



For Immediate Release

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Date: April 19, 2019

Cheap, Flavored Tobacco Easily Accessible To Milwaukee Teens

Youth Access Rate Rises from 19% in 2017 to 25% in 2018

MILWAUKEE-- One in four tobacco retailers in the City of Milwaukee sold tobacco or nicotine products to underage youth during 2018 compliance checks, according to newly released data from [Wisconsin Wins](#). During the Wisconsin Wins compliance checks, minors attempt to purchase tobacco or nicotine products, including cheap, flavored cigarillos, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or single cigarettes. If they are successful, a Milwaukee police officer working with the minors writes a ticket on the spot or retailers can choose to sign up for the MARTS program (Milwaukee Achieving Responsible Tobacco Sales) to avoid citation.

The 25% rate of sale was an increase from the previous year (19%), making 2018 the second highest rate-of-sale since compliance checks began in 2009. A peak of 27% was seen in 2015.

98% of the products purchased were cheap, flavored cigarillos. This type of tobacco product enjoys a lower tax rate than traditional cigarettes while still packing the same punch as a pack of cigarettes. Cigarillos, which are high in nicotine content, are typically sold in packs of two and often cost 99 cents per pack, whereas a traditional pack of twenty cigarettes costs around \$8, including the Wisconsin state tobacco tax of \$2.52 per pack. 2018 was the first year that single cigarette (loosies) and e-cigarette purchase attempts were made. E-cigarettes are currently not taxed in Wisconsin. Single cigarette sales are illegal, yet still common in Milwaukee's central city.

"We are pleased with the work of the Wisconsin Wins Program to help restrict youth access to tobacco products. Hopefully, by including single cigarettes in the Wisconsin WINS compliance checks, this will bring the practice of selling single cigarettes to an end in Milwaukee," said Baker Al-Qudsi, Vice President of Marketing at Hayat Pharmacy and co-chair of the Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network's single cigarettes subcommittee.

Completed Sales out of Attempted Purchases for Each Product

- 2 e-cigarettes sold out of 30 attempts
- 0 single cigarettes out of 12 attempts
- 0 cigarette packs out of 4 attempts
- 118 flavored cigarillos out of 441 attempts

While the overall rate of sale was 25% in Milwaukee, various zip codes within the city saw more sales than others: 53208 stood at 43%, and 53211 at 56%. 53202 stood at 5%, while 53203 had 0% sales to minors. Sales in 53206 went down, from 55% to 31%.

Despite the increase in sales overall, over 4 in 5 (81%) of retailers checked ID before a transaction.

The Wisconsin Wins compliance checks were conducted through a partnership between the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance at Community Advocates, Neu-Life Community Development, Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network, and the Milwaukee Police Department's License Investigation Unit.

To learn more about the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance or the Wisconsin Wins compliance checks, contact Anneke Mohr at amohr@communityadvocates.net or 414-270-2948.