

Tobacco marketing exposure linked to community vulnerability

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A recent University of Kentucky College of Medicine study found that young adults from vulnerable communities are more likely to be exposed to tobacco marketing in their daily lives than are young adults outside

these communities.

The study's findings may help [community leaders](#) create policies that reduce exposure to tobacco marketing, says study author Shyanika Rose, Ph.D., a faculty member of UK's Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET), assistant professor in the Department of Behavioral Science and member of the Markey Cancer Center Cancer Prevention and Control Program.

"Young adults exposed to tobacco marketing are more likely to start smoking, leading to nicotine addiction and increasing risks for developing cancers and cardiovascular disease later in life," Rose said. "Policies that reduce advertising exposure to tobacco products, especially in vulnerable communities, will help address increased tobacco-related health disparities among communities of color, low-income populations and youth."

Rose co-led the study with Julia Chen-Sankey, Ph.D., with the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities and now an assistant professor in the Rutgers University Center for Tobacco Studies and School of Public Health. The paper, published in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* in July, is part of a larger study Rose is leading to examine tobacco marketing exposure of young adults.

Rose's team examined marketing exposure among non-smoking young adults residing in the Washington, D.C. area. Over two weeks, participants checked in multiple times a day on smartphones to give an exact assessment of their exposure in real-time.

The study identified key risk factors for exposure including living in a vulnerable community, being in the presence of others using tobacco and being in public places where tobacco marketing may be more prevalent.

The results showed that young adults from vulnerable communities, those with higher smoking rates, more residents of lower income and more African American residents, were more likely to be exposed to tobacco marketing, especially for flavored products.

"At-risk groups, including communities of color, low-income populations and youth, are already more likely to use flavored [tobacco products](#)—including [menthol cigarettes](#)—which are easier to start using and harder to quit," Rose said.

Rose says the outcomes align with the tobacco industry's long history of targeting minority groups, which is a cause of the tobacco-related [health](#) disparities seen in vulnerable communities.

The results revealed that the [young adults](#), who were all non-current tobacco users initially, were predominantly exposed to [tobacco marketing](#) in their daily lives through retail advertisements.

"The impact of exposure goes beyond tobacco retailers to everyday places like grocery stores, gas stations or outdoor billboards. This could increase the likelihood of developing pro-tobacco perceptions in young people that normalizes tobacco use," Rose said. "This suggests [vulnerable communities](#) could benefit more from policies to reduce marketing exposure in more retail establishments and exterior locations—such as bans on flavored product sales, or policies to reduce the density of [tobacco](#) retailers."

More information: Julia C Chen-Sankey et al, Real-Time Context of Tobacco Marketing Exposure and Community Vulnerability—An Ecological Momentary Assessment Among Young Adults, *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1093/abm/kaab066](https://doi.org/10.1093/abm/kaab066)

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