Communicating About Commercial Tobacco Use with Hispanic/Latinx Adolescents & Young Adults

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Acknowledgements

Study Team
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Overview

Primary goals:

• Describe Latino adolescents’ and young adults’ perceptions of cigarettes and e-cigarettes
• Describe tobacco industry targeting practices
• Discuss strategies for communicating about tobacco use with Latino adolescents and young adults
• Demonstrate an online toolkit presenting these findings

Why do we use the term Latino? Our team discussed this at length because many individuals in this community use the term to refer to themselves. Others, however, may use the term Latinx. When communicating with a community, it is important to be mindful of terminology, and how the community you work with refers to themselves.
Latino youth are a priority population for tobacco use prevention.

- One quarter of Latino high-schoolers report having used a tobacco product in the past 30 days (23%)
- 18.9% have used an e-cigarette in the past 30 days
- 4.6% have used a cigarette in the past 30 days
- More likely to be susceptible to tobacco use than non-Hispanic white youth

Tobacco use is influenced by:

Common influences across youth
- Social norms
- Accessibility of tobacco products
- Exposure to tobacco marketing
- Beliefs that tobacco use serves a purpose

Factors related to race/ethnicity
- Acculturation to the US
- Racial/ethnic discrimination
- Strong ethnic identity may be protective against tobacco use

Need for more research

• Lack of data by sub-groups

• Among adults, disparities in past-month smoking exist

Weighted prevalence of ever tobacco product use among U.S. 12-17 year olds, by sub-group

- Cigarettes
- E-cigarettes
- Filtered cigars/cigarillos
- Hookah

Mexican: 9.8%, 14.4%, 5.5%, 7.7%
Puerto Rican: 9.0%, 14.0%, 6.0%, 8.2%
Other Hispanic: 9.7%, 14.0%, 4.1%, 8.8%

Weighted prevalence of ever tobacco product use among U.S. 12-17 year olds, by sub-group

Need for more research

• Latino youth are less likely than non-Hispanic white youth to be exposed to federal tobacco prevention and education efforts

• Need for targeted campaigns that address unique cultural factors

→ This led our team to use in-depth, qualitative data to examine cigarette and e-cigarette use among Latino adolescents and young adults

What are Latino adolescents’ and young adults’ perceptions of and experiences with e-cigarettes and cigarettes?
Methods

• Online discussion boards with 92 Latino participants ages 15 to 21 living in the US
• Conducted in October 2020
• Partnered with Crux Research to deploy discussion boards
Participants (N=92)

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<td>17-18</td>
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<td>19-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>22 (24%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>23 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico/Dominican Republic</td>
<td>20 (22%)</td>
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<td>39 (42%)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<td>53 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
E-cigarettes: Social Factors

• E-cigarettes viewed as trendy, “everyone is doing it”

“Usually teenagers who want to seem cool and different. We know peer pressure is very much real and many do it because of that. Or some are simply the so called cool kids and do it to continue on being known as cool. I know a couple of people like that.” - Participant (Central American, male, 17)

“I would say the type of person that uses vapes is generally popular and has a lot of friends.” - Participant (Cuban, female, 17)
E-cigarettes: Curiosity

• Wanted to know what the product was like and wanted to see “what the hype was about”
• Viewed e-cigarettes as fun and “enticing”

“They are fun. Plain and simple, they are enticing with their packages, flavors, and being able to easily hide them. It is just a temptation that does not seem like that big a deal.” - Participant (Cuban, female, 17)
E-cigarettes: Stress Relief

• Some saw e-cigarettes as a way to alleviate stress

“I was super calm down. I coughed a little bit while doing it, but overall I was relaxed and more chill after”
- Participant (Mexican, female, 17)

“It’s their stress reliever from the outside world.”
- Participant (DR/PR, male, 18)
E-cigarettes: Favorable comparisons to cigarettes

- Participants directly compared e-cigarettes to cigarettes, and viewed the former more positively:
  - They can be used anywhere
  - They are “easier to hide” and easy to use
  - Not as easy to detect and you “can’t get caught as easily”
  - Does not have the negative aspects of smoking
  - Some believed e-cigarettes had no nicotine
  - Some mentioned flavors and vape tricks

“It was very easy. Easy as in it wasn’t hard to figure out how to use. It was easy to inhale an exhale as well” - Participant (Cuban, female, 21).

“A lot of people are using these now because it removes the two biggest turn offs from cigarettes while still giving the same effects when smoking. It will not make you smell bad like cigarettes, and it won’t make your teeth and/or nails yellow” - Participant (Cuban, female, 21).
E-cigarettes: Health Effects

• Many understood the potential harms of e-cigarettes

  “[H]onestly they scare me because they add a lot of bad things to it and some people say that it is worse than cigarette’s because they add some bad stuff to vapes.” - Participant (Central American, female, 15)

• Some felt they were as or more harmful than cigarettes

  “They can explode on your face, they hurt your body as much as cigarettes, and they can damage your body as well.” - Participant (Cuban, male, 15)

• Some reported negative use experiences

  “The first time it was an unpleasant experience, the smoke was very strong for me and left me dizzy for more than 10 minutes” - Participant (Central American, female, 17).
E-cigarettes: Perceptions of a typical user

• Younger
• Often characterized as popular or rebellious
• Some acknowledged the wide range of people who use e-cigarettes

“In my opinion there is no typical type of person who uses e-cigarettes. anyone who wants to do it, will do it. When I was in school the “nerds”, the “popular” kids, the “athlete“ and just anyone would do it. It doesn’t matter what you consider yourself to be or what group you’re in” - Participant (Cuban, female, 20)

• Many noted that people trying to quit smoking use e-cigarettes
Participants overwhelmingly tied cigarettes to coping and stress relief

- Smoking “brings a relief”, “takes your stress away for a little bit” or makes you “feel a little more calm and relaxed”.

Some acknowledged that young people have a lot to deal with, and smoking is an escape

“I think people my age use cigarettes because they need a way to cope with what’s going on around them, age 13-20 is a hard age to be at. People my age have a lot going on and a lot of pressures whether it’s their parents pushing them to do better in school or their own goals. Not knowing what they want to do with their lives, feeling like they’re not good enough or like time is running out on them. -Participant (PR/DR, female, 17)
Cigarettes: Social Factors

• Social factors were mentioned in relation to cigarettes, but not as often as for e-cigarettes
• Often linked to availability or wanting to be a part of what friends were doing, but not necessarily “peer pressure”

“I was hanging out with my friends and a friend of a friend offered them to us. He did not force us to try it, we just willingly decided to try it. I was also barely learning how to properly smoke.” - Participant (Cuban, male, 21)
Cigarettes: Family

• Exposure to smoking via family may encourage youth use, via access, normalization, or instigating curiosity

“I have always had an "itch" for cigarettes since I have always seen my family smoking. When I first smoked a cigarette, I was immediately hooked.” - Participant (PR/DR, male, 20)

• Families also play an important role in discouraging smoking

“[P]eople in my life think that turning down smoking was the good and safe choice because I won’t be hurting my body putting all those chemicals and smoke. their opinion influenced my decision because they have seen it first hand. Smoking is the reason my grandmother has cancer.” - Participant (Cuban, male, 15)
Cigarettes: Curiosity

• Many participants first smoked cigarettes “out of pure curiosity”, “for the experience”, and because they wanted “to know what it felt like” or “tasted like”

• Accessibility to cigarettes via friends/family enabled youth to act on their curiosity

“[My] friend got some cigarettes from his mother’s bag, we went to the park after school to try… I guess it was just what teenagers had to do, try and see what it felt like.” - Participant (Central American, female, 20)

“I grabbed one from my Brother’s stash. Was curious…” - Participant (Central American, male, 21)
Cigarettes: Negative Health Effects

• The negative short- and long-term effects of smoking were widely noted

  I was coughing like crazy and getting the smoke out was a total failure. I felt that I was an adult with responsibilities.” - Participant (Central American, male, 21)

• Several noted family members who experienced negative effects of smoking (e.g., cancer)

• Despite initial negative experiences, some reported that the perceived benefits won out

  “It hurt my lungs. It made me feel calmer and like I had something to do. It gave me a slight buzz.” - Participant (Cuban, female, 17).
Cigarettes: Perceptions of a typical user

• Older and white were commonly used to describe smokers
  “A person who smokes cigarettes is an old person who’s white or some white woman named Linda who are trashy and not educated” (Mexican, female, 19)

• Others mentioned smokers as “rich” and “rebellious”

• Some commented that younger people used e-cigarettes, while older people used cigarettes
  “Mostly young people vape but the older people are the ones with cigarettes.” - Participant (Mexican, female, 19)
• No significant differences by ethnic sub-group
  • Many participants reported feeling connected to Latinos in general, and sharing values and traditions

“I can relate to other [Latinos] in my community and find comfort in having similar solutions to problems and can also laugh with others who I can relate to having similar experiences growing up.” – Participant (Mexican, female, 21)

• Some youth who grew up in the US reported feeling alienated from their Latino culture
• Some women reported tensions around concepts of machismo, which could affect how families view tobacco use for women vs. men
How do tobacco companies target the Latino community?
Targeted tobacco marketing:

• It is well known that the tobacco industry targets communities of color
  • Communities with higher proportions of Latino residents found to have higher density of tobacco retailers compared to non-minority communities
• Latino youth report higher rates of engagement with online tobacco marketing
• Increased presence of marketing creates opportunity and generates social pressure among youth

Historically, strategies involve...

- Audience segmentation based on language, general Hispanic or Latino identity (as opposed to country of heritage)
- Leveraged shared beliefs and values
  - Machismo/Marianismo
  - Familismo
  - Sociability/Sense of belonging/Community
  - Religion
  - Ethnic identification

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Analysis of tobacco ads

Our team analyzed thousands of tobacco ads run between 2018-2020 for strategies used to target the Latino community.
Featuring Latino people

MAF, Martina Galarza and Amuse put their own spin on the Camel Crush packs

IN STORES NOW

Step outside the everyday with INTENSE liquidpods. Shop selections at https://bit.ly/2GqGKcK

WARNING: This product contains nicotine. Nicotine is an addictive chemical.
Connecting to culture, especially music
Connecting to places with prominent Latino populations or strong ties to Latino roots
How can we best communicate about tobacco risks and harms?
Strategies for tobacco prevention and education

Identify shared values

- What unites your community?
- How does it connect to tobacco use?

Take root causes into account

- Tobacco use for stress relief – relates to discriminatory stress, acculturative stress, other life stressors

Consider countermarketing efforts

- Communicate about how the tobacco industry targets the Latino community
Online Toolkit: BeyondDemographics.org

• Resource with presenting background information, findings from our study, and tips for communication campaigns
• New materials will continue to be uploaded
• Still in ‘beta’ phase – please fill out linked feedback survey on website!
Knowing when, to whom, and how to target tobacco prevention messages is critical to tobacco control and to eliminating disparities in tobacco use.

Simply stating facts is not always the most effective strategy to deliver information to youth who use or may start using tobacco. Rather, novel messaging that resonates with the cultural and social lives of the audience can help make a bigger impact.

This online toolkit provides information from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Truth Initiative, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and our collaborators at University of California-Merced and New York University to help practitioners understand and prevent tobacco use among Latino adolescents and young adults. Based on our analysis of existing literature, plus research that our team has conducted, we've developed this online toolkit to equip community members with defense systems against the harms of tobacco use.
2. Tobacco use is an issue of concern among Latino youth.

Over 1 in 5 Latino high schoolers report using a tobacco product in the past 30 days.

- 18.9% report past 30-day e-cigarette use
- 5.6% report past 30-day cigar use
- 4.6% report past 30-day cigarette use
- 4.4% report past 30-day hookah use
- 2.2% report past 30-day smokeless tobacco use
- 2.0% report past 30-day heated tobacco product use
What we learned:

What do Latino youth think about cigarettes and e-cigarettes?

Cigarettes and e-cigarettes are seen as a way to relieve stress.

“People my age use cigarettes because they need a way to cope with what’s going on around them...to let go of all those struggles and worries even if it is just for a couple minutes, so that’s what causes them to want to smoke.” (Puerto Rican/Dominican, 17 years old, female)

“I believe people use cigarettes because it helps relieve stress or even makes you ease your mind.” (Chestnut Oak)

E-cigarettes are seen as trendy.

“I think society has made it seem like a social activity that you can partake in with friends at parties or when people drink. It almost seems like it has the same cool factor as alcohol within college campuses.” (Red Spruce)

“[People use e-cigarettes] to keep up with the trend.” (Red Maple)

The typical cigarette smoker was perceived as older, while the typical e-cigarette user was perceived as younger.
How can we improve this toolkit?

Click here to provide feedback ›
Thank you!

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