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May 26, 2026

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Truth About E-cigarettes and Youth Affordability

Researchers at The Truth Initiative say E-cigarettes have become increasingly affordable for young people, even as products have grown bigger and stronger. While some researchers have argued that increasing e-cigarette prices could stop adults from switching from smoking to vaping, new research shows that e-cigarettes are already overwhelmingly affordable for adults, such that price increases would impact young teens while keeping e-cigarettes accessible for adults.

E-cigarettes, the most commonly used nicotine product among young people in the United States, have increased in volume capacity and nicotine strength over time. They have also dropped dramatically in price, becoming more affordable and accessible to young people.

Affordable products containing high concentrations of nicotine put young people at risk of nicotine addiction. While some researchers have argued that increasing e-cigarette prices could stop adults from using them as an alternative to combustible cigarettes, new research shows that e-cigarettes are already overwhelmingly affordable — costing just 1% of annual income for young adults — such that even doubling the price would not pose a financial burden. Alternatively, cost-conscious teens (ages 16-19) don't have the budget to accommodate price increases and would be severely constrained.

Despite rising taxes and cost of living, nicotine has become more affordable for young people. According to a Truth Initiative study published in *Tobacco Control*, the average price of 1 mL of e-liquid decreased by 16.2% between 2015 and 2021, with teens using less of their annual income to buy the same amount of nicotine over time.

E-cigarette prices began to drop in 2019, when teens needed to use 33% of their annual income to buy five large-capacity disposable e-cigarettes containing 20mL of nicotine e-liquid. In 2021, they only needed 23% of their income to purchase the same products.

Because younger teens are more price-sensitive, affordability varies by age. Between 2019 and 2021, e-cigarettes became: 14% more affordable for teens aged 16-17; 9.7% more affordable for teens aged 18-19; 12% more affordable for young adults aged 20-24.

Stronger and cheaper e-cigarettes, most of which are disposable, flavored, and sold illegally without Food and Drug Administration authorization, make nicotine highly accessible and appealing for young people. Mechanisms to raise prices, as well as policies that remove flavored and illegal products from the market, can protect young people from nicotine addiction.

Truth Initiative recommends increased taxes on e-cigarettes, price minimums on nicotine products, and the removal of flavored and illegal products, to prevent youth uptake and addiction.

The Truth Initiative is the nation's largest nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empowering quitting. Research is conducted through the Truth Initiative Schroeder Institute that produces independent research to provide evidence for policy change and leadership in cessation research. For more information, please visit www.truthinitiative.org.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned with all combustible and electronic products with tobacco. The Agency employs environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences of smoking and vaping. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn more about electronic products visit the Youth and Tobacco Use and Vaping Facts and Myths Pages of SAFE's website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health at www.safeglencove.org.