

WSJ wants to hear from you. Take part in this short survey to help shape The Journal. [Take Survey](#).

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-raises-tobacco-buying-age-to-21-11576796159>

## U.S.

# U.S. Raises Tobacco-Buying Age to 21

New restriction, which also includes e-cigarettes, is part of spending bill passed by Senate and would take effect in September



A vape-shop employee in Helena, Mont. Youth use of e-cigarettes jumped 78% from 2017 to 2018. PHOTO: THOM BRIDGE/INDEPENDENT RECORD/ASSOCIATED PRESS

*By Jennifer Maloney*

Dec. 19, 2019 5:56 pm ET

The minimum age to purchase cigarettes, e-cigarettes and other tobacco products will be raised to 21 nationwide under the spending bill passed by the Senate on Thursday in a provision aimed at curbing a surge in underage vaping.

If signed into law, the new restriction would take effect in September. Altria Group Inc. and Reynolds American Inc., the two biggest U.S. cigarette manufacturers, both supported the age restriction, as did Juul Labs Inc., the startup that has been blamed by health officials for the rise in teenage e-cigarette use.

President Trump also supported the measure. He first voiced support for it in November after backing away from a plan to pull from the U.S. market all e-cigarettes except for those that taste like tobacco.

Nineteen states already have passed laws raising the minimum tobacco purchase age to 21, including California, Texas and New York, three of the most populous states in the U.S. Sixteen of the states have implemented the rules.

U.S. cigarette unit sales have been falling for decades. That decline accelerated in the past few years as e-cigarette sales took off, and the new age limit could hasten it even further: Among people who smoke cigarettes daily, 87% first used a cigarette by age 18, according to a 2014 Surgeon General report.

About 5% of cigarette smokers are between 18 and 20 years old, but they represent only 2% or 3% of U.S. cigarette unit sales, because this age group smokes fewer cigarettes a day than the national average, Morgan Stanley analyst Pamela Kaufman said.

Shares of Marlboro maker Altria fell 1% Thursday. Shares of British American Tobacco PLC, which sells Camels, Newports and Vuse e-cigarettes in the U.S., were little changed in after-hours trading.

According to Ms. Kaufman, Altria has estimated that across the U.S. tobacco industry, consumers between 18 and 20 years old represent 4% of smokeless tobacco volumes and 15% of e-cigarette unit sales.

Youth use of e-cigarettes jumped 78% from 2017 to 2018—to one out of every five high-school students. The most common way young people obtain e-cigarettes is from someone they know, U.S. health officials say. Supporters of the tighter age restriction say it will ensure that children and teens under age 18 won't have schoolmates who can purchase e-cigarettes for them.

---

HEALTH NEWS IN YOUR INBOX

---

Get a curated weekly look at features, columns and headlines on personal health and the health industry. Sign up.

---

Copyright © 2019 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.