

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Press Release June 10, 2024  
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## **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The American Lung Association's "State of Tobacco Control" Report**

The American Lung Association's (ALA) annual "State of Tobacco Control" report evaluates states and the federal government's actions to eliminate tobacco use—the nation's leading cause of preventable death killing 480,000 each year. These proven-effective and urgently needed tobacco control laws and policies save lives. According to the ALA, state policymakers and the federal government must do more to protect the public from tobacco.

A key finding of the report was that Menthol Cigarettes and Flavored Cigars continue to be popular with youth, making it more difficult to quit in later years. The report indicates that all references to tobacco use, tobacco control or tobacco products refer specifically to the use of manufactured, commercial tobacco products.

The ALA maintains the Federal Government must take action to fulfill its goals to reduce cancer deaths and improve health equity by finalizing the menthol cigarette and flavored cigar rules. Failing to end the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars will result in more death and disease caused by smoking, especially among historically marginalized communities.

The tobacco companies have engaged in a relentless effort since the 1950s to target the marketing of menthol cigarettes in Black communities using advertising, free samples and donations to Black community organizations. Unfortunately, they have been highly successful in this effort, with over 80% of Black individuals in the U.S who smoke using menthol cigarettes today, up from only 10% prior to the beginning of the targeted marketing in the 1950s. Menthol cigarettes make it both easier to start and harder to quit by reducing the harshness of the smoke and cooling the throat. This has led to more disease and death among Black communities. A study released in 2021 by the CDC found that menthol cigarettes were responsible for 1.5 million new smokers, 157,000 smoking-related premature deaths and 1.5 million life-years lost among African Americans from 1980–2018.

In addition, flavored cigars now form a substantial part of the overall cigar market, and a higher proportion of youth and young adults start using cigars with flavored versions compared to older adults. Data from the 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) show that 64.8% of middle and high school students who smoke cigars use flavored cigars, amounting to 270,000 kids. Menthol flavored little cigars can also easily act as substitutes for menthol cigarettes if their sale is not prohibited at the same time.

The ALA feels the FDA must also finalize its review of all pending premarket tobacco product marketing applications as many pre-market tobacco applications for e-cigarettes and other tobacco products submitted after September 9, 2020 remain unaddressed.

The federal government's enforcement against illegal e-cigarette products has been decidedly more mixed, but 2023 showed an increase in meaningful action taken against companies engaged in distribution of illegal products, notably including wholesalers, manufacturers and importers. However, millions of flavored illegal e-cigarette products remain available for sale across the country contributing to the 2.13 million middle and high school students that continued using e-cigarettes in 2023 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey. The most popular brand among youth- Elf Bar – simply changed its name to avoid importation enforcement efforts. Continued enforcement actions by the DOJ against manufacturers, importers and distributors selling illegal products will be necessary to get the situation under control.

The decline in adult cigarette smoking rates stalled out according to the most recent data, staying at 11.6% in 2022 compared to 11.5% in 2021, according to results from the CDC's 2022 National Health Interview Survey. Overall adult tobacco use actually increased in 2022 though, driven by a rise in adult e-cigarette use from 4.5% to 6%. The increases in e-cigarette use over the past two years have been driven by the 18- to 24-year-old age group and 65.5% of e-cigarette users in this age group did not smoke cigarettes previously in 2022.

Overall tobacco use rates also mask significant disparities in tobacco use among races/ethnicities and among socio-economic levels. Tobacco use remains alarmingly high among: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual adults at 26.1% compared to 19.5% among heterosexual adults; adults enrolled in Medicaid (27.9%) and with no health insurance (26.6%) compared to 17.4% of adults with private health coverage; and among adults ever diagnosed with anxiety or depression at 27.0% compared to 16.8% among persons never diagnosed with either.<sup>9</sup> Certain populations are also disproportionately exposed to secondhand smoke, including: children ages 3-11, Black people in the U.S., persons living in poverty and people with a high school education or less. Parts of the country, especially many Southern and Appalachian states, remain unprotected from secondhand smoke in public places and workplaces at the state level.

The ALA maintain efforts to enforce against the importation, distribution and sale of illegal e-cigarettes be increased to prevent and reduce tobacco use in 2024. To view the report please visit <https://www.lung.org/research/sotc>.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about tobacco use, marijuana use and vaping. The Coalition seeks to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [ww.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit the Youth and Tobacco Use Awareness

Campaign page of SAFE's website to learn more about how smoking is detrimental to your health [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org)