

PRACTICES OF TOBACCO AND NICOTINE CONSUMPTION AMONG MINORS

RESULTS OF A QUALITATIVE SURVEY AMONG ADOLESCENTS AGED 15-17, 2024**

Monitoring tobacco consumption and prevention policies

“They [nicotine pouches] are hard to see. They are unnoticeable... When you put it under your lip, it's almost invisible... There's no smoke... nicotine is absorbed into the body through thin tissues.”

(boy, 16 years old, Cherkasy region)

“They [e-cigarette users] just use them uncontrollably... Very often... As I understand it, you smoke a traditional cigarette and that's it, but there, they can sit and smoke it for 20 minutes... meaning 20 times more nicotine.”

(boy, 16 years old, Cherkasy region)

“If you want to smoke a regular cigarette, you need to go outside... to the balcony, you need a lighter... In the case of e-cigarettes, you can smoke them anywhere: in the school toilet, in your bed, at home... and you can't control how much you smoke... and because of that, there's a high dose of nicotine.”

(girl, 16 years old, Kyiv)

“In my environment, it seems to me, 90% of peers use devices for heating tobacco like IQOS and all that stuff... These IQOS devices are used more often than cigarettes, as something new, some new technology.”

(girl, 16 years old, Kyiv region)

“You couldn't go out for a smoke break at school, and because there's no smoke, it [nicotine pouches] was possible to put it in and even sit in class...”

(boy, 17 years old, Kyiv)

“They [snus users] keep them in their mouth for quite a long time, 40 minutes, maybe an hour – that's a large dose of nicotine... A cigarette is smoked for a minute or two, but snus and e-cigarettes are used for 20 minutes, for an hour, and because of this, there's a larger dose of nicotine...”

(boy, 16 years old, Cherkasy region)

Protecting people from tobacco smoke

“I see it [e-cigarette use] at every break... Every break you go to the toilet... someone is definitely exhaling this smoke.”

(a girl, 16 years old, Kyiv)

“Hookah... on weekends, Friday evening. I think many people indulge in this... You can see it once a week... I pass by various bars from the Academy, there are tables on the streets where peers smoke hookah on Friday evening, they always sit there...”

(a girl, 16 years old, Kyiv region)

Offering help to quit tobacco use

“...At first you try it and it doesn't seem like you're using nicotine. It's so sweet, there's some mint, and it seems so cool, but then you smoke once more, and again, and again, and again, and an addiction develops that is difficult to get rid of.”

(girl, 17 years old, Kyiv)

“There were attempts by girlfriends who abuse it, but they didn't succeed... because when you quit smoking (referring to e-cigarettes), you get a lot of stress, you relapse, and when you smoke, you calm down. They just can't do without it.”

(girl, 15 years old, Cherkasy)

“In any case, this (referring to tobacco product consumption) will cause one disease or another, because even on tobacco cigarette packs we can see that... pregnant women should not smoke, that it can provoke cancer or other diseases.”

(girl, 17 years old, Ternopil region)

* Qualitative study of tobacco and nicotine product use patterns among adolescents aged 15-17 from Kyiv, Cherkasy, Ternopil regions, conducted in the format of 6 online dyadic interviews in September 2024.

Warning about the dangers of tobacco

“On regular cigarettes... They print these pictures of ruined lungs, ruined teeth, tongues, organs. It looks so horrible. They write... "Smoking kills your health" – something like that... Smokers who are addicted to it don't care about these pictures. I feel horrible looking at these pictures... Well, from the first attempt, depending on the person, they might get scared and think: "Why do I need this? Why?"...”

(girl, 16 years old, Kyiv region)

“For me personally, it [the e-cigarette] is somehow perceived as a smoking pipe that I can indulge in. Of course, there are some harmful substances in it, but in my understanding, it is somehow perceived as a way to indulge.

(girl, 17 years old, Kyiv region)

“They [nicotine pouches] burn the mucous membrane; my friend showed me his lip... the upper layer of his lip is almost gone, there are just wounds!”

(boy, 16 years old, Cherkasy region)

Some respondents thought that the pictures (probably on cigarettes) had become even more horrific, while others noticed that the pictures had disappeared (probably on HTPs, where there were no pictures), reflecting the negative consequences of cigarette consumption (only text warnings remained). The rest of the study participants did not notice any significant changes.

Describing the warnings on e-cigarette packaging, some respondents said they were neutral in content; they were not noticeable enough against the attractive colour design of the packaging of these products. Other dyad participants either stated that there were no warnings on e-cigarette packaging or said they did not pay attention to such details.

Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship

Availability of tobacco and nicotine products for children:

“...There are small shops, kiosks where they can also sell such things... Sometimes "disposables" are sold, but most often it's e-cigarettes, IQOS sticks, GLO of that type... They don't ask for age there.”

(girl, 15 years old, Cherkasy)

“Well, everyone has a Diya, so it's easy. You just... show a fake Diia and buy it almost wherever you want, or through your friends somehow...”

(boy, 17 years old, Kyiv)

“E-cigarettes, reusable pod systems, their liquids are very easy for adolescents to get here. ...Most often through Telegram channels... They also often order online, because Nova Poshta doesn't check how old you are... There are no... restrictions regarding this.”

(girl, 15 years old, Cherkasy)

Perception of the 'VELO' advertisement (advertising poster):

bright, contrasting colours against the dominant grey of the city streets: 'a grey road, a grey house and only one bright thing’

Raising taxes on tobacco products

Some pupils and students are forced to reduce their consumption of certain products due to lack of money (this can be for a short period, or quite a long one).

