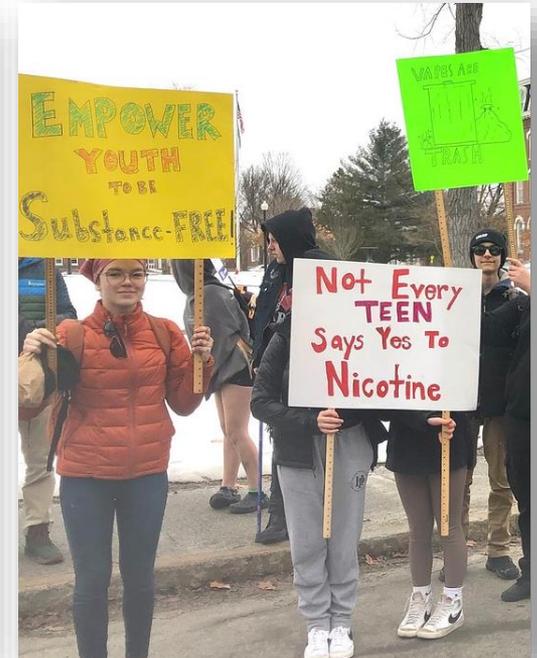


Annual Progress on Eliminating Tobacco Use and Vaping in Vermont

Fiscal Year 2024



About This Brief

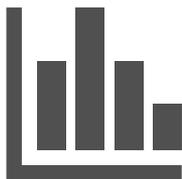
This is an overview of Vermont’s progress and opportunities for eliminating addiction to nicotine and tobacco products. While there has been an explosion of products and flavors in recent years, the work of tobacco control is built on over 50 years of evidence from practice and research. The progress of this steady, evidence-based work and its impact on Vermont’s workers, youth and communities is summarized in this document. **We highlight the tobacco retail environment and opportunities for nicotine dependence treatment.**

The sections of this brief include:

What?

Everyone deserves a fair opportunity to be as healthy as possible. However, the tobacco industry disproportionately markets to some communities.

Pages 3-4



So what?

Vermont has a high tobacco excise tax but too few limits on density, price floor, placement and promotion. Some Vermont residents are unjustly exposed to tobacco products.

Pages 5-9



What next?

Consumer protections are needed to counter the changing product availability, price, placement and promotion. Evidence-based treatment for nicotine dependence is critical.

Pages 10-12

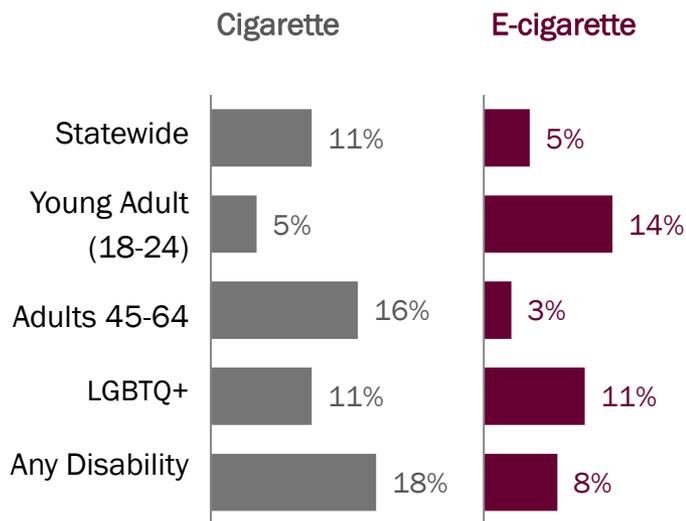


Adult and Youth Tobacco Use Remains High, in Part Due to the Availability of New Tobacco Products.

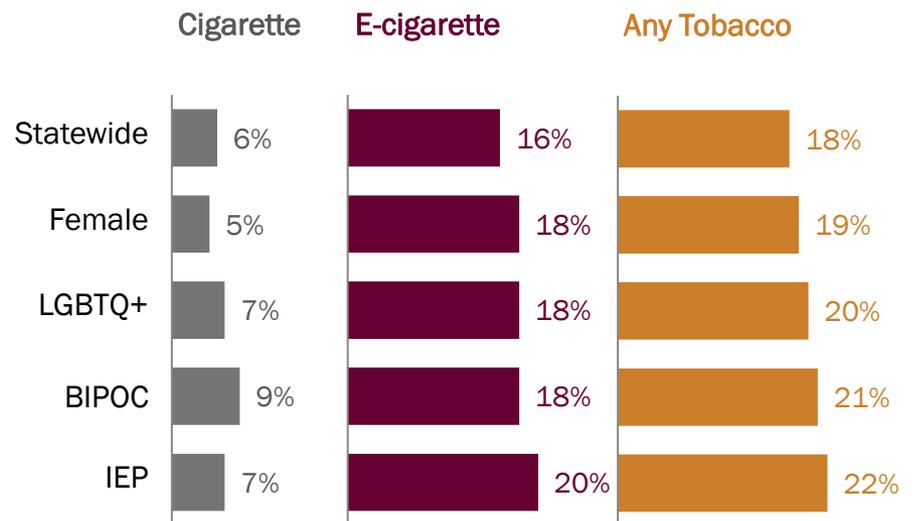
Cigarette smoking has declined by 50% among Vermont adults, from 20% in 2011 to 11% in 2023.¹ Similarly for high school students, cigarette smoking has halved from 13% in 2013 to 6% in 2023.² However, e-cigarette use has increased, especially among young adults. Nationally, in 2022, it was estimated that 11.6% of adults currently smoked cigarettes.³ But, the widespread availability of tobacco products makes it hard to quit, and the use of emerging products, including e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches, is increasing.

Adult **e-cigarette** use is statistically higher for young adults, LGBTQ+ and those with any disability.

High school **e-cigarette** and **any tobacco** use is statistically higher for Vermont high school students who are female, LGBTQ+, BIPOC and/or have an IEP*.



Source: VT BRFSS, 2023



Source: VT YRBS, 2023

* Notes: IEP = Individualized Education Plan, used to support students with disabilities. In the YRBS, any tobacco use includes cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, and e-cigarettes. Nicotine pouches are not included.

The Tobacco Retail Environment is Interconnected.

Since the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement, which restricted some tobacco industry advertising, retail environments have become increasingly important venues for tobacco industry product advertising and promotion. In 2022, 97% of the tobacco industry's marketing for cigarettes and smokeless tobacco was in the retail environment.⁴ To counter this marketing, a three-pronged approach is a national best practice for reducing tobacco use and has shown to be impactful in helping low-income individuals quit. Vermont is one of the top ten states in the U.S. with a high excise tax.

Undercutting Vermont's excise tax are price promotions, including coupons, and the availability of tobacco products. Discounting and promotion of discount brands has been a strategy of the tobacco industry for decades, and it has been successful in attracting and maintaining tobacco use, especially in populations with low socioeconomic status.⁵

The following pages focus on the Vermont tobacco retail environment and its association with tobacco use trends. The 2024 retail audit involved a census of 711 retailers with a tobacco license. This was the fourth retail audit in the past decade. The Vermont Department of Liquor and Lottery collected data.

Note: Online retailers, especially international retailers, continue challenging enforcement efforts. Continued cross-agency efforts are needed.⁶



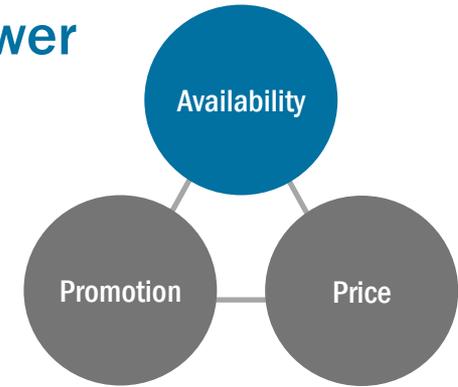
The Density of Tobacco Retailers is Highest in Lower Income Communities.

The prevalence of **smoking cigarettes among individuals with lower income (<\$50k) is over three times higher** than the prevalence among individuals with higher incomes (\$150k+) in Vermont (18% vs. 5%).¹ There are systemic and environmental factors that affect tobacco use in low-income communities, including the tobacco industry's marketing practices and using price promotions to increase sales, such as price discounts, coupons and special sales.⁷

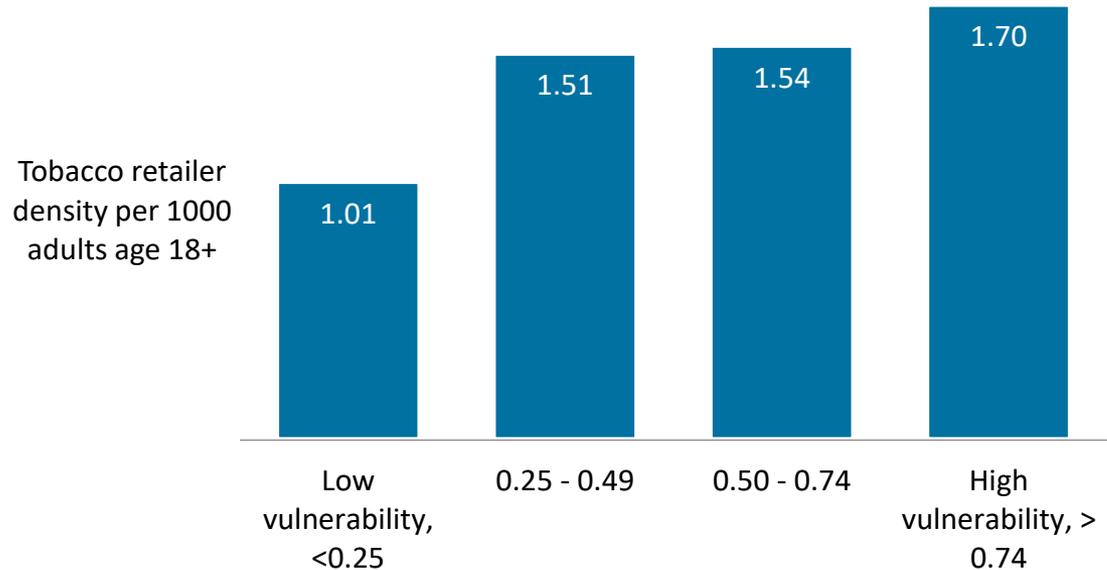
Tobacco retailer density also plays an important role in the higher tobacco use among low-income communities.

The chart to the right shows a significantly higher tobacco retail density in census tracts with high socioeconomic vulnerability.

Vermont residents are disproportionately affected by tobacco industry retail environments and density if they have high levels of poverty, high levels of unemployment, high housing cost burden, low educational attainment and high levels of uninsured.



Tobacco retailer density and socioeconomic vulnerability



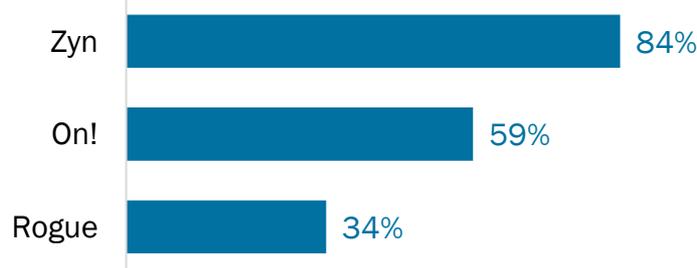
Socioeconomic Vulnerability from 2022 Social Vulnerability Index

There is Widespread Availability of Nicotine Pouches, Disposable and Flavored E-cigarettes in the State.

During the 2024 retail audit, **70% of Vermont retailers had nicotine pouches for sale.** The most common types of nicotine pouches sold included Zyn, Zyn Chill, On! and Rogue. The extensive availability is concerning, given the high nicotine concentrations of these products and that past 30-day use of smokeless tobacco, including nicotine pouches, has almost doubled since 2022 (4.7% in 2022 to 9.1% in 2024) among young adults in Vermont.⁸

Nicotine pouches are commonly flavored, appealing to youth. Among all retailers who sold nicotine pouches in 2024 (n=497), 98% sold mint-flavored pouches, and 93% sold non-mint-flavored pouches.

Among tobacco retailers that sold nicotine pouches, Zyn was the most common brand sold in 2024.



2024 n=497

The **number of retailers that sold e-cigarettes increased** from 2022 to 2024. In 2022, 338 stores out of 733 tobacco retailers (46%) sold e-cigarettes. In 2024, 408 stores out of 711 tobacco retailers (57%) sold e-cigarettes.



Some e-cigarettes are disposable, meaning the e-liquid cannot be refilled once it is depleted and the device must be discarded. Among retailers that sold e-cigarettes in 2024 (n=408), **74% sold disposable e-cigarettes**, which are considered hazardous waste. Other e-cigarettes are not disposable, which means the e-liquid can be refilled using an e-liquid dropper.

Among retailers who sold e-cigarettes, in 2024, more sold flavored mint and flavored non-mint e-cigarettes compared to 2022.



2022 n=338; 2024 n=408

The Price Range of Cheap Tobacco Products in Vermont Varies.

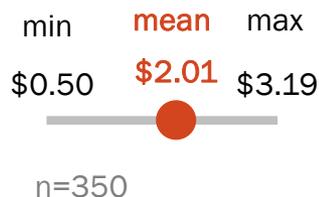
Price of tobacco products is an important factor in tobacco use behavior, and raising the prices of cigarettes has been shown to be an effective strategy in reducing use, especially among price-sensitive groups like youth, young adults, and persons of low socioeconomic status.⁹ In Vermont, the cheapest price of a pack of cigarettes was \$4.99, and cigarettes are the leading product sold in the state, accounting for 84% of tobacco product sales.¹⁰



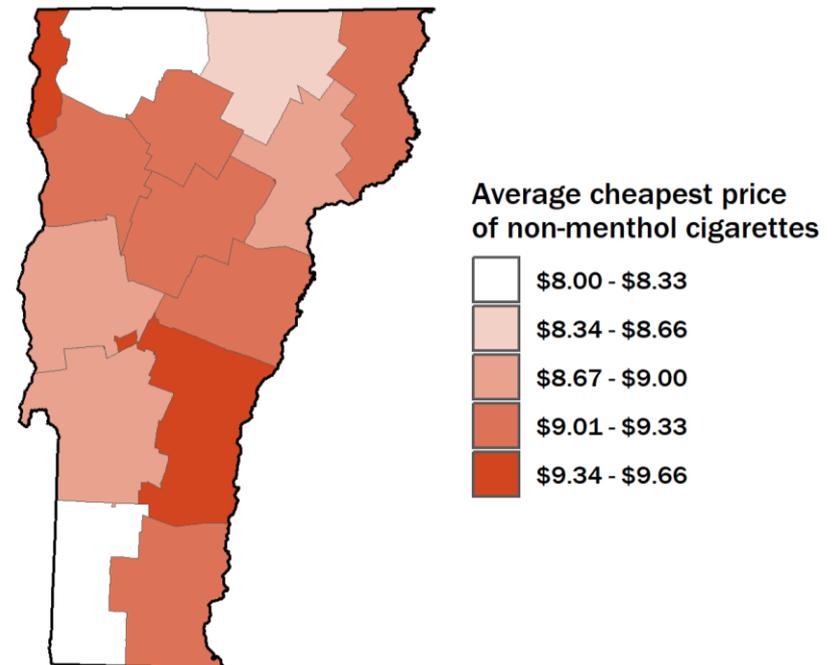
The cheapest price of **non-menthol cigarettes** in 2024 varied widely, with the average cheapest price less than \$10.



The cheapest price of any **single cigarillo, little cigar, or blunt** in 2024 was typically less than \$3.00. Only four retailers sold these products for more than \$3.00.



Across the state, the average cheapest price of non-menthol cigarettes ranged from \$8.00 - \$9.50 by county.



Price Promotions on Tobacco Products are Common Tactics From the Tobacco Industry.

The second prong of strategies that focus on the retail environment, price promotions, is critical. **Vermont is the highest ranked nationally as a recipient of tobacco coupons.**¹¹ In the Vermont retail audit, price promotions for tobacco products included special pricing indicated by terms such as “special value,” “discount,” “cents off,” “on sale,” “reduced price,” or “limited time offer,” and multi-pack discounts, indicated by an offer to purchase more than one item that results in a lower price (e.g., buy-one-get-one free, get 5 free when you buy 3).

E-cigarettes were most commonly sold in gas stations (71%), vape shops (67%), liquor stores (56%) and tobacco shops (50%). Price data on four, specific brands or types of e-cigarette products were only collected in 2024. There is wide price availability from the sample of retailers from which this data was collected.



Loon=17, Loon Maxx=19, disposable e-cigarette=26, e-liquid dropper = 49



Some examples of price promotions from the 2024 Vermont retail audit.

Vermont Children are Exposed to Tobacco Retail Marketing and Advertising.

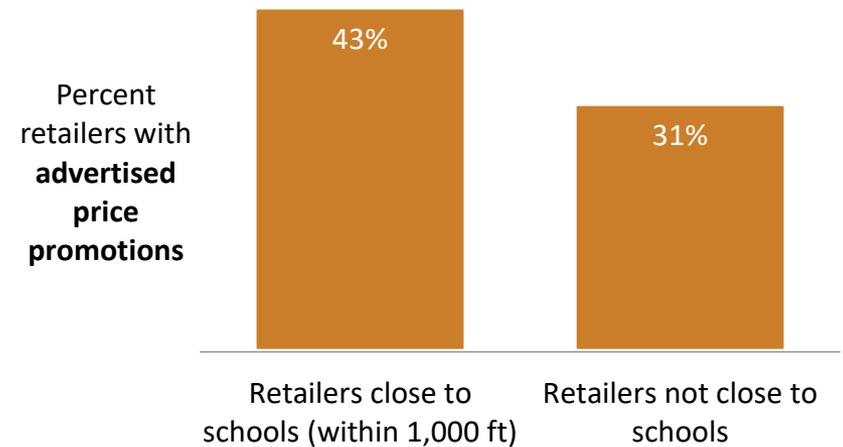
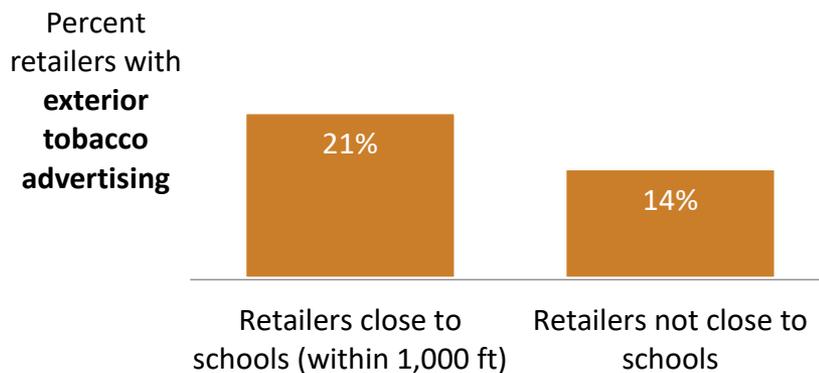
The third prong of strategies that focus on the retail environment, promotion, is a concern in Vermont. Tobacco product advertising and promotion increase tobacco consumption, especially in children, influencing attitudes, beliefs, and expectations regarding tobacco use and increasing the likelihood of initiation.¹² In 2024, of the 711 retailers that were licensed to sell tobacco products, **34% had at least one price promotion.**



When tobacco retailers are located near schools, the availability of products and exposure to tobacco marketing influence youth susceptibility to tobacco use.¹³ In 2024, 21% of Vermont's tobacco retailers were located within 1,000 feet of schools. This varied widely by county, with Orange County having 42% of tobacco retailers within 1,000 feet of schools and Lamoille having 7% (Grand Isle County had zero).

Tobacco retailers near schools were more likely to have exterior tobacco advertisements than retailers not near schools.

Tobacco retailers near schools were more likely to have advertised price promotions than retailers not near schools.



Note: The locations of all tobacco retailers with complete geographic information from the 2024 audit in Vermont were geocoded (n=711) and 1000-foot buffers were drawn to indicate close proximity. Tobacco retail locations were overlaid with the locations of all public and private schools.

The Changing Tobacco Product Landscape is Related to Challenges in Addressing Initiation and Treatment.

Since the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement, which prohibits the advertisement of tobacco products on billboards, the tobacco industry now spends most of its multi-billion dollar advertising budget in the retail environment.¹⁴ Tobacco retailer density affects the health of residents, as youth and young adults are more likely to start smoking, and it makes it harder to quit among those who smoke.^{15, 16, 17}

The estimated tobacco industry marketing in Vermont is \$15.8 million annually.¹⁸

The retail environment is related to tobacco use initiation

Research has shown that more frequent visits to tobacco retailers are associated with an increase in the odds of trying a tobacco product.¹⁹ Further, a nationally representative study found that youth and young adults were two times as likely to have experimented with e-cigarettes after exposure to e-cigarette marketing.²⁰ This is especially concerning, given that perceived ease of access of e-cigarettes has increased among Vermont youth from 2021 to 2023.²

60%

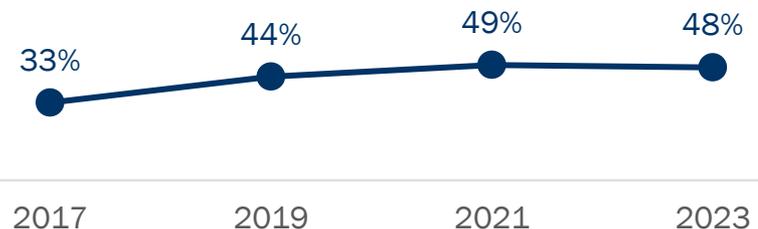
of VT high school students report it is easy to get e-cigarettes if they want them.

Source: VT YRBS 2023

The retail environment impacts effective tobacco treatment

There is strong evidence for the association between tobacco retail density and tobacco use in pregnant women, young adults, and adults.¹⁹ Restriction of tobacco retail density can reduce smoking, especially among men who smoke heavily.¹⁹ Retail density matters as part of a comprehensive strategy to provide evidence-based support for those who want to treat nicotine dependence and quit tobacco products.

The percent of Vermont high school students trying to quit all tobacco products has increased since 2017.



Source: VT YRBS, 2023



The Vermont Department of Health provides counseling and medications to help people who want to overcome nicotine addiction. Adults who used 802Quits, an evidence-based service available to all Vermont residents, were more likely to quit tobacco (39%)²³ than those quitting on their own (5%).²⁴ A special protocol, My Life My Quit, is available for youth under 18. A few Vermont residents who used 802Quits shared their experiences:

“ Thank you so much. I was getting back into dip tobacco because the nicotine pouches were so expensive everywhere in the state. **The products you sent prevented me from using more tobacco.**

“ It was really good to have someone else to talk to who is a former smoker and who knows how to quit. **Talking with them gave me ideas about how to help.**

“ I had quit smoking for eight years, and then I lost my oldest son at 19 and went back to smoking. **802Quits helped me get through and I stopped smoking, even the anniversary did not trigger me to smoke again.**

What's Next?

This is the second brief summarizing progress on [Vermont's 2023-2027 strategic plan](#) to eliminate tobacco use and vaping. The intended use is for accountability and sharing progress and opportunities to realize the vision of healthy people living in communities free from tobacco-related death and disease.

Two reports were published in January 2025 that focus on quitting tobacco:

- First, the [Vermont Cessation Summary](#) includes evidence of outcomes and effectiveness of Vermont's 802Quits services, which have supported 8,435 Vermont adults making a quit attempt in the past five years, with 29% reporting successfully quitting seven months after enrolling.
- Second, a [Vermont Medicaid Overview](#) reports on progress made in screening and providing treatment to Medicaid members.

Three priorities to improve the health of Vermonters and the financial interests of the state are:

- ➊ **Address disparities.** Addressing multiple levels of Vermont's prevention model is vital to reduce further the prevalence of all types of tobacco and vaping products, particularly for subgroups disproportionately impacted by tobacco, including BIPOC, LGBTQ, Medicaid, youth and young adults.
- ➋ **Consider policies that protect Vermont residents.** Tobacco control policies and programs have a long history of protecting the most vulnerable, including youth. Policies that address price and retail density have been shown to reduce youth initiation of these products effectively.
- ➌ **Expand access to treatment.** Most individuals who are addicted to nicotine want to quit. It is essential to expand use and promotion of 802Quits, continued provider engagement and state agency partnership.

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