

Mattingly, D. T., Agbonlahor, O., Rai, J., Hart, J. L., McLeish, A. C., & Walker, K. L. (2023). Harm perceptions of secondhand e-cigarette aerosol among youth in the United States. *Addictive Behaviors*, 137, 107535. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2022.107535>

Definitions

- **Secondhand Aerosol (SHA):** Vapor emitted from e-cigarettes that can be inhaled by people nearby.
- **E-cigarette:** A device that heats a liquid to create vapor, which is inhaled.
- **Logistic Regression:** A statistical method to predict the outcome of a dependent variable based on one or more independent variables.

Key Findings

- Most youth believe secondhand e-cigarette aerosol (SHA) is harmful.
- Older youth and males are more likely to think SHA is harmless.
- Youth who use e-cigarettes or are exposed to SHA are more likely to view it as harmless.
- Educational campaigns are needed to inform youth about the risks of SHA.

Introduction

E-cigarette use among youth is rising, and many believe it is less harmful than smoking regular cigarettes. This study examines how youth perceive the harm of secondhand e-cigarette aerosol (SHA) and whether these perceptions vary by age, gender, e-cigarette use, and exposure to SHA.

Main Content

Background

Secondhand e-cigarette aerosol (SHA) contains harmful chemicals that can affect health, similar to secondhand smoke from regular cigarettes. Understanding how youth perceive the harm of SHA is important for public health strategies.

Methods

- **Participants:** Data from the 2020 National Youth Tobacco Survey, which included 13,292 middle and high school students.
- **Measures:**
 - **SHA Harm Perceptions:** Students were asked if they think SHA causes no harm, little harm, some harm, or a lot of harm. Responses were categorized as harmless or harmful.
 - **Demographics:** Age, sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and urbanicity.

- **E-cigarette Use:** Frequency of e-cigarette use in the past 30 days.
- **SHA Exposure:** Whether the student was exposed to SHA in the past 30 days.

Results

- **Overall Perceptions:**
 - 87.9% of youth perceived SHA as harmful.
 - 12.1% perceived SHA as harmless.
- **Age:** Older youth (16-18 years) were more likely to think SHA is harmless compared to younger youth (11-12 years).
- **Sex:** Male youth were more likely to perceive SHA as harmless compared to females.
- **E-cigarette Use:** Youth who used e-cigarettes more frequently were more likely to perceive SHA as harmless.
- **SHA Exposure:** Youth exposed to SHA in the past 30 days were more likely to view it as harmless.

Conclusion

Youth perceptions of SHA harm vary by age, gender, e-cigarette use, and SHA exposure. Most youth view SHA as harmful, but a significant minority do not. Educational campaigns are necessary to raise awareness about the health risks of SHA and reduce exposure among youth. Developing targeted educational campaigns to inform youth about the dangers of SHA and considering policies to restrict e-cigarette use in public places could help reduce SHA exposure. The study has some limitations, including the use of self-reported data, a cross-sectional design that cannot determine cause and effect, and a sample that may not represent all youth, such as those not in school.

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