

**Teens and Tobacco in
Minnesota, the View from 2008**
*Results from the Minnesota Youth
Tobacco and Asthma Survey*

-- Executive Summary --

Minnesota Department of Health

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

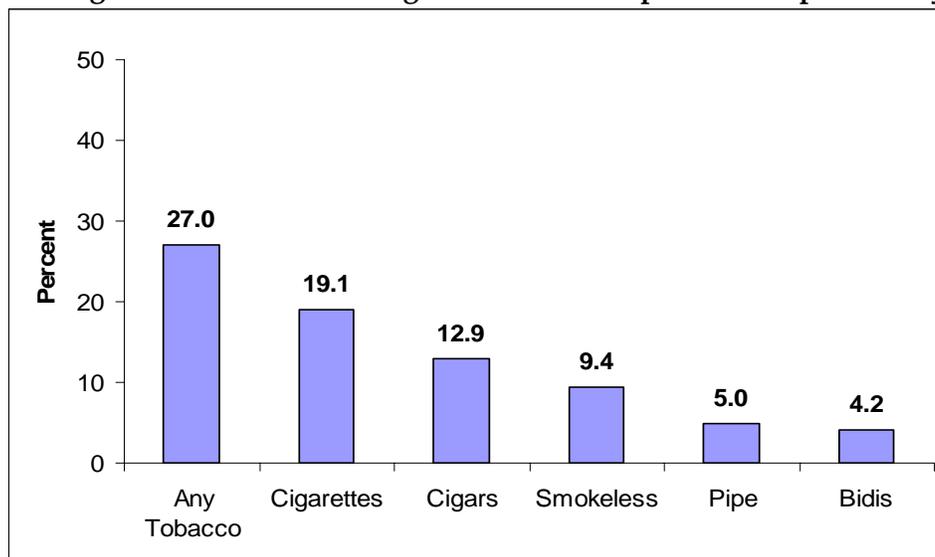
The 2008 Minnesota Youth Tobacco and Asthma Survey is the latest in a series of youth tobacco surveys conducted by the Minnesota Department of Health. Previous surveys took place in 2000, 2002 and 2005. The purpose of the survey is to provide tobacco prevention programs and public officials with information for strategic planning and decision-making. Topics covered include the extent of tobacco use, characteristics of smokers, secondhand smoke exposure, and attitudes and beliefs about tobacco use. Public schools and classrooms across the state were selected at random for the 2008 survey, and over 4,500 students in grades 6 through 12 participated.

Findings

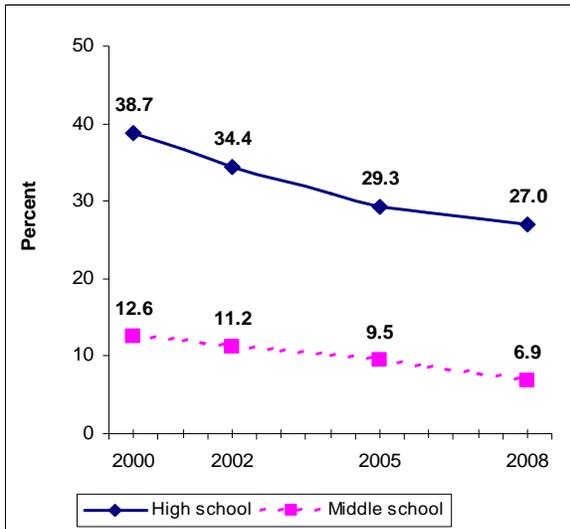
Current Tobacco Use

- In middle school (grades 6-8), 6.9 percent of students are current tobacco users, meaning that they used any form of tobacco in the past 30 days; 3.4 percent are current cigarette smokers.
- In high school (grades 9-12), 27.0 percent of students used tobacco in the past 30 days. One in five high school students (19.1%) smoked cigarettes, 12.9 percent smoked cigars or little cigars, and 9.4 percent used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.
- In 2008, an estimated 85,000 public school students (12,600 in middle school, 72,400 in high school) are current tobacco users.
- At the high school level, males are considerably more likely to use various tobacco products than are females.

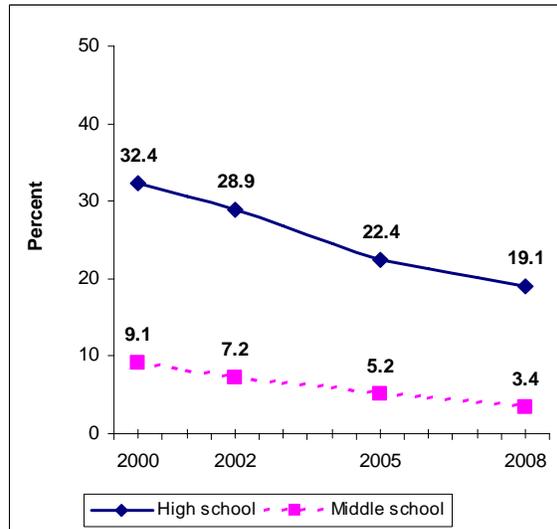
Percent of high school students using various tobacco products in past 30 days, 2008



Percent using any tobacco in last 30 days



Percent smoking cigarettes in past 30 days



Trends in Current Tobacco Use

- Overall tobacco use and smoking rates have declined in recent years, continuing the downward trend that has been in place since 2000. Survey results for 2008 suggest this downward trend may be slowing among high school students.
- Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of middle school students who used any tobacco products in the past 30 days declined from 9.5 percent to 6.9 percent. This decrease is statistically significant. At the high school level, the percentage of students using any tobacco products declined from 29.3 percent to 27.0 percent. This decrease is not statistically significant.
- Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of students who smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days declined from 5.2 to 3.4 percent in middle school and from 22.4 to 19.1 percent in high school. Again, the decrease for middle school students was statistically significant, but the decrease for high school students was not.
- In 2008, an estimated 85,000 public school students used tobacco in the past 30 days, down from 97,000 in 2005.
- While cigarette smoking has declined since 2000, there has been no change since 2000 in the percentage of students smoking cigars or little cigars or using smokeless tobacco.
- Trends among male and female students are markedly different. Among female high school students, cigarette smoking declined by 31 percent between 2005 and 2008, and overall tobacco use declined by 25 percent. However, there was no decrease at all among males.
- Since 2005, the percentage of high school students who are current cigarette smokers has decreased at the same rate in Minnesota as in the nation as a whole.

Multiple Use

- Nearly half of high school current tobacco users (48.0%) report using two or more forms of tobacco in the past 30 days. The most frequent combinations are cigarettes and cigars, and cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.
- Among high school tobacco users, the percentage using two or more forms of tobacco increased significantly from 42.4 percent in 2005 to 48.0 percent in 2008.

Any Tobacco Use in Lifetime

- Less than one-fourth of middle school students (22.5%) have ever tried any form of tobacco in their lifetime, a significant decrease from 27.8 percent in 2005.

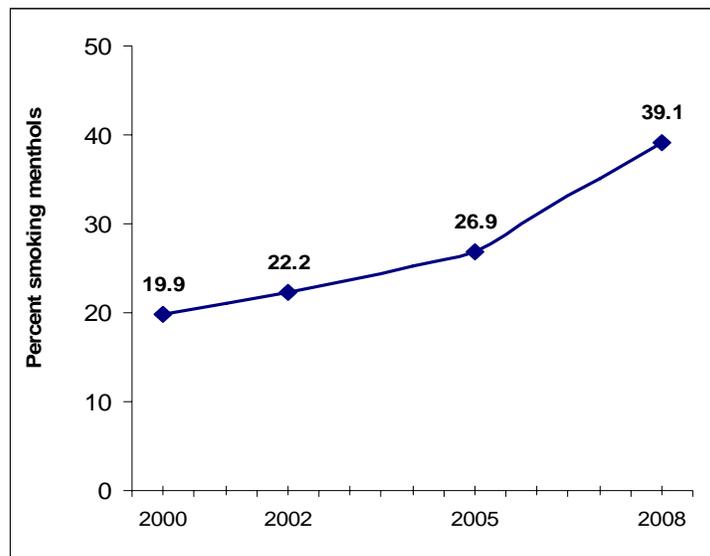
Access to Cigarettes

- Over three-fourths of high school smokers under 18 get their cigarettes from other people, including 41.5 percent who give someone else money to buy cigarettes for them. About 10 percent (9.5%) of underage high school smokers usually get their cigarettes by purchasing them in a store.
- About one in five students (20.3% middle school; 22.0% high school) report that they know of places that sell single or loose cigarettes (“loosies”).

Characteristics of Smokers

- Smoking menthol cigarettes has increased sharply. Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of high school smokers who usually smoke menthols rose from 26.9 percent to 39.1 percent. Since 2000, preference for menthols has doubled.

Percent of high school smokers who usually smoke menthol cigarettes



Quitting

- About half of high school smokers want to stop smoking (48.1%) and just over half have made a quit attempt in the past 12 months (51.8%).

Health Professionals

- In the past 12 months, about 40 percent of high school students report being asked by a doctor, dentist, nurse or other health professional if they smoke, and about 30 percent report being advised by a health professional not to smoke.

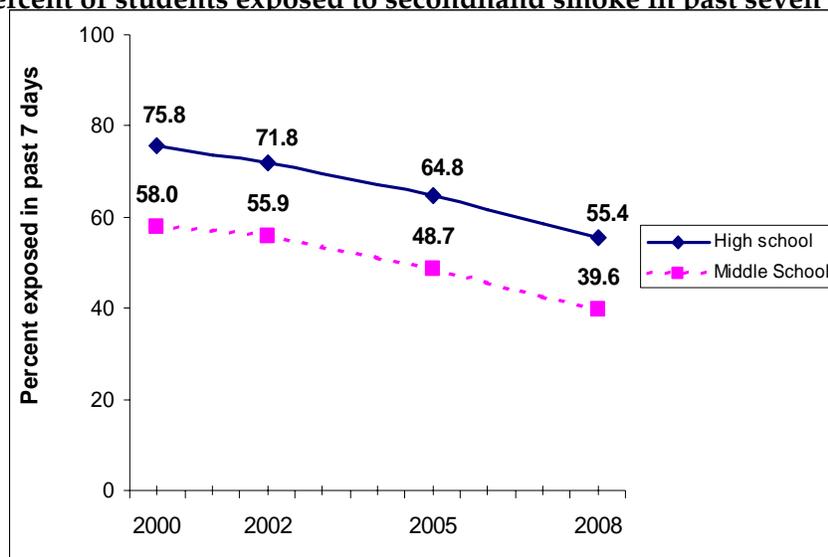
Home Environment, Friends, and Smoking

- Three-fourths of middle school smokers (74.5%) and over half of high school smokers (58.3%) live with someone else who smokes. Living with a smoker greatly increases the odds of becoming a smoker.
- Current smokers tend to form friendship groups with other smokers. In high school, 70.6 percent of current smokers but only 13.9 percent of non-smokers have two or more smokers among their four closest friends.

Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

- Over half of high school students (55.4%) and 39.6 percent of middle school students were exposed to secondhand smoke in the past seven days.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke declined between 2005 and 2008, from 64.8 to 55.4 percent for high school students and from 48.7 to 39.6 percent for middle school students. Both changes are statistically significant and continue the downward trend that has been in place since 2000.
- Repeated exposure to secondhand smoke in the past seven days also declined significantly for both middle school and high school students.

Percent of students exposed to secondhand smoke in past seven days



Perceptions, Rules and Opinions about Secondhand Smoke

- Over 90 percent of students agree that secondhand smoke is harmful.
- Among high school students, 77.0 percent report that smoking is never allowed inside their home and 65.1 percent report that smoking is never allowed in the vehicle they drive or ride in the most.
- Current smokers are much less likely than non-smokers to have smoke-free rules in their homes and vehicles.
- Support for public and private smoke-free rules is very high. Nearly 90 percent of middle school students believe that smoking should never be allowed inside their homes, in their vehicles, at workplaces, and in indoor public places. Support by high school students ranges from 71.0 percent for smoke-free rules in vehicles to 81.3 percent for smoke-free rules in indoor public places.

Attitudes and Beliefs about Tobacco Use

- Close to half of middle school smokers (42.7%) and 20.5 percent of high school smokers agree that so-called “light” or “low-tar” cigarettes are less risky than regular or full flavor cigarettes.

Tobacco Promotional Merchandise

- Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of students who received or bought tobacco brand promotional merchandise declined from 15.3 to 8.4 percent in middle school and from 21.8 to 17.5 percent in high school.

School Curriculum, Community Activities and Media Exposure

- The percentage of high school students who were taught about the dangers of tobacco use in school declined sharply from 60.3 percent in 2005 to 37.4 percent in 2008, and the percentage who practiced ways to resist pressures to use tobacco in school fell from 24.5 to 16.9 percent.
- The percentage of students who saw or heard media messages about the dangers of smoking in the past 30 days declined between 2005 and 2008 for both middle school students (from 75.1% to 65.5%) and high school students (from 81.7% to 76.6%).

Tobacco Use, Secondhand Smoke, and Asthma

- High school students with asthma are significantly more likely than students who don't have asthma to report smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days, using smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days, and living with someone else who smokes.

- Middle school students with asthma are significantly more likely than students who don't have asthma to report being exposed to secondhand smoke in the past seven days.

Discussion

The continuing drop in overall tobacco use and cigarette smoking and the solid, broad-based decline in exposure to secondhand smoke are welcome news for everyone concerned about reducing the harm of tobacco use. The strong support of young people for smoke-free rules in public places and in their own homes and vehicles is further evidence that smoking is becoming less attractive and acceptable.

Survey results, however, point to several issues that tobacco prevention programs should monitor and address. First, while tobacco use and smoking has declined substantially for female high school students since 2005, it has not changed at all for males. Second, while cigarette smoking has steadily declined since 2000, there has been no reduction in use of cigars and smokeless tobacco. Third, use of menthol cigarettes by students has increased sharply. Fourth, less than half of students report being asked if they smoke or being advised not to smoke by a doctor, dentist or nurse in the past 12 months. Fifth, many smokers still believe that "light" or "low-tar" cigarettes are less risky than regular cigarettes. Sixth, fewer high school students are being taught about the dangers of tobacco in school or about ways to resist pressures to use tobacco.