



Capital District
**Tobacco-Free
Communities**

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New Siena College Research Institute Community Survey Finds Majority of Capital Region Residents Support Tobacco Control Policies

Policies supporting lung health another tool to combat COVID-19

ALBANY, N.Y. – [A community survey](#) conducted this spring and summer by Siena College Research Institute (SCRI) on behalf of Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities (CDTFC), reveals that most Capital Region residents in Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties support tobacco control policies. SCRI surveyed residents within the three counties about various tobacco-related topics ranging from policies prohibiting smoking in public areas like beaches and parks, to smoking in apartment buildings, as well as opinions on exposure to tobacco marketing in and out of stores, and near schools. These questions gauge community support of evidence-based policy solutions that lead to decreases in tobacco use.

Based on SCRI's results, residents in all three counties were strongly in favor of policies that reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, including a ban on smoking on the grounds of municipal properties (71%), on the grounds of worksites (68%), and in parks and beaches (65%). There is also strong support for policies that ban the sale of tobacco products in stores that are located near schools (66%). Reducing young people's exposure to tobacco marketing and decreasing the appeal of tobacco products has been shown to reduce youth smoking.

"We're encouraged to see such strong community support for strategies that we know will make it harder for kids to start and easier for people to quit," said Judy Rightmyer, director, Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities. "Especially now when COVID-19 presents an additional and serious threat to lung health."

As of May 2020, New York state banned the sale of flavored e-cigarettes, including menthol flavored e-cigarettes, but left on the market tobacco products that continue to appeal to youth such as menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, cigarillos and chew.

"While 78 percent of area residents agree that candy and fruit flavors added to tobacco products make it easier for you to start using these products, only 45 percent agree that menthol in cigarettes makes it easier for youth to start smoking," said Don Levy, director, Siena College Research Institute.

"My main takeaway from the survey is that we need to do a better job educating about the particular harms caused by menthol as a tobacco product flavoring. Menthol not only serves as a starter kit for youth smokers, it is also disproportionately used by African American smokers as a result of decades of targeted tobacco industry marketing. African Americans experience higher rates of disease and death from tobacco use than do white Americans. They're also experiencing disproportionate disease and death from COVID-19. If ever there was a time to advance tobacco control strategies and promote health equity, it would be now," added Rightmyer.

Smoking is the single largest preventable cause of death and disease in the United States, but communities can take action by implementing evidence-based strategies that reduce youth tobacco use. CDTFC plans to share the community's support for these strategies with stakeholders and decision-makers to create a healthier tobacco-free community.

About Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities

Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities (CDTFC) is a NYS Bureau of Tobacco Control grant funded program held by St. Peter's Health Partners. CDTFC works to increase support for New York state's tobacco-free norm through youth action and community engagement. Efforts are evidence-based, policy-driven, and cost-effective approaches that decrease youth tobacco use, motivate adult smokers to quit, and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke. Visit www.SmokeFreeCapital.org for more information.

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