

Oregon's Tobacco 21 Law: Impact Evaluation

May 2019

Description

In August 2017, Oregon Governor Kate Brown signed Senate Bill 754, which raised the minimum age of purchase for tobacco and vaping products in Oregon from 18 to 21 years. Most addiction to tobacco starts in adolescence: 90% of adults who smoke report starting before they turned 18, and almost 100% started before they turned 26. Senate Bill 754 was enacted to help prevent young people from starting to use tobacco, and to reduce deaths, disease and health care costs caused by tobacco use. Senate Bill 754, also referred to as Tobacco 21, went into effect on January 1, 2018.

Purpose

To assess the short-term outcomes of implementation of Tobacco 21 in Oregon, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) contracted with RMC Research, an independent evaluator, to conduct the evaluation.

Key Evaluation Questions

After legislation, to what extent:

1. Did initiation of tobacco use decrease among youth and young adults aged 13 to 25 years?
2. Did perceived ease of access to tobacco and vaping products decrease among youth and young adults aged 13 to 25 years?
3. Did frequency of requests for proof of age increase among youth and young adults aged 13 to 25 years?

Key Findings

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+ Recent initiation of tobacco use among youth and young adults decreased.

Recent initiation decreased significantly among current tobacco users aged 13–17 years (from 34% to 25%) and aged 18–20 years (from 23% to 18%).

+ Perceived ease of access decreased.

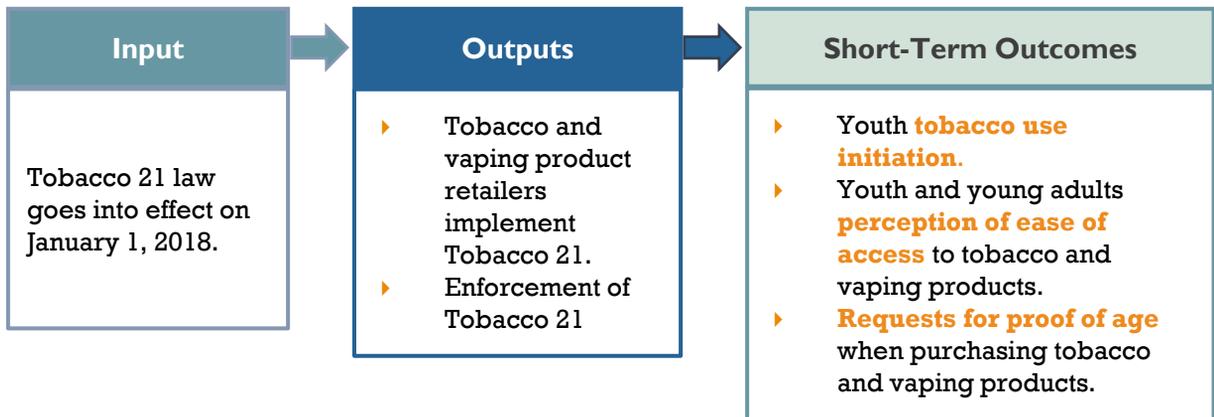
The percentage of tobacco users aged 18–20 years who reported that it was “sort of easy” or “very easy” to obtain tobacco products decreased significantly.

+ Statewide requests for proof of age did not change significantly, although there were differences based on geography.

Current tobacco users outside the Portland metro area who tried to purchase products in a store were less likely to be asked for proof of age than those in the Portland metro area after legislation.

Evaluation design

The evaluation used social media advertising on Facebook and Instagram to recruit for online surveys with youth aged 13 to 17 years and young adults aged 18 to 25 years. Recruitment occurred in all counties in Oregon in two waves; before and after the law took effect. Social media ads targeted participants in the appropriate age ranges and geographic areas.



Survey

The Oregon Tobacco Survey (OTS) asked youth (aged 13–17 years) and young adult (aged 18–20 years and 21–25 years) tobacco users* questions about their experiences with tobacco and vaping products that were expected to be affected by the implementation of Tobacco 21. Surveys were fielded before (pre-legislation, December 2017) and nine months after the Tobacco 21 law took effect (post-legislation, September 2018).



Only youth and young adults who reported using tobacco were included in this report.

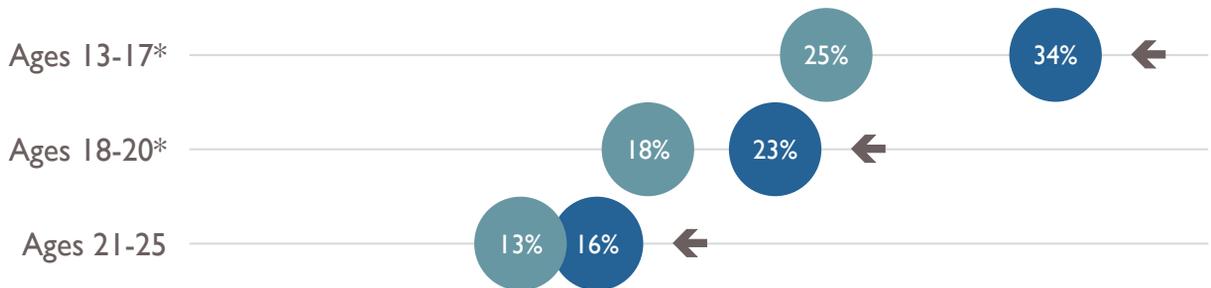
* “Tobacco user” is defined as any use of a tobacco or vaping product in the past 30 days.

Sample

A total of 3,400 current tobacco users were included in the pre-legislation analysis and more than 1,800 current tobacco users were included in the post-legislation analysis. Respondents in both samples were primarily white and non-Hispanic, consistent with the population of Oregon. In both pre- and post-legislation samples, approximately two thirds of the participants were in the Portland metro area.

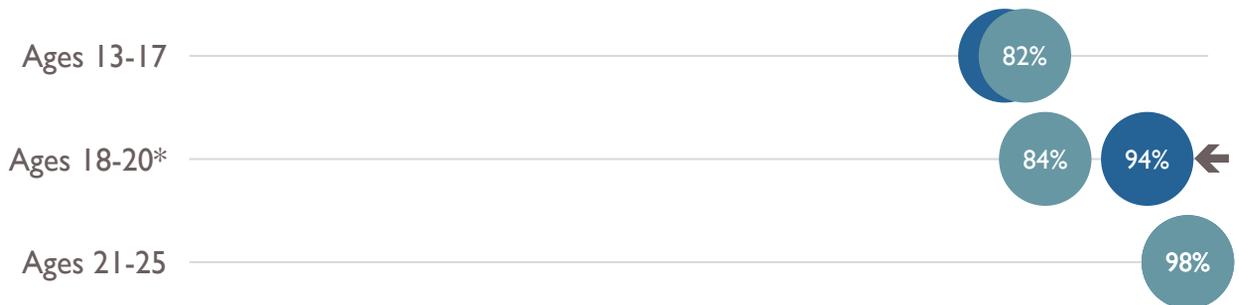
Findings

Recent initiation (within the past 6 months) of tobacco use decreased significantly from **pre-legislation** to **post-legislation**.



Fewer current tobacco users reported purchasing tobacco products from convenience stores, grocery stores or tobacco or vape shops after legislation.

Current tobacco users aged 18-20 years reporting it was **“sort of easy” or “very easy”** to obtain tobacco and vaping products decreased significantly from **pre-legislation** to **post-legislation**.



Overall, among those who tried to purchase tobacco products in a store in the past 30 days, the frequency of **requests for proof of age** did not change significantly from pre- to post-legislation.

Discussion

- + Raising the minimum age for purchase of tobacco products will prevent people from starting to use tobacco products and vaping products.
 - Most addiction to tobacco starts in adolescence. Most adults who smoke report that they started smoking before turning 18 years, and almost all start before they turn 26.
 - The earlier young people start using tobacco, the more at risk they are for chronic disease, including heart disease, asthma and cancer.

- + Retailer compliance is a key part of assuring Tobacco 21 laws reduce youth access to tobacco products.
 - Oregon is one of only nine states that does not have tobacco retail licensure. Requiring retailers to obtain a license to sell tobacco can improve enforcement of the sales age.
 - Tobacco licenses can fund more inspections and impose effective penalties for illegal sales, including the suspension of tobacco licenses for retailers who repeatedly violate the law.
 - Retailer owners and managers have a responsibility to educate their staff on why preventing underage tobacco sales is important. They also need to communicate the consequences of making an illegal sale.

- + Tobacco 21 is a complement to proven tobacco control measures.
 - High-impact policies supporting clean indoor air and tobacco-free schools and workplaces have helped reduce tobacco use in Oregon. Tobacco 21 shows promise as an additional strategy to reduce nicotine addiction for future generations.
 - Though youth who use tobacco make up a small part of tobacco consumption statewide, adolescents are more vulnerable to nicotine addiction. It is critical to reduce youth access to nicotine.
 - Ending youth access to tobacco is only a minor cost for retailers, but a huge gain for reducing tobacco addiction in Oregon's next generation.

For a copy of this report or for more information contact: Karen Girard
Karen.e.Girard@state.or.us

Or visit:
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/TOBACCPREVENTION/Pages/index.aspx>