

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Neetu Balram

Neetu.Balram2@acgov.org

(510) 267-8001

New Survey finds progress in reducing the availability of harmful tobacco products in Alameda County but more work is needed for communities of color

Oakland, CA – June 2020 – Alameda County has made substantial progress in reducing youth access to flavored tobacco products over the last three years. From 2016 to 2019, there was a nearly 20-percentage point decrease among surveyed stores that offer flavored tobacco. However, over 25% of County residents still have access to flavored tobacco products in communities where they live. These products are more accessible to youth at higher rates in Black and Latinx neighborhoods.

Data from a new survey revealed marked disparities in certain neighborhoods likely due to the tobacco industry's long history of targeting advertising to communities of color. Over 90% of youth-accessible stores in Black neighborhoods—which are mostly located in Oakland—sell flavored tobacco products. Outside of Oakland, all youth-accessible stores (87) in Latinx neighborhoods sell flavored tobacco products.

“These findings show that while we have made progress, our County's youth and communities of color are still surrounded by flavored tobacco and other unhealthy products in the retail environment,” said Paul Cummings, Director of the Alameda County Tobacco Control Program.

The findings were obtained through the Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community Survey, which is the largest scientific survey of its kind in the state. It builds upon previous research conducted in 2013 and 2016 and examines changes in the availability and marketing of certain products over time. These products include tobacco, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options.

One of the key goals of the survey was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth. The findings for Alameda County show a slight increase from 2016 to 2019 in the proportion of surveyed stores that sell fruits and vegetables (47% to 49%), and a decrease (56% to 38%) in the proportion of stores that display tobacco marketing in kid-friendly locations, such as within three feet of candy or toys. The 2019 survey also found the following for Alameda County:

- A majority of the stores surveyed (73%) continue to sell menthol cigarettes.
- Over half of the stores (60%) located within 1,000 feet of schools still sell flavored, non-cigarette tobacco products such as grape e-cigarettes.
- The majority (79%) of the stores surveyed sell little cigars/cigarillos, which come in hundreds of enticing flavors and can be sold individually and cheaply – making them very appealing to youth.
- About half (53%) of surveyed stores in Alameda County sell sugary drinks at the check-out counter. This is a six-percentage point increase from stores surveyed in 2016.

- Of the surveyed stores that sold alcohol (64%), the majority also sold sweet and fruity flavored alcopops (78%), which are appealing to youth.
- The majority (84%) of surveyed stores sold condoms, but only 38% sold them on unlocked shelves, which makes it more difficult for people to access them.
- Most surveyed stores (66%) near school have unhealthy storefront advertising.
- Only 49% of the stores surveyed sold fresh fruits and vegetables.

“We are committed to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to provide accurate information and help make our stores healthier, and make the easy choice the healthy choice for all Alameda County residents,” said Kimi Watkins-Tartt, Alameda County Public Health Director.

For full state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, please visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.

More About the Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community Campaign:

The Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community campaign is a statewide collaboration between tobacco and alcohol use prevention, sexually transmitted disease prevention, and nutrition partners to examine what’s in our community stores and how that impacts public health.

#