

Youth and Smoking

NATIONAL PREVALENCE AND TRENDS

- 8.1% of middle school students and 21.7% of high school students smoke cigarettes.¹
- Among middle school students, 8.6% of females and 7.7% of males smoke cigarettes. Among high school students, 22.4% of females and 22.1% of males smoke cigarettes.¹
- Smoking has declined among U.S. youth since peaking in 1997. Among youth in grade 12, the decline in smoking began in 1997. This trend began for younger students in 1996.²
- In middle school, 8.3% of whites smoke, 7.5% of blacks, 9.4% of Hispanics, and 2.2% of Asians.¹
- In high school, 25.4% of whites, 11.4% of blacks, 21.6% of Hispanics, and 11.2% of Asians smoke.¹
- Twenty-two percent of youth (ages 12-17) have never smoked but are susceptible to trying cigarettes.³

FIRST USE OF CIGARETTES

- Eighty percent (80%) of all smokers have their first cigarette before age 18 and 90% of all smokers begin before age 20.⁴
- One third of all smokers began before the age of 14.⁵
- Each day, approximately 3,900 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 years initiate cigarette smoking in the United States.⁶
- Between one half and one third of youth who try a cigarette will go on to become a daily smoker.³
- In this age group, each day an estimated 1,500 young people become daily cigarette smokers in this country.⁶
- Within days or weeks of first cigarette use, symptoms of nicotine dependence may appear.⁷
- In 2002, 33% of middle school students and 57% of high school students reported having tried smoking at least once in their lives.⁸

CIGARETTE PREFERENCES

- Males are significantly more likely than females to smoke tobacco products other than cigarettes.⁹
- In high school, 18.4% of males smoke cigars compared with 7.5% of females.¹
- In high school, 3.6% of males smoke bidis, 3.6% smoke kreteks (clove cigarettes), and 4.6% smoke pipes. The rate is lower among females, about 1.6% smoke bidis, 1.5% kreteks (clove cigarettes), and 1.6% smoke pipes.¹

Cigarette Brand and Type Preferences

- High school smokers are more likely than middle school smokers to report having a usual cigarette type.¹⁰

Menthol Cigarettes

TOBACCO ACCESS

- In 2004, over 70% (70.6%) of middle school students were not asked to show proof of age when purchasing cigarettes. Almost 64% (63.9%) of high school students were not asked for proof of age.¹
- In 2004, 66.4% of middle school students reported that they were not refused purchase of cigarettes because of their age. Among high school students, the percentage was 63.9%.¹

YOUTH EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE

- Twenty-seven percent (27%) of youth live in a household with at least one smoker.¹¹
- Eight times more youth who live with a smoker are exposed to daily secondhand smoke in a room and/or in a car than those who live in a nonsmoker household (40% versus 5%). Overall, 15% of youth experience daily secondhand smoke exposure. In households with a smoker, this percentage rises to 40%.¹⁰
- Sixteen percent of youth are exposed to secondhand smoke in their home, a 40% decline from 1999.¹⁰

SOURCES

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