



## Highlights from the 2007 North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey

- The 2007 North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey shows that the state now has the lowest cigarette use rates for middle (4.5%) and high school (19.0%) ever recorded. Not only are they the lowest since the NC Youth Tobacco Survey (NC YTS) was first conducted in 1999, they are also lower than findings of a similar school health survey (YRBS) that has been collecting high school data since 1991. The all-time recorded high for current N.C. high school cigarette use was 35.8% in 1997 (YRBS).
- Since 2003, there are 34,000 fewer middle and high school smokers in total [27,000 + 7,000]
- Reported current cigarette smoking (past 30 days) among both middle and high school students dropped significantly since 2003. (High school from 27.3% in 2003 to 19.0% in 2005. Middle school from 9.3% in 2003 to 4.5 in 2005.)
- Middle school current cigarette smoking rates in 2007 (4.5%) are lower than the latest national average of 8.4% from 2004. From 1999 to 2007 the NC rates have decreased from 15.0% to 4.5%, whereas US rates have seen less of a decline from 9.2% to 8.4% between 2000 and 2004. In other words, there has been a greater rate of decline in cigarette smoking by teens in the past 4 years (2003 – 2007) than from 1999 – 2003.
- The rate of decline for current cigarette smoking by teens is higher from 2003-2007 than it was from 1999-2003. This is likely the result of the multi-component efforts of the HWTF Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Initiative, as well as other tobacco prevention efforts such as the increase in North Carolina tobacco excise taxes. Specific programs that may have had a positive impact include community and school-based HWTF granted programs (started in 2003) that are now working across the state combined with the statewide media campaign.
- For 2007, the NC high school student current cigarette use rate is on par with the most recent 2004 national rate (NC 19.0% vs US 21.7%). In 2003, the NC rates were higher than the national rates of 2002 (NC 27.3% vs US 22.5%).
- Over three-fourth (78.9%) of all middle school students and more than half (51.1%) of high school students have NEVER smoked, not even a puff. This has increased since 1999 from 60.7% in middle school and 31.8% in high school.
- Significant differences from 2003 to 2007 were noted in among black high school students' current cigarette smoking. In 2003, 20.1% of high school black students were current smokers whereas in 2007, only 11% were current smokers. While black middle school students (11.9%) were more likely than white middle school students (7.2%) to use any tobacco, by high school, whites (31.4%) were more likely to use tobacco than blacks (17.3%). Similarly, in high schools white students (23.2%) were significantly more likely to use cigarettes than black students (11.0%).
- Significant decreases from 2003 to 2007 were noted in high school black current cigarette smoking. In 2003, 20.1% of high school black students were current smokers whereas in 2007, only 11.0% were current smokers.
- Significant decrease in middle school smokeless tobacco use; from 7.2% in 2003 to 3.3% reported in 2007. This is the first time we have seen a significant change in smokeless tobacco use among youth in NC.
- The survey coordination itself is a wonderful example of local, state and national agencies collaborating effectively to produce a high response rate and accurate data. The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), working with the N.C. Dept of Public Instruction, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, University of North Carolina-School of Medicine-Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program, NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund, and NC Division of Public Health, has effectively tapped into existing and on-going resources to make this effort a true success. With the Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators providing the bulk of the on-ground survey administration, this is a shining example of extensive local and state collaboration. More than 7,400 middle and high schools students from 191 schools within 74 school districts participated. The response rate was one of the highest in the nation making the data more credible, reliable, and representative. YTS is the largest statewide youth survey measuring tobacco use, knowledge, and attitudes.

## Areas of Concern

- Reported current use of smokeless tobacco has remained constant since 1999 among high school students. High school current use was 8.6% in 2007 and 9.5% in 2003. The NC high school student rate of 8.2% is higher than the national average in 2004 of 5.5%.
- Susceptibility (future intention or openness to smoking) among middle and high school students has remained steady. That means about one in five middle or high school students indicated they are open to trying tobacco in the future, even though they have never tried it to date.
- Lifetime and current cigar use has remained stable since 1999. However, most programmatic efforts to date have focused on cigarette smoking and, to a less extent, smokeless tobacco. Cigars remain the second most used tobacco product after cigarettes.

## About the YTS:

Background- At the request of then Gov. Jim Hunt, in response to increasing rates of smoking by North Carolina high school students in 1997, NC Division of Public Health, Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch (TPCB) conducted the first NC Youth Tobacco Survey in the fall of 1999. Since then TPCB has conducted five NC Youth Tobacco Surveys—every fall in odd numbered years (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007). Nationally, more than 45 states and Washington DC have conducted at least one YTS or the equivalent for their state using CDC standard protocols and procedures. Since 1999, NC has seen significant declines in the expected direction related to prevalence particularly from 2003-2007. The statistically significant decreases mean that there was less than a 5% probability that these observed changes were the result of random chance.

Seventy-four school districts were selected as part of the sampling frame by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention working with Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch and the Department of Public Instruction. Seventy-four school districts agreed to participate (100%). One hundred seventy-one schools participated and completed surveys from more than 400 classrooms. This represents more than 7,400 middle and high school students who completed surveys. The overall response rate was 80.3% for both middle and high school. Most of the students not participating were absent during the survey. North Carolina was among the top five in the nation in terms of participation and response rate.