



# MORE THAN A STORE

## HOW THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY USES RETAIL SPACES TO HOOK CONSUMERS

**Bodegas. Sari saris. Kiranas. Baqalas. Corner stores.** To you, they're convenient places to grab everyday items. To the tobacco industry, they're powerful marketing machines—opportunities to make tobacco visible and appealing to anyone who walks in.

The tobacco industry uses retail outlets to normalize the presence of tobacco, hook young people, target specific groups, recruit allies and increase sales. Here are just some of the ways tobacco companies use and influence retail outlets to their advantage.

### Store Staff

Many tobacco companies **incentivize retail staff with rewards**, discounts and other perks for meeting sales targets or **promoting their brands**. Tobacco companies have also tried to **mobilize store staff and retail associations to act as allies**, opposing tobacco control regulations and serving as front groups to protect the industry's profits.

### Wall Behind Counter

Tobacco companies try to **ensure visibility of their brands by influencing product placement** on shelves and price lists, even in places where tobacco products must be covered. They may also attempt to attract consumers with **branded in-store displays or advertisements on shelves**.

### Counter Display

Some retail outlets **strategically place tobacco and nicotine products that appeal to children**—like flavored products or those with bright packaging—**at eye-level for kids or near candy**. Tobacco companies may also **provide stores with tobacco-branded shelving**, even for non-tobacco products.

### Location

Some tobacco companies **offer retailers incentives for prominent cigarette displays or banners at the store entrance, including at stores near schools**. They have also **strategically pushed specific brands and/or price discounts** in neighborhoods where their target demographics live, such as **Black Americans or people with low incomes**. These areas often have a higher density of tobacco retailers.



See more ways the industry uses retail spaces to hook new customers and sustain addiction among current consumers on [Tobacco Tactics](#).



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Policies that regulate the sale of tobacco products in retail spaces can reduce tobacco consumption. That leads to healthier, more productive communities. Here are just some of the things policymakers can do to protect public health.

1

**Include point-of-sale displays and plain packaging requirements in tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) bans.** This will prevent tobacco companies from using in-store branded displays and branded cigarette packaging to lure consumers and normalize the presence of tobacco. This will also protect children from tobacco product displays that appear near candy and snacks, and from brightly colored packaging designed to appeal to youth.

• 2

**Ban and enforce bans on advertising and selling tobacco near schools and playgrounds.** Governments should require minimum distances between tobacco-selling outlets and facilities such as schools, and ban the sale of tobacco via vending machines, which can be easily accessible to minors.

• 3

**Policymakers should be aware of Big Tobacco-backed front groups.** The industry often persuades retailers and retail associations to lobby for its interests. Policymakers should check [STOP's tobacco industry ally database](#) or [Tobacco Tactics](#) to see which groups have industry links. Governments should also offer economically alternative activities to retailers, incentivizing them to move away from tobacco.

4

**Policymakers must recognize that tobacco industry marketing makes systemic inequity worse, and enact policies accordingly.** The tobacco industry's targeted marketing practices, including in retail environments, perpetuate existing inequities. Requiring a tobacco-selling license and limiting the number of tobacco retailers in a geographic area or by population density could reduce disproportionate concentrations of tobacco retailers in areas already affected by discrimination.

**TAKE ACTION**

Countries around the world are enacting these solutions and others to reduce tobacco availability.

Discover more policy solutions identified in a 2023 review, and explore a case study examining the public's perception of related policies in Egypt, where tobacco use is rising.

## SOURCES

- + [Tobacco Tactics](#)
- + [Indonesia: Tobacco industry merges retailer incentives with brand promotions](#)
- + [Policies regulating retail environment to reduce tobacco availability: A scoping review](#)
- + [Public's perception of policies reducing tobacco availability by regulating the tobacco retail environment: A case study in Egypt](#)