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INSPIRING
TOBACCO-FREE
LIVES

LAWS IN TOBACCO NATION

**RESIDENTS OF STATES
WITH THE DEADLIEST
SMOKING DISPARITIES
SUPPORT POLICY
PROTECTIONS**

In 2017, Truth Initiative® released a [report](#) highlighting a **collection of states with smoking rates that rival the most cigarette-dependent countries on earth.**¹⁻³ These states, termed **“Tobacco Nation,”** have not only the nation’s highest adult smoking rates and poorer health outcomes compared with the U.S. as a whole, they also have largely failed to enact public health policies that could lessen their dependence on tobacco. In **“Tobacco Nation: The Deadly State of Smoking Disparity in the United States,”** we argued that the lack of tobacco control policies exacerbated smoking rates and other health risks, and called for a set of policy actions that could help loosen the grip of tobacco on these communities.²

This report revisits Tobacco Nation to gauge states’ support of these policies. **How do individuals on the ground feel about laws to curb tobacco use?** The answer, we learned, was somewhat surprising. Despite any reluctance leaders in Tobacco Nation states may feel about enacting sensible tobacco laws, residents of Tobacco Nation states support tobacco control policies at almost exactly the same level as their counterparts in states outside Tobacco Nation. In some cases, their support was higher. **Inside or outside of Tobacco Nation, residents recognize that they deserve the same public health protections.**

TOBACCO NATION BACKGROUND

Tobacco Nation is comprised of **12 states with the highest adult smoking prevalence:** Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and West Virginia.⁴ With more than 66 million residents, these states include roughly **20 percent of the U.S. population.**⁵

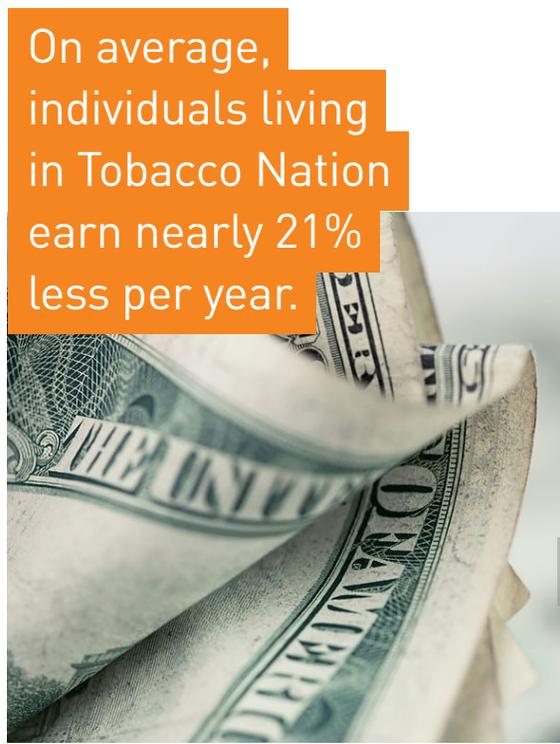


Tobacco Nation is both **less diverse** (whites comprise 75 percent of the population, compared with 59 percent in the rest of the U.S.) and **less well-off financially**.⁵ On average, individuals living in Tobacco Nation earn nearly 21 percent less per year (\$45,133) than the average resident in the rest of the U.S. (\$56,852).⁵

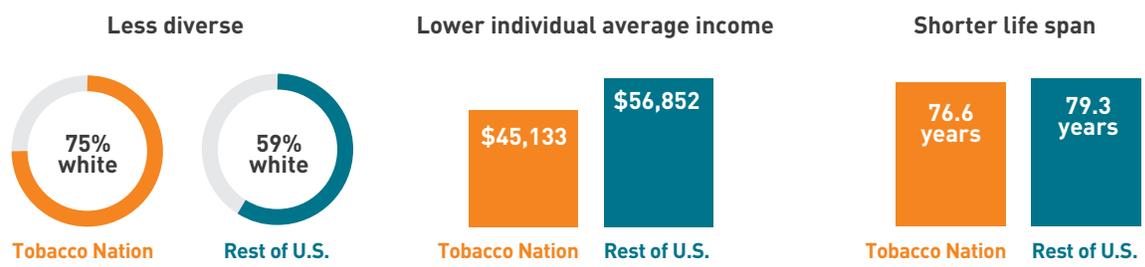
Both **youth and adult residents** of Tobacco Nation **smoke at higher rates** (22 percent of adults and 12 percent of youth compared with 15 percent of adults and 9 percent of youth in the rest of the U.S.). They also smoke many more cigarettes per person every year (66.6 packs) than the rest of the U.S. (40.6 packs).^{1,3,6}

What all of this adds up to, for Tobacco Nation residents, is a **shorter life span and a higher risk of dying**. The average life expectancy in Tobacco Nation is 76.6 years, compared with 79.3 years in the rest of the U.S.⁷ Tobacco Nation residents are **more likely to die from cancer** and face much **greater heart disease mortality** than the rest of the U.S.⁸⁻¹¹

Facing poorer health and financial outcomes, **Tobacco Nation states could benefit from comprehensive tobacco control policies**. Yet the **region is far less likely than other states to implement such policies**. Lower taxes are levied on cigarettes, fewer Tobacco Nation states have raised the cigarette purchasing age to 21 and only two states in Tobacco Nation have laws forbidding smoking in workplaces, restaurants and bars.^{6,12,13}



Population: Tobacco Nation vs. rest of the U.S.



TOBACCO NATION POLICY SUPPORT

Although the tobacco policy framework is currently lacking in much of Tobacco Nation, its **residents favor policies that can make a difference in winning the war against tobacco**. Truth Initiative conducted a survey to assess support for a number of tobacco control policy ideas, both in and outside of Tobacco Nation. We found that **support did not differ dramatically between residents of Tobacco Nation and those in the remaining states**.

The survey used Lightspeed GMI's online panel and was sponsored by RTI, an independent, not-for-profit research organization. Truth Initiative then analyzed the survey data using statistical methods to ensure that the survey accurately represented the demographics and smoking characteristics of both Tobacco Nation and the remaining U.S. states (excluding Hawaii and Alaska). From Dec. 14, 2017, to Dec. 19, 2017, 1,601 participants completed the survey.

The majority of people who live in Tobacco Nation favor evidence-based tobacco control policies.



UNIVERSAL SUPPORT

Regardless of geography, the **majority of survey participants favored several evidence-based policies.**

- > **Tobacco 21:** Seventy-two percent of both Tobacco Nation and the rest of the U.S. supported a requirement that **people be 21 years old to buy any tobacco product.**
- > **Smoke-free policies:** Seventy-three percent of both Tobacco Nation and the rest of the U.S. supported a **ban on smoking in restaurants**, while 68 percent of both groups supported a **ban on smoking in entrance ways of public buildings and workplaces.** The majority of both groups also supported a **ban on smoking in bars** (Tobacco Nation: 53 percent, rest of U.S.: 57 percent) and **using e-cigarettes in all indoor places** (Tobacco Nation: 57 percent, rest of U.S.: 60 percent).
- > **Purchasing policies:** Sixty-one percent of Tobacco Nation and 65 percent of the rest of the U.S. supported **banning the sale of tobacco products in stores near schools.** The majority of both groups also supported **banning the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies** (Tobacco Nation: 50 percent, rest of U.S.: 53 percent).
- > **Tobacco display in shops:** Sixty-two percent of Tobacco Nation, compared with 52 percent of the rest of the U.S., supported **requiring that tobacco products** (such as packs of cigarettes) be **kept out of view in stores where youth shop.** Given Tobacco Nation's higher youth tobacco use rate of 12 percent (compared to 9 percent in the rest of the U.S.),^{1,3} every barrier to youth purchases could make a difference.
- > **Litter fee:** Fifty-six percent of Tobacco Nation residents supported the idea of **charging smokers 25 cents more per pack to pay for cleaning up cigarette litter**, compared with 54 percent of the rest of the U.S. In a region that smokes 26 more packs of cigarettes on average per year,⁶ the potential reduction in litter alone could be significant. San Francisco, for example, imposes a 75 cent fee on each pack of cigarettes as a cleaning fee.¹⁴
- > **Licensing laws:** Sixty percent of Tobacco Nation, compared with 58 percent of the rest of the U.S., supported **requiring every store that sells tobacco to purchase a license from the state or local government.** The ability to regulate the type and location of retail stores that sell tobacco is a valuable tool in restricting tobacco sales.

Support for tobacco control policies in Tobacco Nation

Require people to be 21 years to buy any tobacco product



Ban smoking in restaurants



Ban the sale of tobacco products in stores near schools



Require tobacco products to be kept out of view in stores where youth shop



Charge smokers 25 cents more per pack to pay for cigarette litter cleanups



Require every store that sells tobacco to purchase a license from the state or local government



SUPPORT FOR FLAVORED TOBACCO AND MENTHOL BANS

Two-thirds to three-quarters of participants in both groups supported, or were neutral about, **flavor and menthol bans**, showing that the majority do not oppose the policy. Most are supportive — one half of both groups support menthol and flavor bans. Of those not declaring outright support, one-quarter to one-third were neutral to these policies, suggesting that they could be open to the idea of a flavor or menthol ban. San Francisco recently proved that public support can advance policy. In the city, 68 percent of residents voted to uphold a ban on both flavors and menthol tobacco products.¹⁵

- **Flavor bans:** Forty-four percent of Tobacco Nation and 46 percent of the rest of the U.S. supported **banning the sale of fruit-, alcohol- or candy-flavored tobacco products** (not including e-cigarettes), and around 45 percent and 46 percent of Tobacco Nation and the rest of the U.S., respectively, supported **banning fruit-, alcohol- or candy-flavored e-cigarettes**. Roughly one-quarter of participants were neutral to the idea.
- **Menthol ban:** Tobacco Nation was **more in favor of banning menthol cigarettes than the rest of the U.S.** A little more than 40 percent of Tobacco Nation and 37 percent of the rest of the U.S. supported banning the sale of menthol cigarettes, while roughly 30 percent of participants were neutral.



In San Francisco, 68% of residents voted to uphold a ban on both flavors and menthol tobacco products.

Support for flavored tobacco and menthol bans in Tobacco Nation vs. the rest of U.S.

Support banning the sale of fruit-, alcohol- or candy-flavored tobacco products (not including e-cigarettes)



Support banning fruit-, alcohol- or candy-flavored e-cigarettes



Support banning the sale of menthol cigarettes



SURVEY RESULTS

	Favor		Neutral		Against	
	GROUP 1: TOBACCO NATION ⁱ	GROUP 2: REST OF U.S. ⁱⁱ	GROUP 1: TOBACCO NATION ⁱⁱⁱ	GROUP 2: REST OF U.S. ^{iv}	GROUP 1: TOBACCO NATION ^v	GROUP 2: REST OF U.S. ^{vi}
What is your opinion about a policy that would...	%	%	%	%	%	%
Smoke-free policies						
Ban smoking in restaurants	72.44	72.88	10.44	11.30	17.12	15.82
Ban smoking in entrance ways of public buildings and workplaces	67.67	67.64	13.07	14.83	19.25	17.53
Ban using e-cigarettes in all indoor public places	56.54	59.59	17.40	17.62	26.06	22.79
Ban smoking in bars	52.52	57.12	18.23	17.36	29.25	25.51
Ban smoking in outdoor public places , such as beaches or parks	49.97	49.79	15.37	18.83	34.66	31.38
Tobacco 21						
Require people to be 21 years old to buy any tobacco products	72.02	71.83	14.06	14.40	13.92	13.77
Purchasing policies						
Require that tobacco products, such as packs of cigarettes, be kept out of view in stores where youth shop	61.59	52.48	22.07	25.94	16.34	21.58
Ban the sale of tobacco products in stores that are near schools	61.37	64.71	19.55	14.57	19.08	20.72
Require every store that sells tobacco to purchase a license from the state or local government	59.50	57.65	19.51	20.38	20.98	21.96
Ban the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies	49.77	52.52	26.58	23.15	23.65	24.33
Require additional state tax of \$1 on a pack of cigarettes	48.80	44.48	20.14	16.83	31.06	38.69
Litter fee						
Charge smokers 25 cents more per pack to pay for cleaning up cigarette litter	56.12	54.15	19.64	16.15	24.24	29.70
Flavor and menthol bans						
Ban the sale of fruit-, alcohol- or candy- flavored tobacco products (not including e-cigarettes)	44.48	46.33	26.62	24.48	28.90	29.19
Ban the sale of fruit-, alcohol- or candy- flavored e-cigarettes	43.99	45.77	30.72	24.62	25.29	29.61
Ban the sale of menthol cigarettes	40.15	36.95	35.10	28.86	24.76	34.20

ⁱn=46675583; ⁱⁱn=201134548; ⁱⁱⁱn=46675583; ^{iv}n=201134548; ^vn=46675583; ^{vi}n=201134548

CONCLUSIONS

No single public policy will end the scourge of tobacco use. But as the experience in the rest of the U.S. has shown, a **comprehensive slate of tobacco control policies can make a significant difference in winning the war against tobacco**. A region that smokes far more packs of cigarettes per year than the rest of the country would undoubtedly **benefit from policies that increase the price of cigarettes and make it harder for young people to buy them**. A large section of the country unprotected by the smoke-free laws enjoyed by most of the rest of the U.S. stands to gain cleaner air, improvements in health and a potential reduction in tobacco use.

In addition to the policy items suggested in the survey, the actions we called for in our previous report remain critically important. **Higher taxes on cigarettes, tobacco-related public education, increased public and private funding to combat tobacco use, quitting services and point-of-sale regulations** that keep tobacco advertisements at a minimum all play a key role in putting an end to the tobacco epidemic.

It is clear that **Tobacco Nation does not have to and should not endure the status quo**. Its **residents** resoundingly agree with the majority of the U.S. and **believe that they should be protected by practical tobacco control policies**. Now we must work to ensure that their representatives and other state leaders abide by their beliefs and enact the types of policies that support Tobacco Nation's health. The era of excuses and of delaying or preventing action must come to an end. **Every American deserves the chance to live a healthy, productive life**. We can start by listening to Tobacco Nation's residents and building the policy framework needed to improve health and change the future.

Every American deserves
the chance to live a healthy,
productive life.



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