

Tobacco product display in retail settings in Siliguri, India

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Significance

In India, the national tobacco control law prohibits tobacco advertising at the point-of-sale (POS).

Tobacco products can be displayed but are not permitted to be placed within the reach of a minor.

Tobacco retail settings vary greatly in India including permanent structures (bricks-and-mortar shops or permanent kiosks) and temporary structures (movable kiosks and street vendors).

The city government in Siliguri, West Bengal, is developing local policies to support tobacco control, including tobacco vendor licensing.

This study identified tobacco vendors throughout Siliguri to assess if tobacco products were on display and if they were displayed within the reach of a minor.

Methods

Stretches of road (500-1000m) with retailers were identified in each of Siliguri’s 47 wards. From Nov-Dec 2020, data collectors conducted observations in these pre-determined environments. Tobacco vendors were identified and classified based on their physical features (permanent or temporary).

Data collectors noted if tobacco products were on display including smokeless and combustible tobacco products. If tobacco products were on display data collectors noted if these products were within reach of a minor (approximately 1m from the ground or less, and products not kept behind glass).

Most tobacco vendors display tobacco products in Siliguri, West Bengal, and most of these displays are within reach of minors.



Results

The study identified N=567 tobacco vendors across the 47 wards in Siliguri including 405 permanent vendors and 162 temporary vendors.

Tobacco products were on display at 87% (n=493) of tobacco vendors, including 84% of permanent vendors and 94% of temporary vendors.

Of the vendors with tobacco products on display, 68% had tobacco placed within reach of minors including 63% of permanent vendors and 79% of temporary vendors.

Conclusions

Most tobacco vendors observed in this study displayed tobacco products at the POS and had tobacco products within reach of a minor; tobacco vendors that operated out of temporary structures were more likely to have products on display and more likely to have tobacco products within reach of a minor.

The city of Siliguri could consider banning product display as a provision of obtaining a tobacco vendor license.

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Acknowledgements: This work was supported with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (Bloomberg.org).

Conflict of Interest Disclosure: No potential conflicts of interest to report