



Tobacco Retailer Compliance Survey Results 2020

1.0 Introduction

The *Tobacco Products Control Act 2006* (the Act) prohibits the sale and supply of tobacco products to anyone under 18 years of age. This is an important part of the Act which aims to reduce smoking among young people. The Tobacco Retailer Compliance Survey (the survey) is used to measure retailers' compliance with the Act, by determining the proportion of retailers willing to sell cigarettes to children. This bulletin summarises the methods, results and trends of the survey conducted in 2020 and sets out future directions to further improve tobacco retailers' compliance with the Act.

2.0 Survey method

The survey took place during September and October 2020. Controlled Purchase Officers (CPOs) were recruited and trained. The CPOs were eight teenagers (four females and four males) aged 15 to 17 years. The CPO's role was to visit his or her allocated retail outlets and ask to buy a packet of cigarettes. A survey about the purchase attempt was completed after each visit. A total of 1,001 purchase attempts were made across 510 stores around the Perth metropolitan area.

3.0 Results

3.1 Level of compliance

- 13% (1 in 8) of purchase attempts resulted in the sale of cigarettes to a CPO.
- 78% (almost 4 out of 5) of stores complied with the Act by not selling cigarettes to CPOs during the survey period.
- 18% of stores surveyed (94 stores) sold cigarettes to a CPO on one occasion during the survey period; and 3% of stores surveyed (16 stores) sold cigarettes to a CPO on two occasions.

Table 1: Summary of purchase attempts

Total number of stores surveyed and purchase attempts	Did not sell cigarettes	Sold cigarettes to a CPO on 1 occasion	Sold cigarettes to a CPO on 2 occasions
510 stores	400 stores (78%)	94 stores (18%)	16 stores (3%)
1001 attempts	875 attempts (87%)	94 attempts (10%)	32 attempts (3%)

3.2 Retailers response to request to purchase cigarettes

- CPOs were asked for identification (ID), asked their age, or if they were 18 years old on 95% of purchase attempts.
- CPOs were specifically asked for ID during 85% of purchase attempts. This was the most common question CPOs were asked at point of sale.
- However, 18 sales were completed (cigarettes were sold to the CPO), even after the CPO was asked for ID but did not present any.

Table 2: Summary of purchase attempts by questions asked at point-of-sale

Question asked at point-of-sale	Number of purchase attempts where cigarettes were sold to CPO	Number of purchase attempts where cigarettes were not sold to CPO	Total purchase attempts
Asked CPO for ID	18	828	846
Asked CPO their age	3	65	68
Asked CPO if they were 18 years	0	38	38

3.3 Likelihood of sales to children

In 2020, sales of cigarettes to children (CPO) were generally highest when:

- the retailer was male (19 per cent; versus 10 per cent female retailers);
- the purchase attempts were made in the afternoon, between 1:30pm and 6:00pm (refer to table 3);
- the CPO purchase was from a Café, Tobacconist or Newsagent/Lottery Centre; and
- the CPO was not asked for ID or their age.

Table 3: Summary of successful purchase attempts by time of the day (%)

8:00am – 10:29am	10:30am – 11:59am	12:00pm – 1:29pm	1:30pm – 2:59pm	3:00pm – 4:29pm	4:30pm – 5:59pm
8%	10%	13%	20%*	18%*	57%*

*Note: the sample size was smaller than earlier in the day

Table 4: Summary of purchase attempts where cigarettes were sold by type of retailer (%)

Café	Deli/ kiosk/ lunch bar	Newsagent/ Lottery	Service Station	Supermarket	Tobacconist	Other*
38%*	13%	18%	10%	12%	20%*	11%*

*Note: the sample size was significantly smaller than other types of outlets (< than 30)

4.0 Significant trends

The Tobacco Retailer Compliance Survey has been conducted seven times since 2002 (including 2002, 2004, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2020) and provides a snapshot of compliance results over a two-week period.

Overall, results show there have been improvements in compliance with sales to children over the past two decades, with a significant decline in sales to children during the survey period from 45% in 2002 to 13% in 2020 (see Table 5).

Since 2002, there has also been improved compliance with retailers asking for ID, increasing from 54% in 2002 to 85% in 2020.

Table 5: Summary of purchase attempts in 2002 and 2020

Purchase attempts	2002 1047 attempts	2020 1001 attempts
Did not sell cigarettes	576 (55%)	871 (87%)
Sold cigarettes	471 (45%)	130 (13%)
Asked for ID	565 (54%)	846 (85%)

Over the past two decades the WA Department of Health has focused on educating retailers on their legal obligations when displaying and selling tobacco products, strengthening tobacco control legislation; and improving compliance and monitoring of the sale and supply of tobacco in WA. The improvements in tobacco sale compliance with the Act may be attributed to some of these activities.

5.0 Conclusion

While there have been strong improvements in compliance, there are some strategies which remain essential to help further improve compliance with the Act and reduce sales of cigarettes to children.

Two priority areas include:

- ID Checks: all sales staff should be encouraged to ID check customers who look under the age of 25 years, and decline the sale if ID is not able to be provided, as recommended in the [Guide for selling tobacco products in WA](#).
- Training and supervision: retailers and their sales staff require ongoing training and supervision to remain well informed of their legal obligations when selling cigarettes.

For more information on selling tobacco products in Western Australia and the Tobacco Retailer Compliance Survey, visit the WA Department of Health website: <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Health-for/Environmental-Health-practitioners/Tobacco>.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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