



Raising our Voices for Health Justice for Our Rural Communities

Health justice means bringing communities to the table, so everyone's voices are heard and people from all walks of life achieve the health and wellness they deserve.

Rural smokers tend to smoke at higher rates than their urban counterparts, even in California where overall smoking rates are low, and are also twice as likely to use chewing tobacco.ⁱ It's time to eliminate the unfair health burden tobacco places on rural communities.

Tobacco impacts the health of our rural communities by specifically targeting them.

- Rural adults' use of any tobacco product is significantly higher (25.6%) than the California general population (14.6%).ⁱⁱ
- Rural residents start smoking at an earlier age.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Images of cowboys, hunters, and race car drivers are used in tobacco marketing to appeal to young, rural individuals and get them hooked on deadly tobacco products.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Rural-county stores were more than twice as likely as other stores to sell roll-your-own tobacco and two times more likely to sell chewing tobacco than stores in nonrural counties.^{iv}
- In rural areas, there is greater density of tobacco stores with 93 stores selling tobacco per 100,000 residents in rural areas versus 79.6 stores for 100,000 residents across California.ⁱⁱ
- Rural-county stores were found to be significantly more likely to advertise at least one discount for chewing tobacco and vaping products which appeals to price-sensitive consumers, including youth (20.9% prevalence of discounts in rural communities vs. 16.8% in nonrural communities).^{iv}

Tobacco litter negatively impacts the environment of rural communities.

- Cigarette butts are the number one most littered item in the world.^v
- Cigarette butts leach toxic chemicals into the environment including lead, arsenic and nicotine – the same toxic chemicals found in secondhand smoke.^v
- Cigarette filters are made of the plastic material cellulose acetate, which does not biodegrade.^{vi}
- Butts, cigar tips, chew containers, vape pods and other product packaging are most often disposed of improperly in the form of millions of kilograms of product waste discarded into the environment each year.^{vi}

Smokeless Tobacco Use in Rural CA

- While the rate of smoking among Americans has declined from 20.9% of adults in 2005 to 14% of adults in 2017, smokeless tobacco use among rural adults has increased and remains higher in rural populations than in non-rural populations.^{vii}
- 16% of white teens boys use smokeless tobacco and this is even more common in rural areas.^{viii}
- 58% of rural teens boys in CA have ever used smokeless tobacco and 56% of those still use smokeless products.^{viii}
- Teens see using chew as a part rural or country way of life. Many may feel this is a part of the tradition and culture in their community. The tobacco industry knows this and uses it to market to rural communities.^{viii}
- Many smokeless tobacco users see smokeless tobacco use as an alternative to cigarette smoking because they incorrectly believe there is a reduction in risk of related diseases.^{viii}

Smart tobacco policies can save lives and improve rural communities.

- In a survey of rural and small-town Californians, over 85% felt that secondhand smoke was harmful and 70% were in favor of policies prohibiting smoking at outdoor events such as rodeos and fairs. Local smoke free outdoor air laws can protect rural Californians from the secondhand smoke they want to avoid.^{ix}
- Securing tobacco control funds may help increase cessation service access and strengthen health infrastructure in rural areas.^{ix}
- Smart tobacco policy can help create an environment where community leaders and leaders and families feel empowered to reject the culture of tobacco use and choose healthier, tobacco-free futures.

How smart tobacco policies can save lives and improve rural communities.

- Stronger regulations on tobacco sampling and coupons can prevent the tobacco industry from having a presence at family- friendly events such as rodeos and fairs. Currently, tobacco promotions are much more common at events in rural communities compared with events in urban communities.
- Local retail licensing policies can reduce youth access to tobacco and help rural communities enforce minimum age purchase laws.
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- Smart tobacco policy can help create an environment where community leaders and families feel empowered to reject the culture of tobacco use and choose healthier, tobacco-free futures.



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- ⁱ Tobacco Free CA. *How Tobacco Sampling Impacts Our Communities*. <http://tobaccofreeca.com/tobacco-industry/sampling-sponsorship/>
- ⁱⁱ Tobacco Free CA. *Story of Inequity: Rural Communities*. <https://tobaccofreeca.com/story-of-inequity/rural/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ American Lung Association. *Cutting Tobacco's Rural Roots Tobacco Use In Rural Communities*. <https://www.lung.org/getmedia/429eb03a-9196-47bb-9912-e47e835d4466/cutting-tobaccos-rural-roots.pdf.pdf>
- ^{iv} Henriksen, Lisa, et al. "Retail Tobacco Marketing in Rural Versus Nonrural Counties: Product Availability, Discounts, and Prices." *Health Promotion Practice*, vol. 21, no. 1_suppl, 2020, doi:10.1177/1524839919888652.
- ^v Tobacco Free CA. Cigarette Butts Are Toxic Waste. <https://tobaccofreeca.com/environment/cigarette-butts-are-toxic-waste/>
- ^{vi} "Commercial Tobacco, Health, & The Environment." www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Commerical-Tobacco-Health-and-the-Environment.pdf.
- ^{vii} "Current Cigarette Smoking Among Adults in the United States." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 Dec. 2020, www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/adult_data/cig_smoking
- ^{viii} Couch, Elizabeth T, et al. "Smokeless Tobacco Decision-Making Among Rural Adolescent Males in California." *Journal of Community Health*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, June 2017, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5409860/.
- ^{ix} National Network of Public Health Institutes. *Advancing Tobacco Prevention and Control in Rural America*. 2019. <https://nnphi.org/resource/ruraltobacco/>

