

Support for Tobacco-Related Point of Sale Policies

Local Opinion Leaders & Adults in Vermont

Background

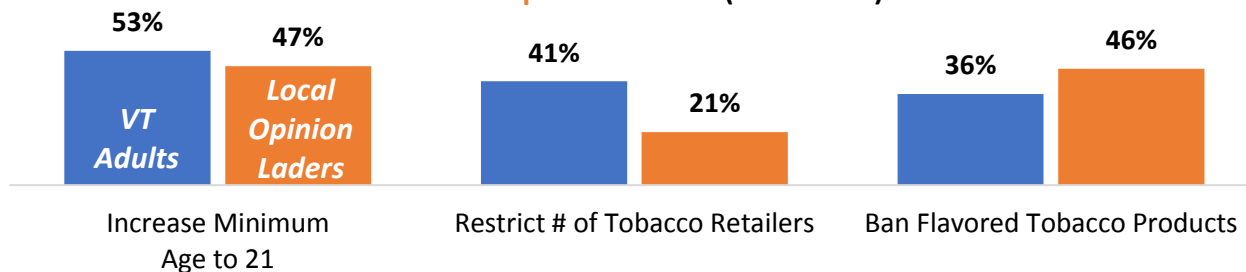
Every year, the tobacco industry spends billions of dollars on promotions to reduce tobacco prices and keep tobacco visible. In Vermont, the industry spends \$17.7 million on marketing each year¹ with most of the dollars being spent in the retail environment. Youth exposed to tobacco advertising in one of the nearly 1,000 tobacco retailers in Vermont are more likely to use tobacco.² For those trying to quit, exposure to marketing makes it harder to be successful. Tobacco industry marketing and promotion strategies include store location, product displays and packaging, flavored products, and promotions that keep prices low. Point of sale policies can help combat tobacco industry marketing strategies, such as keeping tobacco away from schools, banning redemption of tobacco coupons, and increasing the purchase age for tobacco.

Tobacco-Related Point of Sale Policy Support: Vermont Adults and Local Opinion Leaders

The Vermont Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program gathered information about policy support from local opinion leaders and the general adult population in 2016 and 2017.³ The Local Opinion Leaders Survey (LOLS) included mayors, representatives from regional and local planning commissions, town managers, selectboard chairs, and members of Chambers of Commerce. Information from the general adult population comes from the 2016 Adult Tobacco Survey (ATS) and the 2017 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to which supplemental tobacco-related questions were added from October – December 2017.

Close to half of Vermont adults and local opinion leaders are in favor of increasing the minimum age to 21 years for purchasing cigarettes and other tobacco products (53% and 47%, respectively). There is a substantial difference between Vermont adults and local opinion leaders in their level of support for restricting the number of tobacco retailers in a community. While support is low overall, Vermont adults are twice as likely to support this policy compared to local opinion leaders (41% versus 21%). Vermont adults are more likely to support most of the tobacco-related point of sale policies, except for banning the sale of flavored tobacco products in a community. This is the least supported point of sale policy among Vermont adults (36%) while it is one of the most supported policies among local opinion leaders (46%). Interestingly, 16% of local opinion leaders and 10% of Vermont adults report that they don't know whether flavored tobacco products should be illegal (data not shown).⁴

Support for Tobacco-Related Point of Sale Policies among Vermont Adults and Local Opinion Leaders (2016-2017)*



*Includes those that answered strongly or somewhat in favor of increasing the minimum age to 21 (BRFSS & LOLS, 2017) and restricting the number of tobacco retailers in a community (LOLS 2017 & ATS 2016); includes those that answered yes to making the sale of flavored tobacco products illegal (BRFSS & LOLS, 2017).

¹ <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/vermont>

² Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2012

³ For information about the Local Opinion Leaders Survey (LOLS) see:

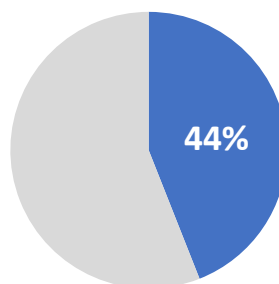
http://jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/_download_pub.cfm?id=19359&lid=3.

⁴ The “don't know” responses for banning flavored tobacco products are included when calculating support for this policy in order to account for the large number of responses in this option.

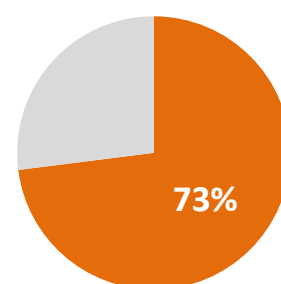
Two questions were not comparable across VT adults and local opinion leaders, as each was asked on only one of the surveys. Support for banning the sale of flavored tobacco products near schools was only asked of Vermont adults, while opinions on increasing the tobacco excise tax was only asked of local opinion leaders.

- Less than half of Vermont adults support banning the sale of flavored tobacco products near schools (44%).
- A majority of local opinion leaders support increasing the tobacco excise tax (73%). In fact, it is the most supported point of sale policy among local opinion leaders.

Support for Banning Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products Near Schools (BRFSS, 2017)*



Support for Increasing Tobacco Excise Tax (LOLS, 2017)*



*Includes those that answered strongly or somewhat in favor.

Comparison of Vermont Adult Support for Tobacco-Related Point of Sale Policies

The Vermont Department of Health has asked Vermont adults their opinions on several tobacco-related point of sale policies over the past six years, as shown in the table below. Banning advertising on the outside of stores is consistently the most supported point of sale policy among Vermont adults (65%). There is also support for banning the sale of tobacco products near schools. Restricting the number of tobacco retailers and banning the sale of flavored tobacco products are the least supported. The rank order of policy support has remained stable across the years. Support for all policies has decreased slightly over time.

Support for Tobacco-Related Point of Sale Policies among Vermont Adults (ATS, 2012-2016; BRFSS, 2017)*

	2012	2014	2016	2017
Ban advertising on outside of stores	--	69%	65%	--
Ban sale of tobacco products near schools	64%	60%	58%	--
Increase the minimum age to 21	--	--	--	53%
Ban sale of tobacco products in pharmacies	50%	56%	47%	--
Ban sale of flavored tobacco products near schools	--	--	--	44%
Restrict the number of tobacco retailers	43%	46%	41%	--
Ban sale of flavored tobacco products	--	--	--	40%

*Includes those that answered strongly or somewhat in favor of each policy except ban on sale of flavored tobacco products (yes/no response categories).

-- Indicates question was not asked in that year.

Conclusion

Over the last decade, Vermont has enacted several tobacco-related policies which have helped to make considerable progress in reducing the burden of tobacco use among Vermont's adult and youth, especially those related to sales tax; clean indoor air in workplaces, public places and cars with children; and smoke- and tobacco-free campuses. Point of sale policies have been shown to be effective in preventing tobacco use and helping current users in their cessation efforts. Our data show strong support among local opinion leaders in increasing the tobacco excise tax, as well as a high level of support among Vermont adults for banning advertising on the outside of stores.

For more information, please contact:

Erin Singer, PhD, Vermont Department of Health Tobacco Analyst; erin.singer@vermont.gov; 802-865-7783; <http://healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/surveillance-reporting-topic/tobacco>

For more information on the Vermont Tobacco Control Program: <http://healthvermont.gov/wellness/tobacco>