

# The Illegal Experimental Tobacco Marketplace I: Effects of vaping product bans

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## Abstract

**Objectives** Banning vaping products may have unintended outcomes, such as increased demand for illegal products. This study experimentally examined the effects of a vaping ban and a flavored vaping ban on the probability of purchasing illicit vaping products, and factors affecting purchasing from a hypothetical illegal marketplace.

**Methods** A crowdsourced sample of exclusive cigarette smokers, exclusive e-cigarette users, and frequent dual users (n=150) completed hypothetical purchasing trials in an Experimental Tobacco Marketplace under three conditions (no ban, vaping ban, flavored vaping ban). Participants chose to purchase in a hypothetical legal experimental tobacco marketplace (LETM) or illegal experimental tobacco marketplace (IETM). Vaping products were available in each marketplace depending on the condition. Other tobacco products were always available in the LETM. A hypothetical illicit purchase task with five fine amounts assessed the effect of monetary penalties.

**Results** Participants from all groups were more likely to purchase from the IETM when product availability in the LETM was more restricted, with e-cigarette users being most affected. The likelihood of purchasing illegal products was systematically decreased as monetary penalties associated with the IETM increased, with e-cigarette users showing greater persistence in defending their illicit purchases.

**Conclusions** Restricting vaping products from the marketplace may shift preference towards purchasing vaping products in the illegal marketplace. Nevertheless, penalties imposed on consumer's behavior might be effective in preventing illicit trade. The IETM is a methodological extension that supports the utility and flexibility of the ETM as a framework for understanding the impact of different tobacco regulatory policies.

## Recommended Citation

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