

## **Internet Sales of Cigarettes to Minors**

Many adolescents have easy access to the Internet, raising concerns over their potential ability to buy cigarettes through Internet-based cigarette vendors. This paper presents the first published, peer-reviewed study assessing whether minors can successfully purchase cigarettes online.

### **Key Findings**

Under adult supervision (and with parental consent), four adolescents aged 11 to 15 years attempted to buy cigarettes online from 55 Internet cigarette vendors. In total, the minors made a total of 83 purchase attempts.

- Approximately 92% of Internet vendors in the study sold cigarettes to minors.
- Internet vendors sent a total of 1650 packs of cigarettes to the underage adolescents in the study.
- Age was never verified for any of the cigarette deliveries. The vast majority of packages containing cigarettes were simply left at the door without any age verification at the point of delivery.

The results show that minors can quite easily buy cigarettes online. Although most of the Internet vendors in the study posted an age warning on their website, in practice they typically had very weak or nonexistent age verification procedures. The results demonstrate a need for stricter legislation and effective enforcement of existing laws to prevent online cigarette sales to minors.

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