

# **New study shows Boston has reduced youth access to flavored cigars**

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A 2011 Boston regulation that set minimum pricing and packaging requirements for fruit-flavored cigars has successfully reduced their availability, according to a new study led by UMass Medical School statistical scientist Wenjun Li, PhD.

Dr. Li and co-authors from the Boston Public Health Commission, Tobacco Free Mass and the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards found an overall 34.4 percent decrease in the percentage of stores selling single, flavored cigars that were becoming increasingly popular among youth. Previous state and federal policies that have been effective at reducing teen use of cigarettes—such as minimum price laws, high excise taxes, minimum packaging requirements and prohibitions on flavors—did not apply to cigars.

"This evaluation clearly showed that a citywide tobacco price and packaging regulation can effectively change the retail environment," said Dr. Li, associate professor of medicine in the Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine.

Published April 6 in *Tobacco Control*, the study examined the availability and price of grape-flavored Dutch Masters single packaged cigars among tobacco retailers in Boston before the city enacted the 2011 policy that requires all retailers to sell cigars in an original package of at least four cigars, and to sell single cigars for more than \$2.50, almost twice the preregulation price.

Youth cigar use is currently higher and has increased faster than that of adults, particularly among African American youths, according to the study. Less encouraging was the finding that despite decreases across all neighborhoods, racial minorities continue to have the highest availability of single flavored cigars three years after the regulation.

"Perhaps more important than the compliance was the decrease in availability across the very diverse Boston neighborhoods," Li said. "The policy has the potential to help reduce and ultimately eliminate disparities in access to flavored tobacco products among youth of all ethnic and racial backgrounds."

The study was funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Public Health Law Research Program, which is dedicated to building the evidence base for laws that improve [public health](#).

"These results are of great value to other municipalities that are formulating or implementing similar regulations to reduce youth access to tobacco products," concluded Li and co-authors, who will continue to evaluate whether or not the reduction in access to flavored [cigars](#) will effectively translate to reduced youth [tobacco](#) use.

**More information:** Has Boston's 2011 cigar packaging and pricing regulation reduced availability of single-flavoured cigars popular with youth? *Tob Control*. [DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2015-052619](https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2015-052619)

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