

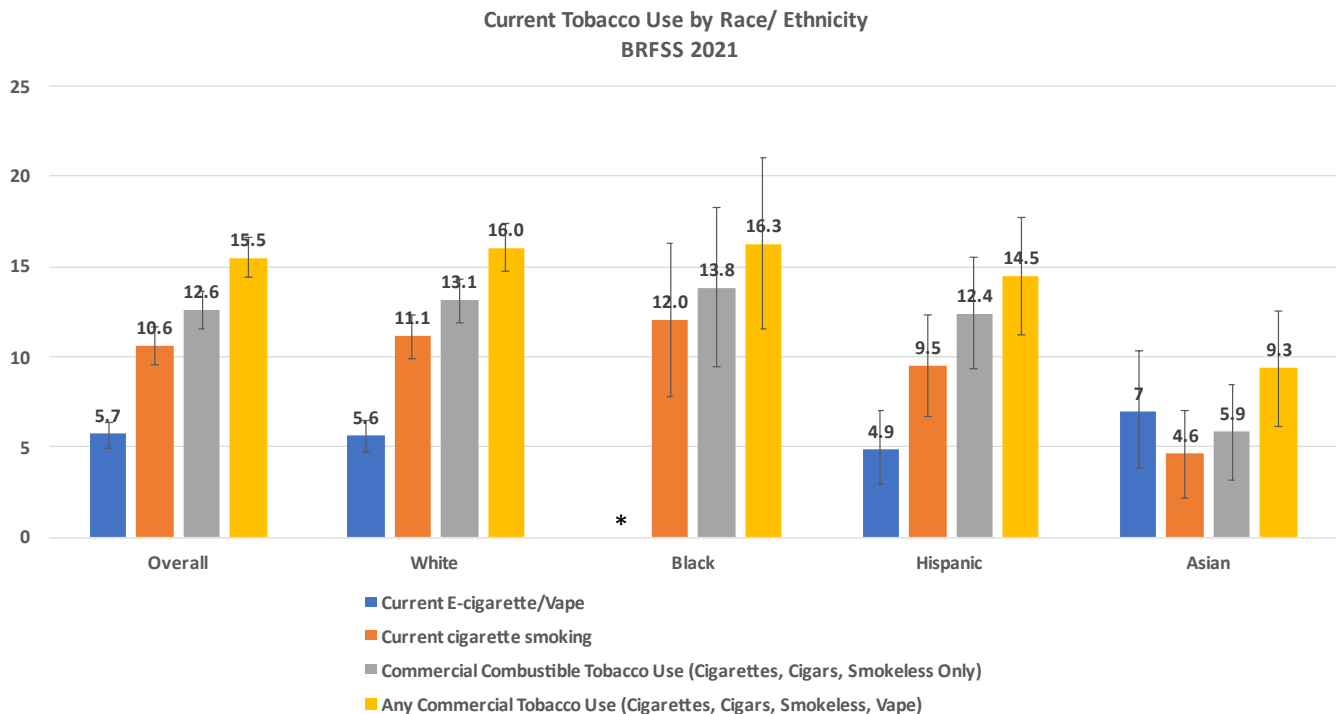
Tobacco Free Mass

Value Proposition

Tobacco Free Mass advocates for legislation, policies and programs that counteract the tobacco industry's impact on the people of Massachusetts, focusing on those most affected by tobacco use and its harms. We work to increase awareness of tobacco issues, help tobacco and nicotine users quit, prevent young people from starting, and ensure that no one is exposed to secondhand smoke or e-cigarette aerosol.

As the overall rate of tobacco use has decreased, the disparities between the state average and groups with high rates of tobacco use have become more pronounced. People who are Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ+, have low incomes, live in rural communities, and/or those who report having poor behavioral health are currently the most disproportionately affected by tobacco use. This situation is a crisis caused by a combination of tobacco industry targeting and the disproportionate burden of health problems caused by systemic and institutional racism and other structural inequities. To properly respond, we need engagement and leadership from these disproportionately affected groups. We commit to actively recruiting leadership from these groups to roles on our decision-making bodies.

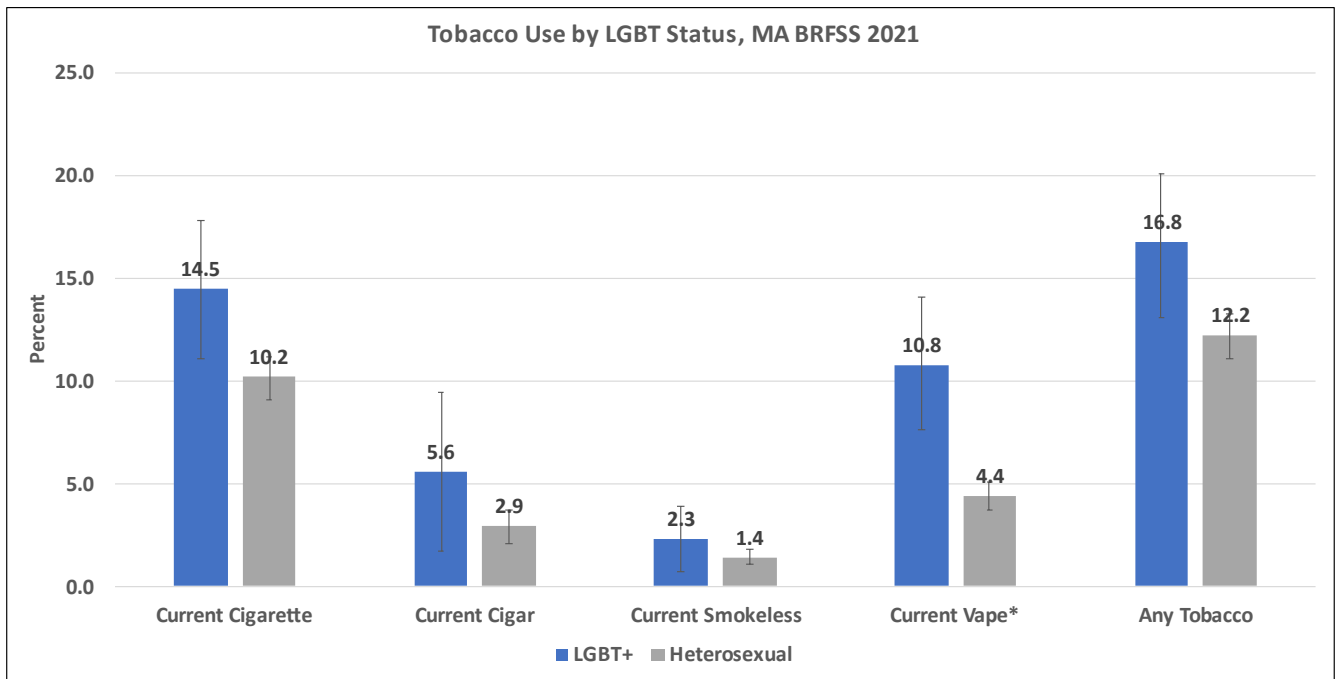
ADULT DATA – Chart 1



*current vaping not reportable

At TFM we are working to strengthen our collaborative approach to address health disparities caused by tobacco use by focusing on populations disproportionately impacted by tobacco use as mentioned above. One essential step is to help policy and decision makers understand trends and disparities in tobacco use. We must work together to speak out on the social injustices caused by tobacco companies and their products. There **IS** strength in numbers.

Chart 2



*Rates are different. Chart 1 shows the overall vape rate for MA adults, while chart 2 shows the vape rate for individuals who identify as LGBT+ vs straight/cisgender (so does not present the overall vape rate for MA adults).

Our members contribute in many ways, including lending expertise, developing strategy, communicating with policymakers, testifying before legislators, and sharing information. The work we do is strong because we do it together. Our willingness to work together as a coalition, weathering disappointments and doubt, has meant that we have had moments of clarity, insight, excitement, and victory. We commit to a climate of collaboration, thoughtfulness, respect, and understanding as we seek to expand and bring in new members to move us forward.

The tobacco/vaping industry is well-funded, tenacious, and continues to be active in Massachusetts. It works to make its products appear harmless and acceptable through pervasive marketing, maintaining a strong presence in communities, manipulating small businesses, and influencing decision-makers. We commit to monitoring tobacco/vaping industry activity and countering its actions.

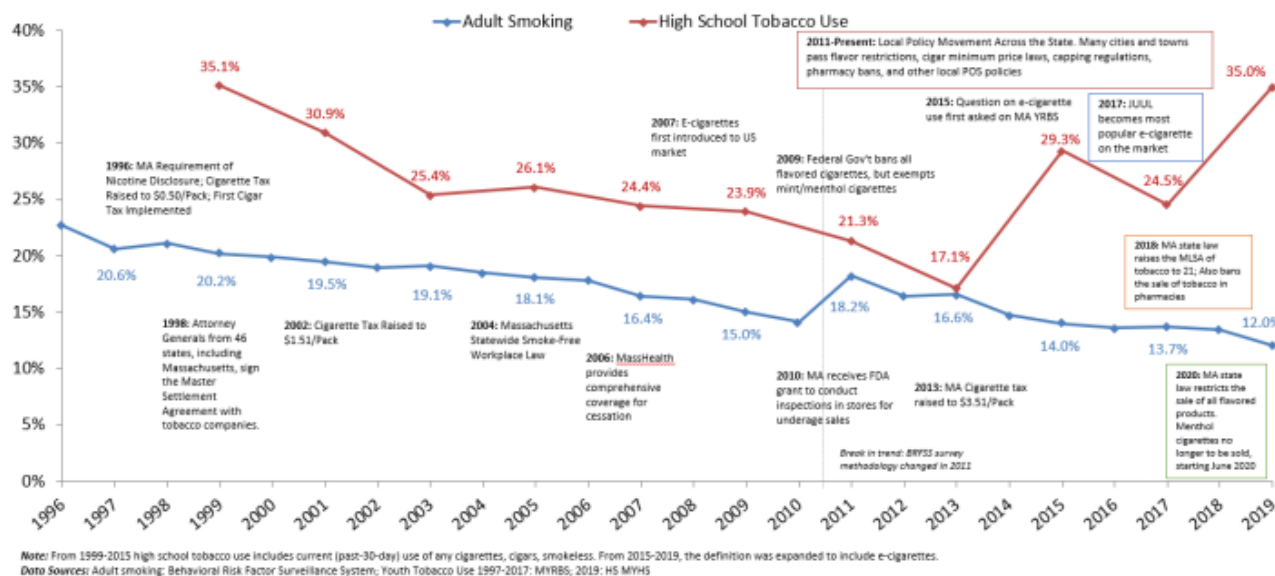
We are closer than ever before to ending the tobacco problem in Massachusetts - but we're not there yet - as the tobacco industry continues to work hard to addict future generations with e-cigarettes and other tobacco products. Our membership remains committed and engaged, raising awareness of key issues, and taking action.

These achievements have helped to cut the adult combustible tobacco smoking rate down by over half and the youth rate by almost 90%. In 1992 the Adult Smoking Rate in Massachusetts was 23.5% and in 2022 it dropped to 10.6%. The youth smoking rate in 1993 was 30.2%, reaching as high as 35.7% in 1995, and in 2022 it fell to 3.5%. It is hard to imagine how many lives each of these achievements have saved or improved.

But the work is not over! In 2015, an e-cigarette company had planted the seeds for a **youth addiction epidemic** that would make nicotine cool again after years of historic declines in cigarette smoking. In **2019 youth use of any tobacco product was at a significant high, 35% of high school students** reporting using a tobacco product in the past 30 days (see graph below). The

tobacco industry still is hard at work developing new products, looking for new customers and seeking to roll back the gains we have made.

Figure 1. Adult Smoking (BRFSS) and High School Tobacco Use (YHS) rates in Massachusetts, 1996-2019 (larger scale also included as a supplemental document to comment).



There is still much that needs to be done!

- **Secure adequate funding for the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program** at the Department of Public Health. Even the strongest laws and regulations can be circumvented without enforcement at the state and local levels.
- **Expand coverage of tobacco cessation services in MassHealth** by allowing more clinicians to provide tobacco cessation counseling. This is especially important for people with behavioral health diagnoses -- one of the highest categories of tobacco use!
- **Increase cigarette and cigar taxes** to reduce tobacco initiation by youth and encourage cessation by existing smokers. Youth are especially sensitive to price increases!
- **Protect Massachusetts' state and local tobacco laws and regulations from attack. They are the strongest in the nation and we need to defend them!** The law prohibiting the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes advances health equity by significantly reducing tobacco-related health disparities.

The membership of the Tobacco Free Mass (TFM) coalition includes national, statewide, and local organizations, as well as committed individuals. They support our work through annual membership dues and contributions. In addition, they help guide our work as voting members of our coalition and its committees and help develop our policies. Our efforts are made possible through the financial support we receive from our membership's dues. Additional member benefits:

- Eligibility to vote as part of the TFM Coalition and join the Advocacy Committee
- Most up to date local, state, and federal tobacco information and calls to action
- Listing on the TFM website and inclusion on the TFM letterhead
- Build your organizations relationship with leading state and national public health organizations
- **The knowledge that you are supporting the only coalition dedicated to fighting tobacco/vaping in Massachusetts...and taking pride in all our achievements!**