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Assessing Attitudes Towards Tobacco Advertising in Winooski, VT

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Introduction

There are approximately 75,500 adult smokers in Vermont, making up about 15% of the state's adult population¹. These rates are relatively higher in low-income populations. Winooski, Vermont is vulnerable to high tobacco use rates given that 23.6% of Winooski residents live below the poverty line².

The majority of tobacco users begin in their youth³. Tobacco advertising, which has been shown to have a direct, dose-dependent association with tobacco use in youth³, is highly prevalent in stores in Winooski. In conjunction with the Winooski Coalition for a Safe and Peaceful Community (WCSPC), we assessed the attitudes toward tobacco advertising within the Winooski Community.

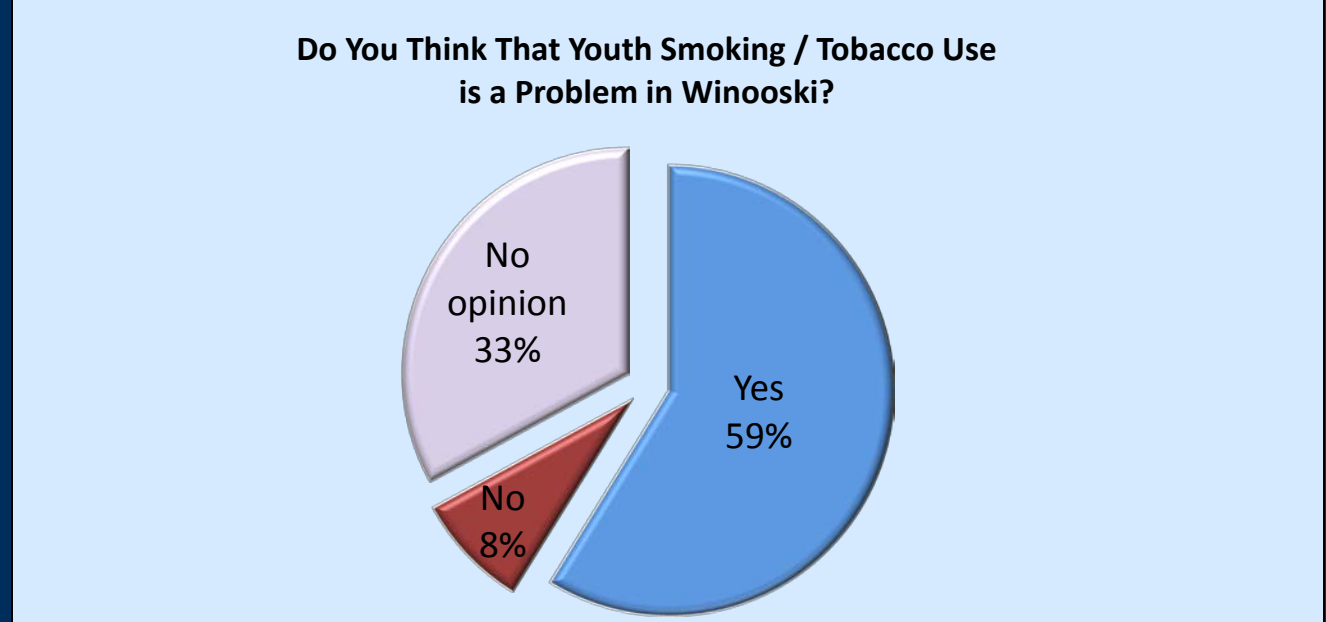
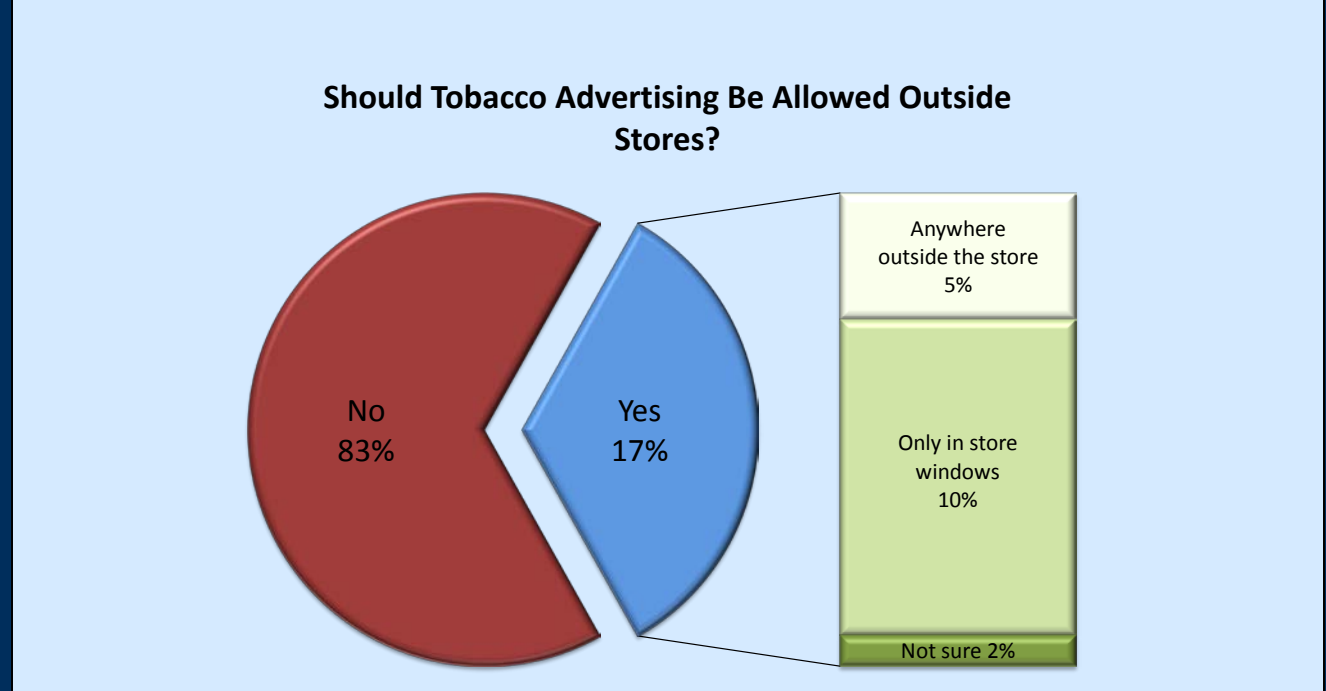
Objectives

- Initiate the *Small Changes, Big Impact*⁴ protocol
- Assess attitudes toward tobacco advertising and youth tobacco use in Winooski, VT
- Provide the WCSPC data for efforts to reduce tobacco advertising and use

Methods

- Designed a survey to assess the opinions of adult community members towards tobacco advertising and youth tobacco use in Winooski
- Administered the survey in three different settings:
 1. Sent home with students of the Winooski school district
 2. In-person at the parent-teacher conference at the Winooski school district
 3. In-person at the Winooski Community Health Fair
- Organized a free health fair at the Winooski Community Health Center

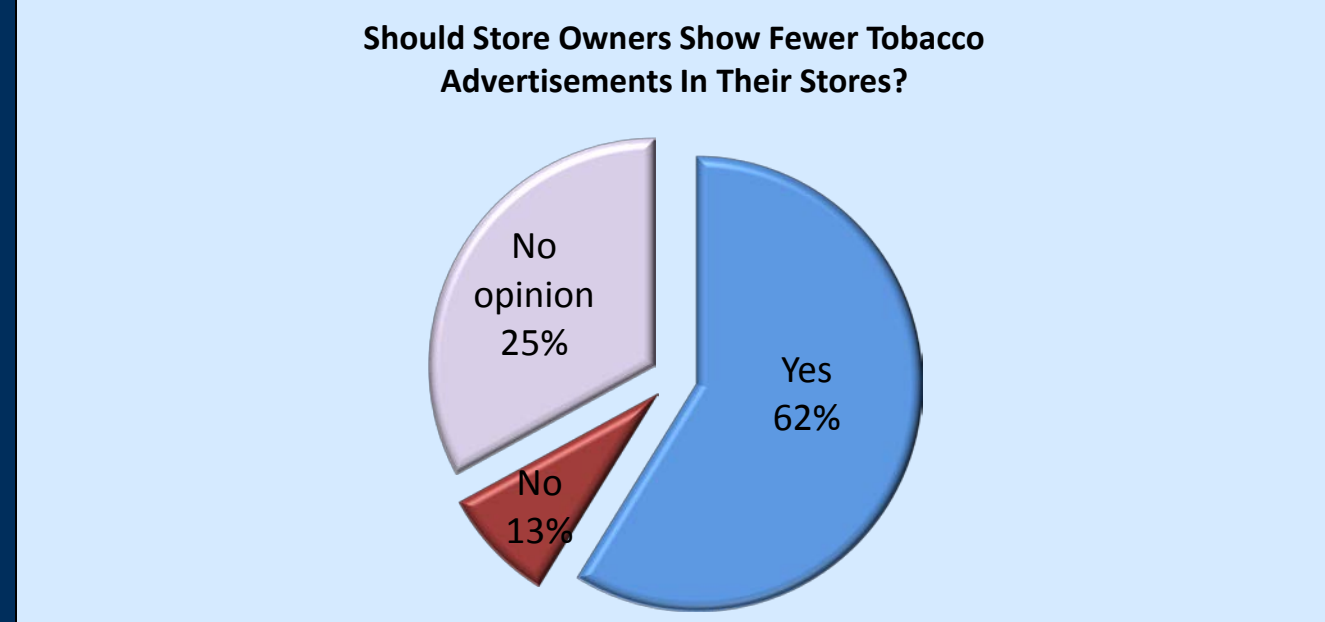
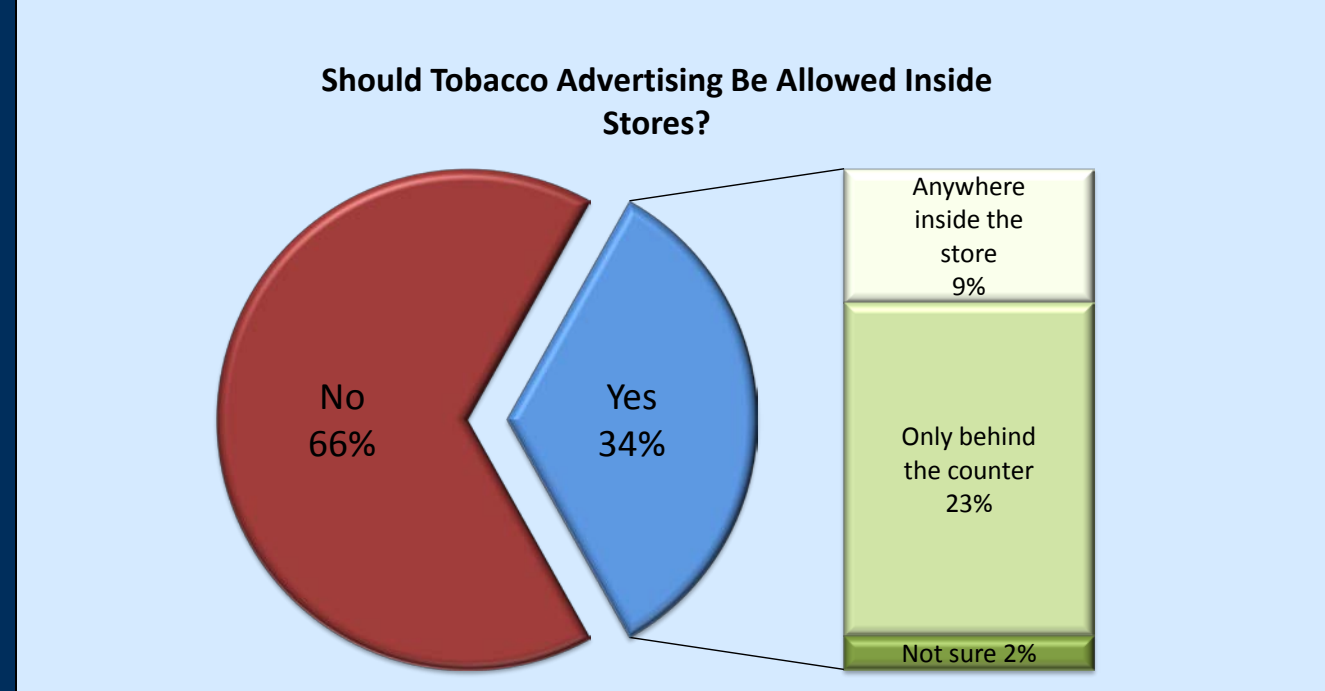
Results



- 18 % of respondents identified themselves as smokers.
- 59% of respondents thought that youth are influenced by tobacco advertising in stores.
- Respondents thought that grocery stores (77%), pharmacies (77%), corner stores (54%) and gas station/convenience stores (55%) should not post advertisements and signs for tobacco products.



Photo credits: Rajan Chawla
Eric Chang takes a blood pressure measurement at the Winooski Health Fair



| | Nonsmokers | Smokers | Overall |
|--|------------|---------|---------|
| Tobacco advertising should not be allowed inside stores | 71% | 29% | 66% |
| Tobacco advertising should not be allowed outside stores | 85% | 65% | 83% |
| Store owners should show fewer tobacco advertisements inside stores | 63% | 59% | 62% |
| Youth smoking & tobacco use is a problem in Winooski | 66% | 29% | 59% |

- Respondents thought that grocery stores (66%), pharmacies (73%), corner stores (41%) and gas station/convenience stores (43%) should not sell tobacco products.
- 26% of respondents reported that they or other members of their family received advice from a doctor regarding tobacco products use in the past year.

Discussion

Youth exposed to tobacco advertising are more likely to smoke or use tobacco products³. The majority of respondents believe that youth smoking and tobacco use in Winooski is a problem and that store owners should decrease or eliminate tobacco advertising. This demonstration of community support for reduced tobacco advertising will be instrumental for achieving the goals of the *Small Changes, Big Impact*⁴ initiative in Winooski, VT.



Conclusion

- The majority of respondents believe that tobacco products should not be advertised anywhere inside or outside of stores.
- Both smokers and non-smokers think store owners should show fewer tobacco advertisements/displays in their stores.
- The majority of survey respondents think that grocery stores, pharmacies, corner stores, and gas station/convenience stores should not post advertisements and signs for tobacco products.

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