

# Tailored Data Collection Approaches for Understanding Community Needs and Assessing the Local Tobacco Landscape: Data and Lessons Learned from the University of Kentucky's PREVENT Alliance programs, #iCANendthetrend and EMPOWER



Gabrielle Cochran, MPH<sup>1</sup>, Kassidy Maust, MPH<sup>1</sup>, Abeni El-Amin, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Melinda Ickes, PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Kinesiology and Health Promotion, University of Kentucky

## Introduction

- Kentucky = **4th highest smoking rate**<sup>1</sup>
- Youth report vaping at a higher rate (19.7%) than adults report smoking (17.4%)<sup>1</sup>
- Challenges<sup>2,3,4</sup>
  - Preemption
  - Targeted marketing
  - No statewide survey evaluating youth use of flavored tobacco
  - Few local data sources around tobacco use
- **Purpose: Explore strategies for responsive data collection at the local level.**

## Programs



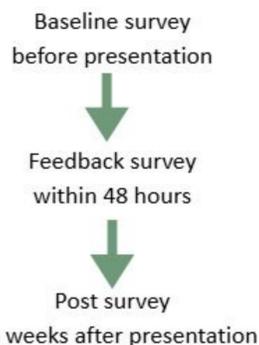
EMPOWER is a community-engaged program centered on reducing the use of menthol and flavored tobacco product use in underserved communities.

#iCANendthetrend is a peer-led vaping prevention and education program for Kentucky youth.

## Methods

### Youth Surveys- #iCANendthetrend

- Surveys distributed by teachers to students receiving an #iCANendthetrend presentation
- 6 new questions added in Spring 2023 related to the use of flavored tobacco products (FTPs)



### Community Surveys- EMPOWER

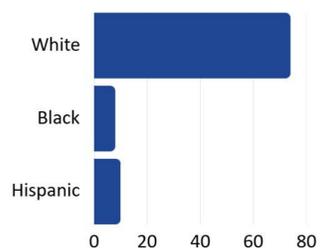
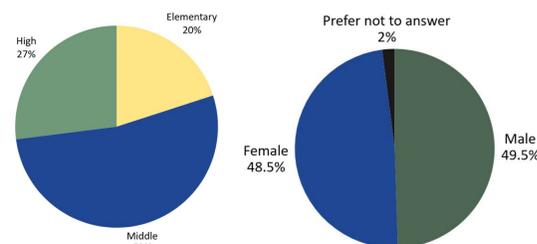
- Question in English and Spanish
- Co-created response options
- Low burden and anonymous
- Real time community feedback



## Results

### Youth Surveys

- 4,017 students from 4th-12th grade responded to the survey for the 2024-2025 academic year
- Summary reports shared back with schools.



**Question: Compared to regular tobacco products, are flavored tobacco products a lot less harmful to a person's health, a little less harmful, about the same, a little more harmful, or much more harmful to health?**

	Total Elem Responses (%) n= 749	Total MS Responses (%) n=1963	Total HS Responses (%) n=975
Less harmful	46 (6.1%)	201 (10.2%)	98 (10.1%)
About the same	241 (32.2%)	831 (42.3%)	434 (44.5%)
More harmful	462 (61.7%)	931 (47.4%)	443 (45.4%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>1963</b>	<b>975</b>

Less harmful is a combination of options a lot less harmful and a little less harmful.  
More harmful is a combination of options a lot more harmful and a little less harmful.

**Question: What flavors were the e-cigarettes that you have used in the past 30 days? (Select one or more)**

	Total Elem Responses (%) n= 30	Total MS Responses (%) n=189	Total HS Responses (%) n=137
Tobacco	3 (10%)	24 (13%)	14 (10%)
Flavorless	6 (20%)	32 (17%)	23 (17%)
Mint	4 (13%)	32 (17%)	27 (20%)
Menthol	1 (3%)	15 (8%)	19 (14%)
Fruit	11 (37%)	83 (44%)	64 (47%)
Candy, desserts, or other sweets	5 (17%)	45 (24%)	40 (29%)
Other	7 (23%)	65 (34%)	49 (36%)

**Question: I would support policies or laws that would prevent flavored tobacco products from being sold in stores.**

	Total MS Responses (%) n=1832	Total HS Responses (%) n=922
Strongly disagree or disagree	308 (16.8%)	142 (15.4%)
Neutral	424 (23.1%)	244 (26.5%)
Strongly agree or agree	1100 (60.0%)	536 (58.1%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1832</b>	<b>922</b>

### Outreach Boards

- Over 1,000 responses collected from community members in Lexington

Board Prompt: Why do you choose NOT to use tobacco products?	Total across 3 events (%) n=201
To protect my physical health	104 (51.7%)
To protect my mental health	48 (23.9%)
To protect my family	15 (7.5%)
Other	34 (16.9%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>201</b>

Options listed below received less than 5% of response options

To avoid dependence, to care for the environment, they taste or smell bad, too many chemicals, someone I care about would be upset, they cost too much, other  
Collected March-April 2025

**Board Prompt: What do you do to support your mental health?**

Total across 3 events (%)  
n=131

Time with family or friends	30 (22.9%)
Helping others	23 (17.6%)
Music or Art	19 (14.5%)
Exercise or physical activity	16 (12.2%)
Work on a hobby	11 (8.4%)
Journaling and writing	8 (6.1%)
Religious or spiritual activities	7 (5.3%)
Meditation or grounding	7 (5.3%)
Other	10 (7.6%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>131</b>

Options listed below received less than 5% of response options

Setting boundaries or saying "no", leaning into community support, and other

Collected February-June 2025

## Conclusions

- Youth seem to understand FTPs are NOT less harmful than unflavored products.
- Sweet e-cigarette flavors, like candy and fruit flavors, were more likely to be used by the students sampled than unflavored or tobacco flavored e-cigarettes.
- The majority of youth respondents support regulations on FTPs.
- Advocacy for policies that regulate FTPs is needed to prevent youth tobacco product use.
- Sharing data summaries back into the community is essential for building trust between the community and researchers.
- Tailored outreach methods can increase response rates at community events and in hard to reach populations.
- Protective factors should be explored as avenues for preventing tobacco product initiation and supporting cessation efforts.

## References

1. Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. (2024). The Toll of Tobacco in Kentucky. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/kentucky>
2. Kentucky Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program. (2023) Report on the Findings of Kentucky's 2023 Local Health Department Tobacco Cessation Survey July 2023. <https://www.chs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dpqi/Documents/Findings%20Cessation%20Survey%20Report.pdf>
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4. CDC. (2024). STATE System Preemption Fact Sheet. <https://www.cdc.gov/statestystem/factsheets/preemption/Preemption.html>

## Acknowledgments

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