



For Immediate Release

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**Cheap, Flavored Tobacco Easily Accessible To Milwaukee Teens
One in five retailers are selling to city youth**

MILWAUKEE-- One in five tobacco retailers in the City of Milwaukee sold tobacco or nicotine products to underage youth during 2019 compliance checks, according to newly released data from [Wisconsin Wins](#). The 21% rate of sale in Milwaukee was a decrease from the previous year (25%), although the ten-year trend is up from 11% in 2009. Youth access rate in Milwaukee peaked in 2015 at 27%.

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 2019 Wisconsin WINS compliance checks were conducted when it was still legal to sell tobacco to individuals ages 18 and up. In December 2019, an amendment to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act raised the federal minimum age of sale of tobacco products – including cigarettes, cigars, and e-cigarettes – to anyone under 21. The City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance is educating local retailers on how they can comply with the new Tobacco 21 regulations.

Wisconsin Wins is a science-based strategy to reduce youth access to tobacco products. Local members of [FACT](#), Wisconsin's youth tobacco prevention program focused on peer-to-peer messaging, help to conduct Wins checks in Milwaukee.

“Although retailers are getting a little bit better about not selling tobacco to minors, there are still too many who are willing to sell to youth and beginning their addiction to nicotine,” said DW, a member of the FACT group organized at Neu-Life Community Development in Milwaukee who also participated in last summer's Wins checks. “More shop owners and employees should look out for the health and safety of the youth in their community.”

Most 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 20 cigarettes costs around \$8, including the Wisconsin state tobacco tax of \$2.52 per pack. Single cigarette sales are illegal, yet still common in Milwaukee's central city.

While the overall rate of sale was 21% in Milwaukee, various aldermanic districts within the city saw more sales than others. District 1 on the North Side had a 47% youth access rate; District 9 on the far North West Side had a 45% youth access rate; and District 4, encompassing Downtown, the Near West Side, and the East Side, had a 35% youth access rate.

Despite the high youth access rate overall, over 4 in 5 (81%) of retailers checked ID before a transaction and 60% posted signage indicating no sales to minors.

The Wisconsin Wins compliance checks were conducted through a partnership between City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance at Community Advocates; Neu-Life Community Development; Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network; Wisconsin Hispanic Latino Tobacco Prevention Network, and MPD'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.

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