



Tobacco Retailer Licensing

Survey of Los Angeles County Voters

About Policies in the Tobacco Retail Environment

Public Opinion Research Survey: April 2011

Background

The sale of tobacco products to minors is a problem in most cities and counties in California, including in Los Angeles County. Illegal sales by retailers contribute to the start of a lifelong addiction of many youth to tobacco. To combat this problem, many communities have passed a law that requires retailers to obtain a license to sell tobacco products. In addition, some communities are considering other policy options, such as restricting where and how tobacco products are sold, that can be “plugged-in” to the basic licensing ordinance to provide greater health protections for youth.

In April 2011, the Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health commissioned a survey of 561 Los Angeles County voters to gauge the level of support for licensing ordinances and other policies in the tobacco retail environment. The survey was conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research. The Center also did an identical survey of 600 California voters. This document summarizes the results for Los Angeles County voters with some comparisons to the statewide results. A summary document for the statewide results and other survey documents are available at www.Center4TobaccoPolicy.org/polling-retailer-policies.

Summary of Key Findings

Provisions of a Tobacco Retailer Licensing Ordinance

Los Angeles County voters understand the need for greater enforcement of laws against selling tobacco products to minors. They support a licensing ordinance and the different provisions of such a law:

- 48% feel that it is easy for minors to buy cigarettes at local retail stores
- 85% support requiring store owners to get a license to sell cigarettes and other tobacco products
- 78% favor a fee of a few hundred dollars a year that would be used to enforce the law against selling cigarettes to minors
- 87% agree that a store owner who repeatedly sells cigarettes to minors should have their license to sell tobacco products suspended

Policies to Restrict the Location of Tobacco Retailers

Los Angeles County voters support laws that limit where tobacco retailers can be located:

- 73% support a law prohibiting any business located within 1,000 feet of a school from selling tobacco products
- 58% feel that stores that are currently located within 1,000 feet of a school should not be allowed to continue to sell tobacco products if such a law was adopted
- 60% support requiring stores that sell tobacco products to be located at least 500 feet apart from one another

Policies to Restrict How Tobacco Products are Sold

Los Angeles County voters support laws that restrict the manner in which tobacco products are sold in the retail environment:

- 87% support requiring stores that sell tobacco products to post warning signs about the dangers of tobacco use, greater than the 82% support among California voters
- 71% support a law prohibiting stores that sell meth pipes from also selling tobacco products
- 56% support prohibiting the sale of individual little cigars and cigarillos, greater than the 54% support among California voters

Arguments For and Against Policies in the Tobacco Retail Environment

Los Angeles County voters are more receptive to arguments in favor of restricting the location of tobacco retailers and restrictions on tobacco product sales than they are to arguments opposing these policies. In each section below, the first two arguments listed are in support of the policy and the second two arguments are in opposition to the policy:

Prohibiting Businesses from Selling Tobacco Products within 1,000 Feet of Schools

- 76% think a good reason to restrict tobacco retailers near schools is that this law will reduce illegal sales to minors
- 80% think a good reason to restrict tobacco retailers near schools is that this law can reduce youth smoking
- 47% think a good reason to continue to allow tobacco retailers near schools is that it's wrong for the government to tell stores where they can and cannot do business
- 34% think a good reason to continue to allow tobacco retailers near schools is that a law like this could hurt the economy and jobs during this recession

Requiring Stores to Post Health Warning Signs about Tobacco Use

- 82% think a good reason to require warning signs is that these signs would encourage people to quit using tobacco and would prevent young people from starting to use tobacco
- 83% think a good reason to require warning signs is that we know that warnings really work in helping people quit using tobacco, so they should be visible before people buy tobacco products
- 50% think that a good reason to not require warning signs is that warning labels are already on the tobacco packages and adults can make up their own minds without being forced by the government to see even more intrusive information
- 42% think that a good reason to not require warning signs is that these signs would require retailers to post negative information about the very products they are trying to sell

Eliminating the Sale of Individual Little Cigars and Cigarillos

- 69% think a good reason to prohibit sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that they are inexpensive and marketed to young smokers, so this law would discourage their use among young people and reduce youth smoking
- 66% think a good reason to prohibit sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that they are developed and marketed primarily to African Americans and Latinos, so this law can help reduce smoking rates among these groups
- 44% think a good reason to allow sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that these products are used less frequently than cigarettes, so requiring them to be bought in packages is a needless hassle for the customer
- 49% think a good reason to allow sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that it is wrong for the government to tell retailers how to sell certain products

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research. This survey data represents information acquired from 561 Los Angeles County voters by telephone interview, including both land lines and wireless numbers. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, with about 8% of the interviews conducted in Spanish. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.1% at a 95% confidence level for the Los Angeles County results.

Resources

The Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing has many resources available on tobacco retailer licensing ordinances and other policies in the tobacco retail environment available at www.center4tobaccopolicy.org/localpolicies-licensing. These include documents that track ordinances in the tobacco retail environment, a fact sheet on drug paraphernalia in tobacco retailers and a document showing the effectiveness of tobacco retailer licensing ordinances in reducing sales to minors. Visit www.lapublichealth.org/tob/ for more information about tobacco control efforts in Los Angeles County. For model ordinance language for many of the policies in the survey, visit the website of the Technical Assistance Legal Center at www.phlpnet.org/tobacco-control.