

RESEARCH BRIEF

Menthol restrictions coupled with limits on retailer density may boost cigarette cost, reduce disparities

Targeting the tobacco retail environment is rapidly emerging as the next frontier in tobacco control. Policies focused on the places tobacco is sold can reduce tobacco use and tobacco-related health disparities by increasing the direct and indirect costs of tobacco to consumers. National, state and local governments have recently begun to restrict the sale of menthol products and act to reduce tobacco retailer density.

In this study,* the authors used a computer model called **Tobacco Town** to test the effect of five retail restrictions on the reduction of retailer density, total cost per cigarette pack, and the average distance customers travel to buy cigarettes. The model was based on data from six communities in Minnesota where some have enacted and others are planning menthol restrictions. During each simulated day in the model, computer-generated “people” smoke and make decisions on when and where to buy cigarettes.

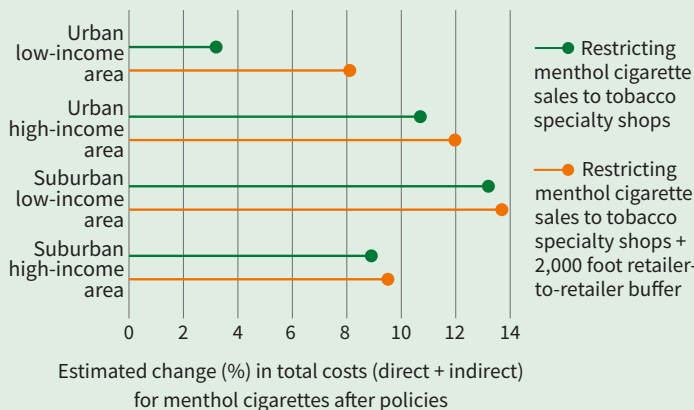


Photo credit: Counter Tobacco

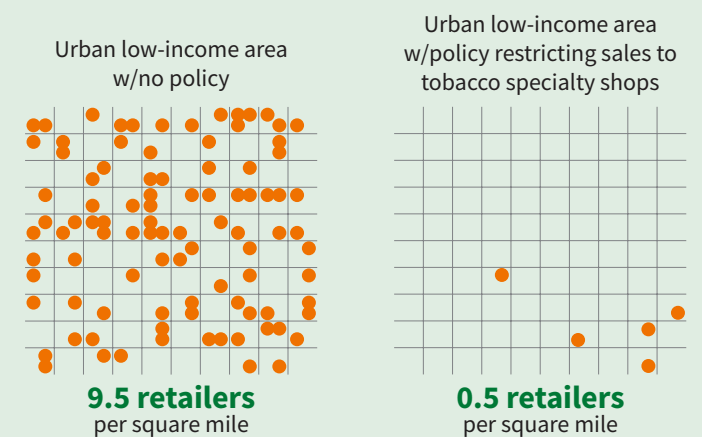
***RESEARCH BRIEF based on this article:** Combs, T. B., McKay, V. R., Ornstein, J., Mahoney, M., Cork, K., Brosi, D., Kasman, M., Heuberger, B., Hammond, R.A., & Luke, D. (2019). Modelling the impact of menthol sales restrictions and retailer density reduction policies: insights from tobacco town Minnesota. Tobacco Control, 0:1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2019-054986>. This study was funded by ClearWay Minnesota (Grant number: RC-2017-0010).

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE RESEARCH

Combining menthol sales restrictions and density restrictions **could help reduce disparities by increasing costs in urban low-income areas**



The **single policy with the largest impact** on density reduction, **especially in urban low-income areas**, was **restricting all cigarette sales to tobacco specialty shops**



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2017, **Canada** passed a law prohibiting the manufacture and sale of all menthol cigarettes. Other countries that have recently prohibited the sale of menthol or other flavored tobacco products include **Brazil**, **Ethiopia**, **Turkey**, **Uganda** and **Moldova**.



“The feasibility of adopting different retail policies will vary by community due to a number of different factors, such as political support, community readiness, the scope of local authority, the availability of information about retailers, enforcement capabilities, and coalition expertise.”