



External Relations Division

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Early results show fewer youth started smoking since Tobacco 21 took effect

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PORTLAND, Ore. — The Oregon Health Authority announced promising short-term outcomes of Senate Bill 754, which raised the age of purchase for tobacco and vaping products in Oregon from 18 to 21 years.

OHA found a significant decrease in youth (aged 13-17) and young adults (aged 18–20) who have started using tobacco since the law took effect Jan. 1, 2018. The evaluation also shows a decrease in young adults' perceived ease of access to tobacco and vaping products.

"Tobacco 21 was enacted to help prevent young people from starting to use tobacco, and it's working," said Tom Jeanne, MD, deputy state health officer and epidemiologist. "With this and our strong Indoor Clean Air Act, Oregon is a national leader in protecting youth from tobacco use."

In August 2017 Governor Kate Brown signed Senate Bill 754, making Oregon the fifth state to increase the age to purchase tobacco. To ensure compliance with the law, businesses that sell tobacco products and inhalant delivery systems such as e-cigarettes must post signs prohibiting sales of these products to persons under the age of 21.

Ending youth access to tobacco is only a minor cost for retailers but a huge gain for reducing tobacco-related deaths and diseases in Oregon's next generation, Jeanne says.

Fewer current youth tobacco users reported purchasing tobacco products from convenience stores, grocery stores, or tobacco or vape shops after the legislation went into effect. However, statewide requests for proof of age by retailers did not change significantly, especially outside the Portland metro area. This is, in part, because Oregon is one of only nine states that does not have tobacco retail licensure.

"Nicotine is a poison and tobacco is sweet, cheap and easy to get in Oregon," Jeanne said. "Enforcing Tobacco 21 is vital, and there are other actions we can take to keep our momentum going. For example, we know that raising the price of tobacco keeps kids from starting and encourages people to quit. Our Legislature is considering several bills this session to increase the price of tobacco, e-cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products."

(<http://www.oregon.gov>)



The evaluation of Tobacco 21 assessed short-term outcomes of the law in communities throughout Oregon. OHA contracted with RMC Research, an independent evaluator, to conduct the evaluation through online surveys with youth and young adult tobacco users before and nine months after the law took effect.

The report is available as a PDF at

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/TOBACCPREVENTION/Documents/Oregon-Tobacco-21-Impact-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

([/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/TOBACCPREVENTION/Documents/Oregon-Tobacco-21-Impact-Evaluation-Report.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/TOBACCPREVENTION/Documents/Oregon-Tobacco-21-Impact-Evaluation-Report.pdf)).

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