

June 2026

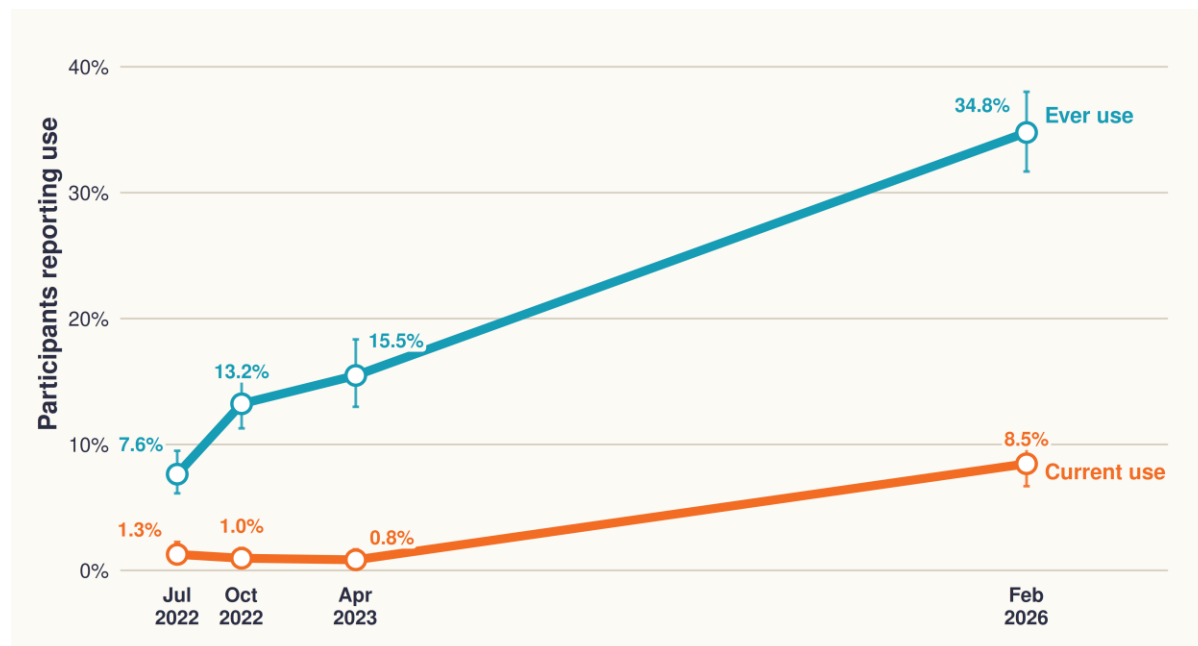
Longitudinal Nicotine Pouch Use Among Canadian Youth and Young Adults

The rapid emergence of oral nicotine pouches has significantly altered the nicotine market in recent years, outpacing public health surveillance and regulatory responses. These smokeless, tobacco-free pouches deliver nicotine discreetly through the oral mucosa (1). While potentially comparable to pharmaceutical nicotine replacements in terms of health effects, few studies have been conducted (2, 3).

As the fastest-growing nicotine category (4), nicotine pouch use is surging globally. A previous study found that in 2024 in Canada among young adults (20-29) ever-use reached 9.1% and past month use was 4.2% compared to 17.6% ever use and 7.9% past 30 day use in the US (3). Secondary students in Quebec (equivalent to grades 7-11 outside Quebec) in 2024 reported 2.9% past 30 day use (4). Usage has been found to be highest among males, youth, and concurrent tobacco users, rather than among those who formerly smoked (3-5). Among Canadians who currently smoke attempting to quit in 2024, only 6% used nicotine pouches in that quit attempt.(6) In Canada, Zonnic was initially approved in July 2023 and launched by Imperial Tobacco Canada Ltd. in October 2023 without legislated minimum age of sale and with limited marketing restrictions. To curb rising youth appeal, Health Canada intervened in August 2024 by mandating: behind-the-counter pharmacy sales only, stronger advertising restrictions, and additional labelling and flavouring limitations (mint and menthol flavours only) (7).

The Vaping Dependence Cohort (2020-2026), led by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit, is a longitudinal study examining changes in nicotine dependence and use patterns over time among 3,400 Canadian youth and adults aged 16 to 25 at baseline in 2020-2022. Nicotine pouch use (ever reported use, and use during the past 30 days) was first assessed in the 6th follow up wave in July 2022 (ages 18-27). Overall, questions on nicotine pouch use were included in 4 follow up waves (follow up waves 6-9). The most recent wave of the cohort (follow up wave 9) was surveyed in February to March 2026 when participants were 21-31 years old. The current analysis includes 2,348 participants who contributed to at least two nicotine pouch waves. Post-stratification weighting was used to generalize the sample to the Canadian population of young adults.

Key messages: In this longitudinal study, cumulative reported ever use of nicotine pouches increased from 7.6% in July 2022 (ages 17-27) to 34.8% in February 2026 (ages 21-31). Reported past-month use stayed near 1% between July 2022 and May 2023, then rose to 8.5% in February 2026.



- Figure 1. Prevalence of nicotine pouch use in the Canadian Vaping Dependence Cohort, 2022-2026. Ever use is cumulative reported ever use of nicotine pouch within the time period. Current use is past month use at from the survey date. Dates of data collection labelled as the average date. Actual dates of collection: Jul 2022: 2022-06-21 to 2022-09-19; Oct 2022: 2022-09-20 to 2023-04-12; Apr 2023: 2023-04-13 to 2023-05-22; Feb 2026: 2026-02-10 to 2026-03-23

The results show that nicotine pouch use is increasing. In the July 2022 survey, 7.6% of respondents reported ever use of nicotine pouches, and 1.3% had used in the past month. In the most recent wave in February 2026, 34.8% reported ever use and 8.5% reported use in the past month. The test for trend was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

References

- Al-Otaibi HM, Althobiani MA. Nicotine pouches: a narrative review of the existing literature. *Frontiers in Public Health*. 2025;13:1641308.
- Jablonski JJ, Cheetham AG, Martin AM. Market survey of modern oral nicotine products: determination of select HPHCs and comparison to traditional smokeless tobacco products. *Separations*. 2022;9(3):65.
- Reid JL, Burkhalter R, Ball J, et al. Awareness and use of oral nicotine pouches among youth and young adults, 2022–2024: repeat cross-sectional surveys in Canada, England, the USA and New Zealand. *BMJ Public Health*. 2025;3(2):e003457.
- Battista K, Piché-Ayotte M, Haddad S, Turcotte-Tremblay A-M, Leatherdale ST, Bélanger RE. Emerging use of oral nicotine pouches among Canadian adolescents: Findings from the COMPASS-Quebec study. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. 2025:1-11.
- Duren M, Atella L, Welding K, Kennedy RD. Nicotine pouches: a summary of regulatory approaches across 67 countries. *Tobacco Control*. 2024;33(e1):e32-e40.
- Statistics Canada. *Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) Annual Component Data Dictionary*. 2024. Accessed Feb 17, 2026.
- Government of Canada. Supplementary Rules Respecting Nicotine Replacement Therapies Order: SOR/2024-169 Publication Title: *Canada Gazette, Part II*. 2024;158(18).

This research was supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.