

# PRESS RELEASE

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## New Poll: New York Voters Overwhelmingly Support Increasing the Age of Sale for Tobacco Products to 21

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WASHINGTON, DC – A new poll released today finds that 72 percent of New York voters favor raising the minimum age for the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products in New York state from age 18 to 21. Fewer than two-in-ten voters (18 percent) oppose increasing the sale age for tobacco products.

“The poll found that voters are concerned about tobacco use among young people and that New Yorkers across the political spectrum are broadly supportive of raising the age for sale of tobacco,” noted Jeffrey Plaut of Global Strategy Group, the firm conducting the survey.

Other poll findings include:

- Support for increasing the tobacco age comes from a broad-based coalition of voters, including 69 percent of Republicans, 74 percent of Democrats and 71 percent of independents.
- Voters from across the state support increasing the tobacco age to 21, with support at 71 percent among New York City voters, 72 percent among suburban voters, and 73 percent among Upstate voters.
- Eight out of ten voters (81 percent) are concerned about smoking and other tobacco use among young people under age 21 in New York.
- The poll also found that voters still strongly support raising the tobacco sale age to 21 even when they hear arguments on both sides of the issue. After hearing common arguments on both sides, more than two-thirds (68 percent) favor the increased age and 23 percent oppose it.

The statewide survey of 800 voters was released by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, which provided funding for the survey along with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Increasing the tobacco sale age to 21 is supported by a coalition of health groups in New York, including the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, and American Lung Association of the Northeast.

There is a growing, nationwide movement to increase the tobacco sale age to 21. Five states – California, New Jersey, Oregon, Hawaii and Maine – have raised the tobacco age to 21, along with at least 300 localities across the country.

In New York, New York City and nearly 20 other cities and counties have raised the tobacco

age to 21. Tobacco 21 legislation is under consideration by several counties, including Essex, Nassau and Westchester, and statewide in the Legislature.

Health advocates support increasing the tobacco age to 21 in order to reduce tobacco use among youth and young adults – age groups when nearly all tobacco use begins and that are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. Research shows that about 95 percent of adult smokers began smoking before they turned 21. A 2015 report by the prestigious Institute of Medicine (now called the National Academy of Medicine) concluded that increasing the tobacco age to 21 will significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking, with immediate and long-term benefits for the nation's health.

Tobacco use is the No. 1 cause of preventable death in the United States, killing over 480,000 Americans and costing the nation about \$170 billion in health care bills each year. In New York, tobacco kills 28,000 people and costs over \$10 billion in health care expenses each year. Without additional action to reduce tobacco use, 280,000 kids alive today in New York will die prematurely from smoking.

Additional materials, including the poll summary and questionnaire, are available [here](#).

*Methodology: The survey was conducted by landline and cell phone, using live interviewers, April 11-15, 2018 among a random sample of 800 registered voters statewide. To assure data are representative of the voting population, results were checked against statewide voter statistics and weighted by key demographics, when necessary. The overall sampling error is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The survey was conducted by the research firm Global Strategy Group, and funded by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Complete methodological information is available upon request by contacting the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids at [info@tobaccofreekids.org](mailto:info@tobaccofreekids.org).*