

Nicotine Pouch Use, Frequency of Use, Reasons for Use, Flavor Use and Use of Other Tobacco Products in a National Probability-Based Sample of U.S. Youth and Young Adults

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Significance

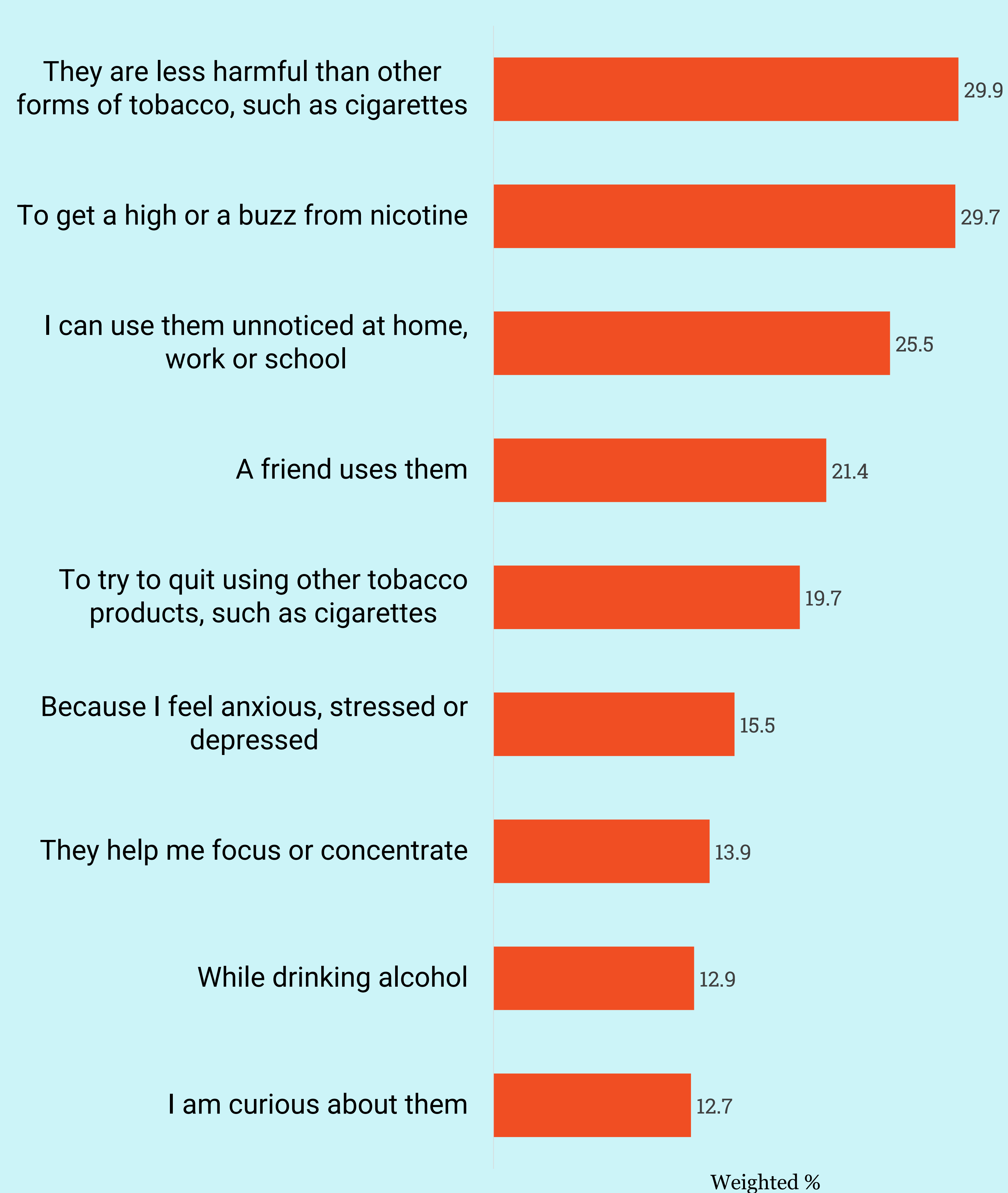
Amid rising sales of nicotine pouches, it is important to understand use patterns and related factors among young people. We investigated nicotine pouch use, frequency of use, other tobacco product use, reasons for use, flavor use and use in a quit vaping attempt among U.S. youth and young adults.

Methods

Data were drawn from Wave 4 (fielded Feb-Jun 2024) of the Tobacco Epidemic Evaluation Network (TEEN+) Study, a probability-based cohort of U.S. youth and young adults aged 13-26. Survey sampling and weighting allowed for cross-sectional examination of results. All analyses were conducted in SAS 9.4.

Youth and young adults who reported past 30-day nicotine pouch use indicated beliefs about reduced harms, desire for a nicotine buzz and discreet public use as top reasons for current use.

Top Reasons for Current Use of Nicotine Pouches (n=284)



Results

Among 10,233 youth and young adults, 8.3% (n=769) ever used nicotine pouches and 3.2% (n=288) reported current (past 30-day) use. Most youth and young adults who reported current use were aged 18-26 (90.3%). Of those who indicated past 30-day use of pouches:

- Nearly two-thirds (61.9%) reported use on 1-9 days and one in five (21.0%) reported daily use
- 75.8% currently used at least one other tobacco product
- 54.9% reported concurrent use of e-cigarettes

When asked, "Why do you currently use nicotine pouches?" top responses from a randomized list were:

- "They are less harmful than other forms of tobacco, such as cigarettes" (29.9%)
- "To get a high or a buzz from nicotine" (29.7%)
- "I can use them unnoticed at home, work or school" (25.5%)
- "A friend uses them" (21.4%)
- "To try to quit using other tobacco products, such as cigarettes" (19.7%)

The top flavors that youth and young adults indicated using in the past 30-days were:

- Mint (70.6%)
- Menthol (19.7%)
- Fruit (16.5%)
- Tobacco (9.8%)
- Non-alcoholic drink (6.5%)

Youth and young adults who reported ever trying to quit e-cigarettes (n=3,569) could indicate if they used another product in their attempt to quit; 2.6% reported using nicotine pouches for this purpose.

Conclusions

Youth and young adults who currently use nicotine pouches do so for a variety of reasons, notably beliefs about reduced harms, to get a buzz and surreptitious public use. Feelings of anxiety, stress or depression and perceptions that they aid focus or concentration were also common reasons for current use. However, nicotine exposure in adolescence, which continues through age 25, can harm memory and attention.¹ Continued monitoring and enhanced public health and education efforts may be warranted.

¹Goriounova NA, Mansvelter HD. Short- and long-term consequences of nicotine exposure during adolescence for prefrontal cortex neuronal network function. *Cold Spring Harb Perspect Med.* 2012;2(12):a012120. Published 2012 Dec 1. doi:10.1101/cshperspect.a012120