



# Smoking and Tobacco Products Micro- Influencer Focus Group Results Report

This presentation outlines the attitudes, beliefs and actions of social media ‘micro-influencers’\* in California. Through a series of focus groups, micro-influencers were able to share where they get their information, their thoughts on tobacco use, and whether they would be in favor of a tobacco ban. Twenty-one individuals participated in a total of three focus groups. Seventy-one individuals were recruited and screened. Their perceptions are also included in this presentation.

*\*A micro-influencer is **someone who has a social media following between 1,000 to 100,000**. They are everyday consumers, who share useful thoughts with an engaged audience in a specific niche.*



# Focus Group Sample

*A micro-influencer is **someone who has a social media following between 1,000 to 100,000**. They are everyday consumers, who share useful thoughts with an engaged audience in a specific niche.*

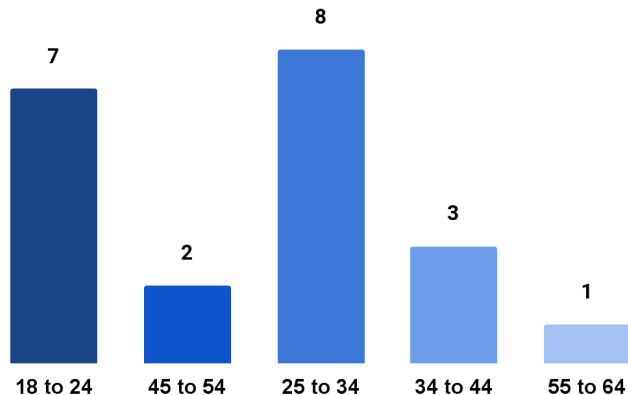


# Sample Demographics

21

Respondents Attended

## Respondent Age Ranges

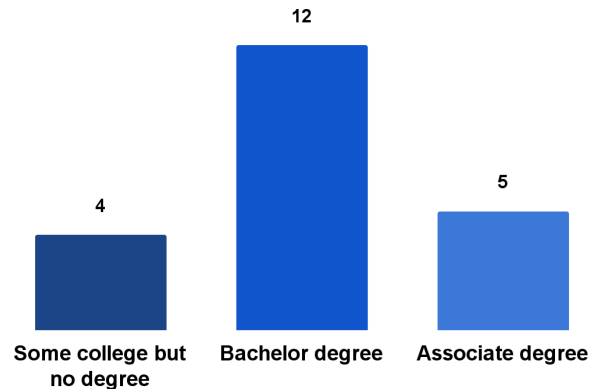


## Locations (urban, suburban, rural)

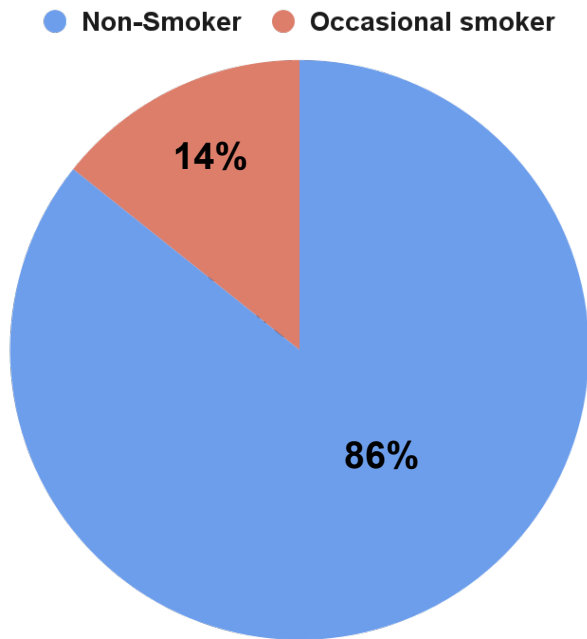


62% of respondents were in an urban setting

## Educational Levels



# Sample Perspectives



**33% of respondents** believed that Smoking and tobacco consumption should be **banned and discouraged**

**38% of respondents** or their families have been **negatively affected** by tobacco products

**90% of respondents** were **not aware** that Beverly Hills and Manhattan Beach have phased out the sale of tobacco products

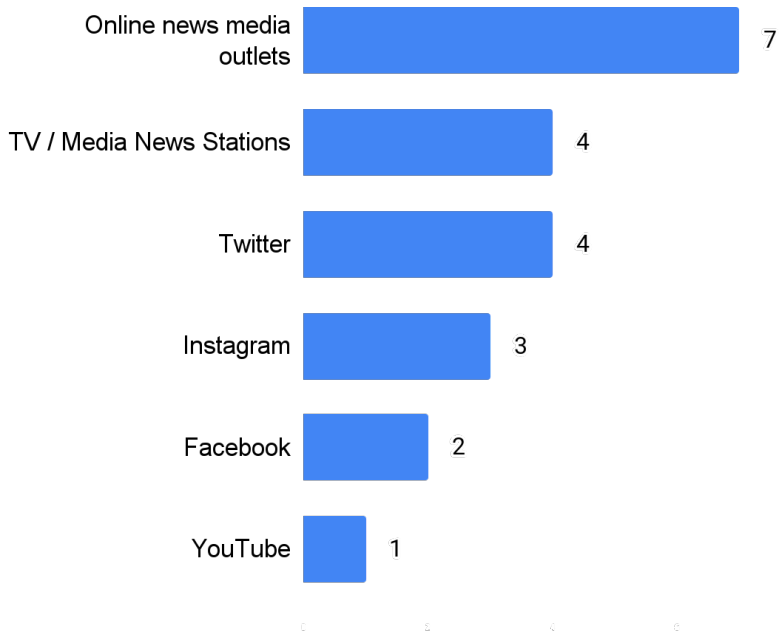


# Focus Group Results



# Sources for News and Information

## Top News and Media Sources Used



**How closely, if at all, do you follow news and information on current events?**

**76%** of respondents follow news and current events **somewhat or very closely**

**What makes information or a news story most compelling to you?**

***“...if it pertains to me, then I should know what’s going on.”***

***“If it reflects my community, my people, and my family...”***

***“...if commentators are qualified specialists. Also if my friends are discussing something, then I’ll learn more about it.”***

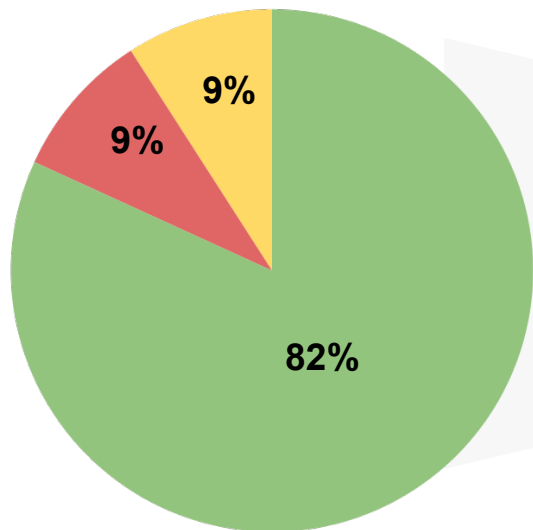
***“I look at if something is timely and relevant. If it’s current and being spoken about, and applies to me, I’m more likely to read it.”***



# Perspectives on ASH's Support of Phase Out

## What's your reaction to ASH's support to phase out tobacco sales in the state of California?

● In Favor ● Against ● Neutral



Respondents who reported having a negative family impact by tobacco are more likely to be sympathetic to a sales ban

*"All your research says we were targeted and now you want to get rid of something we are all hella addicted to and make us criminals?"*

*"Mixed thoughts. Everyone wants their own choice, but I would support the ban..."*

*"...it's something I would support. My concern would be the extent to which people would go to get tobacco illegally."*

*"I'm supportive of phasing out tobacco products."  
"I do support the ban, but there are other underlying issues"*





# Perspectives on ASH's Support of Phase Out

Is there anything that would not make you want to support a ban on tobacco sales?

*"The only reason I wouldn't support it would be because people might go through unsafe measures to obtain tobacco. I'd rather the person be safe getting tobacco even if I don't agree with using it."*

*"I wouldn't support it if the ban isn't truly a solution because people look for them elsewhere. It would have to involve providing other resources that the community needs."*

*"Providing resources to help in addition to the ban would help. Those resources could help deter people from getting tobacco from other sources."*

*"I think of marijuana before it was legalized, everyone could get it but a lot of the people who were incarcerated for it were people of color."*

*"No, I'm 100% for it. I think cigarettes can affect a lot more people than just the smoker, like their kids. You're exposed whether you want to be or not."*



# Perspectives on ASH's Support of Phase Out

If tobacco wasn't going to be criminalized, does that change your thoughts?



*Most respondents reported that their opinion of ASH's support to phase out tobacco products **would not change**.*

Is there anything that would make you not want to support a ban on tobacco sales?

*"The only reason I wouldn't support it would be because people might go through unsafe measures to obtain tobacco. I'd rather the person be **safe getting tobacco even if I don't agree with using it.**"*

*"It would have to involve **providing other resources** that the community needs."*

What if only certain tobacco products, like cigarettes were phased out?



*"I think it's a good idea and it's a start."*



*"It's a solution that's weak and in my opinion reinforces the belief that e-cigs are okay."*



*"I would be okay with that but I would think e-cigs would be next because I think there's been research showing e-cigs are just as bad if not worse."*



*"Phasing out traditional cigarettes makes sense because it has a second hand impact but something that doesn't affect anyone else like gum doesn't make sense to ban."*



# Personal Stories of Tobacco

**Have you or your family been impacted by negative health effects attributed to tobacco products?**

***"A lot of people in my family passed away from smoking. My mother is a chronic smoker and she's very sick. My father smokes. It's taken a lot of people away in my life."***

***"I grew up with two parents who smoked and had a brother who was asthmatic. It's a gateway drug and not a good thing at all."***

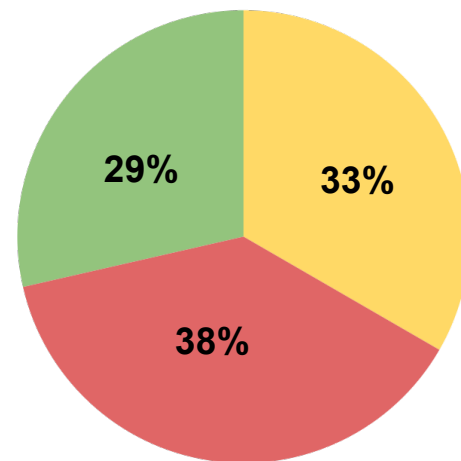
***"My mom smoked for 35 years and died of cancer."***

***"My father still smokes and it's such a trigger in my family. It's led to a lot of other issues and addiction and family drama."***

***"I had a grandma who died who smoked all her life until she couldn't hold it."***

Respondents who reported having a negative family impact by tobacco are more likely to be sympathetic to a sales ban

● Uncertain ● Yes ● No



# Perspectives on Tobacco News

## What would make news about tobacco products more compelling to you?

*"If there was something that affected my boyfriend then I would be more interested since **it affects someone I care about.**"*

*"A lot of tobacco content is passion or personality-driven and I think the audience is used to that and is saturated or overwhelmed by that. I have more interest now in new research or new studies or facts. **I would highlight new studies and findings that people might not know, in particular about these new products like E-Cig and Vaping.** I find the studies and facts more persuasive."*

*"I love statistics and numbers. I'd like to see the same type of energy used in COVID campaigns for smoking campaigns. **Numbers are compelling to me and draw me into reading about the topic at hand.**"*

*"**Connect with people on a personal and emotional way.** If they made it sound scarier or more terrifying, because it is. They need to make cigarettes and smoking as frightening as COVID because it kills people too."*

## Main Takeaways:

Respondents respond best to stories that are **emotional** and **relevant** to them.

**Scary and urgent** news moves some respondents

They want to see news that lists the **facts, figures**, and is **somewhat contrary to common knowledge.**



# Reactions to Menthol Flavor

**What do you think about menthol being more addictive and being used at higher rates among racial minorities?**

*"My mom smokes menthol tobacco. It is addicting and it tastes good. **I think it's something we should take off the market because it's addictive and harmful.**"*

*"**I think it's a good idea to get rid of something that's addictive.** Obviously there's racism within the tobacco industry so if we could get rid of it, that'd be great."*

*"**Cigarettes in general have been geared toward people of color and Black people** and that was part of the branding. People of color, Blacks, Latinos more than whites."*

*"It's on brand for them to not ban the kinds of cigarettes that affect African Americans and Native Americans. **I'm not surprised to see they're not banning the tobacco that affects those demographics.**"*

*"**I think they brand toward people of color** because they look at what we lack, so if we lack access to mental health, smoking becomes a mental health coping mechanism."*

## Main Takeaways:

Respondents felt strongly that menthol **should be taken off the market.**

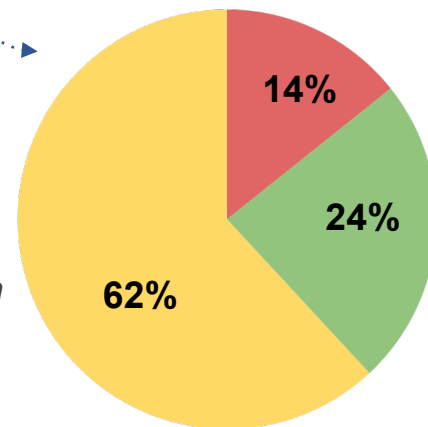
While **disgusted that menthol flavoring is not banned** due to its higher use in minority populations, **respondents were not surprised** at this news.



# Perspective on Other Nicotine Products

If people could still get other types of nicotine products, would you support or oppose such a phase out?

● Oppose ● Support ● Unsure



*"...I would like to see all of it go away ... I don't want anyone to get in trouble for it. I'd love to see it go away though."*



*"I think it's a good idea and it's a start. My father was an alcoholic and the last drug he did was cigarettes and when you buy E-Cigarettes you can control how much nicotine is in it, so he's lowered how much nicotine is in his cigarettes. I think having that option is positive."*



*"It's a solution that's weak and in my opinion reinforces the belief that E-Cigarettes are okay. I think they'd be suggesting that E-Cigarettes and vapes are the clean option for getting nicotine. Sure, it would help but I think the messaging behind it needs to be clear and careful."*



*"I would be okay with that but I would think E-Cigarettes would be next because I think there's been research showing E-Cigarettes are just as bad if not worse."*



*"Vaping is like putting lipstick on a pig."*

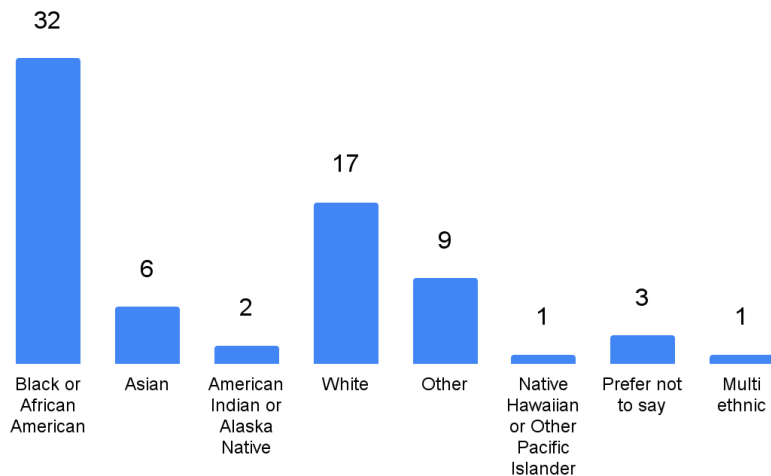


# Recruitment Survey Results

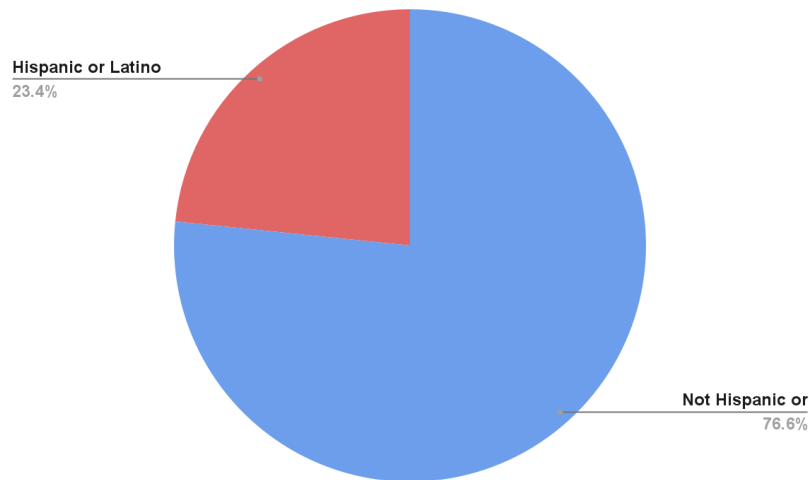


# Demographics

## Respondent Race



## Respondent Identity



n=71

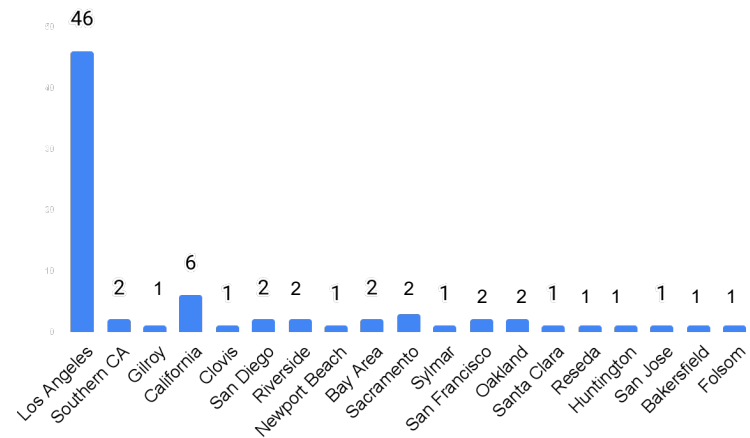
\*some respondents declined to provide their race and ethnicity





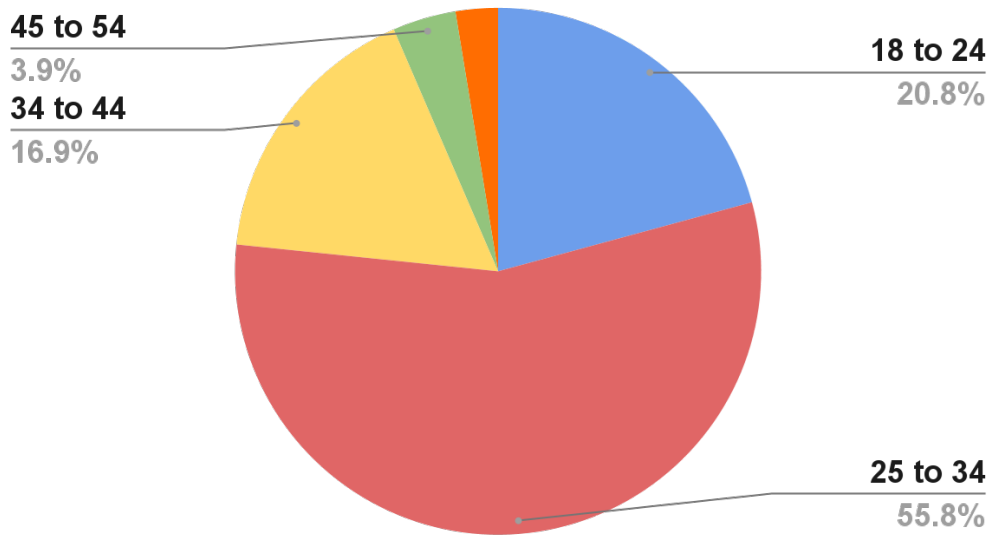
# Demographics

Respondent Location



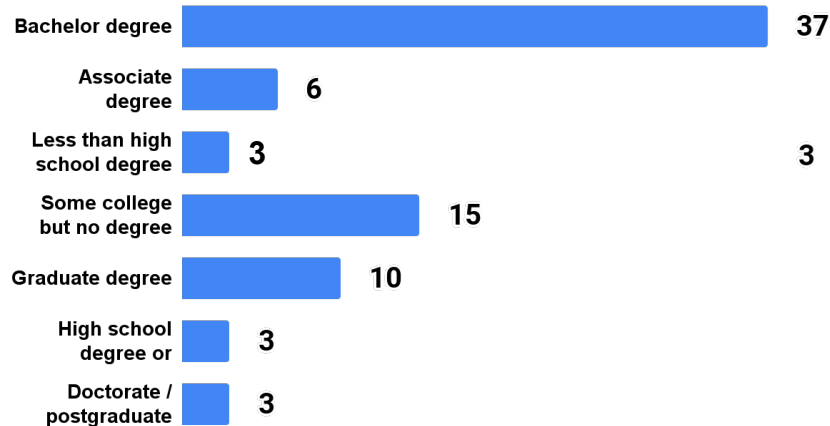
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Age Ranges

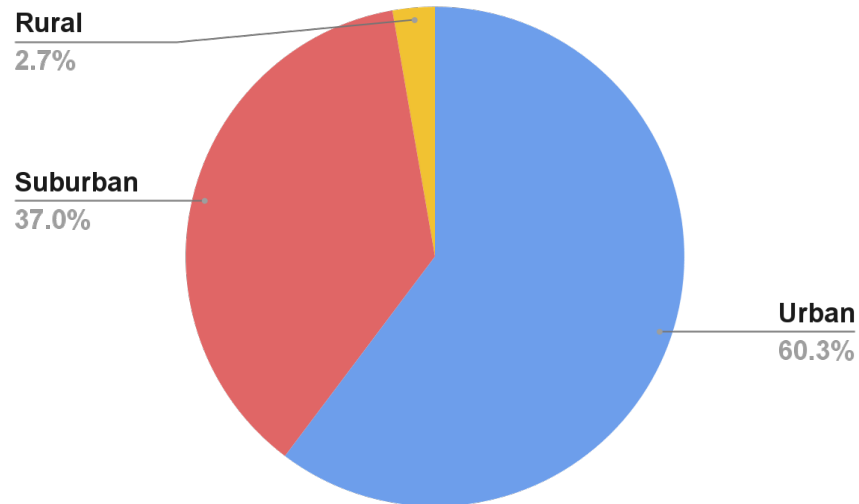


# Demographics

## Respondent Education Level



## Respondent Location

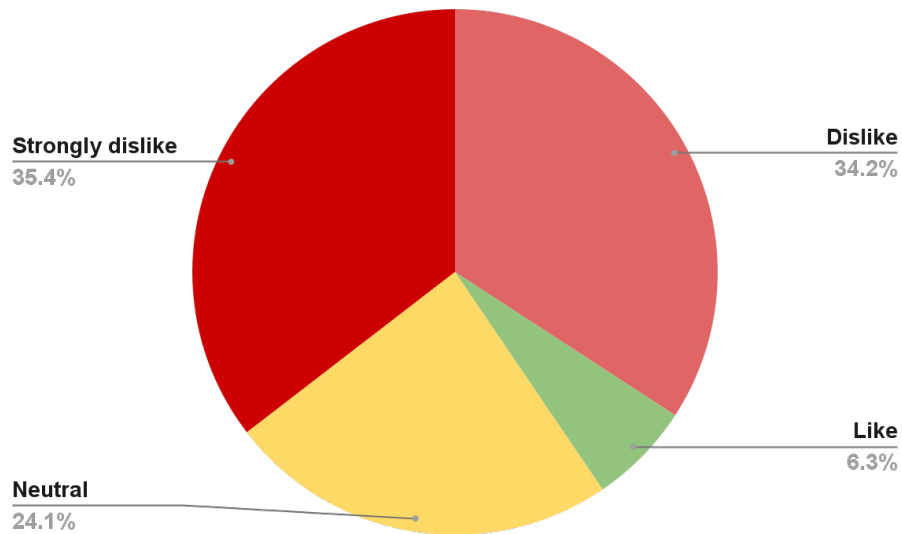


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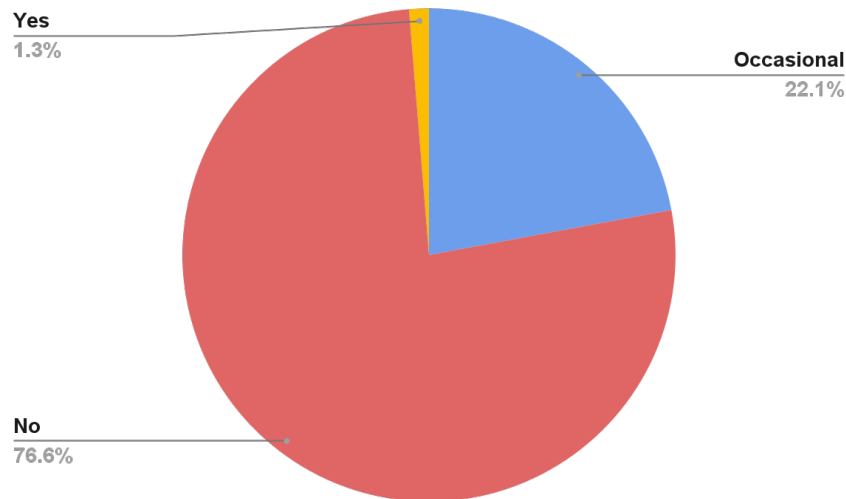
# Perspectives and Impacts on Smoking

## Feelings on Smoking and Tobacco



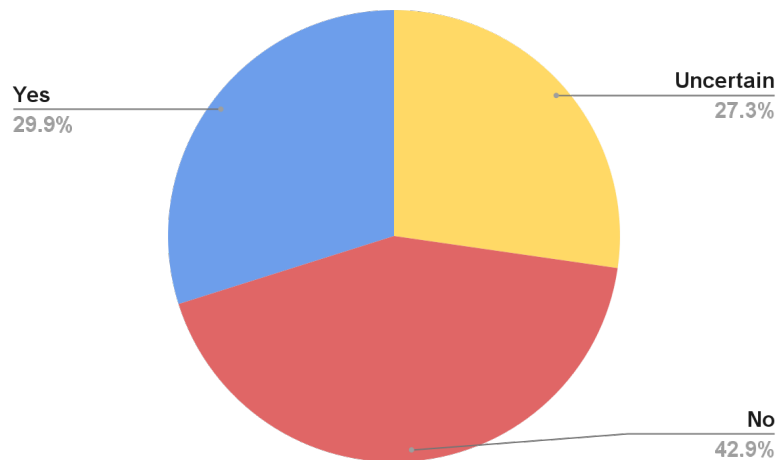
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## Respondent Smoking Status



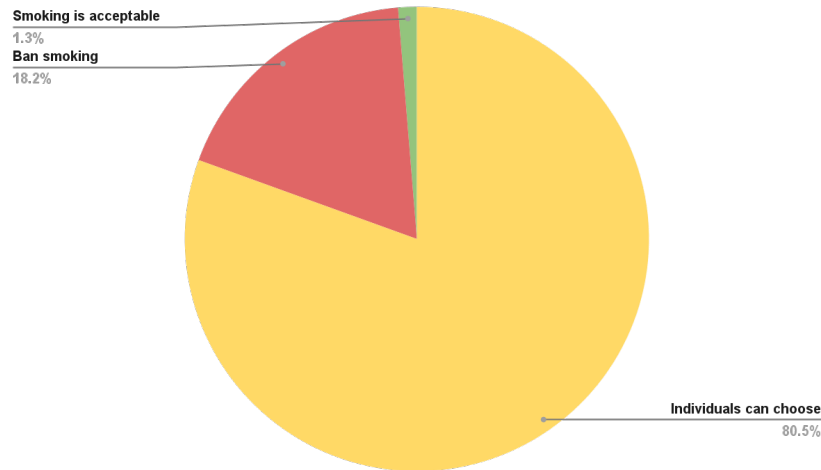
# Perspectives and Impacts on Smoking

## Negatively impacted by tobacco products



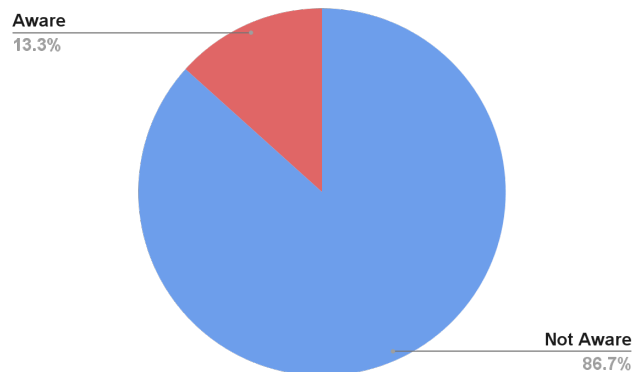
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## What do you think about Tobacco Products?

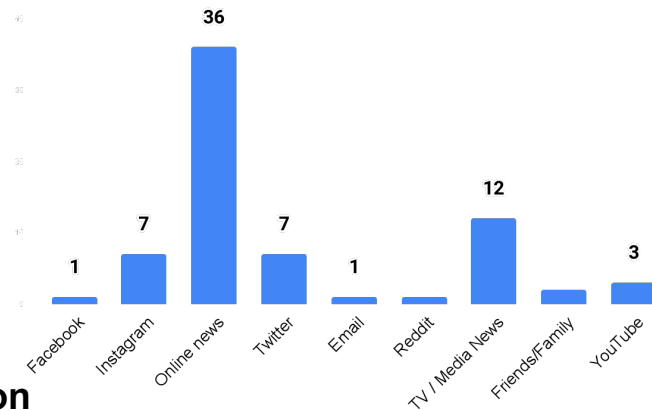


# News and Media Sources

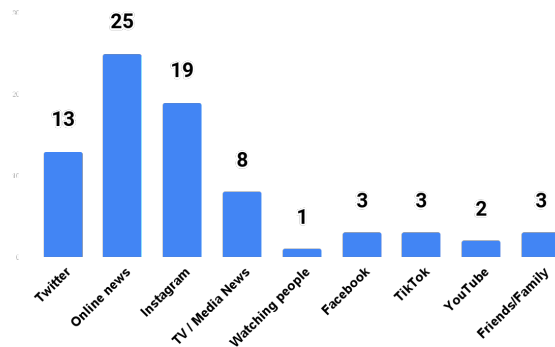
## Awareness of Manhattan Beach Tobacco Phase-Out



## Most Trusted source of News and Information



## Main source of News and Information



n=77



# Focus Group High Level Overviews



# Black / African American Cohort

8

**Respondents Attended**

**100%** of Respondents  
were **non-Smokers**

## Top 3 News Sources

1. Twitter
2. Online news media outlets  
(New York Times, CNN, MSN,  
Huffington Post, etc.)
3. TV / Media News Stations  
(Fox News, CNN, etc.)

***Most respondents were moderately  
opposed to tobacco products.***

***Two of the eight respondents had  
negative family experiences with  
tobacco.***

**What's your immediate reaction to this statement about  
ASH's support to phase out tobacco sales in the state of  
California?**

***The majority of participants supported the tobacco ban but felt  
there were also larger underlying issues that should be addressed.***

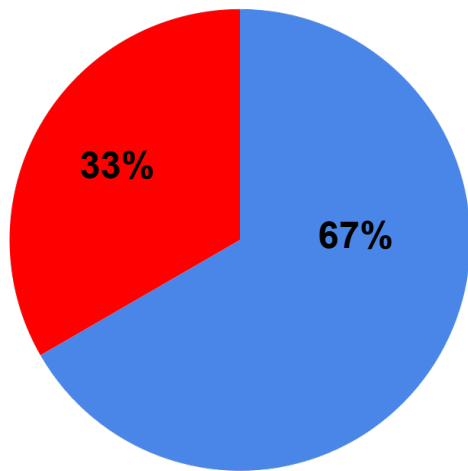


# Latinx Cohort

6

Respondents Attended

● non-Smokers ● Occasional Smokers



## Top 3 News Sources

1. TV / Media News Stations (Fox News, CNN, etc.)
2. Online news media outlets (New York Times, CNN, MSN, Huffington Post, etc.)
3. Twitter

***All respondents were strongly or moderately opposed to tobacco products.***

***The majority of respondents or their families were negatively impacted by tobacco products.***

**What's your reaction to ASH's support to phase out tobacco sales in the state of California?**

*Participants had mixed reactions, with some in support, and some against a ban in fear it would create a Black Market.*

**If the use of tobacco wasn't going to be criminalized, does that change your thoughts?**

*This information had little impact on respondent thoughts.*





# Latinx Cohort

What's your reaction to ASH's support to phase out tobacco sales in the state of California?

## Non-smokers:

*"Although cigarettes haven't affected my family, drug abuse and incarceration has affected my family. **When you talk about banning a product, I think about it becoming a criminal act to smoke**, so it's hard for me to support a ban. My brother has been arrested for drugs and the things he's done to get drugs, that lead him to get arrested. **I worry it would affect communities of color for behaviors that were thrust upon them.**"*

## Occasional smokers:

*"I think it's great. I would support the phasing out of all tobacco products."*

*"Mixed thoughts. Everyone wants their own choice, but I would support the ban. It's their choice and I can't impose it on other people. While it's a good idea, I can only choose for myself and my family."*

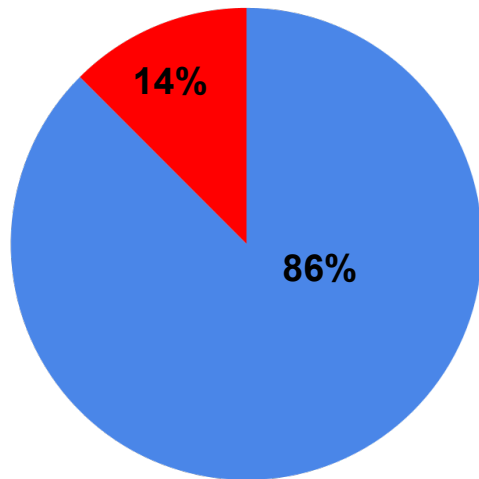


# General Health & Wellness Cohort

7

Respondents Attended

● non-Smokers ● Occasional smokers



## Top 3 News Sources

1. Online news media outlets (New York Times, CNN, MSN, Huffington Post, etc.)
2. Instagram
3. Facebook

*All respondents were **strongly or moderately opposed** to tobacco products*

***Two out of seven** respondents had **negative family impacts** due to tobacco products*

## What's your reaction to ASH's support to phase out tobacco sales in the state of California?

*Respondents were generally supportive of a state-wide ban, but expressed concern for the dangers of the Black Market sale of tobacco products.*

## If the use of tobacco wasn't going to be criminalized, does that change your thoughts?

*This information reassured one respondent of their support for a ban.*



# List of Full Focus Group Questions

1. To get us started I'd like to learn more about each of you. In a moment I'll call on each of you and ask you to introduce yourself with your name, where you're from, and what you as a social media influencer focus on with your accounts/brand.
2. How closely, if at all, do you follow news and information on current events?
  - a. 1 - Very closely, 2 - Somewhat closely, 3 - Not so closely, 4 - Not closely at all
3. What sources or news outlets do you most frequently use to get your information from? This could be a news station, website, blog, social media, or friends/family.
  - a. Why do you use this particular source/news outlet for information on current events?
4. What makes information or a news story most compelling to you?
  - a. Is it the: imagery, shocking facts, personal connection, news source (i.e. the CDC v. a celebrity)
5. What do you think of tobacco products? Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, hookah, vapes, e-cigarettes, dip, and chew.
6. Cigarette flavors, except for menthol, have been banned. Menthol makes it easier to start smoking and makes it harder to quit. The FDA and some cities are working to ban menthol in cigarettes. 85% of African Americans and half of Native Indian Americans use Menthol cigarettes. What do you think about this?
7. Have you or your family been impacted by negative health effects attributed to tobacco products?
8. What would make news or information about tobacco products more compelling to you?
9. What's your immediate reaction to this statement about ASH's support to phase out tobacco sales in the state of California?
  - a. Do you support or oppose this phase out of tobacco sales in California?
10. What would convince you that a tobacco sales ban is necessary and helpful?
  - a. Personal stories, data or statistics, changes in law and law enforcement, etc.
11. Is there anything that would \*not\* make you want to support a ban on tobacco sales?
12. What if only certain tobacco products, like cigarettes, were phased out, but people could still get other types of nicotine products like e-cigarettes? Would you be more likely to support or oppose such a phase out?



# Thank You



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