

Tobacco-21 laws can lower smoking prevalence in the 18-20 age group

25 July 2019



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A new study published today by the scientific journal *Addiction* found that raising the legal age of sale of cigarettes from 18 to 21 in the U.S. was associated with a 39% reduction in the odds of regular smoking in 18- to 20-year-olds who had experimented with cigarettes. The reduction was even greater (50%) in those who had close friends who smoked when they were 16.

The study compares smoking prevalence among 18-20 versus 21-22-year-olds, in regions that did versus did not raise the legal age of tobacco sales to 21. In areas with tobacco-21 laws, 18-20-year-olds were much less likely to smoke than their same-[age peers](#) in areas without these policies. That differential was not evident for 21-22-year-olds, who would not have been bound by the sales restriction but should have been affected by other local factors that might explain the younger age-group's differential smoking rate (e.g., other local tobacco policies, regional attitudes towards smoking).

Lead author Abigail Friedman, assistant professor at the Yale School of Public Health, commented,

"This research indicates that a 'social multiplier' effect may amplify the impact of tobacco-21 laws. While these policies were associated with a 39% drop in the odds of regular smoking overall, the reduction was larger among [young people](#) whose friends were likely to smoke before tobacco-21 laws were adopted. As peer smoking is a critical predictor of youth smoking, this study suggests that tobacco-21 laws may help reduce smoking among those most susceptible to tobacco use. This result supports raising the age of sale to 21 as a means to reduce young adult [smoking](#) and improve [public health](#)."

As of June 2019, sixteen U.S. states and over 400 localities have adopted tobacco-21 laws.

More information: Abigail S. Friedman et al, Tobacco-21 laws and young adult smoking: quasi-experimental evidence, *Addiction* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/add.14653](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14653)

Provided by Society for the Study of Addiction

APA citation: Tobacco-21 laws can lower smoking prevalence in the 18-20 age group (2019, July 25) retrieved 25 October 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-tobacco-laws-prevalence-age.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.