

TOBACCO IS CHANGING

See How Menthol Damages Vulnerable Communities

Tobacco companies have aggressively marketed highly addictive menthol products to low income and racial and ethnic minority neighborhoods for decades. Their targeted tactics have made menthol an urgent public health and social justice issue for Wisconsin's vulnerable populations, including Black Americans, LGBTQ+ people, youth, people living in poverty, and others.

10 Reasons Why Menthol is a Social Justice Issue

1. Tobacco companies spend millions to hook people of color.

Kids of color and their families are exposed to two to three times the usual number of cigarette ads, especially for menthol products.¹

2. Tobacco companies flood vulnerable communities with their products.

Wisconsin Retail Assessment Project data shows that Black neighborhoods had a 50% higher density of tobacco retailers than white neighborhoods.

3. Communities of color are surrounded by tobacco advertising.

Black neighborhoods are exposed to almost twice as much outdoor menthol advertising as white neighborhoods, according to research.²



4. Tobacco retailers are located close to Wisconsin's most vulnerable kids.

In Wisconsin, tobacco retailers are more likely to sell products closer to playgrounds and schools in low-income communities than in more affluent neighborhoods.

5. Tobacco companies exploit other cultures.

Their ads appeal to ethnic pride and the shared experiences of people of color and others. They even sponsor cultural celebrations for Black History Month, Cinco de Mayo, and Pride Fest.

Sources:

¹ www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0208.pdf

² <https://tobwis.org>

For a full list of sources, visit TobaccoisChanging.com.

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6. More Black youth are addicted to menthol tobacco.

Nationally, 70.5% of African American middle and high school students who report smoking use menthol cigarettes, compared to 51.4% of white students.³

7. Menthol is more addictive and keeps users hooked.

Research shows that menthol actually makes tobacco products easier to use and harder to quit. Menthol smokers report shorter periods between cigarettes. They also try to quit smoking more often and are less likely to be successful.⁴

8. The tobacco industry slashes prices, especially in lower-income communities.

Wisconsin data shows there are almost twice as many menthol price promotions in Black neighborhoods as white neighborhoods.⁵

Sources:

³ <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/targeted-communities/tobacco-use-african-american-community>

⁴ www.fda.gov/media/92673/download

⁵ <https://tobwis.org>

⁶ <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/cessation-fact-sheet>

⁷ [Tobwis.org: Menthol_Marketing_Get_the_Facts.pdf](https://tobwis.org/Menthol_Marketing_Get_the_Facts.pdf)

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9. Menthol cigarettes have created a heritage of illness.

Menthol cigarettes expose the body to poisons and nearly 70 known cancer causers. The serious health effects are spreading from one generation to the next in communities of color.⁶

10. Menthol products end a disproportionate number of Black lives.

Research shows a menthol ban could save as many as 340,000 American lives—including at least 100,000 Black lives—by 2050.⁷



What Can You Do?

Support Tobacco Flavor Restrictions that Include Menthol

Menthol is often deliberately left out of restrictions that govern the flavored tobacco products that tempt kids. You can help change that. Visit TobaccoisChanging.com to connect with a local coalition and find out how you can support comprehensive tobacco policies in Wisconsin.

Learn more about the manipulative tobacco tactics affecting our communities at TobaccoisChanging.com.

