Making the Case for Tobacco 21

Kendall Stagg, JD
Trinity Health
Director, Safety Net Transformation and Community Health Innovation
Tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable disease and premature death in the U.S.

Tobacco use is one of the largest drivers of health care costs. Chronic diseases are the most common and costly of all health problems. They are also the most preventable.
The ages of 18 to 21 are a critical period when many smokers move from experimental smoking to regular, daily use.

95% of current adult smokers began before age 21.
In 1995, the US Food and Drug Administration declared tobacco use a "pediatric disease."

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other highly-reputable, national health organizations wholeheartedly endorse the view as well.
It is easy to think of smoking as an adult problem. It is adults who die from tobacco-related diseases. We see adults light up in a restaurant or bar. We see a colleague step outside for a cigarette break. But this is a dangerously shortsighted view.

—David A. Kessler, M.D. Former FDA Commissioner
Marketing to Kids Compounds the Problem
Why Raise The Age?

Tobacco Companies Target Young Adults

Magazine Ads

Parties & Bar Nights

Internships

Point of Sale

Social media
The tobacco industry aggressively markets and promotes its products to continue recruiting young adults as new consumers. But despite legal settlements and laws, the tobacco companies still spend:

$9.5B a year

to market their deadly and addictive products, and they continue to entice and addict America’s kids.

---

From the 1950s to the present, different defendants, at different times and using different methods, have intentionally marketed to young people under the age of twenty-one in order to recruit ‘replacement smokers’ to ensure the economic future of the tobacco industry.

—U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler
Final Opinion, United States v. Philip Morris
The 2012 U.S. Surgeon General’s report concluded that scientific evidence “consistently and coherently points to the intentional marketing of tobacco products to youth as being a cause of young people’s tobacco use.”

1. HHS, Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults, A Report of the Surgeon General, 2012.
E-cigarette ads reach nearly 7 in 10 U.S. youth.
A January 2015 CDC report shows alarming levels of youth exposure to electronic cigarette advertising is fueling e-cigarette use among youth.
Surgeon General’s Warning:

“Our work to protect our children’s health and improve the public’s health is not close to completion... if more is not done to combat tobacco use, then 5.6 million of today’s youth will die prematurely from a smoking-related illness.”¹

Individuals who begin smoking at a young age have greater risk of becoming addicted, progressing to daily use, transitioning to heavier use in adulthood, and having difficulties quitting.²,³,⁴

---

Tobacco 21
A Bold New Innovation
New innovative, prevention tools are needed to complement the success of prevention programs, higher tobacco taxes, smoke-free laws and drive youth smoking down even further.
Institute of Medicine

Tobacco 21 Will Reduce Smoking and Save Lives
360-page report commissioned by the FDA, documents enormous public health benefits that would result from Tobacco 21.

The IOM, one of the most prestigious scientific authorities in the U.S., strongly concluded that raising the tobacco sale age to 21 will have a substantial positive impact on public health and save lives.
Over time…

25% decline in smoking initiation by 15-17 year olds

12% overall drop in smoking prevalence

10% reduction of smoking related deaths

For kids alive today, **4.2 million years of life** would be saved by virtue of this logical, simple policy change.

Other Important Impacts…

12% Decline in premature births

16% Drop in SIDS cases
Most adults favor making 21 the minimum age of sale for tobacco products.

3 out of 4 U.S. adults favor making 21 the minimum age of sale for tobacco products.

This includes 7 out of 10 U.S. adult cigarette smokers who favor making 21 the minimum age of sale.

Source: American Journal of Preventive Medicine
Across the board, the majority of adults in every demographic group (i.e., age, race, gender, education level, U.S. Census region, and income) as well as smoking-status category supported increasing the minimum age.

“Never Smoker”
79.5%
Favorable

“Former Smoker”
75.6%
Favorable

“Current Smoker”
69.9%
Favorable

Tobacco 21 Is Politically Popular
Tobacco 21 ‘Wins’

✅ Improve Health

✅ Save Lives

✅ Popular
Raising the legal minimum age for cigarette purchaser to 21 could gut our key young adult market...

—Philip Morris report, January 21, 1986
Why Raise the Age?

Tobacco companies know that if they don’t capture new users by their early 20’s, it’s unlikely that they ever will.

“If a man has never smoked by age 18, the odds are three-to-one that he never will. By age 24, the odds are twenty-to-one.”

—RJ Reynolds, September 10, 1982
Model Legislation Basics

Prohibit sales to individuals under 21

Penalize the sale instead of the possession – hold vendors and the tobacco industry accountable

E-Cigarettes should be included

Signage

Allow time for educational outreach before law goes into effect
Tobacco 21
A Win-Win For Everyone