

2025 | CAPITOL INFORMATION & EDUCATION DAYS



Building Stronger Rural Communities for a Healthier California

The pride and strength of our California rural communities comes from our values: family, legacy, environment, resilience, independence, and community. These have kept us strong for generations. Over time these values are getting compromised by commercial tobacco and nicotine companies. Rural communities are stepping up and winning against commercial tobacco efforts.

Commercial tobacco companies target and market specifically to rural Californians

- Rural youth and young adults are targeted using images of masculinity, blue collar, and outdoor themes in advertising, which were present for almost 50% of ads for smokeless tobacco products and over 33% of ads for cigarettes.¹
- Dollar stores contribute to availability of cheaper cigarettes in neighborhoods that are lower-income, rural, and have greater proportions of youth. It is notable that the estimated price of the cheapest pack of cigarettes was significantly lower in dollar stores compared with convenience stores and pharmacies.²

Impacts to Rural Communities

- California rural adults' use of any commercial tobacco product is notably higher (**15.1%**) than the California general population (**11.4%**).³
- Rural adult smokeless tobacco use is **4.5%** vs. **1.8%** among urban adults.⁴
- California rural youth tobacco use (any product) is **9.6%** vs. **6.9%** urban.⁵
- Rural youth nicotine pouch use **1.7%** vs. **0.8%** urban.⁵
- Rural communities have a higher first-time cigarette and smokeless tobacco use rate than in urban areas and intergenerational tobacco use is a significant factor in prevention efforts.⁶

- People living in rural areas have **18–20%** higher lung cancer death rate than people living in urban areas.⁷ Eliminating smoking would reduce the rural-urban gap.
- There is a widening life expectancy between rural and urban Americans—especially rural men.⁸

Inadequate rural health infrastructure may pose challenges for tobacco prevention efforts.

- Recent rural hospital closures could diminish some rural communities' capacity for population health activities including tobacco control.⁹
- Federal and state formulas for tobacco control funding may disadvantage rural local health departments in relation to their urban peers.⁹
- Individual rural residents may have greater difficulty accessing tobacco control and prevention services, due to local health care provider shortages, lower incomes, and elevated rates of uninsurance.⁹
- Significant barriers exist for many rural populations in access to cessation support services. Compounded with the fact that provider shortages are also common in rural areas and rural populations must travel far distances for care.⁹

Rural Communities Protect Their Values

For additional information on how tobacco and nicotine products impact rural communities, contact RISE Project Director, Shelly Brantley, at sbrantley@healthcollaborative.org and visit www.ca-rise.org.

- Rural communities are stepping up with protections for their young people and adults. In addition to protecting families through smoke-free outdoor air and multi-unit housing policies, rural California communities have passed policies requiring tobacco and vape retailers to be licensed locally.¹⁰ This can help reduce access by young people and ensure state laws are upheld.
- Smart commercial tobacco policies can empower families and community leaders to protect rural values, which may contribute to a healthier California.
- Policies that decrease cigarette sales do not adversely impact convenience stores. Research shows that convenience stores that adapt to new rules, like banning flavored tobacco, are doing well even with the decline in tobacco sales. Rural convenience stores may increase profit margins and revenue without cigarettes and flavored tobacco.¹¹

REFERENCES

1. Truth Initiative. Mailed tobacco ads rely on price discounts and youth-appealing themes. [truthinitiative.org](https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/tobacco-industry-marketing/mailed-tobacco-ads-rely-price-discounts-and-youth). July 12, 2022. Accessed March 4, 2025. <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/tobacco-industry-marketing/mailed-tobacco-ads-rely-price-discounts-and-youth>
2. Raskind IG, Vishwakarma M, Schleicher NC, Andersen-Rodgers E, Henriksen L. The changing retail landscape for tobacco: dollar stores and the availability of cheap cigarettes among tobacco-related priority populations. *Tob Control*. 2022;31(e2):e140-e147. doi:10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2020-056389 (Rover #45730)
3. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. California Health Interview Survey, 2021-22.
4. Cornelius ME, Loretan CG, Jamal A, et al. Tobacco product use among adults – United States, 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2023;72:475–483. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7218a1>
5. Clodfelter, R, Dutra, LM, Bradfield, B. (2023). Annual results report for the California Youth Tobacco Survey 2023. RTI International.
6. Roberts ME, Teferra AA, Keller-Hamilton B, et al. Shared and unique risk factors for tobacco use among rural versus urban adolescents. *Preventive Medicine* Vol. 140 (2020): 106239. doi:10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106239
7. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Office on Smoking and Health. People In Some Geographic Regions Experience a Health Burden From Commercial Tobacco. May 15, 2024. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed March 4, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-health-equity/collection/regional-health-burden.html>
8. Chapel JM, Currid-Halkett E, Tysinger B. The urban-rural gap in older Americans' healthy life expectancy. *J Rural Health*. 2025;41(1):e12875. doi:10.1111/jrh.12875 (Rover #49322)
9. Talbot JA, Williamson ME, Pearson KB, et al. Advancing Tobacco Prevention and Control in Rural America. National Network of Public Health Institutes; 2019. Accessed March 3, 2025. <https://nnphi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AdvancingTobaccoPreventionControlRuralAmerica.pdf>
10. <https://www.ca-rise.org/resources/tobacco-retailer-license-trl-matrix/>. March, 2025.
11. Tauras, JA & Chaloupka, FJ. The economic effects of cigarette sales and flavor bans on tobacco retail businesses. *Economics for Health*. 2023. Accessed March 4, 2025. <https://www.economicsforhealth.org/research/the-economic-effects-of-cigarette-sales-and-flavor-bans-on-tobacco-retail-businesses/>