

Smoking and drinking less, young adults on LI support nicotine limits and alcohol warning labels



Local members of Generation Z appear to support recent federal government proposals that include a cancer-related warning label on alcohol. Credit: John Griffin

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Members of Generation Z on Long Island appear to support recent federal government proposals for a cancer-related warning label on alcohol and for limiting nicotine in cigarettes at a time when polls show young adults are drinking less alcohol and smoking less tobacco.

It's unclear whether President Donald Trump's administration will support recent pitches from former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The White House didn't respond to an inquiry this week.

The Surgeon General's Office and the FDA said Thursday the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which includes both agencies, has put "a pause on mass communications and public appearances that are not directly related to emergencies or critical to preserving health."

But a sampling of Gen Z members — a group topping out at age 28 — said in Newsday interviews they favored the proposals that came before Trump's inauguration.

WHAT NEWSDAY FOUND

- **Members of Generation Z** on Long Island appear to support recent federal government proposals for a cancer-related warning label on alcohol and for limiting nicotine in cigarettes.
- **It's unclear whether** President Donald Trump's administration will support recent pitches and the warning label would require action from Congress.
- **Local health advocates** said adjustments in federal policy can reshape people's relationships with alcohol and tobacco.

Raquel Brown, 21, Baldwin, said she sees the proposals as a step toward permanently weaning off drinking and smoking.

"It's really great, because it might make you think a little bit more before buying it," she said of proposed warning label for alcohol and cigarettes. "So it's just one step forward to that path. I think we could be like the generation that stops this. ... Like, it ends with us. "



The proposed warning labels "might make you think a little bit more before buying" alcohol or cigarettes, said Raquel Brown, 21, of Baldwin. Credit: Newsday/Howard Schnapp

Both substances are leading causes of preventable diseases, with tobacco long linked to cancer. Murthy's Jan. 3 [advisory](#) said alcohol is also the leading preventable cause of at least seven cancers, and warning labels on such beverages should be updated to warn of that.

"It's very important in general that what goes into your body you have complete knowledge of. This is a very beneficial step in just having everybody healthier and with clearer minds and hopefully with long lives ahead of them," said Francis Marrone, 22, of Bayville.

He was less enthused about a separate pitch from the FDA.

"It's very important that while you cap certain things, you leave individual rights and leave people to make their own choices," Marrone said.

On Jan. 15, the FDA proposed a new rule that would make cigarettes much less addictive by capping the nicotine in them at 0.7 milligrams, or levels officials said could stop new addictions from forming and encourage people who already smoke to quit.



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If the FDA's push to limit nicotine continues under Trump, [court battles](#) from tobacco companies could delay implementation, The Associated Press recently reported.

And while it would take a vote of Congress to change alcohol warning labels, local health advocates said adjustments in federal policy can reshape people's relationships with alcohol and tobacco.

"We're not going for a teetotaling society, but when it comes to marketing and promotion ... alcohol is not the social elixir that we advertise it as today," said Steve Chassman, executive director of the Westbury-based Long Island Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence Inc.



"I'm hoping the increased education makes a difference," said Nicholas Gallo, 26, of Deer Park. Credit: Newsday/Howard Schnapp

Dr. Richard Rosenthal, an addiction psychiatrist at Stony Brook Medicine, believes the proposed measures could impact consumption habits, saying people are "undereducated about risk" and when risk is corroborated by science, it "allows people to make better decisions."

He agrees there's a shift in younger people moving away from alcohol, saying "substances sort of go through trends" and "cannabis is sort of taking over from where alcohol used to be."

Nicolas Gallo, 26, of Deer Park, said he supports both recent government proposals.

"I'm hoping the increased education makes a difference," said Gallo, who called his generation already "well-informed."

Gallo also said he believes limiting nicotine could "help the population wean off" the drug.

Across the country, young adults aren't drinking or smoking as much as people their age did in the past, according to global analytics and advisory firm Gallup, which found that could be due in part to more young adults using electronic cigarettes and marijuana.



Emiliano Barron, 24, of Brooklyn, called the government proposals "a good move." Credit: Newsday/Howard Schnapp

A 2023 [Gallup Poll](#) showed 62% of those aged 18 to 34 use alcoholic beverages, down from 72% two decades ago.

[In August](#), Gallup said that during the last three years, an average of 6% of adults under 30 said they had smoked cigarettes in the past week, compared with 35% of young adults in 2001 through 2003.

Emiliano Barron, 24, a Brooklyn resident who is considering going to law school on Long Island, said the government's proposals are another step in the right direction.

"It's better than doing nothing. It's a good move," he said. "I guess we can see how it goes and if doesn't work out, we can have that conversation later."