

TOBACCO SALE TO MINORS: CANADA-WIDE STUDY

Since 1995 an independent research group, ACNielsen, has been investigating retailer compliance to the Tobacco Act which prohibits the sale of tobacco product to minors. The 2003 study, while boasting some positive changes, has also demonstrated that there is great variability across the country with regards to retailers' compliance with federal and provincial legislations.

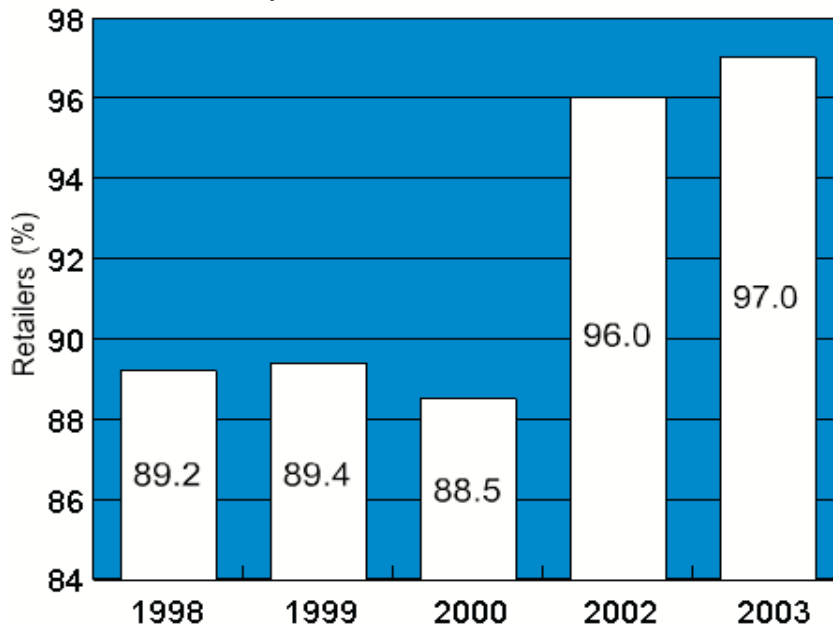
The study involved sending a minor (either fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen years of age) into a tobacco-selling establishment across thirty cities in Canada. Youth were instructed to attempt to purchase a pack of cigarettes and were asked to be untruthful about their age. They were asked not to provide identification and not to disguise their appearance. Adult observers were responsible for the supervision of minors and for the data collection. A total of 5,452 retail stores were sampled from a variety of different trades including grocery supermarkets, convenience stores, pharmacies, and gas stations.

The rate of retailers refusing to sell to minors across Canada declined in 2003, down by 3.5 % from 2002, and

currently stands at 67.7%. This translates into more Canadian retailers selling tobacco products to underage youth. The age of the minor remains the strongest predictor of compliance, in that younger individuals were more likely to be refused a sale compared to the older group. Other factors involved in retailer compliance included: a) the age and gender of the store clerk (seniors being more likely to sell to minors), b) the store being located near a school and/or mall, and c) the presence of another adult in the store. Retailers are also more likely to refuse the sale of tobacco to girls over boys.

of retailers refusing to sell to minors. Moreover, Quebec City and Sherbrooke are the only two other cities where compliance decreased to below 50%. Overall, the compliance across the cities visited in Quebec dropped by 20 percentage points since 2002, down to only 36.6%.

On a more positive note, 19 out of 30 cities reported a compliance rate of over 80%, and 25 out of 30 cities had a compliance of over 70%. Examples of cities reporting high compliance were Windsor (100%), Medicine Hat (95.4%), Ottawa and Kingston (90%), and Fredericton (86.3%).



Of greatest concern in this year's study is the significant decline in compliance across major cities in Quebec. Montreal had the lowest rate of compliance in Canada with only 32.5%

While similar studies have yet to be conducted with regards to retailers' compliance in the sale of gambling products to underage youth, the results of this survey are significant as they highlight the regional gaps and the importance of the enforcement of legislation. Many would argue that the compliance in selling gambling products to minors lags far behind tobacco, given the greater levels of public awareness on the harms of tobacco, and the stricter monitoring and enforcement of the Tobacco Act. This type of research highlights the need for retailer and industry

education with respect to protecting youth from harmful products.

For a complete copy of the report:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/tobacco/research/access03/04e.html>