



Contra Costa Store Survey Highlights 2016

Contra Costa survey findings confirm that unhealthy products such as tobacco, alcohol and sugary beverages are still being promoted to youth.

2016 Store Survey Highlights

- **Six in 10 stores in Contra Costa have exterior advertising for *unhealthy* products** like tobacco, alcohol and sugary drinks. This compares with two in 10 stores with exterior advertising for *healthy* items including fruits, vegetables and non-fat/low-fat milk.
- **About two-thirds of all stores in Contra Costa sell e-cigarettes.** The number of stores selling e-cigarettes statewide has increased in the last three years, from 46% in 2013 to 62% in 2016. The percentage of high school students who reported current use of e-cigarettes tripled between 2013 and 2014. Many of these products are attractive to youth because they are relatively cheap and come in flavors like cherry-limeade, and mint.
- **Many stores (77%) near schools in Contra Costa sell flavored non-cigarette tobacco products**, like “watermelon” and “peach” flavored cigarillos and little cigars. Many of these products sell for under a dollar, making them very attractive and affordable for youth.
- **Sugary drinks are available at the check-out area at about half of stores** in Contra Costa. The largest single source of calories for youth is sugary drinks, including sodas and sports drinks.
- **Six in 10 stores selling tobacco near schools in Contra Costa** are in low-income cities and unincorporated communities. People living in low-income areas have high rates of smoking and chronic diseases like heart disease, cancers and stroke. The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids estimates that 441,000 kids now under the age of 18 in California will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.
- **About two-thirds of all stores in Contra Costa sell e-cigarettes.** The number of stores selling e-cigarettes statewide has increased in the last three years, from 46% in 2013 to 62% in 2016. The percentage of high school students who reported current use of e-cigarettes tripled between 2013 and 2014. Many of these products are attractive to youth because they are relatively cheap and come in flavors like cherry-limeade, and mint.
- Of the stores that sell tobacco and alcohol in Contra Costa, 77% are selling **Alcopops**, which are increasingly popular among young people because of their **fruity flavors and attractive containers**. These flavored malt beverages, sold as 12 oz. can or bottles typically with a 12% alcohol content, were captured in the survey. “Supersized” versions of 23.5 oz. with 8% alcohol content are also available.

Policy Options

Potential solutions to reduce youth exposure to these products in our communities must be explored. Cities and Counties can adopt policies to reduce promotion of unhealthy products to youth, such as prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products, limiting the amount of allowable signage on storefronts, and limiting the number of stores that sell these products near schools.

The Survey

- A sample of randomly selected zip codes in the county was chosen for this survey. Attempts were made to survey all stores that sell tobacco within these zip codes, except for stores that prohibit youth from entry and those that require membership, including convenience, supermarket, liquor, tobacco, small market, discount, drug and big box stores.
- Overall, there were few differences between the survey results for Contra Costa County, the Bay Area Region and the State. Although some of the County, State and Regional survey results look different, there are few that are “statistically different.”