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Cutting off customer supply

Age-based policies to restrict young people from accessing tobacco and nicotine products

What are these policies?

- T21 (Tobacco 21) – Raising the legal age of purchase to 21 years of age.
- Tobacco-free generation: Policies that prohibit the sale of tobacco to people born after a certain year.
 - A law that prohibits the sale of tobacco to anyone born after January 1, 2005.
 - Law then increases legal age at which people can purchase tobacco products every year.



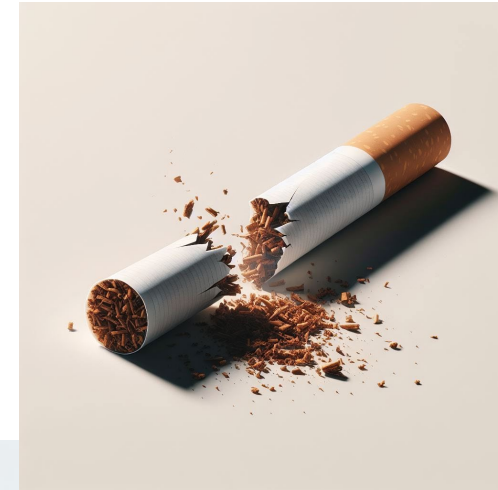
T21: Purpose of policy

- Worldwide, most tobacco users initiate smoking before age 20.
- Prohibit the sale to those under the age of 21.
 - Can also extend to possession, making it illegal for someone underage to use tobacco.
- Establishes a new social and legal norms.
- Reduces the ability of teenagers to buy from their peer group and within social network

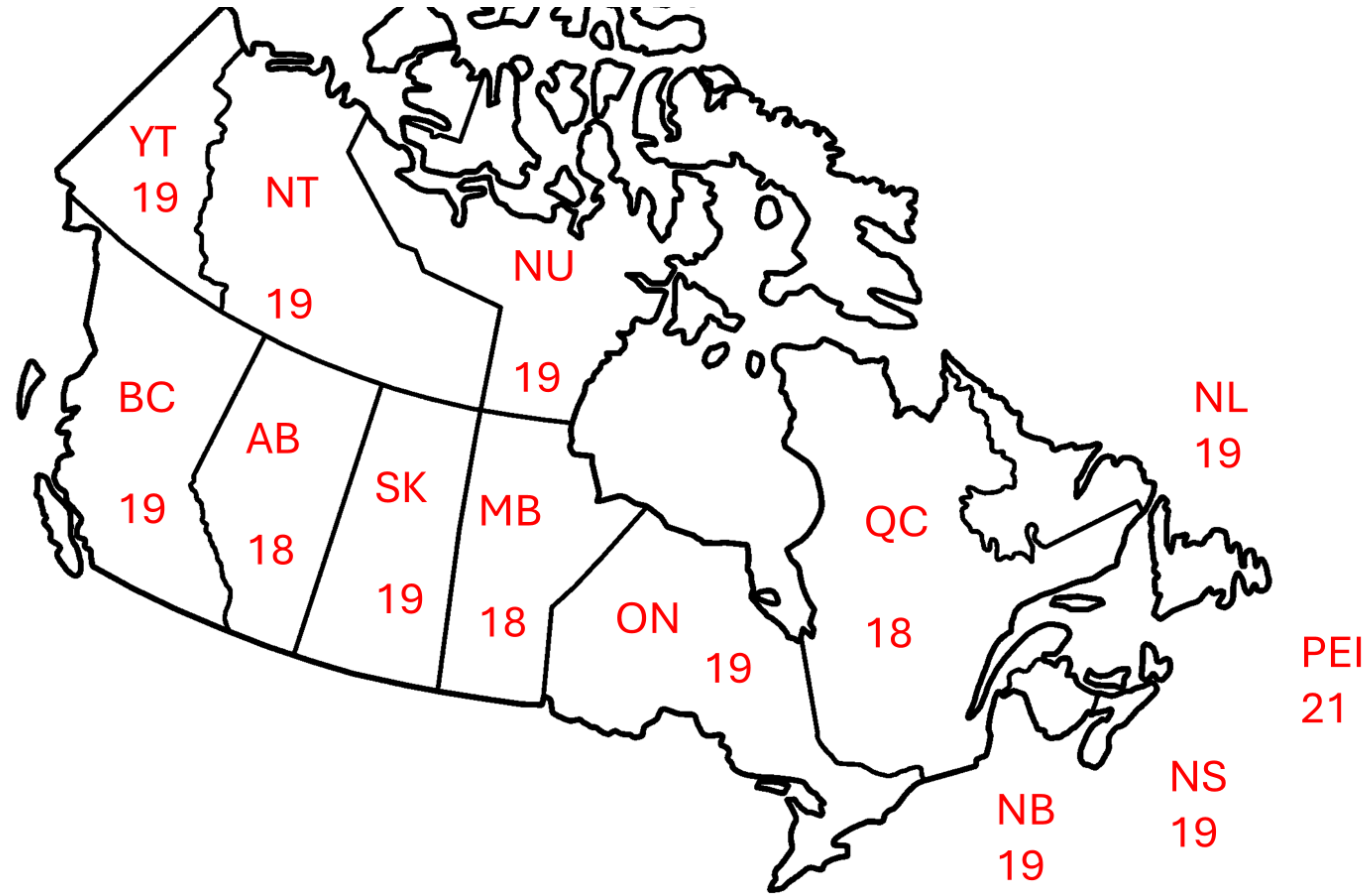


T21: Benefits of policies

- Protect many young people from starting to smoke.
- Defers the age of smoking initiation.
- Research has found that those who begin smoking at a younger age find it more difficult to quit.
- Nicotine can stunt brain development. Our brains are not fully developed until mid 20s.

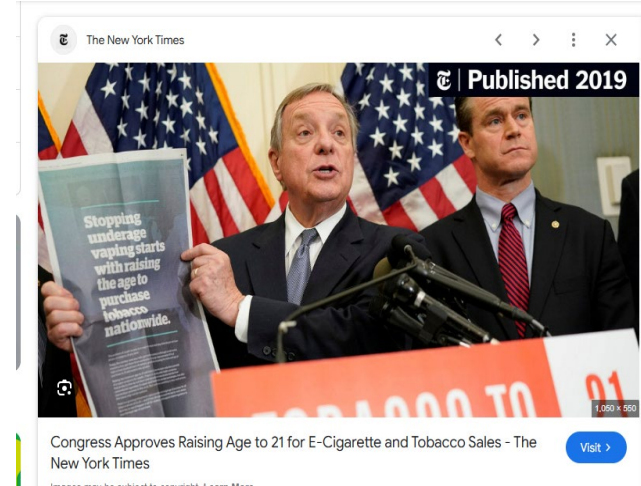


Tobacco and vape age of purchase across Canada



Age-based tobacco policies

- **Sri Lanka:** Age 21 (2006)
- **Honduras:** Age 21 (2010)
- **Mongolia:** Age 21 (2013)
- **Uganda:** Age 21 (2016)
- **Guam:** Age 21 (2018)
- **Niue:** Age 21 (2018)
- **Ethiopia:** Age 21 (2019)
- **United States:** Age 21 (2019)
- **Samoa:** Age 21 (2019)
- **Kuwait:** Age 21 (2019)
- **Philippines:** Age 21 (2020)
- **Japan and Thailand:** The minimum legal age for purchasing tobacco is 20 years (2001 and 2017)



Tobacco-free generation

Purpose:

- “Policies that prevent people from ever starting, such as generational endgame policies, could have a significant impact on reducing tobacco use around the world.”
- “Tobacco-free generation” reduces tobacco rates to nearly zero for the youngest people in society by restricting their access.



Tobacco-free generation: global scan

Denmark

Proposed a tobacco-free generation package in March of 2022.

- Withdrawn when legal analysis found it preemptive to European Union directive.

Malaysia

Prohibit the use and sale of tobacco products and vapes to anyone born after January 1, 2007.

- Not implemented. “According to the country’s former health minister, the generational endgame portion was removed from the bill due to industry lobbying.”

New Zealand

Prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2009.

- Not implemented. New government repealed the Act, due to industry opposition. The Act also included policies to reduce the amount of nicotine in tobacco products and decrease the volume of tobacco retailers.

United Kingdom

Prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2009. Government fell and new bill was put forth with a range of tobacco and vape restrictions.

- Passed House of Commons and now with House of Lords.



Tobacco-free generation: Regional progress

Balanga City, Philippines

- 2016: generational endgame policy prohibited the sale of tobacco products to those born after January 1, 2000.
- policy repealed two years later due to industry litigation

Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

- 2021: law prohibited the sale of tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2000.
- Implemented September 2021.
- Several tobacco retailers filed lawsuits, but court rejected suits and law stands.

Foundations of policy in New York, Hawaii and California



Age-based vaping policies

- 19 years of age: Jordan, Republic of Korea, and Turkey
- 21 years of age: Guam, Honduras, Kuwait, Niue, Palau, Philippines, and the USA
- No nicotine-free generation policies on the horizon. UK policy only includes tobacco.





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Generating knowledge for public health



Age Policies Evidence Review

April 17th, 2025

Webinar

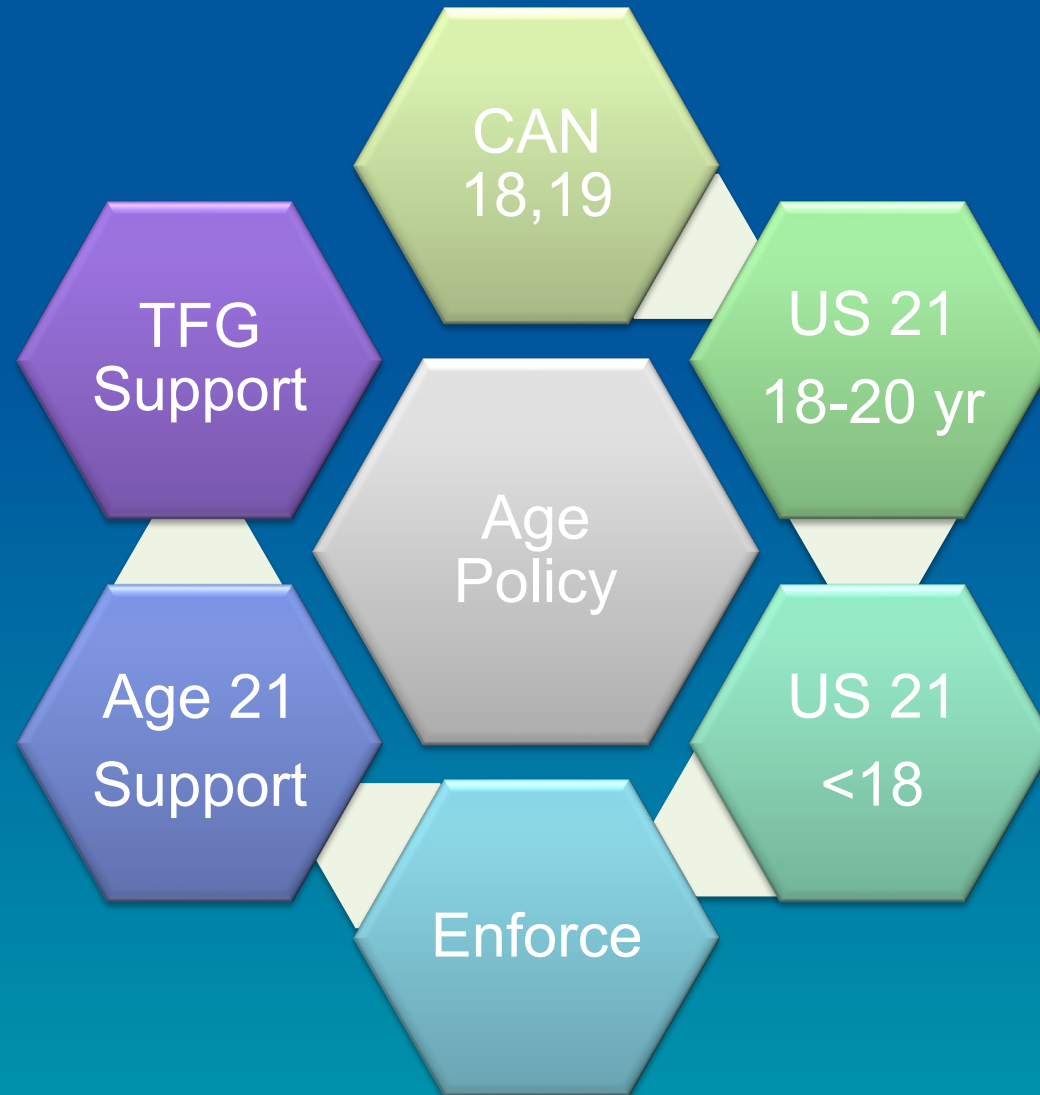
Robert Schwartz

OTRU

CAMH and University of Toronto

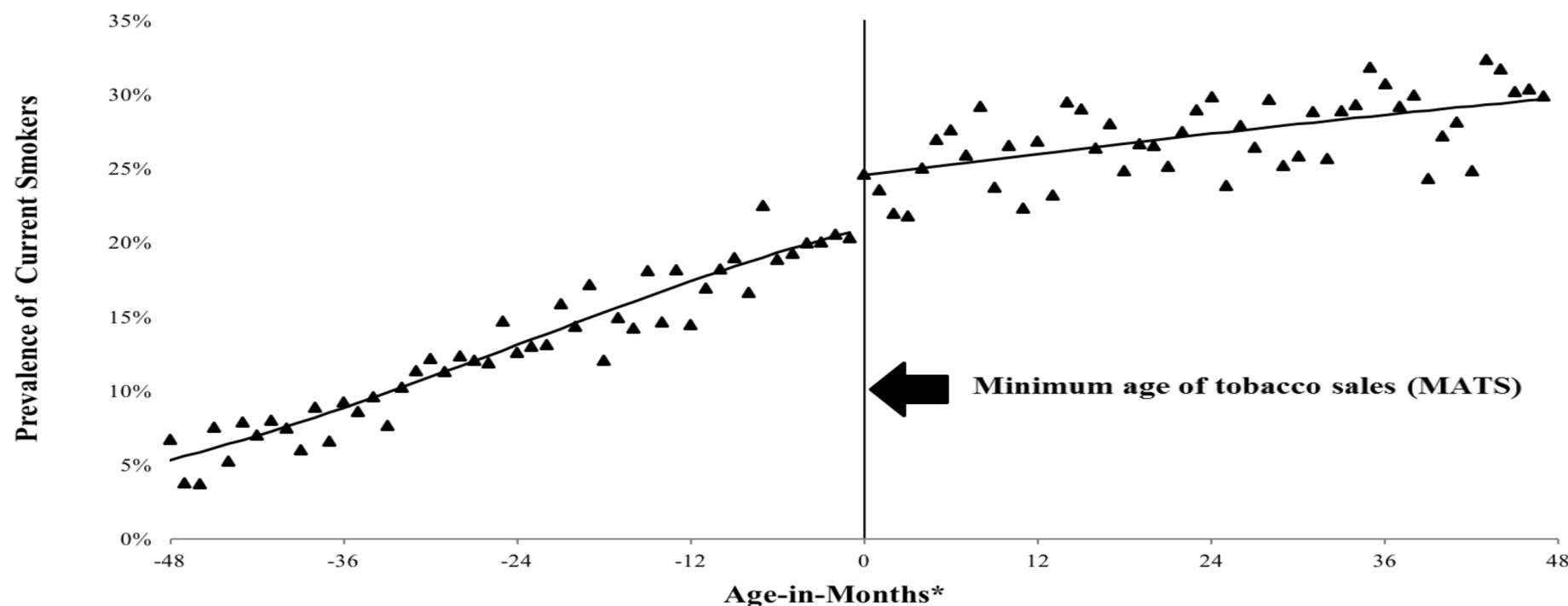
Outline

- Effects of current minimum age restrictions in Canada
- Real World Evidence on Effects of Age 21
- Compliance / Enforcement
- Public Support for Age 21 and for SFG / TFG



Impacts of Canada's minimum age for tobacco sales (MATS) laws on youth smoking behaviour, 2000–2014

Russell Clarence Callaghan,¹ Marcos Sanches,² Jodi Gatley,³ James K Cunningham,⁴ Michael Oliver Chaiton,⁵ Robert Schwartz,⁵ Susan Bondy,⁶ Claire Benny⁷



Prevalence of current smokers by respondents' age in months across minimum age of tobacco sales, Canada

Effects of current minimum age policies in Canada

- Few prior studies, mixed results
- High levels of retailer compliance
- Dampen smoking behaviour in tobacco-restricted age groups
- Important role in influencing youth smoking behaviour at the population level.

Real World Age 21

- Many studies, including systematic reviews demonstrate several impacts, particularly decreasing cigarette smoking:
 - US state level analysis shows 2-4% decrease in cigarette smoking among people aged 18-20 years (Hansen et al. 2023)
 - Smoking prevalence in Needham, Massachusetts, decreased from 13% to 7% (2006 – 2010) – much more than in surrounding communities (Schneider et al 2016)

Age 21 decreases tobacco use in 18-20 year olds who smoke

- 39% reduction in the odds of both recent smoking [odds ratio (OR) = 0.61; 95% confidence interval (CI) = 0.42, 0.89] and current established smoking (OR = 0.61; 95% CI = 0.39, 0.97) among 18-20-year-olds who had ever tried cigarettes.
- Tobacco 21 in California resulted in 26% decrease in daily smoking among young adults aged 18-20 years (Dove et al 2021)

Age 21 decreases tobacco use in lower age groups

- Cleveland, Ohio,
- Minnesota,
- National study using Monitoring the Future and Nielsen Retail Scanner data

Enforcement

- Depends much on enforcement
- In California, 65% of cigarette users and 82% of e-cigarette users were not refused purchase of cigarettes
- At same time about half felt it was harder to purchase

Support for Age 21

- Globally, support is above 50%, with few exceptions such as Germany
- ITC study (Australia, Canada, England, and the U.S.): support ranged from 62.2% in U.S. to **70.8% in Canada**.
- UK - support by adults (63%).
- U.S. Strong public support, consistent over time [e.g., 75.0% in 2014; 72.3% in 2015; 78.4% in 2016; and 75.2%].

Support for TFG /SFG

- UK: 63% of respondents agree with the policy change.
- New Zealand: 75%+ support for “a law that prevents anyone who is currently 18 or younger from ever buying cigarettes or tobacco,”
- New Zealand supported it as a social good and viewed it as liberating rather than restrictive.
- Meta-analysis of extant literature: overall 54% level of support for “tobacco-free generation”

Thanks

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Simulation modeling for T21

A 2015 Institute of Medicine (Bonnie et al) report concluded that raising the minimum tobacco sales age to 21 nationwide would reduce smoking initiation over time by 25% among 15- to 17-year-olds and by 15% among 18- to 20-year-olds.

It estimates that 223,000 premature deaths could be prevented among people born in the USA between 2000 and 2019, including 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer

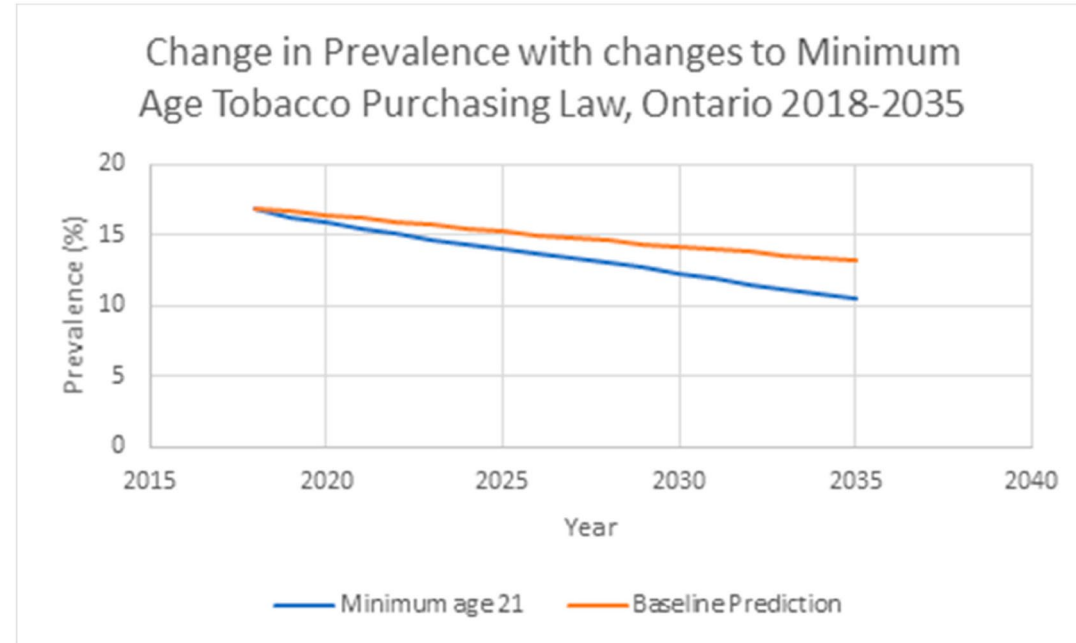
Simulation modeling for T21

Whitney et al. T21 law in El Paso County, Texas, using an agent-based simulation model of smoking behavior and cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Skinner et al. used a system dynamics model to assess 8 different endgame policies for the Australian state of Queensland. Raising the minimum age to 21 was found to have effects on smoking initiation but no impact on adult smoking prevalence.

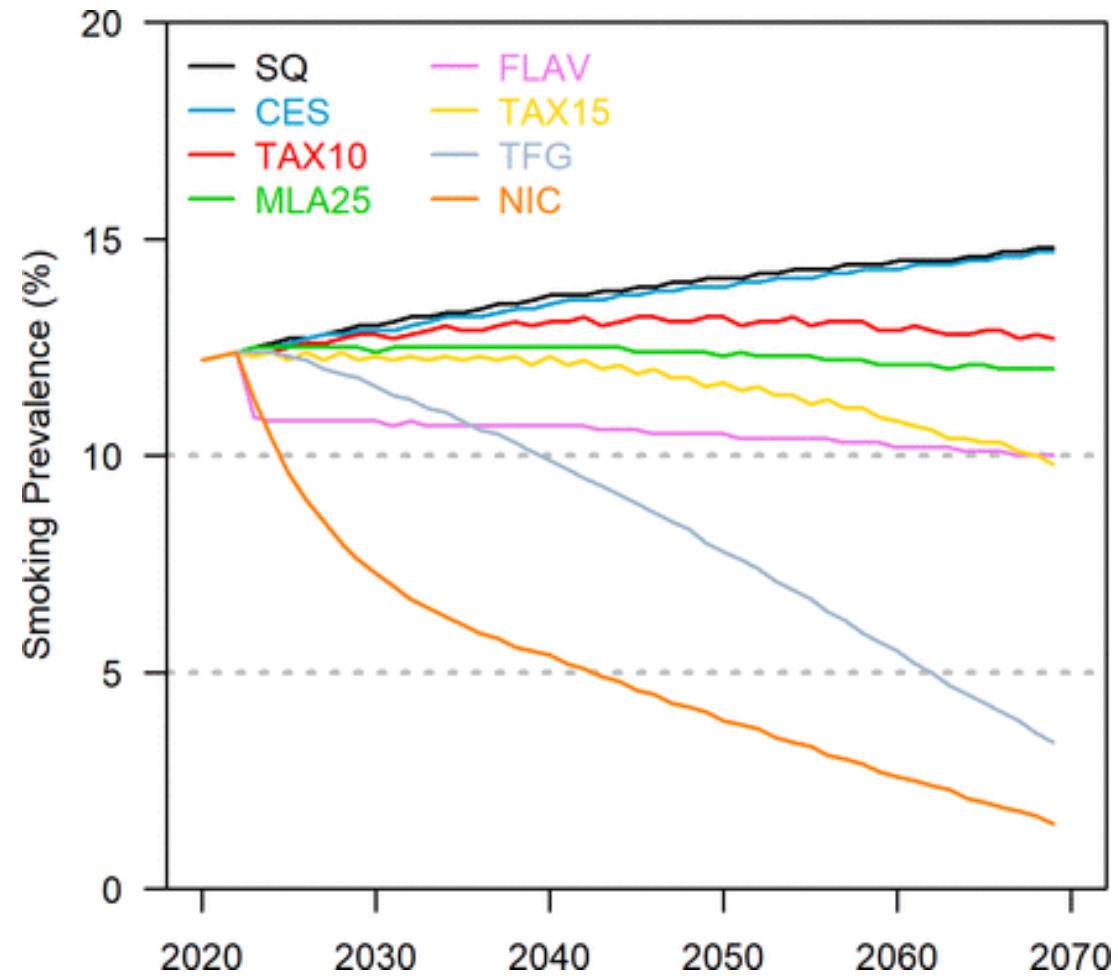
Ontario Modeling

- Ontario Simsmoke model and found that raising the minimum legal purchase age to 21 would be expected to reduce smoking prevalence by 5.2 percentage point among young adults



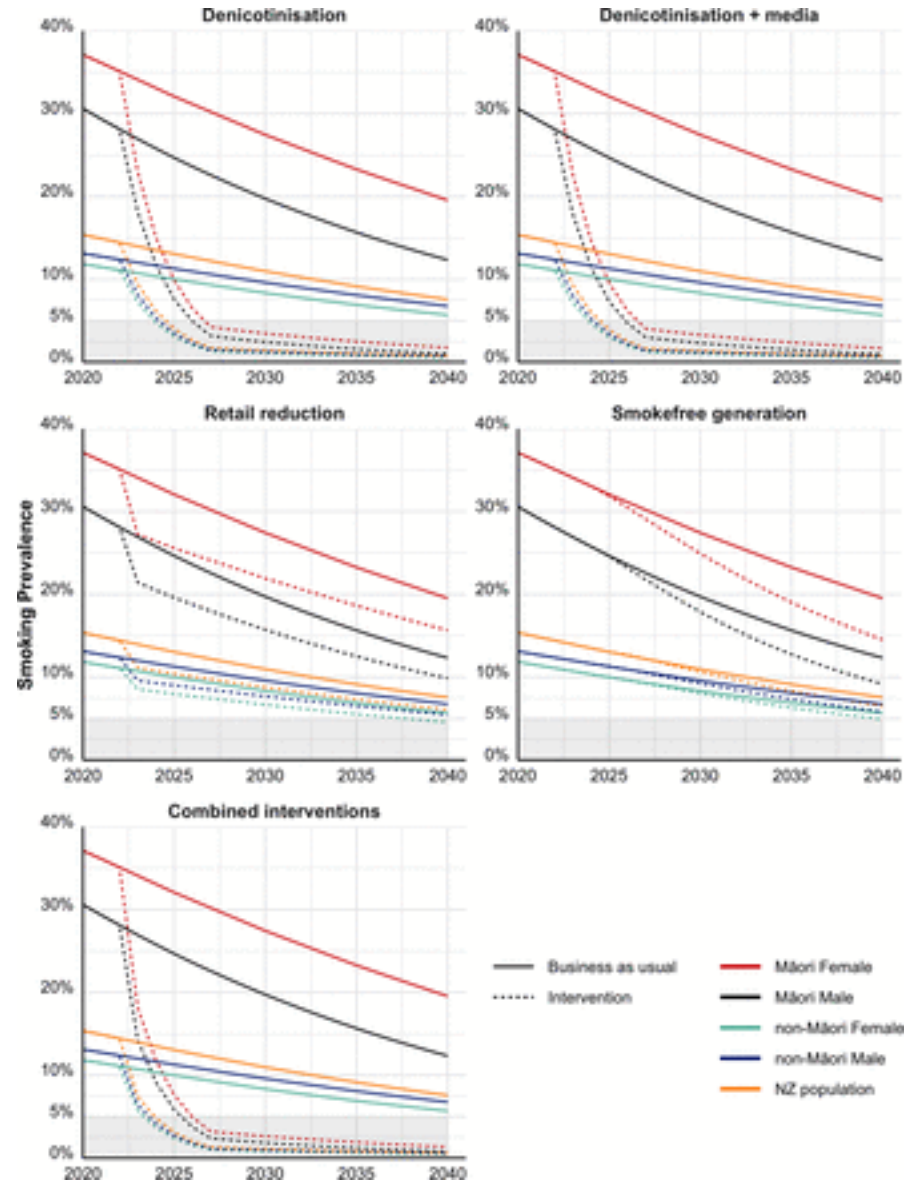
T21 and the Endgame

- Zeng et al. modelled potential tobacco endgame strategies for Singapore. A minimum age increase to 25 was insufficient to achieve a tobacco endgame target within 50 years.



Smoke-Free Generation and the Endgame

- Ouakrim et al. using a proportional multistate model found that a tobacco free generation would be responsible for approximately 60 deaths averted by 2040 in New Zealand while other policies would lead to more than 7000 deaths averted. Similar effects were found in Australia (Van Der Deen et al) and the Solomon Islands (Singh et al.) using the same underlying model.



Unknowns

Little real world evidence of an increase in the age to age 21, and none with respect to raising the age to 25 or Smoke-Free Generation

Unknown effect on equity

Unknown effect on social perception of tobacco and effect on cessation

Compliance

- Consistent with previous literature on minimum age laws compliance and change in ability to purchase cigarettes is needed for the law to have an effect.
- Studies have found that less than 20% of youth have issues in purchasing cigarettes underage
- Most urgently an issue for vulnerable population





Going forward



Alliance for a Tobacco Free Ontario: Roadmap

Restrict access to nicotine by age over time.

- Raise the legal age of purchase for tobacco and vape products to 21.
- Introduce a tobacco and nicotine free generation.

Address nicotine retail environment

- Ban online sales of nicotine and tobacco
- Amend SFOA to include vape product sales as part of automatic prohibition framework
- Reduce retail density of tobacco and vape stores

Ban single use vape products

Continue to increase taxes

- Maintain tobacco tax increases to match inflation
- Maintain vape tax increases to match inflation

Smoke + vape free public spaces

- hookah in restaurants and cafes
- vaping in entertainment facilities
- smoke-free beaches and golf courses

Age-based tobacco and nicotine restrictions

Advocacy efforts

- Heart & Stroke along with our partners have been advocating for T21 at provincial and federal levels.
- Some momentum at the federal level and pockets of interest regionally.
- There is strong support from ON PH leadership. ATFO will work to build political will with elected officials.

Recommendations

Reinvigorate the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, focusing on populations and regions with high rates of tobacco use. Expand the strategy to create a comprehensive, coherent public health-oriented framework for regulating vaping and all nicotine-containing products.

Targets

- Adopt Health Canada's target of less than 5% tobacco use by 2035
- Develop aggressive targets to prevent the use of vaping products by youth and people who do not smoke

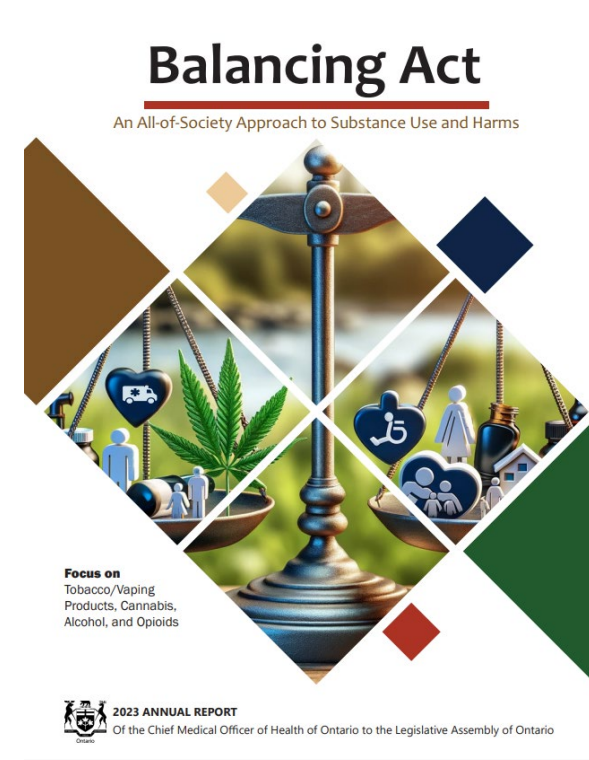
Health Promotion

- Continue to raise awareness among Ontarians, particularly youth, of the risks associated with tobacco and vaping products

Regulatory Measures

Minimum legal age of purchase

- Increase the minimum legal age to purchase tobacco and vaping products from 19 to 21 years old
- Consider progressively increasing the minimum legal age to purchase these products over time as a way to ban the purchase of these products by future generations



Advocacy efforts

- Research modeling will play a major part in building a strong evidence base
- Public opinion polling: 81% of Canadians support raising tobacco purchase age to 21.*
- Additional socialization of policy issue in public discourse.



*Source: Canadian Cancer Society, Polling from February 2025

Aged based restrictions: Opposition

- UK: Industry efforts to water down tobacco free generation to age 21 instead (Distraction)
- Malaysia: Industry claimed illicit trade would increase and youth would be able to easily access cheap tobacco
- New Zealand and Malaysia: Threat of lost tobacco taxation revenue
- UK and Malaysia: Industry lobbied for exemptions including vape products and heated tobacco products
- UK: PMI threatened to sue government over tobacco-free generation policy
- New Zealand and UK: Industry claimed endgame measures would be difficult to enforce



Implications

- Do we strive for age 21, then 25, and then tobacco free generation?
- Do vaping and tobacco need to align? Can we move tobacco without other nicotine products?
- What about other products? Alcohol and cannabis? Do we utilize the spectrum of harm to create age-based restrictions for products?



Next steps

- ATFO roadmap stakeholder endorsement.
- In meeting with elected officials, it's powerful to have local representation.
- Youth engagement is key.
- Federal election April 28. Course of action dependent upon which party wins.
- Provincial age 21 efforts – BC, MB, ON, QC and NS.
- Provincial generational policy – PEI.





Thank you for your time!
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