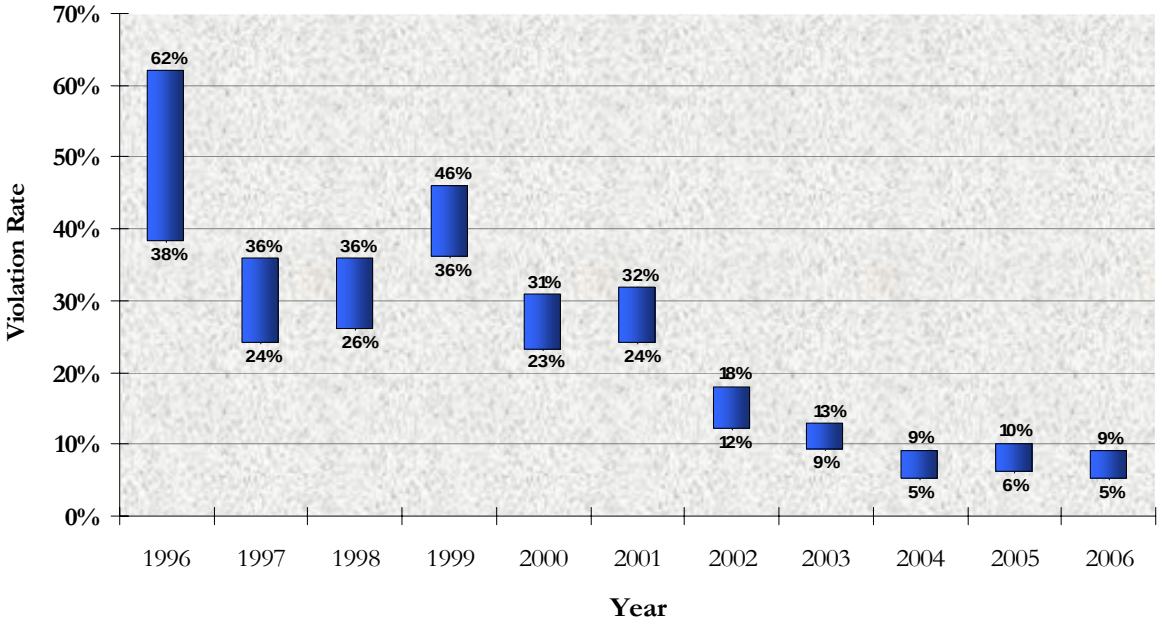
6. Youth Access to Tobacco

Cigarette use among youth is declining and an important reason for that drop may be that retailers are selling fewer cigarettes to minors. Chart 6-1, below, shows the dramatic drop that has been seen in illegal sales to minors between the years 1996 and 2006. The chart shows the confidence intervals of rates of illegal sales, with the 2006 violation rate of between five and nine percent.

Youth do, though, continue to obtain cigarettes. Students were asked how they got cigarettes in the Youth Tobacco Surveys conducted for school years, 2000-2001, 2002-2003, and 2006-2007. While significantly fewer students purchase from a store, there were corresponding increases in other ways students got their cigarettes, and the most common was that they gave money to another person to buy cigarettes, as shown in Chart 6-2.

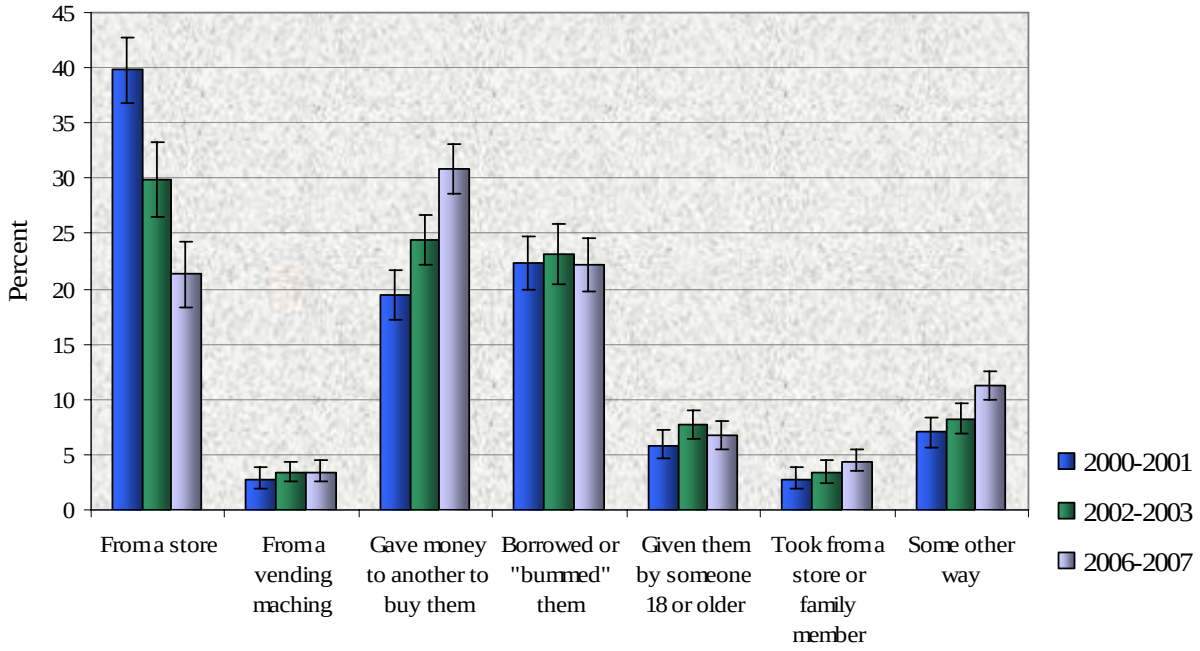
***Chart 6-1*. Results of Annual Synar* Compliance Checks of Tobacco Sales to Minors Pennsylvania, 1996-2006**



Source: Synar Survey, 1996-2006, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Health Statistics and Research.

* The Federal Synar Regulation requires that each state annually conduct random, unannounced inspections, using hired youth inspectors, to assess their compliance with the state's access law. States are required to meet annual target inspection failure rates established by the federal government. Failure to meet requirements of the Synar Regulation can result in a penalty of 40% of a state's substance abuse prevention and treatment block grant allocation.

Chart 6-2. **Percentage of Methods High School Students Used to Obtain Cigarettes Pennsylvania, 2000-2001, 2002-2003 and 2006-2007**



Source: Pennsylvania Youth Tobacco Survey, 2000-2001, 2002-2003, and 2006-2007, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control.

I denotes 95% confidence interval.