



KLAMATH COUNTY

Tobacco Retail Assessment

2022 - 2023

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Thank You,
Klamath

Introduction

Klamath County tends to be the caboose for most Oregon health and wellbeing outcomes.

But we plan to do better.

Since the previous Retail Assessment of Klamath County was completed in 2014, we have made steady progress in improving our quality of life, by improving access to resources, and empowering Klamath County residents to choose healthier lifestyles.

To improve the standard of tobacco sales and minimize underage tobacco use, Klamath County implemented our Tobacco Retail License (TRL) in 2018, well ahead of Oregon's TRL in 2022.

Our work, however, remains ongoing, as Klamath County residents have higher rates of cigarette and vaping use compared to other Oregon counties, and consequently, higher death rate per capita and heavier burden of disease from nicotine addiction.

The **purpose** of this Tobacco Retail Assessment (TRA) is **three-fold**:

1

assess commercial tobacco retail sites

2

better understand community sentiment on tobacco sales and use

3

incorporate community feedback to promote tobacco prevention and cessation, in order to reduce commercial nicotine use

Timeline & Participants

The Who

We visited retailers who sell tobacco as part of their products, and retailers such as smoke shops and stores selling only nicotine and/or cannabinoid products were not part of this retail assessment.

Out of **90 licensed** tobacco retailers in Klamath County, we **visited 68**, with 4 retailers declining to answer assessment questions, and 4 retailers unavailable at the time of site visit.

Some of our participants were able to provide definite answers to our questions, whereas others had to defer to higher management and/or business partners, who were unavailable.

Our data analysis takes into account these findings, and outlines the number of definitive responses for each assessment category.

The When

This assessment was completed by the Tobacco Prevention Coordinator at Healthy Klamath, a department within Sky Lakes Medical Center. **Site visits** spanned from **September through December of 2022**, with data analysis and report writing thereafter.

Tobacco
Retailers
Visited:

68

Objective Findings

Each year, tobacco companies spend billions of dollars - nearly \$1 MILLION, per hour - on marketing and advertising, driving product exposure and sales.

1

Tobacco Contracts and Ads: Varies Across the Board

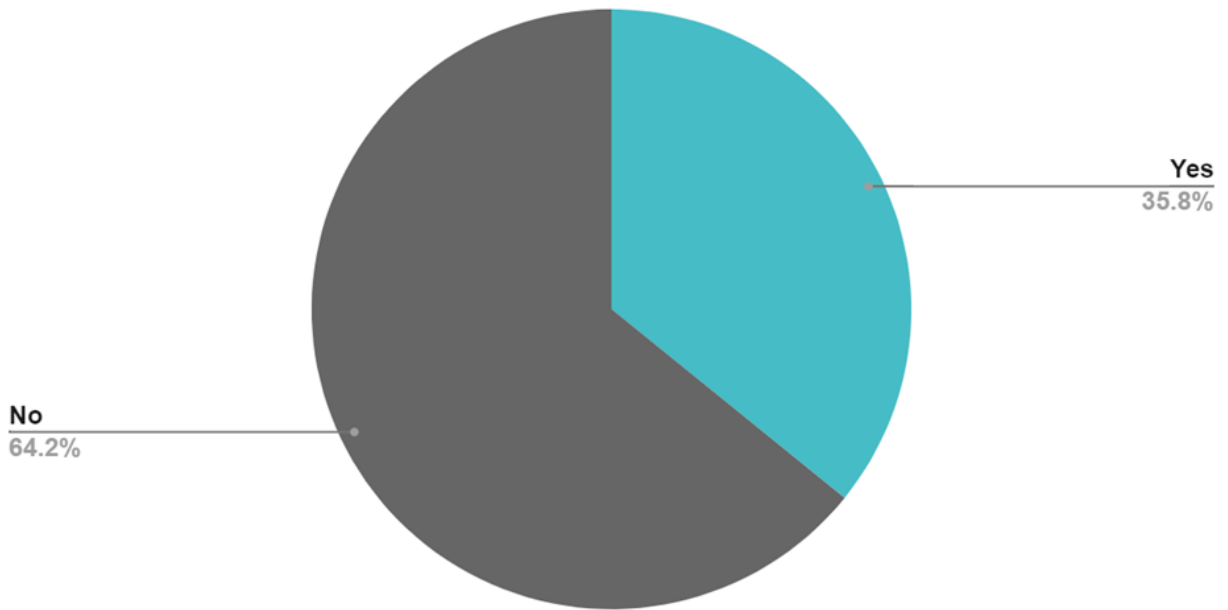
Most retailers reported that the decision to accept tobacco advertisements and their subsequent placements within/outside the store are made by higher-level management, or specified by tobacco company contracts, with slightly over one-third (**35.8%**) of retailers displaying tobacco **advertising outside** their stores.

Overall, **29.8%** of retailers **specifically declined free tobacco ads**, whereas the majority of retailers were unsure of tobacco ad contracts (63.1%), and the rest actively contracted with tobacco companies and received free ads (7.0%).

Of note, most single-store retailers report purchasing inventory from a supplier, with tobacco as being one of many items, rather than directly contracting with tobacco companies.

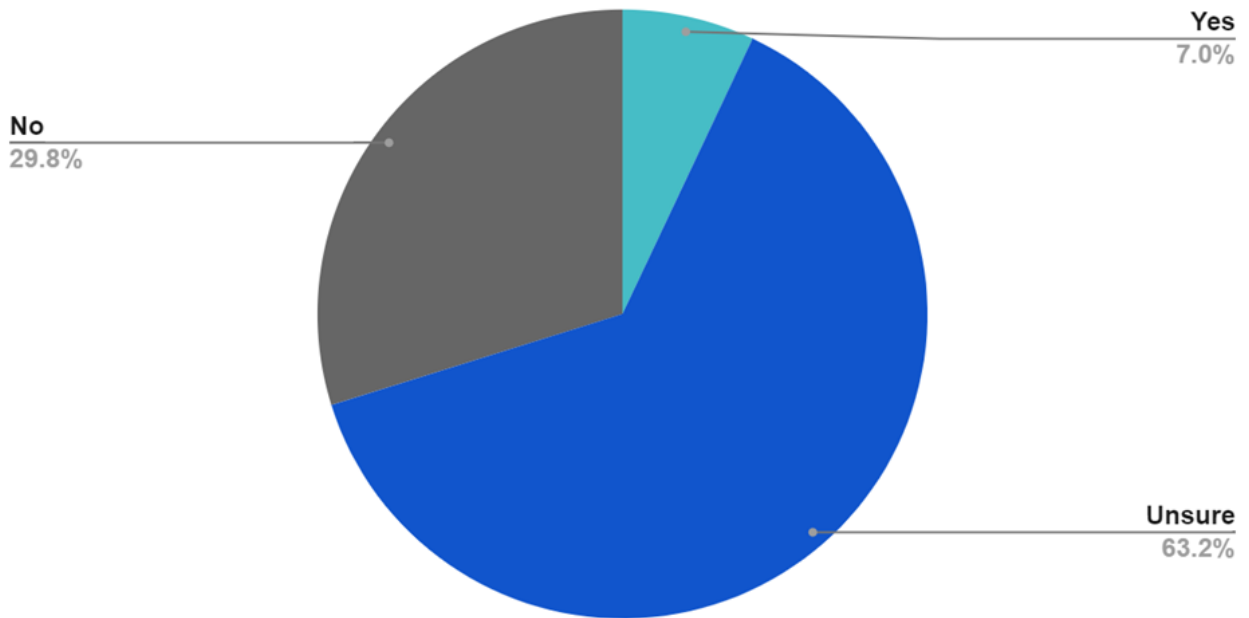
Retailer Displays Exterior Ads

Number of Responses: 67



Retailer Accepts Free Tobacco Ads

Number of Responses: 57



2

Tobacco Scan Data Program: A Sensitive Topic

A small proportion of retailers reported **participating** in the **Tobacco Scan Data program (7.0%)**, by which retailers provide point of sale data to tobacco companies, in exchange for lowered prices for subsequent tobacco orders and/or monetary rebates.

Understandably, participation in Tobacco Scan Data can be a sensitive topic. Corporate retailers primarily deferred to higher level administration for tobacco contracts and/or Tobacco Scan Data participation, and most retailers either declined to, or could not, provide precise Tobacco Scan Data information.



Fewer retailers displayed price promotion in 2022 vs. 2014

3

Price Promos, Vape Sales, and Youth-Focused Marketing: Making Good Headways, Still Work to be Done

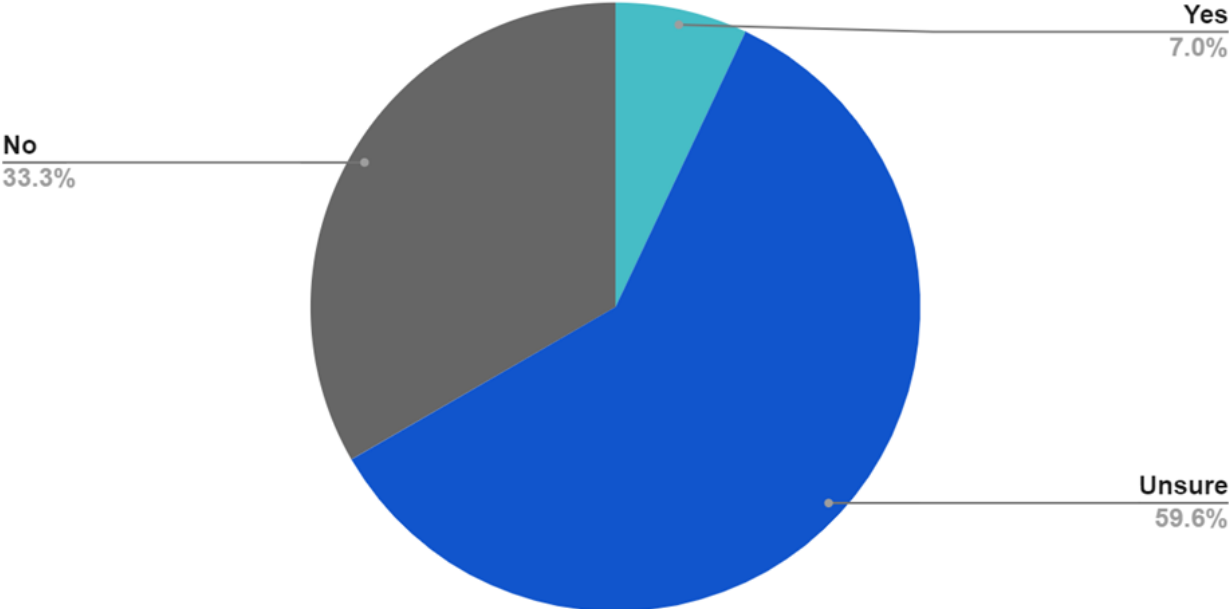
Based on research from the Truth Initiative, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending tobacco use, youth-themed and discounted tobacco products directly target youth and other vulnerable populations by lowering the cost barrier to tobacco use. In the 2014 Klamath County Retail Assessment, 54% tobacco retailers offered price promotions. **Slightly less than half** of retailers in our assessment prominently **displayed price promotion (49.2%)**.

The previous assessment also found about 1 in 4 retailers displayed tobacco products **within 12 inches of youth-centric products**, whereas nearly all retailers (98.4%) from our assessment kept tobacco products separate from youth-centric products, to be dispensed exclusively by store staff.

Multiple locally owned businesses emphasized that they **intentionally do not sell** e-cigarettes, i.e. **vaping products**, as they care about the health of our youth, and want to do their best to minimize youth nicotine use. Overall, **39.7%** of all retailers **sold vaping products** in addition to “traditional” tobacco products.

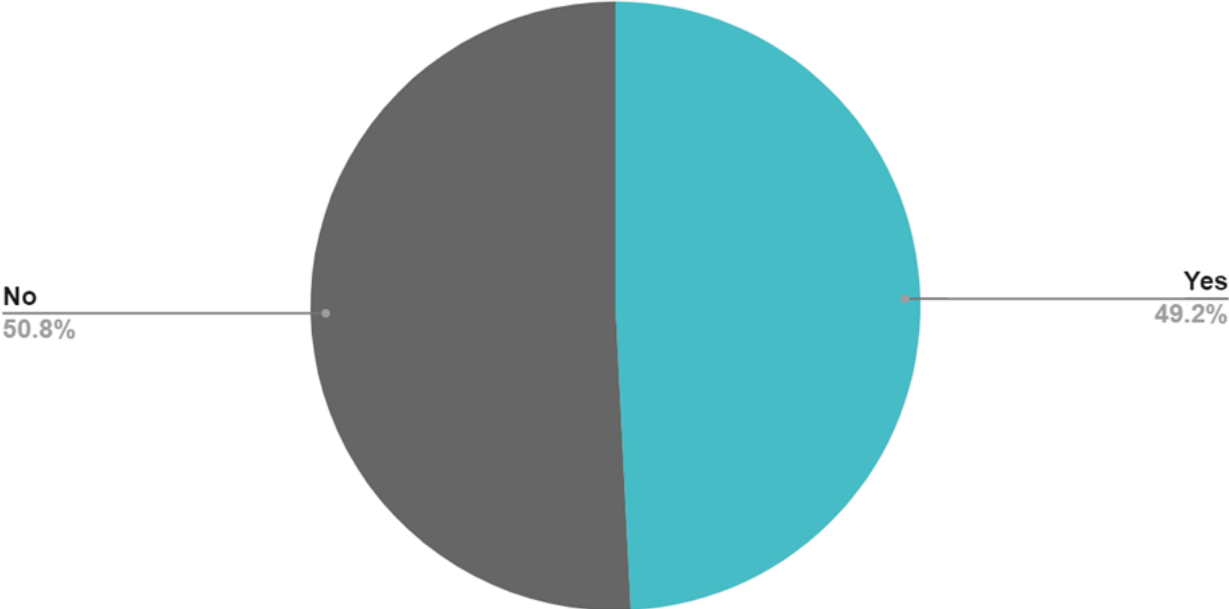
Retailer Participates in Scan Data Program

Number of Responses: 57

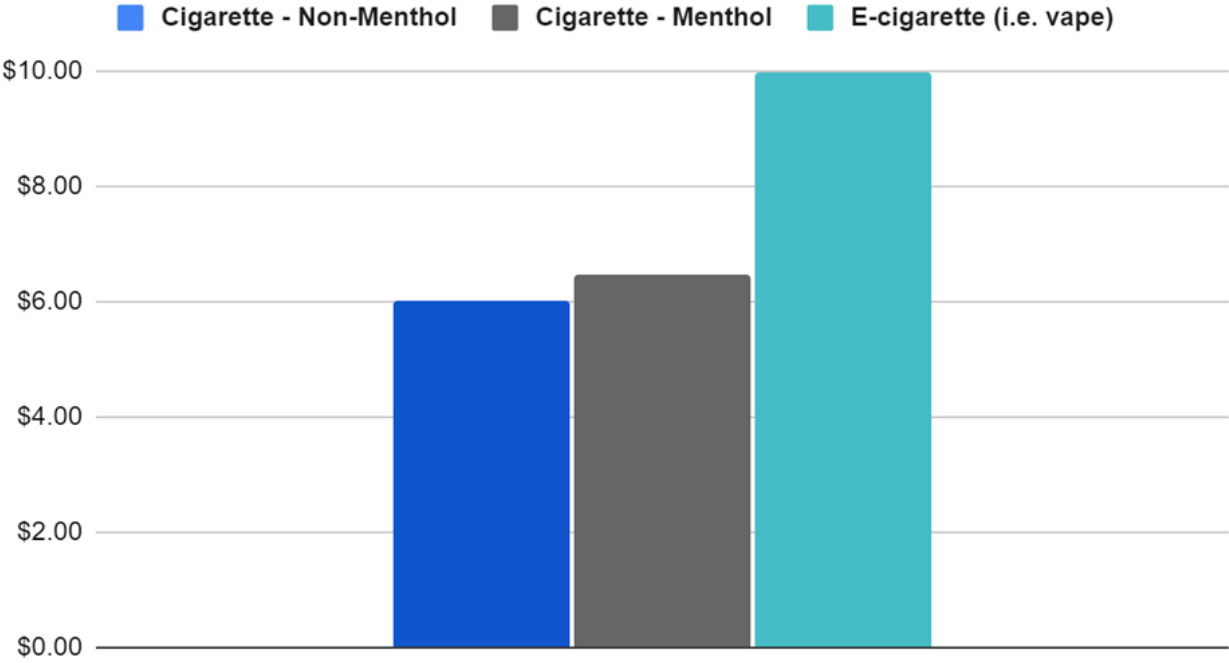


Retailer Offers Tobacco Price Promotions

Number of Responses: 63

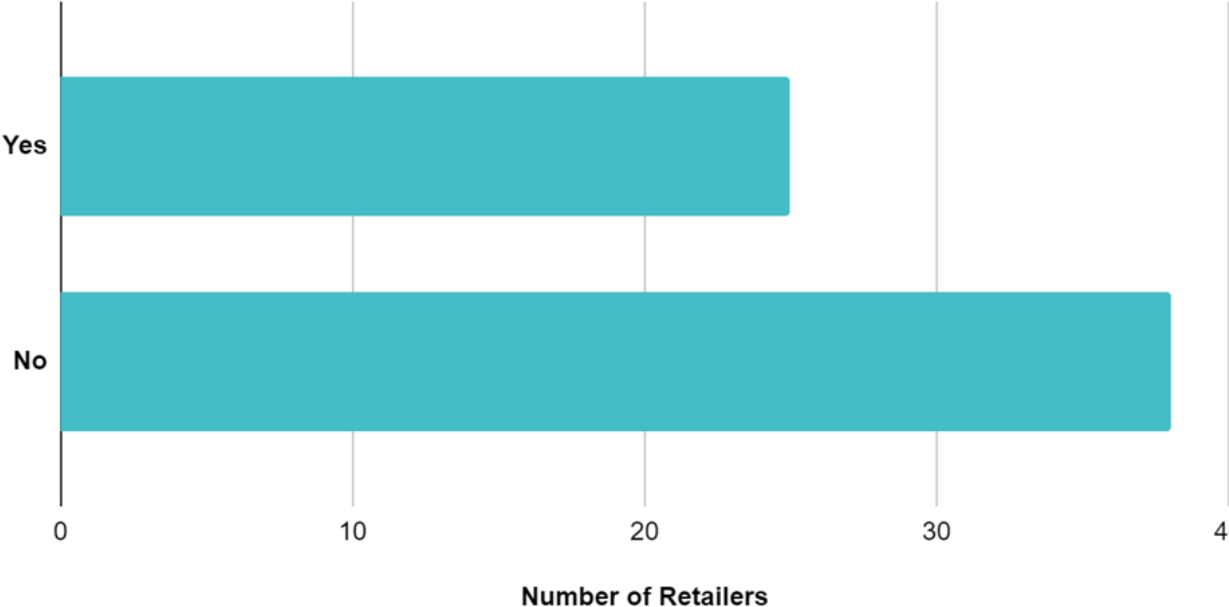


Cheapest Tobacco Product by Type



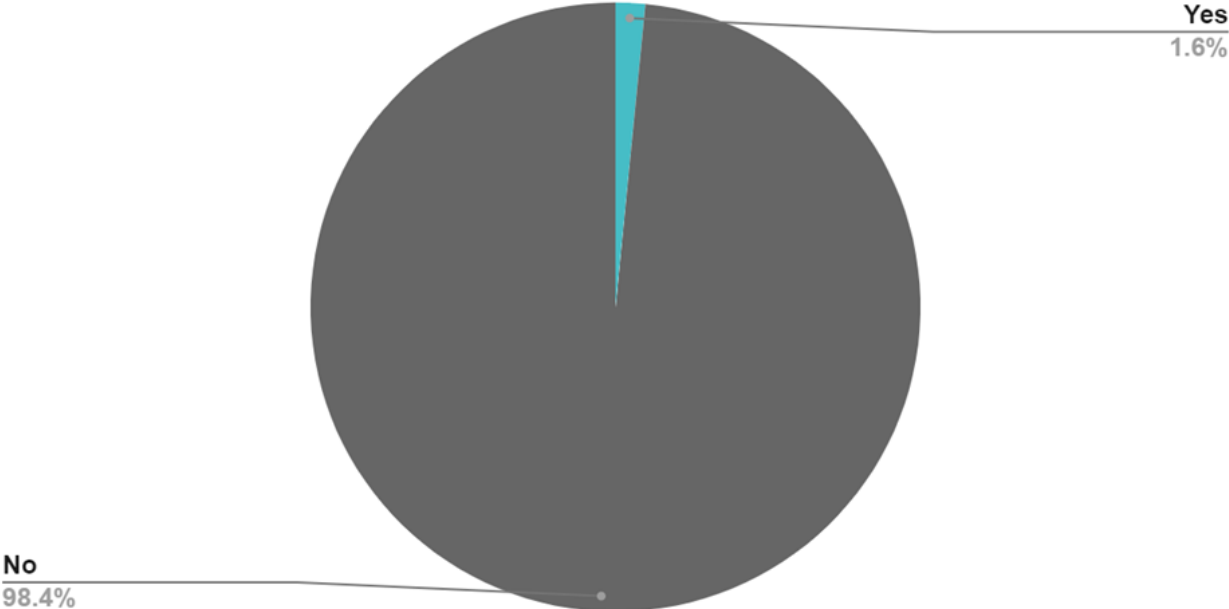
Retailer Sells Vaping Products

Number of Responses: 63



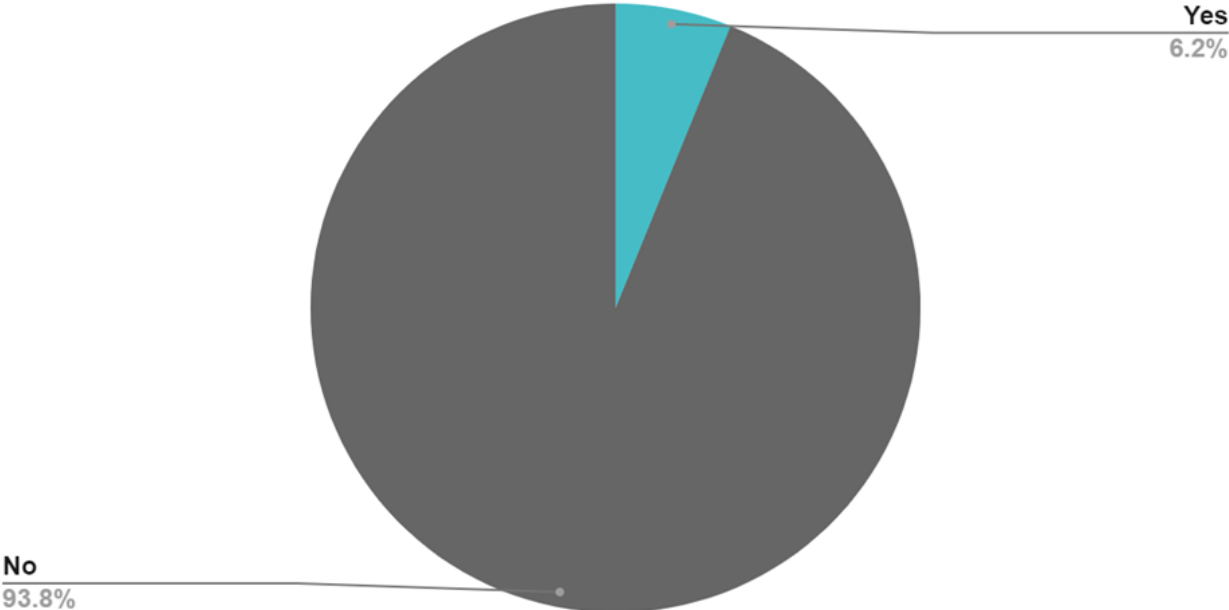
Retailer Displays Tobacco within 12 Inches to Youth-Specific Products

Number of Responses: 64



Retailer Displays Tobacco Products within 3 Feet from the Floor

Number of Responses: 65



Community Feedback

1 Tobacco Profit Margin: Mostly Measly, But Indispensable

Almost all retailers agreed that tobacco products are detrimental to both individual and public health, with most retailers (64%) reporting that out of all their inventory, **tobacco products** carry the **least profit margin**, at around **5–10%** for a pack of cigarettes.

However, most retailers (78.8%) reported frequent to consistent associated sales from regular customers who purchase non-tobacco products alongside tobacco products, and who would go to

another retailer entirely, if the interviewed retailer ceased selling tobacco products.

Therefore, losing clientele was cited as a primary concern over ceasing to sell tobacco, and **over half of all retailers** stated they will **continue to sell tobacco** (56.1%), **even if Klamath County's tobacco retail license cost the same as Oregon State's, at \$975**. This finding underlines that while most retailers do not wish to abet tobacco companies in selling their harmful products, the **heavy reliance on tobacco sales** as a conduit for associated revenue **remains a barrier for positive cultural change**.

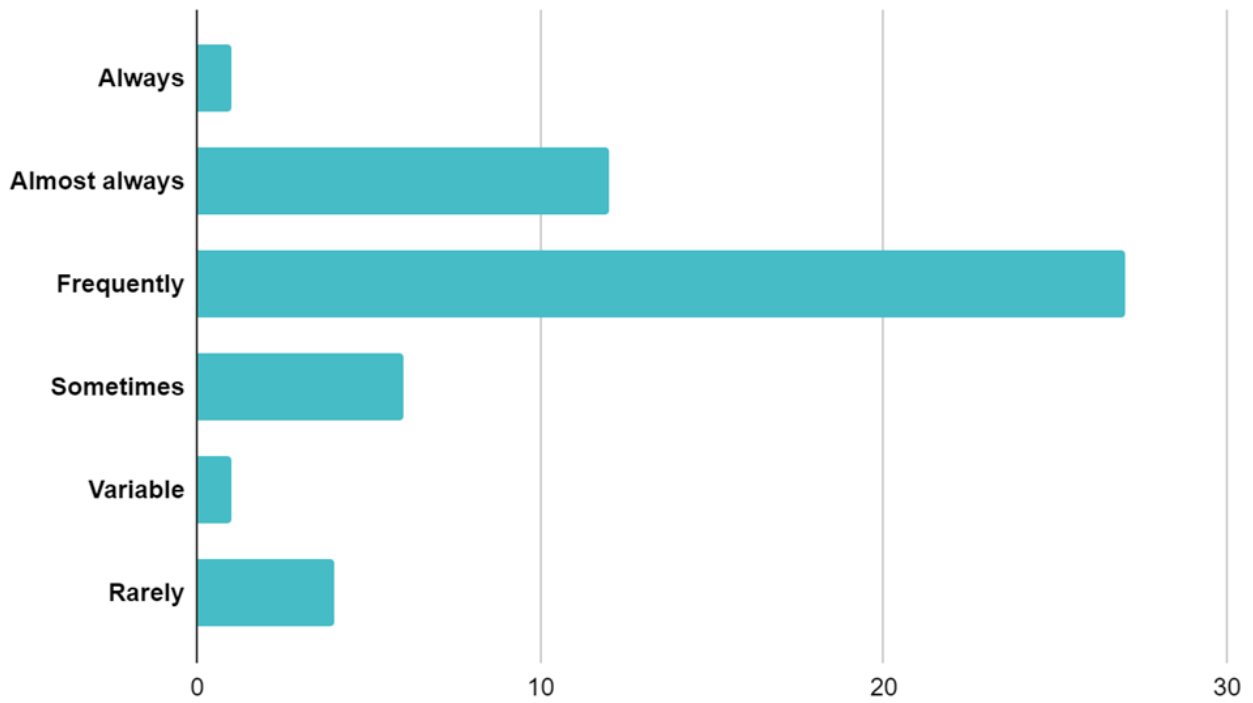
Profit Margin per Pack of Cigarettes (%)

Number of Responses: 45



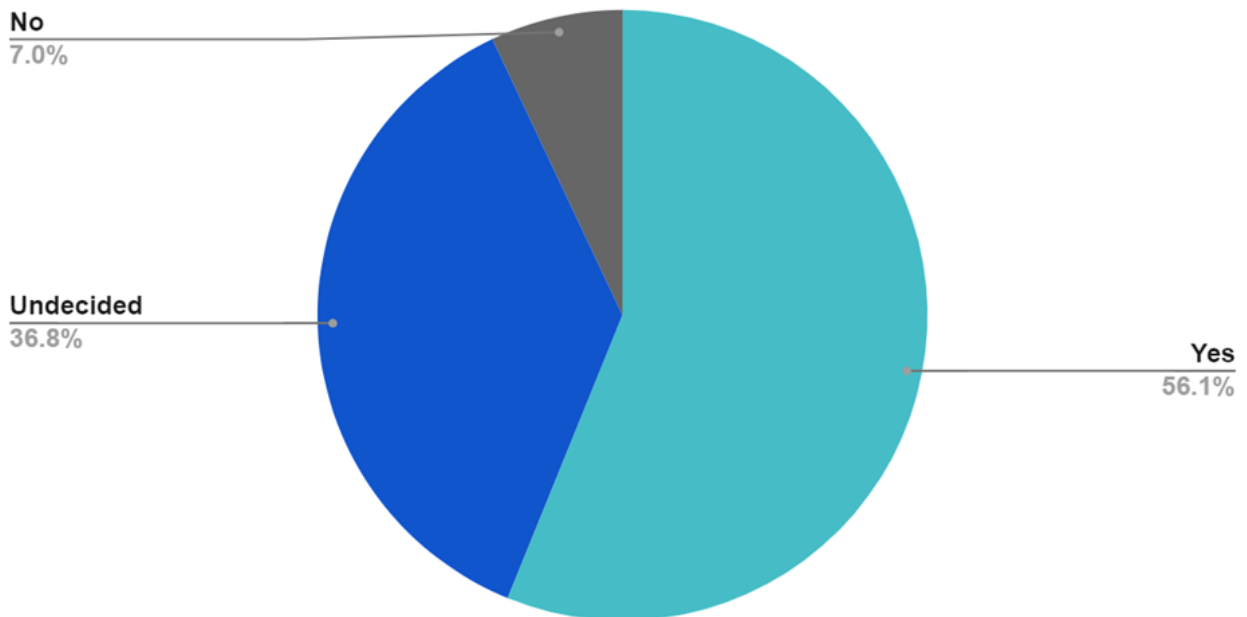
Reported Frequency of Associated Sales with Tobacco Purchase

Number of Responses: 51



Retailer to Continue Tobacco Sales at Oregon State License Cost

Number of Responses: 57



2 Ballot Measure 108: Little Effect on Tobacco Sales

The reported impact on tobacco sales from **Ballot Measure 108**, which increased taxes on tobacco products, has **largely been minimal**.

While some retailers reported noticing customers buying a cheaper brand, all reported having minimal (51.7%) to no changes (48.3%) in overall tobacco sales, only increased customer complaints about the added cost.

Some retailers also reported that the **increased tobacco prices** have resulted in customers **spending less money on food items, while continuing to purchase tobacco due to their nicotine addiction**.

Therefore, **indefinitely raising taxes** on tobacco products **may not be an effective unilateral measure** to curtail tobacco use, and a comprehensive prevention and cessation approach remains integral to addressing nicotine addiction.

3 ID Checks and Signage: Small Town Values Keeping Youth Accountable

All retailers interviewed reported being vigilant in checking customer ID, especially in **rural areas** where **retailers personally know the youths** in the community and refuse to sell them tobacco products.

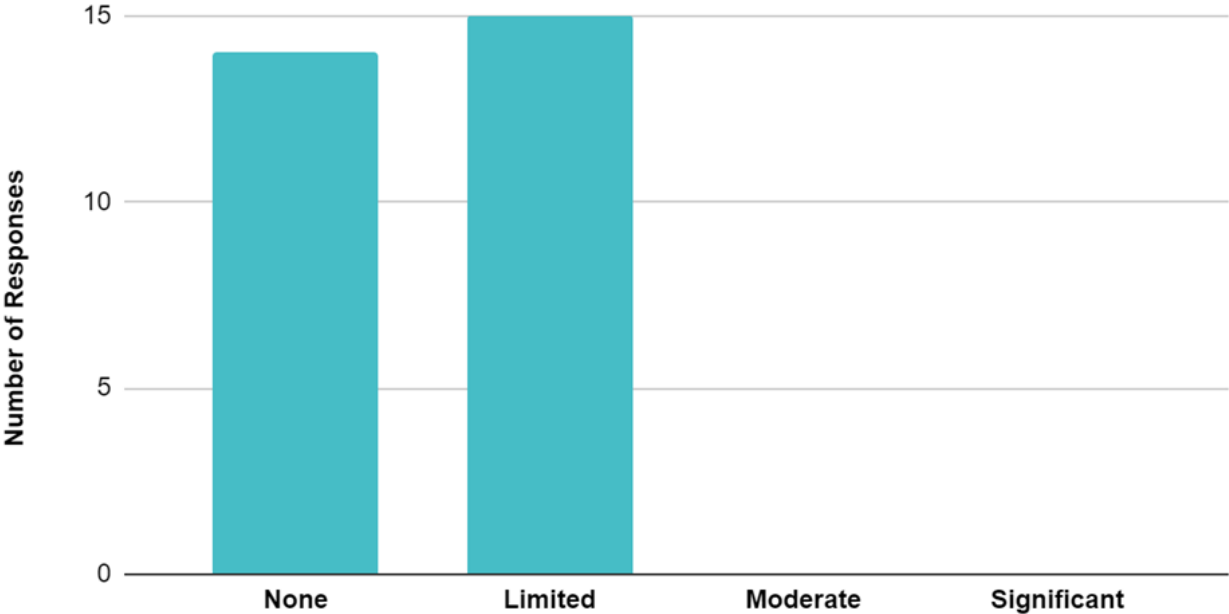
Signage for ID and/or tobacco education materials were prominently **displayed** in less than half of retail stores (**47.6%**), though very few customers reportedly pay attention to these signs, as static signage quickly becomes desensitized, and has little effect to deter underage buyers.



"This is Our Watch" poster from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, describing the federal minimum age of 21 to purchase tobacco products.

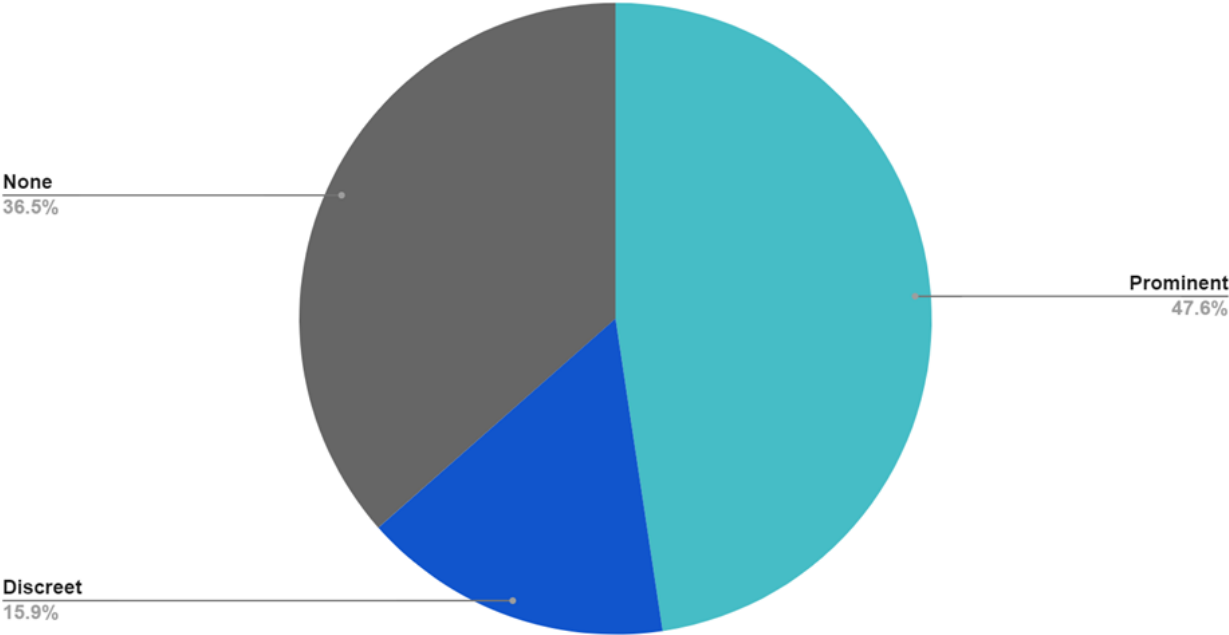
Reported Effect of Ballot Measure 108 on Tobacco Sales

Number of Responses: 29



Presence of ID Signage and/or Tobacco Education Material in Store

Number of Responses: 63



4

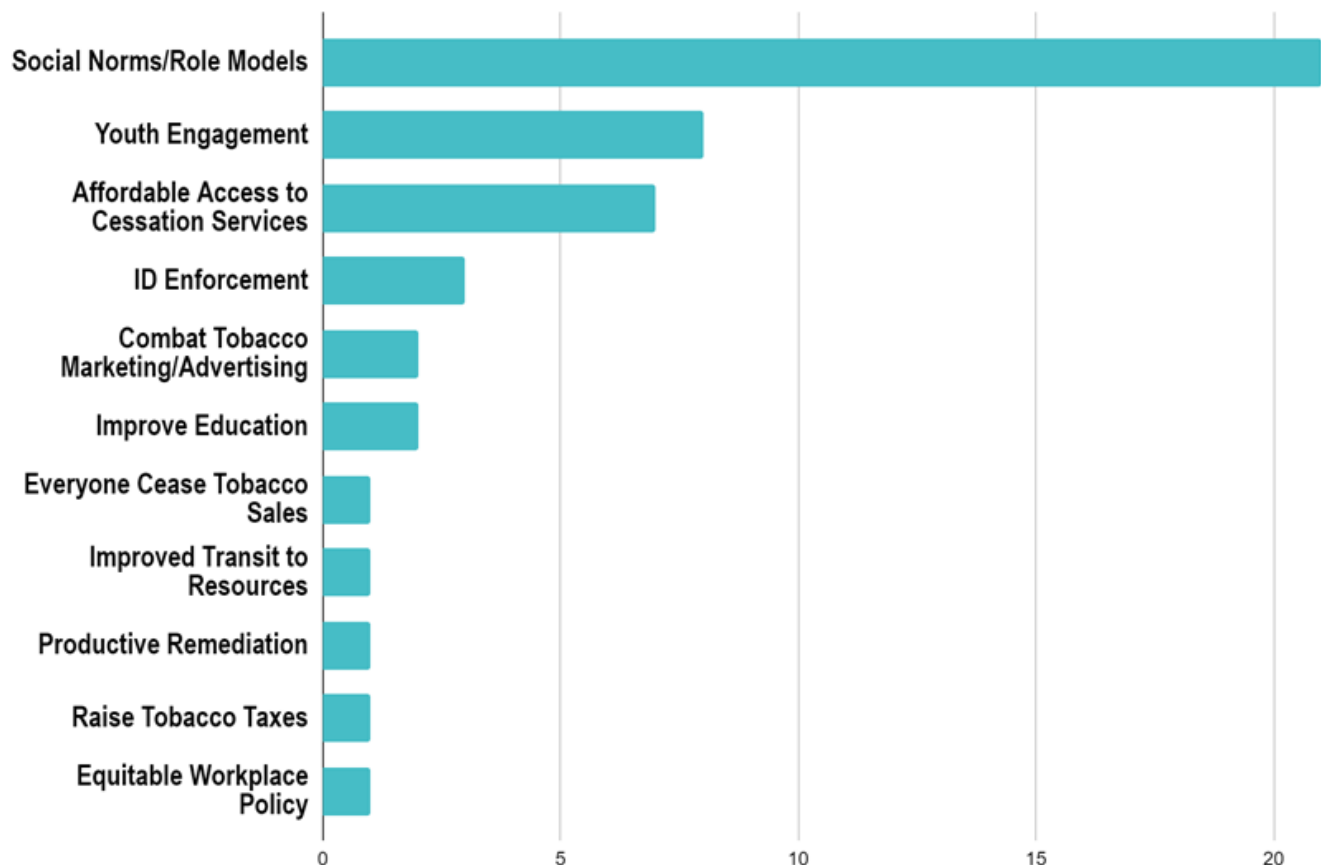
Tobacco Prevention: Social Norms and Role Models Are Paramount

During discussions on tobacco prevention, especially youth vaping, **nearly half of all community feedback** cited the **importance of social/cultural norms** (43.8%). These included **positive adult influences both inside and outside the home**, as well as **positive peer support and constructive outlets**. Youths reported that the majority of **initial vaping** use frequently came from **peers such as older athletic teammates**, whereas exposure to **“traditional” tobacco** products (i.e. cigarettes and/chewing tobacco) frequently came from **family members and other adults**.

Educators and supporting staff reported that while vaping can occur amongst some school athletes, **athletic programs with explicit nicotine policies** tend to see **much lower vaping rates**. Students who are involved in **extracurricular activities** such as band, orchestra, and theater are generally **less likely to use nicotine** products, whereas **students who vape** tend to **not belong** to any particular **social group**, and usually are **already at risk for truancy**.

Community Input: Social Norms and Role Models Are Key in Tobacco Prevention

Number of Responses: 48



Future Plans, Challenges, and Opportunities

With cigarette smoking generally in decline, tobacco companies have changed tactics to market to **“replacement smokers”, namely children and youth**. Emphasizing peer acceptance, rebellion against authorities, and overall being cool, tobacco companies promote vaping as they did glamorous cigarette smokers in the past.

Consequently, youth vaping has become endemic in Klamath County, to manage depression and anxiety, create a sense of belonging, and fight the scourge of boredom.

However, **nicotine addiction exacerbates** existing **mental health disorders**, causes **permanent changes** to the developing brain, and **increases the likelihood for addiction** to other substances.

Most retailers from this TRA agreed that tobacco and nicotine use is detrimental to our health, and especially dangerous for our youth.

Therefore, we are working with community partners to:

- 1** increase vaping awareness and prevention education in schools and youth-serving centers
- 2** create supportive and productive remedial processes for underage nicotine use
- 3** create a collaborative resource directory to address vaping-related inquiries
- 4** continually strive for best practices in policy-making

As part of our awareness, prevention, and cessation education, we are hosting an **anti-vaping campaign** to:

- **highlight the dangers of nicotine use,**
- **promote positive coping mechanisms, and**
- **raise awareness to effective cessation resources.**

To decrease youth exposure to commercial tobacco, **Klamath County Public Health** is **strengthening** their **TRL enforcement**, and **proposing ordinances on proximity and density** of tobacco retailers to schools and youth-serving centers.

THE GOAL	IDEAS & PLANS	CHALLENGES
REDUCE TEENAGE VAPING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education campaign 2. Improve remedial processes 3. Update resource directory 4. Practice best policy-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience outreach • Limited staff time • Different school policies • Change is hard!
INCREASE ADULT CESSATION RESOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update local provider directory 2. Increase the number of local cessation providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover and burnout, loss of programs
IMPROVE ADULT CESSATION ATTENDANCE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Streamline referral processes to create closed-loop systems 2. Coordinate with local cessation providers to improve attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural outreach • Barriers to attendance: schedule, transport, cost
INCREASE NICOTINE-FREE SPACES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decrease tobacco litter to beautify our towns and improve sense of pride 2. Strengthen nicotine-free policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program sustainability • Community acceptance • Reinforcement

One potentially highly effective measure to **curb youth vaping** is to prohibit **sales of all flavored commercial nicotine** products, as the vast majority youth and young-adult nicotine users choose a flavored product, and a majority of them would stop using nicotine products without the flavors[1]. Currently, **House Bill 3090**, proposing to eliminate flavored tobacco products, is being discussed in the Oregon State Legislature. If approved and implemented, we can help Klamath County youth resist the onslaught of tobacco companies' manipulative marketing.

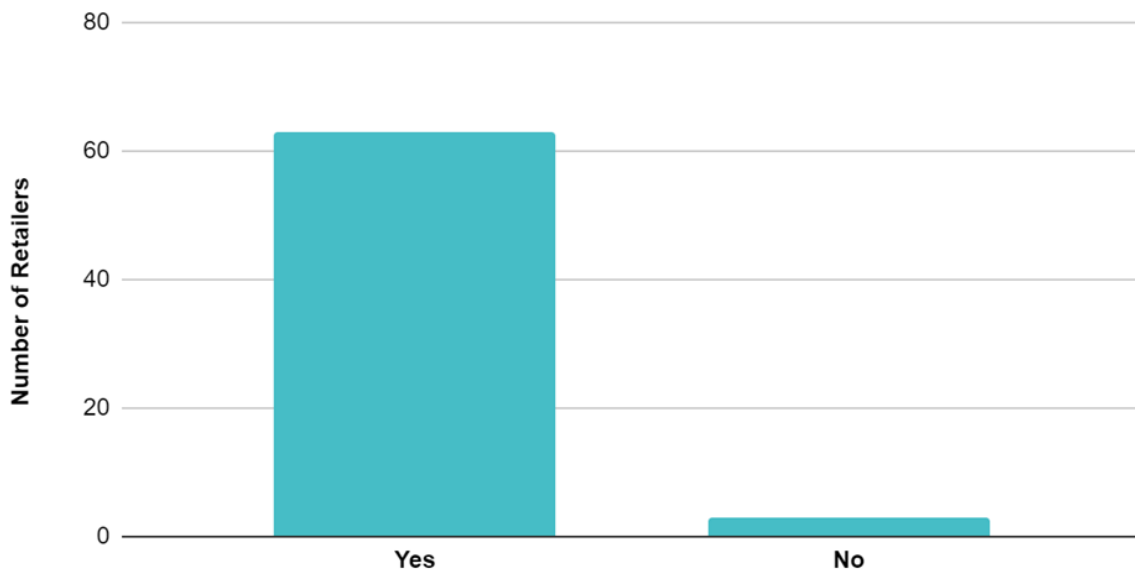
1. Harrell MB, Loukas A, Jackson CD, Marti CN, Perry CL. Flavored Tobacco Product Use among Youth and Young Adults: What if Flavors Didn't Exist? Tob Regul Sci. 2017 Apr;3(2):168-173. doi: 10.18001/TRS.3.2.4. PMID: 28775996; PMCID: PMC5536860.

**4 out of 5
young tobacco
user choose
flavored products**

**3 out of 4
of them would quit,
if flavors are no
longer available**

Retailer Sells Flavored Tobacco Products (Including Menthol)

Number of Responses: 66



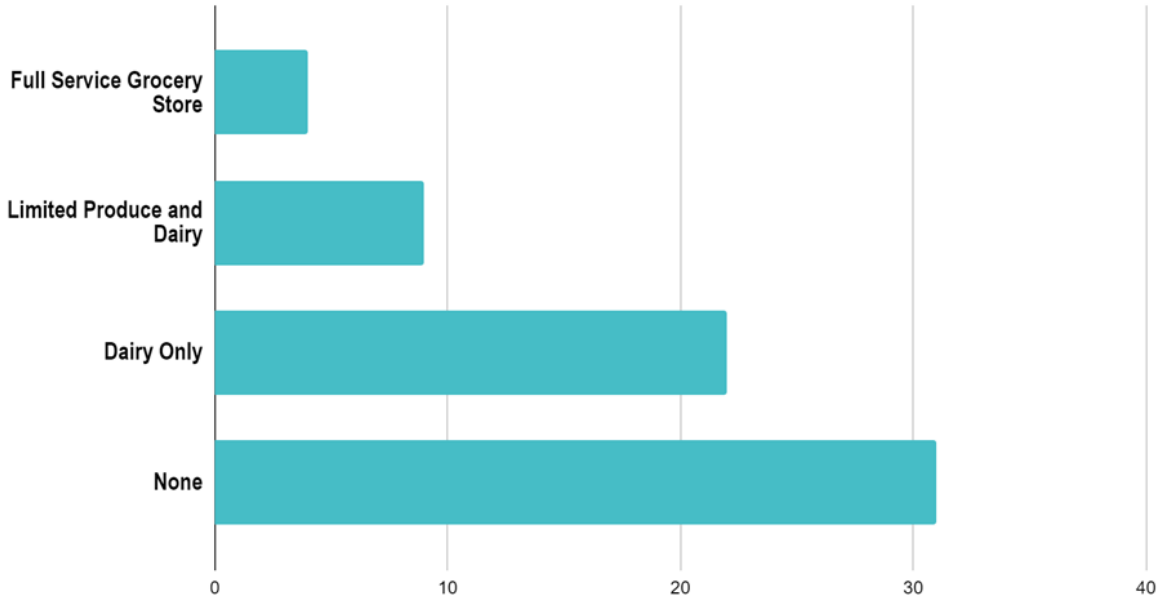
For future tobacco retail assessments, the Standardized Tobacco Assessment for Retail Settings (**STARS**), should be **updated**, as its contents have become outdated. One recommendation is to include whether fresh and **nutritious food** is available at tobacco retailers. Our assessment found that many retailers carried limited amounts of fresh foods, mostly in the form of dairy products (33.3%), whereas **nearly half (46.9%)** carried **no produce of dairy of any kind**.

The **lack of access to fresh and nutritious food**, especially in rural communities, contributes to **poorer health outcomes**. To improve overall health and nutrition, and minimize preventable diseases associated with a poor diet, it is essential to increase affordable and reliable access to fresh and nutrition-dense foods, especially in rural communities such as Klamath County.

46.9%
Retailers had
**NO PRODUCE
OR DAIRY**

Retailer Carries Produce/Groceries in Store

Number of Responses: 66



358

ANNUAL
TOBACCO-RELATED DEATHS
IN KLAMATH COUNTY

\$7.8 MILLION

KLAMATH COUNTY ANNUAL SPENDING ON
TOBACCO-RELATED MEDICAL CARE

During the last several years of social distancing and remote healthcare delivery, the Oregon QuitLine has been promoted as an option for self-paced tobacco cessation. One consistent community feedback is that the current QuitLine website is complicated to use, and its marketing materials can be unclear. We have reported this feedback to OHA, who is planning to update the QuitLine website and marketing materials. Ultimately, having robust support systems and social connections can be the most powerful asset in quitting tobacco. Therefore, we are strengthening local cessation resources to create closed-loop referral processes, and supporting in-person, community-based cessation curriculum, so our loved ones can have the best chances to quit tobacco.

Readers appreciate
accurate information

We absolutely recognize that the choice to start using commercial nicotine is a personal choice. However, addiction to commercial tobacco is the loss of personal choice. We hope that through collaboration with our community, we can relieve ourselves from the control of commercial tobacco, a product that is driven by the for-profit, corporate tobacco industry. By decreasing the burden of disease from commercial tobacco that we all carry, as taxpayers and Oregonians, we hope to all live longer, healthier lives.

Hey Klamath, Here's To Us

Acknowledgements

This report is completed with funding from Oregon Health Authority (OHA). The author recognizes the staff from Klamath County Public Health for assistance during site visits, the staff from OHA Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention for assistance in data analysis, and the OHA Community Engagement Team for support and guidance.

This report would not have been possible without the residents of Klamath County, who participated in this Tobacco Retail Assessment. We thank you for your generosity of time, and look forward to working together to help all of Klamath residents live longer, healthier lives.

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