

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prevalence

- ◆ About 16.3% of middle school students and 33.7% of high school students in West Virginia currently smoke cigarettes (*an estimated 38,558 students*).
- ◆ About 12.9% of middle school boys and 21.5% of high school boys currently use smokeless tobacco.
- ◆ *The southern part of the state – Southern Coalfield region, Western region, and the Greenbrier Valley region – has the highest prevalence of both smoking and smokeless tobacco use among middle school students. Regional rates are not significantly different from the state prevalence.*
- ◆ *The Southern Coalfield region has a significantly higher rate of current use of any tobacco product as compared to the Northern Panhandle region.*

Decreasing Prevalence

- ◆ *The prevalence of current smoking among high school students has shown a statistically significant decline of more than 20% since 1999. Rates have dropped more among girls than boys.*
- ◆ *Current smokeless (spit) tobacco use among high school boys has shown a statistically significant decline of more than 30% since 1997.*
- ◆ *Among middle school students, there was no significant decline in smoking or spit tobacco use since 2000; however, a declining trend appears to have begun.*

Cigarette Smoking – Initiation and Progression

- ◆ *Most decisions about smoking and smokeless tobacco use are made by the time students reach the 9th grade – that is, while they are still in middle school.*
- ◆ *About 26% of students who had ever smoked and 34% of boys who had ever used smokeless tobacco first used their tobacco product before the age of 11 years.*
- ◆ *Though overall tobacco use is on the decline, tobacco use increases with each increasing grade. The greatest grade-to-grade increase in smoking occurs in middle school grades.*

Cigarette Consumption

- ◆ A current smoker in the 6th grade smokes, on average, a little more than three and one half packs of cigarettes per month; a 12th grader smokes about 10 packs.
- ◆ *Cigarette consumption has significantly declined among middle school smokers since 2000.*
- ◆ Current youth smokers smoke an estimated 3.5 million packs of cigarettes per year.
- ◆ Marlboro is the most preferred cigarette brand among current youth smokers.

Access to Tobacco

- ◆ Most underage smokers obtain cigarettes by giving money to someone else to buy them or by borrowing them.
- ◆ About 5% of middle school underage smokers and almost one in five high school underage smokers (19%) usually get their cigarettes *by purchasing them*.
- ◆ About 70% of middle school and 61% of high school underage smokers were *not* asked for proof of age while purchasing cigarettes. A declining trend is evident since 1999.
- ◆ *Underage teenagers are possibly less likely to be asked for proof of age at gas stations and convenience stores than at other stores.*

Tobacco Use on School Property

- ◆ *Smoking on school property has significantly declined by 30% since 1999 among high school students.*
- ◆ *Smokeless tobacco use on school property significantly declined by almost 40% since 1995 among high school boys.*

Smoking Cessation

- ◆ More than half of all current smokers want to quit smoking.
- ◆ Only 12% of current smokers in middle schools and 9% in high schools have ever participated in a smoking cessation program, females even less frequently than males.

Secondhand Smoke (SHS)

- ◆ *An estimated 116,792 students in West Virginia were exposed to SHS in a room or a car on at least one occasion in the past seven days – comprising 73% of middle school students and 83% of high school students. Of these, 79,533 were non-smokers.*
- ◆ *For middle school students, this represents a statistically significant decline of 7% since 2000.*

Knowledge, Beliefs and Attitudes

- ◆ *One in 5 students in both middle and high schools think that young people who smoke have more friends.*
- ◆ *About 73% of high school students believe that teenagers who use tobacco products are victims of tobacco companies' marketing and advertising.*

Adolescent Receptivity to Tobacco Industry Advertising

- ◆ *More than 91% of students are exposed to tobacco industry advertising (actors/athletes using tobacco) while watching TV or movies or using the Internet.*
- ◆ *A little less than half of all students are receptive to tobacco company merchandise (that is, they have bought or would buy such merchandise).*

Anti-Tobacco Influences at School and Home

- ◆ *About 76% of middle school students and 56% of high school students said that they were taught about the dangers of tobacco use in any class in the past school year.*
- ◆ *Fewer students discussed the dangers of tobacco use with their parent/guardian in 2002 than in 2000 – this unfortunate declining trend was statistically significant among high school students.*

RAZE and Truth

- ◆ *About 29% of students have seen or heard advertising for the state anti-tobacco program RAZE vs. about 50% of students who have seen or heard about the nationwide campaign Truth. However, the RAZE campaign was only just getting under way when this survey was completed.*

At a Glance: Changes from the Years 2000 and 1999

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Major Indicator	Percent change in 2002 from 2000	Percent change in 2002 from 1999
Changes for the Better*		
Current smoking	↓ by 9.9%	Data not available
Current smokeless tobacco use (boys only)	↓ by 13.4%	
Frequent smoking	↓ by 27.0%	
Current underage smokers who usually <i>bought</i> their cigarettes in a store	↓ by 4.0%	
Current underage smokers <i>not</i> asked to show proof of age for cigarette purchase	↓ by 13.9%	
Smokeless tobacco use on school property (boys only)	↓ by 1.7%	
Exposed to secondhand smoke in a room or car at least once in the past week	↓ by 6.9%	
Taught about the dangers of tobacco use at school this year	↑ by 1.6%	
Changes for the Worse*		
Smoking on school property**	↑ by 2.1%	Data not available
Participated in a program to discourage people from using tobacco in the past year	↓ by 15.5%	
Saw or heard ANTI-smoking commercials in the past month	↓ by 1.3%	
Smokers who tried to quit smoking in the past year	↓ by 5.5%	
Have <i>not</i> discussed the dangers of tobacco use with parent/guardian in the past year	↑ by 5.0%	
Saw tobacco advertising on the Internet	↑ by 5.2%	
Think young people who smoke have more friends	↑ by 19.0%	

* Figures represent relative changes from the year 2000 or 1999. Details on statistical significance are presented in the report.

** Some indicators such as this one show a slight increase from 2000 for middle schools. However, for high schools, there has been a significant decline since 1999. This could suggest a need for targeting middle school students.

At a Glance: Changes from the Years 2000 and 1999

HIGH SCHOOLS

Major Indicator	Percent change in 2002 from 2000	Percent change in 2002 from 1999
Changes for the Better*		
Current smoking	↓ by 12.5%	↓ by 20.1%
Current smokeless tobacco use (boys only)	↓ by 18.9%	↓ by 24.8%
Frequent smoking	↓ by 15.4%	↓ by 22.4%
Current underage smokers who usually <i>bought</i> their cigarettes in a store	↓ by 6.9%	↓ by 9.5%
Current underage smokers <i>not</i> asked to show proof of age for cigarette purchase	↓ by 4.6%	↓ by 19.7%
Smoking on school property	↓ by 22.5%	↓ by 30.2%
Smokeless tobacco use on school property (boys only)	↓ by 28.4%	↓ by 22.3%
Exposed to secondhand smoke in a room or car at least once in the past week	↓ by 2.4%	Data not available
Taught about the dangers of tobacco use at school this year	↑ by 3.3%	
Participated in a program to discourage people from using tobacco in the past year	↑ by 2.3%	
Saw or heard ANTI-smoking commercials in the past month	↑ by 1.1%	
Changes for the Worse*		
Smokers who tried to quit smoking in the past year	↓ by 2.5%	Data not available
Have <i>not</i> discussed the dangers of tobacco use with parent/guardian in the past year	↑ by 27.6%	
Saw tobacco advertising on the internet	↑ by 7.1%	
Think young people who smoke have more friends	↑ by 0.5%	

* Figures represent relative changes from years 2000 or 1999. Details on statistical significance are presented in the report.