



Kentucky can...

Expand local control to curb tobacco use among youth and improve health

The Kentucky General Assembly has made strides in recent years to curb tobacco use among youth by establishing a statewide tobacco-free school campus policy, increasing tobacco excise taxes, and setting the legal minimum age for purchasing tobacco products at 21.

Local governments are uniquely positioned to meet the needs of the people who live in their communities.

City and county governments see firsthand how effective tobacco control policy can improve health over time. They can respond more quickly to local needs, tailor ordinances to meet those needs, and develop effective enforcement measures. Yet, a current state law prohibits – or preempts – local jurisdictions from enacting stronger tobacco-control measures to reduce tobacco use.

Allowing local governments **the option** to quickly and effectively regulate the use, display, sale, and distribution of tobacco products ensures cities and counties can work to reduce health disparities in their community.

Examples of local control tools could include:



Set standards on tobacco retailer density in neighborhoods



Set buffer zones between tobacco retailers and schools or playgrounds



And other options communities choose



While youth cigarette smoking has declined, **e-cigarette usage among children and teens doubled** from 2016-2018



Every year, smoking directly causes **8,900 deaths** and leads to more than **\$1.9 billion** in health care costs



Youth who use e-cigarettes products are up to **7 times more likely to get COVID-19** than non-e-cigarette users



Children are **more likely to smoke** if they live or go to school in a neighborhood with **high tobacco retailer density**



Tobacco retailer density is higher in urban neighborhoods, neighborhoods with higher percentage of Black residents, and low-income neighborhoods – meaning that **kids who are low-income or Black are disproportionately at-risk of using tobacco**

Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Solution:

Allow city and county governments the option to regulate the use, display, sale, and distribution of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

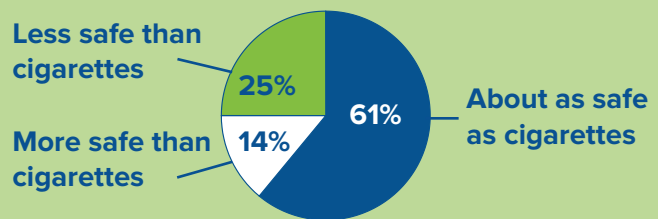
Youth Provide Insight on Tobacco Use

Kentucky Youth Advocates, in partnership with the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, surveyed middle and high school students in November and December 2020 to gauge their beliefs around tobacco use among youth and how recent policies have impacted youth tobacco use. The survey was completed by **400 youth from 22 counties across Kentucky**, including counties in the far eastern, western, and southern parts of the commonwealth.

Three key findings emerged:

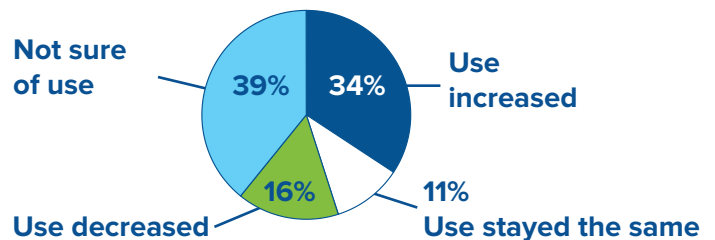
1. Kentucky must invest in tobacco prevention and cessation programming to continue to inform kids about the dangers of e-cigarettes and that they **are not a safer alternative** to traditional cigarettes.

When asked about the safety of e-cigarettes or vapes compared with cigarettes, 14% of youth surveyed reported they believe e-cigarettes are safer than cigarettes.



2. Youth believe there has been an increase in tobacco use due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so dedicated tobacco prevention and cessation funding and programming is critical during this vulnerable time. Several factors could contribute to this, including increased stress, changing use since they are not learning onsite at tobacco-free campuses, and different social environments that could lead to getting tobacco products from family members. The unexpected impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have made it difficult to measure the effects of recent tobacco legislation such as tobacco-free schools, raising the minimum purchase age to 21, and e-cigarette taxes.

When asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student use of e-cigarettes/ tobacco products, 39% of respondents were unsure. Among those who felt sure of its impact, more than half believed that use increased.



3. Middle and high school students across Kentucky support giving local cities and counties the option to pass laws that reduce tobacco use and help keep youth safe.

More than 70% of youth respondents support giving local cities and counties the option to pass laws that will keep kids healthier now and in the future.

