 5: Smoke Less



Respondents were also asked about the flavours they used when they began vaping (see Figure 6), as well as the flavours they currently use (see Figure 7). It should be noted that 57.9% reported using only one flavour when they began vaping, while just 20.9% currently use a single flavour.

Figure 6: Initial Flavours

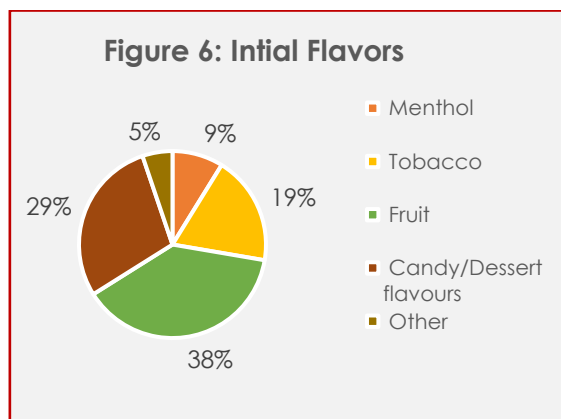
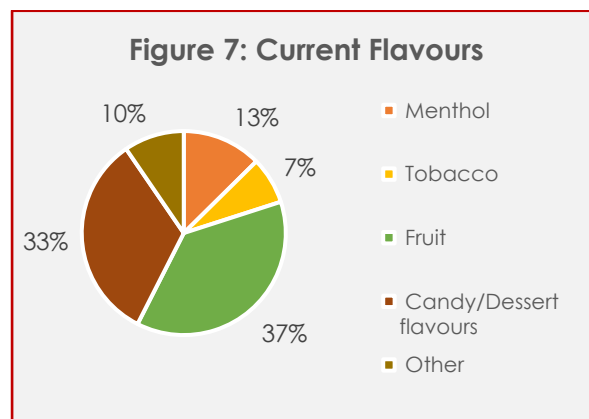


Figure 7: Current Flavours



In terms of initial flavour choice, just 19.1% of respondents who had quit smoking because of vaping used tobacco flavour when they started vaping, and just 8.7% reported using menthol.

Based on a sample of over 5,279 adults, these data support the following conclusions:

1. Adults are using vaping to quit smoking. The vast majority (97.9%) of respondents reported quitting smoking because of vaping. Among the few respondents (286) who did not fully quit, 246 or 86.0% reported they were smoking less because of vaping.
2. Adult vapers need and enjoy flavours. Vapers begin using a single flavour that is almost never tobacco or menthol. As time passes, they increase the number and variety of flavours they use to remain smoke-free. As with any flavoured products, variety is key to reaching as many smokers and former smokers as possible.

COMMENTS: While we concur that youth vaping remains a concern, we disagree that limiting adult choice will have the intended effect. Our grave concern is that at a time when Canadians should be doing everything that they can to protect their health, further restrictions on a product that most people are using in order to stay smoke-free will send a mixed message. In addition, removing options could make vaping a less attractive alternative and send former smokers back to smoking. We are also concerned that removing options may spur a rise in black market activity to fill the void.

CONCLUSION: We recommend that the government of Saskatchewan pause any further actions that would restrict flavoured vapour products in Saskatchewan. Our research indicates that flavours are an important driver in the decision to quit smoking and the ability to remain smoke-free. A recent study, *Associations of Flavored e-Cigarette Uptake With Subsequent Smoking Initiation and Cessation*, confirms that, “Relative to vaping tobacco flavors, vaping non tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes was not associated with increased youth smoking initiation but was associated with an increase in the odds of adult smoking cessation.”¹ The five year study surveyed 17,929 respondents between the ages of 12 and 54 years old.

A separate survey of 20,836 respondents concludes that, “Adult frequent e-cigarette users in the USA who have completely switched from smoking cigarettes to using e-cigarettes are increasingly likely to have initiated e-cigarette use with non-tobacco flavors and to have transitioned from tobacco to non-tobacco flavors over time. Restricting access to non-tobacco e-cigarette flavors may discourage smokers from attempting to switch to e-cigarettes.”² Rights 4 Vapers’ own data echo these findings in Canada.

It is our understanding that the federal government also intends to review flavours in vaping products in the coming weeks. It is our hope that they too will follow the science and evidence and provide a framework to allow flavoured vaping products to remain available and accessible to adult smokers and former smokers. We recommend a pause while the federal government considers a national framework, both in order to assess whether additional measures *would be required* and to avoid unnecessarily penalizing Saskatchewan smokers and former smokers. The health of our citizenry must be weighted in the context of our current situation, when we are all anxious about health outcomes.

¹ Friedman AS, Xu S. Associations of Flavored e-Cigarette Uptake With Subsequent Smoking Initiation and Cessation. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(6):e203826. Published 2020 Jun 1. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.3826

² Russell, C., McKeganey, N., Dickson, T. *et al*. Changing patterns of first e-cigarette flavor used and current flavors used by 20,836 adult frequent e-cigarette users in the USA. *Harm Reduct J* 15, 33 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0238-6>