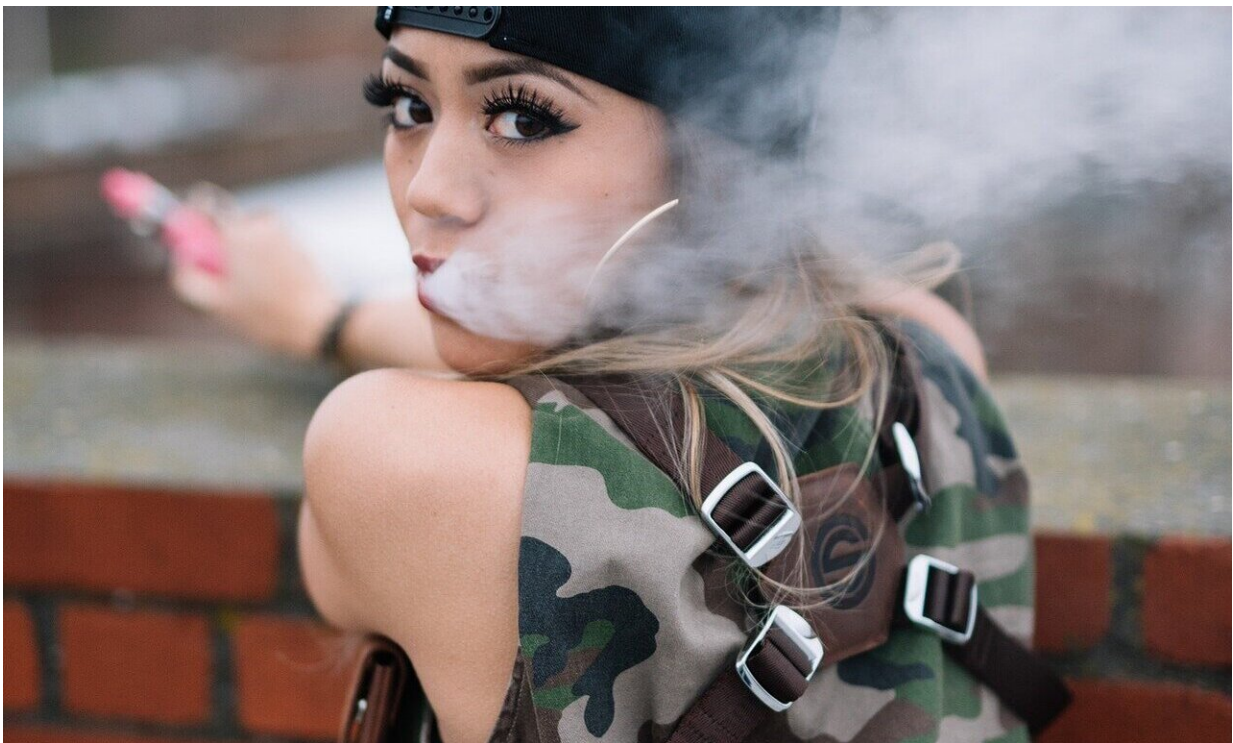


Young adults with cognitive disabilities and major depressive episodes found more likely to vape nicotine

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In 2022, 14% of high school students and 3% of middle school students reported using e-cigarettes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This is part of a growing trend of adolescents and young

adults increasingly using e-cigarettes, also known as nicotine vaping.

A new study led by Gilbert Gimm, associate professor in Mason's College of Public Health, found that a greater share of adolescents and young adults with cognitive disabilities engaged in past-month nicotine vaping (14.2%) compared to those without a disability (9.6%). The study also found that major depressive episodes (MDEs) are associated with vaping in adolescent and young adult populations.

These findings reveal that adolescents and young adults who experience MDEs or have cognitive disabilities are at higher risk of vaping. The National Institute of Mental Health defines an MDE as a period of at least two weeks when a person experiences a depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities and has a majority of specified symptoms, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, or self-worth.

"New information from this study highlights the need for additional support and early interventions for [young adults](#) who have a higher risk of nicotine vaping," said Gimm, the principal investigator.

In addition to [cognitive disabilities](#), researchers found other disability types and their past-month nicotine vaping prevalence rates, which included communication (2.8%), hearing (1.0), mobility (2.6%), and vision disabilities (2.8%). Researchers believe these findings can be helpful to school nurses, counselors, and [mental health professionals](#) in their screening of major depression as a risk factor for e-cigarette use.

The research team used data from the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health to conduct descriptive and multivariable analyses to estimate the national prevalence of nicotine vaping by disability type and examined major depressive episodes (MDEs) as a risk factor for nicotine vaping.

"Examining the Prevalence of Nicotine Vaping and Association of Major Depressive Episodes among Adolescents and Young Adults by Disability Type in 2021" was [published](#) in *Addictive Behaviors*.

More information: Gilbert Gimm et al, Examining the prevalence of nicotine vaping and association of major depressive episodes among adolescents and young adults by disability type in 2021, *Addictive Behaviors* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2024.107975](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2024.107975)

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