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Discourage Smoking by Minimizing Access to Cigarettes

Access to cigarettes is linked to higher levels of tobacco use. However, little is known about how policy can reduce access to cigarettes by decreasing the number of retailers who sell cigarettes in specific communities.



The Tobacco Town project is a collaboration between researchers at the Brookings Institution, Washington University, Stanford University, and the University of North Carolina using computer simulations to examine the impact of reducing access to cigarettes in four different kinds of communities.

Simulated Policies

- 1 Capping the total number of retailers
- 2 Limiting proximity of retailers to each other
- 3 Limiting proximity of retailers to schools
- 4 Reduction by type of retailer (e.g. pharmacies)



DID YOU KNOW?

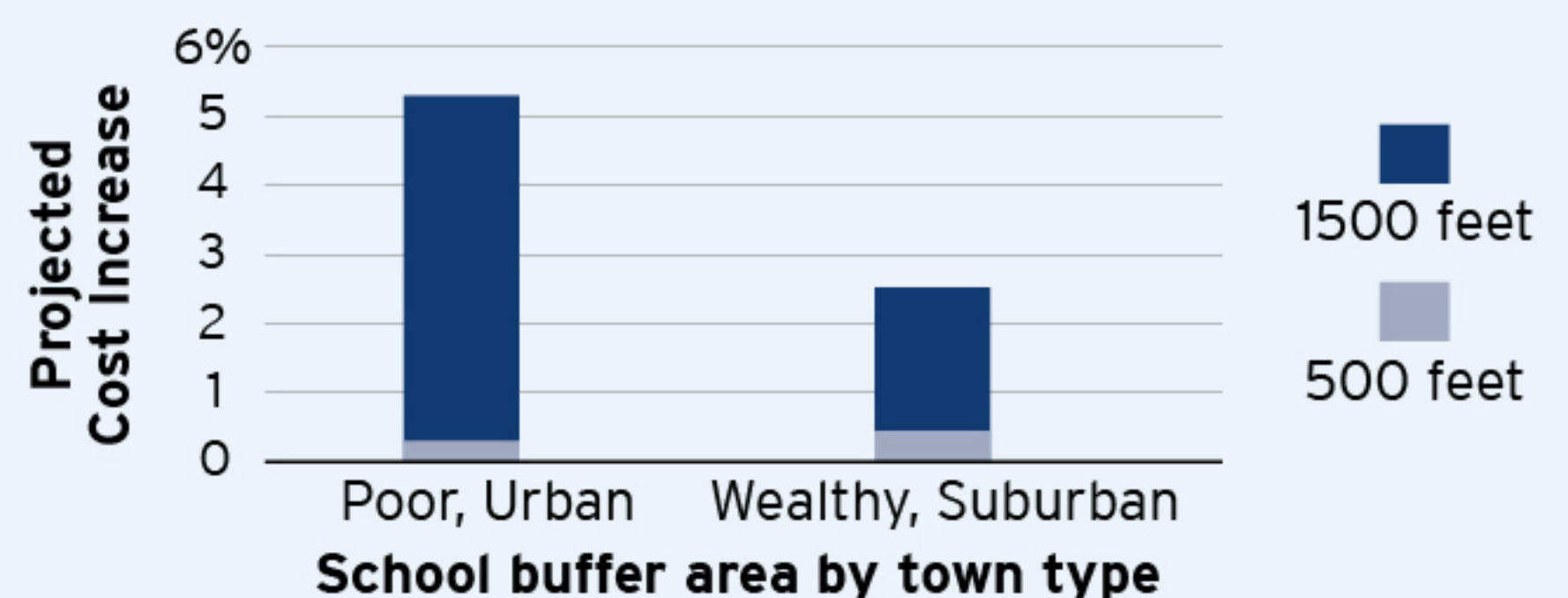
Approximately **40%** of US adolescents aged 13-16 years live within walking distance of a tobacco retailer, and nearly half visit these stores at least weekly.

Average total cost of cigarette pack in poor, urban community under different policy types



\$ 5.01 No policy	\$ 5.25 1500 ft Retailer Buffer
\$ 5.10 Convenience Store Ban	\$ 5.26 1500 ft School Buffer
\$ 5.12 50% Retailer Cap	\$ 5.57 Combination

School buffer effects on cigarette pack prices in representative poor, urban and wealthy, suburban towns



Here are some takeaways from the project that policy makers should consider:

There is no “one size fits all” policy solution for communities. Policies should be adapted to the specific characteristics and needs of each community.

There are policy strength tipping points; below these, policies do little to reduce retailer density.

Policies are synergistic; applying multiple policies can have a bigger effect on retailer density than a single, high-strength policy alone.

Source note: Luke, Douglas A., Ross A. Hammond, Todd Combs, Amy Sorg, Matt Kasman, Austen Mack-Crane, Kurt M. Ribisl, and Lisa Henriksen. 2017. Tobacco town: computational modeling of policy options to reduce tobacco retailer density. *AJPH* 107 (May): 740-746.