

IYTS Special Topic Report: Access to Tobacco Products



Tobacco Prevention
and Cessation

The Indiana Youth Tobacco Survey (IYTS) was administered in 2024 to middle and high school students across the state. The survey covers many tobacco-related topics including product use, perception of access, and how youth obtain or attempt to buy tobacco products, offering insights into how youth access to tobacco products.

Youth Perceptions of Tobacco Access

Despite Indiana state laws setting the minimum purchasing age at 21, many young people still perceive tobacco products as easy to access. According to data from the 2024 IYTS, 26% of middle school students and about 49% of high school students reported that obtaining tobacco products would be “very” or “somewhat easy.” This perception tends to significantly increase with age.

Among youth who currently use tobacco, about 77% of middle schoolers and 82% of high schoolers report easy access. In contrast, only 24% of middle schoolers and 47% of high schoolers who do not use tobacco report the same. This significant difference suggests that once youth begin using tobacco, they encounter few barriers to getting tobacco products, making continued use more likely.

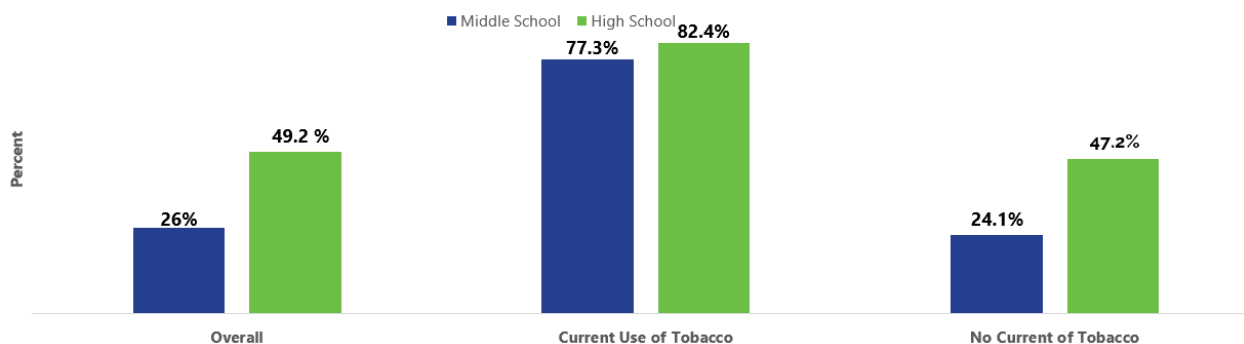


August 2025

Fast Facts

- **1 in 4** middle school and **1 in 2** high school students reported **easy access to tobacco products**
- About **8 in 10** middle and high schoolers who **used tobacco in past 30 days** say it is **easy to get** tobacco products
- Only **7%** of **high school youth** who use tobacco were **refused a sale** due to age.
- **3 out of 4** high school and **2 out of 3** middle school youth who use e-cigarettes **got product from someone else**
- About **4 in 10** high school and **2 in 10** middle school youth who use e-cigarettes buy product **from stores**.

Perceived Ease of Access to Tobacco Products Among Indiana Youth, IYTS 2024



Refusal to Sell Tobacco Products Due to Age

In 2024, among high school students who currently used tobacco products and tried to purchase tobacco products during this time, only about 7% were refused a sale because of their age. This means that most high school youth who tried to buy tobacco were able to purchase it successfully.

Only **7%**

**ACCESS
DENIED**

of high school youth who use tobacco reported that a seller ever refused to sell to them because of their age

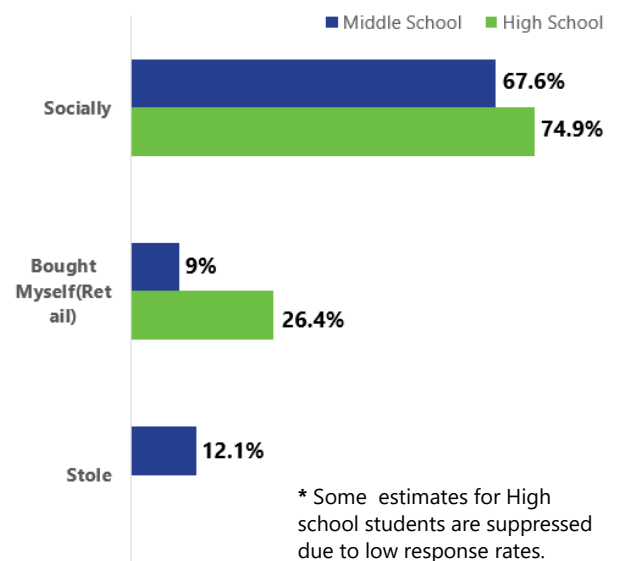
Youth E-Cigarettes Access

E-cigarettes, also known as electronic cigarettes or vapes, are battery-powered devices that heat a liquid (usually containing nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals) to create a vapor that users inhale. In recent years, e-cigarettes have grown in popularity among youth. In 2024, 2.4% of middle school students and 5% of high school students reported using e-cigarettes in past 30 days. These figures show that e-cigarette use remains a concern among youth. The following sections explore how young people access and purchase these products, offering insight into the challenges of preventing underage vaping.

How Youth Get E-Cigarettes

In 2024, the Indiana Youth Tobacco Survey (IYTS) asked middle and high school students who currently use e-cigarettes how they got them. The most common way students accessed e-cigarettes was through social sources. About 75% of high school students and nearly 68% of middle school students said they didn't buy them themselves. Instead, someone else gave them the product, bought it for them, or they borrowed it. This shows how friends, peers, or social contacts play a big role in helping youth get these products. Still, retail access remains a concern. Even though laws prohibit sales to youth under 21, 1 in 4 (~26%) high school e-cigarette users reported that they bought the product themselves. Among middle school users, nearly 1 in 10 (9%) said the same. A smaller portion of middle school users, about 12%, said they stole from store or other person.

Sources of E-cigarettes Among Middle and High School Youth, IYTS 2024



Where Youth Buy E-cigarettes

On the 2024 IYTS, youth who currently use e-cigarettes were asked where they buy the product. Nearly 4 in 10 high school students (39%) and about 2 in 10 middle school students (19%) reported buying e-cigarettes themselves from retail locations such as gas stations, convenience stores, vape shops, and malls. Additionally, approximately 1 in 9 middle school users (12%) obtained e-cigarettes through other channels like mail or delivery services, indicating alternative methods beyond traditional retail outlets. These findings underscore the need for stronger enforcement of existing age restrictions at both physical and online retail points. Community awareness, retailer accountability, and policy updates must work hand-in-hand to prevent underage tobacco purchases.

For additional information on the Indiana Youth Tobacco Survey or commercial tobacco control in Indiana, visit:

in.gov/health/tpc



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