



CINCY

TOBACCO 21 CINCY COALITION FACT SHEET

OVERVIEW

Tobacco use continues to be a significant public health concern and a leading cause of preventable death in the US. Though we have made some great strides, nearly 1 in 3 high school students reported using tobacco products in 2018, and the US Surgeon General estimated that nearly 6 million children will die prematurely in adulthood if current trends continue.^{1,2} Further, in 2015, nearly 2 million people smoked cigarettes for the first time and around 90% of cigarette smokers first try smoking by age 18.^{1,3} Because of the addictive nature of nicotine, experimentation or initiation of tobacco use among youth and young adults is particularly troubling. This is a critical period for growth and development, one during which the brain may be especially susceptible and sensitive to the effects of nicotine.⁴ Increasing the minimum legal sale age (MLSA) for tobacco products to 21 would reduce youth access to tobacco products.

UNDER 21: NO TOBACCO

Setting the MLSA at 21 would prohibit retailers from selling tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vape products to anyone under that age. As of November 2018, six states (California, New Jersey, Oregon, Hawaii, Maine and Massachusetts) and at least 375 localities have raised the tobacco age to 21.⁵ Raising the MLSA to 21 targets the age range at which many habitual smokers consume their first cigarette and the age at which older kids are often the social source for the youth.^{2,6} Further, an MLSA at 21 works to combat the tobacco industry’s desire to attract a new, loyal generation of “replacement” users and to re-engage those who have already quit.⁷

TOBACCO IS KILLING OUR FUTURE

Tobacco has deadly consequences for our youth:

- If current smoking rates continue, 5.6 million of today’s Americans younger than 18 years of age are expected to die prematurely from a smoking-related illness. This represents about one in every 13 Americans aged 17 years or younger who are alive today.²
- Total economic costs of smoking are more than \$300 billion per year including nearly \$170 billion in direct medical care for adults and \$156 billion in lost productivity due to premature death and exposure to second hand smoke.^{2,8}



WHY 21: THE EVIDENCE

Evidence shows that nicotine dependence and smoking intensity are strongly correlated with younger ages of smoking initiation.⁹ In other words, the younger people are when they smoke their first cigarette, the more likely they will be a smoker for life. Furthermore, some research suggests that adolescent smokers may experience more difficulty in quitting compared with adult smokers.¹⁰

In 2015, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine released a report¹¹ that modeled the myriad of public health benefits for raising the MLSA. Notably, the report concluded that raising the MLSA to 21 would decrease tobacco use by 12% and lead to:

- Nearly 225,000 fewer premature deaths
- Nearly 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer
- Almost 300,000 fewer pre-term births
- 4.2 million fewer years of life lost for those born between 2000 and 2019
- Less of a likelihood that adolescents will have peer group members who are over the MLSA

Other research models have predicted that Tobacco 21 laws would significantly increase overall life expectancy and simultaneously reduce health-care costs.¹²

Tobacco sales to those younger than 21 years account for just 2% of total tobacco sales yet produce 90% of new smokers.¹³

Tobacco 21 is one of the most popular retail-based policy approaches¹⁴ – one survey showed that among all adults, 75% strongly or somewhat favored raising the age to 21 years; 77.5% of never smokers, 74.6% of former smokers, and 69.9% of current smokers strongly or somewhat favored it.¹⁶

A study in Massachusetts¹⁷ showed that local Tobacco 21 initiatives can have a significant impact when combined with other tobacco control policies:

- 30-day smoking rates decreased in Needham where Tobacco 21 was passed, from 13% to 7%, and this was significantly greater than comparison communities (15% to 12%). This decline was consistent for both genders, Caucasian and non-Caucasian youth, and all grades surveyed. Cigarette purchases among current smokers also declined significantly more in Needham than in the comparison communities.



NYC has done important evaluation after implementation of Tobacco 21 and found that retailer compliance is a key part of assuring that the policy is effective in reducing youth access to tobacco products.^{19,20}

TOBACCO 21 CINCY

Tobacco 21 Cincy is a movement to raise the age of sale of all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to anyone under the age of 21 throughout Southwest, Ohio. Those laws should include effective enforcement mechanisms, including compliance checks, to ensure retailers comply with the law and not place excessive punishment or burden on youth.



NOW IT'S TIME TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.



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