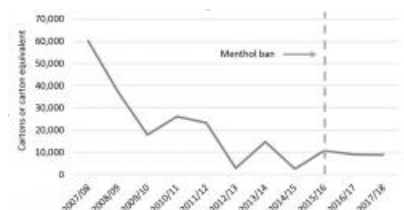


Report: No Surge in Illicit Cigarette Seizures after Menthol Ban

Data from Nova Scotia shows no increase in number of illicit cigarette seized



October 12, 2018—Contrary to the tobacco industry’s assertions, there was no surge in illicit cigarettes after a 2015 ban on menthol cigarette sales in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. The finding is included in [a brief report appearing in *Tobacco Control*](#).

In May 2015, the Canadian province of Nova Scotia became the first jurisdiction in the world to ban menthol cigarettes. At the time, the tobacco industry claimed that “the primary effect of this law will be to increase the illegal tobacco market in Nova Scotia.” To find out if that warning came to be true, Michal Stoklosa, MA, an economic and health policy research scientist at the American

Cancer Society, undertook the first attempt to examine the impact of the menthol ban on trends in illicit cigarettes.

To investigate the ban’s effect, data on the number of illicit cigarettes seized in Nova Scotia covering the period from 2007/08 to 2017/18 were obtained from the Provincial Tax Commission in Nova Scotia to compare seizures before and after the ban was implemented.

While enforcement efforts in Nova Scotia have not declined in the recent years, the number of seized illicit cigarettes of any kind declined significantly, from more than 60,000 cartons in 2007/08 to just under 10,000 cartons in 2017/18. The bulk of this decline occurred in the late 2000’s, suggesting that seizures were unrelated to the menthol ban.

In the years after the 2015 menthol ban, seizure volume remained stable, with no statistically significant difference in the number of cigarettes seized before and after.

“This indicates that illicit cigarette sales in the province are similarly unlikely to be increasing,” said Mr. Stoklosa. “Indeed, Nova Scotia tax authorities estimate that the prevalence of illegal tobacco in the province has actually decreased, from 30 per cent of all tobacco consumed in 2006/07 to less than 10 per cent in 2016/17. There were only a few small seizures of menthol cigarettes in the year following the ban, after which there have been no further seizures of menthol cigarettes.”

The author concludes that credible evidence on illicit cigarette trade, independent of tobacco industry influence, is desperately needed to support implementation of tobacco control policies.

[Article: No surge in illicit cigarettes after implementation of menthol ban in Nova Scotia](#). Stoklosa M. *Tobacco Control*. Published Online First: 11 October 2018 doi: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2018-05455