

# Understanding Social, Economic, and Cultural Considerations in the Banning of Flavored Tobaccos

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### Background

As counties across the country consider regulating and banning flavored tobacco, it is essential to understand tobacco user perspectives prior to decisions. This project focused on the use of flavored tobacco- specifically vapes and hookah- in Middle Eastern communities in the Bay Area in order to better understand the social, economic, and cultural implications of tobacco bans.

### Upcoming Tobacco Products: What to Look out For



### Methods

- Initiated meetings with stakeholders in flavored tobacco sector (i.e. business owners, policy makers, and users)
- Conduct a thorough assessment of literature and public information on upcoming flavored tobacco trends
- Conduct interviews with hookah and vape smokers (sub -category of flavored tobacco)
- Deep dive interview with Muslim and Middle Eastern users in order to produce three podcast to inform community stakeholders

### Why did you start smoking hookah? Qualitative Responses

Who: 30 interviews; 17 women responded and 13 men. 29 were of Middle Eastern descent and 1 was Latinx; 10 self-identified as Muslim during the interviews  
 When: Winter and Spring 2022  
 What: Semi-structured interviews about what hookah products they smoke(d), when they started smoking hookah, why they started smoking hookah, what their familiarity is with flavored tobacco smoke policies in the bay area, if/why they quit or considered quitting

THEME	QUOTE
Combination: Peer-pressure/seemingly cool	"My cousins friends took us me to a lounge and everyone was doing it" "My brother's friends bbq in high school. I wanted to feel cool"
Normalization in culture (equivalent of drinking in American society)	"When we had our social worker she was a great resource where I was not certain what my concern level was or if I was missing something—like having her as a resource after I referred a patient to go to check in on was good."
The role of flavor	"I remember seeing bubblegum flavor and I wanted to try it too" "Thought it would taste good" "It didn't taste good at first but the flavors make it better and it's the chill thing that everyone is doing"
What motivated you to quit smoking?	"I just feel more comfortable when a senior who has had years more experience than me is able to assist me in making these decisions"

### Objectives

Research flavored tobacco trends and products across the U.S.  
 Conduct interviews with Santa Clara County residents in order to understand their perspectives on flavored tobacco bans  
 Conduct interviews with hookah and vape smokers to understand their motivations for smoking

### Conclusions

- #### Recommendations
- Invest in data to understand the short-term (economic and health) consequences of hookah smoking
  - Engage stakeholders from vulnerable populations through focus groups in order to understand what would work for prevention and cessation
  - What are the broader public health considerations in MENA populations that must be considered beyond/before tackling hookah + flavored tobacco issues?