

New Léger Survey Shows Overly Restrictive Access Can Push Nicotine Pouches Users Who Are Also Adult Smokers Toward Unregulated Alternatives

Most users of illicit oral nicotine pouches say better access to legal alternatives would encourage them to switch to regulated products

Montreal, June 1, 2026 — A new Léger survey¹ commissioned by Imperial Tobacco Canada shows that overly restrictive access to Health Canada authorized nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) pouch products may be pushing adult smokers, who are also nicotine pouch users, toward unregulated alternatives.

The findings are based on an online survey² conducted between January 27 and February 11, 2026. Among adult smokers who both use nicotine pouches and smoke at least weekly, 86% agreed that limiting access to Health Canada–authorized NRT pouches drives consumers toward purchasing illicit nicotine pouch alternatives.

The findings point to the need for a balanced cessation framework that preserves the important role pharmacists play in supporting adult smokers, while also allowing responsible, age-controlled access to Health Canada authorized NRT pouch products in the retail locations where adult smokers already buy cigarettes, including convenience stores and gas stations.

“Pharmacists play an important role in helping adult smokers on their cessation journey, and that role should continue to be recognized and supported,” said Eric Gagnon, Vice President, Corporate and Regulatory Affairs at Imperial Tobacco Canada. “At the same time, adult smokers should not be pushed toward unregulated products because authorized options are too difficult to access. Convenience stores and gas stations are already trusted to sell age-restricted products responsibly. They can also be part of a

¹ Léger surveyed users of white nicotine pouches which includes Health Canada authorized NRT pouches and unauthorized nicotine pouches.

² This survey was conducted by Léger between January 27 and February 11, 2026, among a sample of 504 Canadian adults, which includes a sample of 333 Canadian adults who are current users of white nicotine pouches and at least weekly smokers. Among the total sample, 135 respondents were at least weekly smokers who also used illicit white nicotine pouches. Results provide directional insights into purchasing behaviors and attitudes within this category.

controlled, regulated access model for authorized cessation products, including authorized NRT pouch products.”

Key Findings on Access, Regulation and Adult Smoker Who Also Use Nicotine Pouches Behaviour

- 86% of adult smokers who are also illicit nicotine pouch users say they would be motivated to switch to Health Canada authorized NRT pouch products if access were improved.
- 89% of adult smokers who are also nicotine pouch users agree that Health Canada authorized brands of NRT pouches should be available in convenience stores, gas stations and grocery stores channel.
- 93% of adult smokers who are also nicotine pouch users agree Health Canada–authorized NRT pouch products should be sold in the same locations as cigarettes.
- 37% of adult smokers, who are also illicit nicotine pouch users said they knew they were purchasing unauthorized products - meaning more than 6 in 10 were unaware.
- 86% of adult smokers, who are also unauthorized nicotine pouch users say limiting access to Health Canada authorized NRT pouch products drive consumers toward unregulated options.

The survey also identified ease of access and flavour options as factors influencing illicit purchasing decisions.

Balanced Access, Pharmacist Support and Enforcement Are Critical

According to Imperial, the findings reinforce the need for an evidence-based regulatory approach that protects youth, supports adult smokers, preserves the role of pharmacists in smoking cessation, and prevents unregulated nicotine pouch products from filling gaps in access. This should not be a choice between pharmacies and other retail channels.

“Pharmacies are an important part of Canada’s smoking cessation system. Knowing that the goal is to help adult smokers quit, authorized NRT pouch products also need to be available where cigarettes are sold. A balanced approach would keep pharmacists at the center of smoking cessation support, while allowing responsible, age-controlled sales through convenience stores and gas stations that already have experience selling restricted products to adults.”

About Imperial Tobacco Canada

Imperial Tobacco Canada is the leading tobacco and nicotine company in Canada, part of the global BAT group. Our mission at BAT is to [create A Better Tomorrow™](#) by promoting

a Smokeless World. We envision a future where smokeless products replace cigarettes, encouraging smokers to make a Switch to Better.

Imperial is committed to advancing THR through transparency, innovation, and collaboration. One such initiative is Omni™, a platform developed by our parent company BAT, to support education and stakeholder engagement around THR. [Omni™](#) serves as a dynamic resource for those working toward a smoke-free future.

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