



Opinion

Editorial Board

Unraveling the FDA's shortsighted ban on flavored vapes

The government's crackdown on e-cigarettes created a more dangerous black market.

Yesterday at 5:00 p.m. EDT

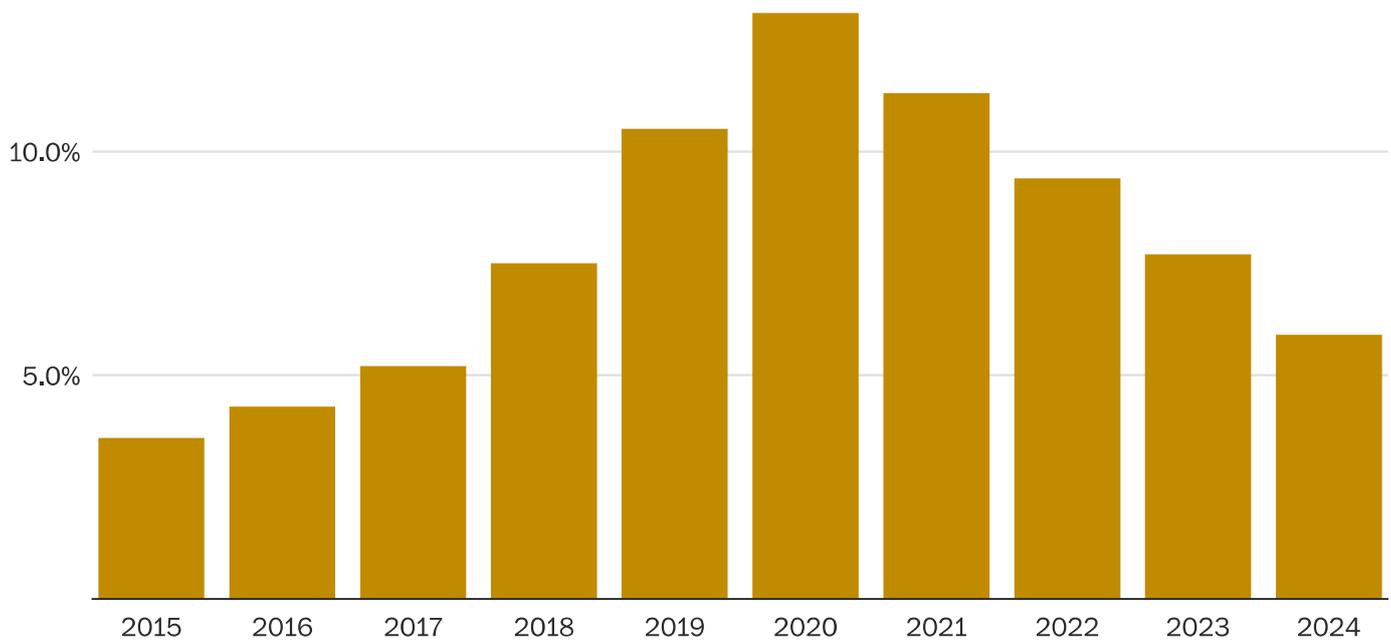
The Food and Drug Administration recently signaled that it's planning to let e-cigarette companies sell a broader range of flavors in the United States. It's a welcome change, but the FDA isn't going nearly far enough.

Illegal vapes began flooding into the U.S. after the enactment of the 2020 ban, which affected all vapes except for tobacco- and menthol-flavored products. The black market has proved extraordinarily resilient to enforcement crackdowns, and these illicit products now make up what the industry estimates to be 70 percent of all e-cigarette sales.

By authorizing companies to start selling some of these popular flavors, the FDA can undercut the black market with alternatives to products that sometimes contain harmful chemicals such as formaldehyde, acrolein and lead.

Anti-vaping activists warn that allowing flavored e-cigarettes to be sold legally would attract young people. Nicotine-heavy products are addictive and can have serious consequences for young, developing brains. But teens have no trouble accessing the counterfeit versions. Fewer are using e-cigarettes, but there's no proof that is directly a result of the ban. After all, the use of traditional cigarettes continues to reach historic lows among kids, despite their exposure to new nicotine products.

Percentage of middle and high school students who say they used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days



Source: National Youth Tobacco Survey

Many adults as prefer the flavored versions — including those who are trying to quit smoking. In fact, [survey data suggests](#) that those who vape with “sweeter” flavors are more likely to ultimately quit compared to those who use tobacco or menthol flavors.

Research [has consistently shown](#) that e-cigarettes are more effective at helping people quit combustible tobacco products than other nicotine replacement strategies, such as patches or lozenges. Meanwhile, vaping — while [certainly not risk free](#) — so far appears far less harmful than smoking. Any time the government makes it less appealing for people to make the switch, it discourages them from pursuing a healthier substitution.

Adult are free to choose to consume all kinds of harmful substances, including some in a sweeter variety. There’s no reason vaping should be any different.

What readers are saying

The conversation explores a range of perspectives on the topic of flavored vaping products and their regulation. Some participants argue that reducing sweet flavors is an effective harm minimization strategy to prevent children from taking up vaping, while others suggest that the... [Show more](#)

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