

## **Web Sites Selling Cigarettes: How Many Are There in the USA and What Are Their Sales Practices?**

In the late 1990s, Americans were increasingly using the Internet to purchase products. At the same time, vendors selling cigarettes and other tobacco products had begun popping up online. This study offers a baseline assessment of the number of Internet cigarette vendors as of 1999, along with an overview of their sales practices.

### **Key Findings**

Researchers entered four keyword search terms into five Internet search engines to identify relevant vendors. More than 1,800 websites were examined to identify 88 websites on which cigarettes were being sold.

- Indian reservations (which sell cigarettes tax-free) housed 49 of the 88 sites.
- Although Internet cigarette vendors were based in 23 different states, more than half were based in New York. Many vendors were based in tobacco producing states with low cigarette excise taxes.
- Only 28% of sites featured relevant U.S. Surgeon General's health warnings.
- Nearly 82% featured minimum age warnings.

The results provide a window into the emerging online cigarette market and underscore the new regulatory and enforcement challenges presented by Internet cigarette vendors. Because cigarette consumption is related to price, the availability of cheap or tax-free cigarettes online could have significant public health implications.

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