

# N.C. Youth Tobacco Survey - NEWS BRIEF



N.C. Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch – Surveillance and Evaluation Team

November 2005

## WHO'S STILL SMOKING IN N.C.?



Tobacco continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and in North Carolina. Each year, about 430,000 Americans die prematurely from smoking-related diseases. That's one in every five deaths in this country and enough people to fill the Carolina Panthers' Bank of America Stadium six times! More than 12,000 North Carolinians die every year and more than 80% of America's smokers start smoking before the age of 18!

Youth smoking continues to haunt North Carolina. In 2003, as measured by the N.C. Youth Tobacco Survey, almost 30% of middle schoolers, (students in grades 6-8), and almost 60% of high schoolers, (grades 9-12), have smoked at least one or two puffs of a cigarette. That means that more high schoolers have tried smoking than play high school sports! What's more, nearly 10% of all middle schoolers and 30% of all high schoolers currently smoke cigarettes.

Smoking is a problem that affects all of North Carolina's students; it does not discriminate based upon gender or ethnicity. Nearly equal numbers of girls (8.9% middle school and 25.7% high school) and boys (9.8% middle school and 28.7% high school) currently smoke cigarettes. Current smoking follows expected patterns by grade level, increasing steadily from 4.1% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders to 35.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Some differences exist between different ethnic groups and smoking prevalence. In middle school, whites (9.1%) are as likely to smoke as blacks (8.8%).

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## Lifetime Tobacco Use among High School Students in N.C., 2003



Western counties: 63.6%  
Central counties: 58.3%  
Eastern counties: 58.8%

## Lifetime Tobacco Use among Middle School Students in N.C., 2003



Western counties: 30.4%  
Central counties: 28.2%  
Eastern counties: 33.4%

## THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT:

The American Cancer Society (ACS) hosts the 29<sup>th</sup> annual Great American Smokeout on Thursday, November 17, 2005 to help smokers quit tobacco use for at least 24 hours, with the hope that smokers will then be able to quit completely. Smokers should use the Great American Smokeout as a call to action to see their physicians and use the effective treatments available to help them convert their quit attempt into successful long-term cessation. For the Great American Smokeout, ACS staff and volunteers provide smoking cessation and smoking prevention activities for people of all ages at the local ACS offices. Additional information is available from ACS:

1-800-227-2345 or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

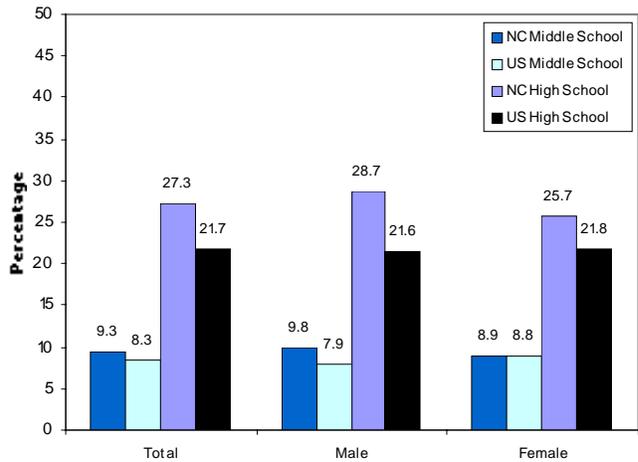
However, Hispanics are slightly more likely to smoke (13.5%), although results are based upon smaller sample sizes than whites and blacks. In high school, whites (30.8%) are significantly more likely to currently smoke cigarettes than either blacks (20.1%) or Hispanics (18%).

In comparison to the rest of the U.S., North Carolina is still running a little behind in current smoking. In 2004, only 8.3% of middle schoolers in the U.S. currently smoked cigarettes, compared to 9.3% in North Carolina. And in high school, 21.7% of students in the U.S. currently smoked cigarettes, whereas 27.3% of all North Carolina high schoolers currently smoked cigarettes. To reverse that trend, North Carolina must continue to implement evidence-based tobacco prevention and cessation programs within schools, while working to change the social norms surrounding tobacco in our state.

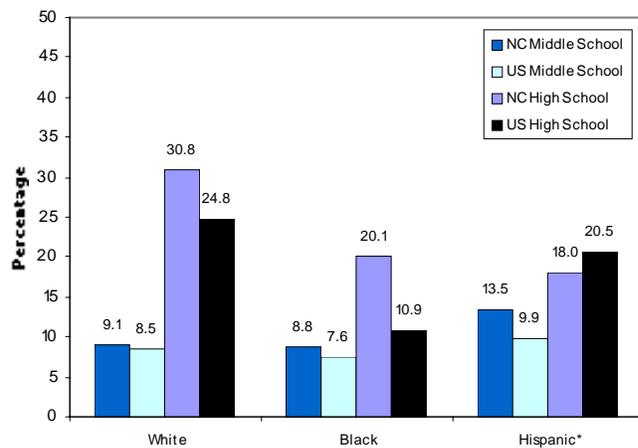
We should not be discouraged about youth smoking in North Carolina. Over the past six years, the N.C. Youth Tobacco Survey has been conducted three times, and in each round smoking levels have decreased. Among middle schoolers, current smoking has decreased from 15% in 1999 to 11.3% in 2001, and to 9.3% in 2003. That's a 38% decrease in current cigarette smoking among middle schoolers! In high school, current cigarette smoking has decreased from 31.6% in 1999 to 27.8% in 2001 and to 27.3% in 2003, a 14% decrease.

Even more importantly, of the students who still currently smoke in North Carolina, nearly 50% of middle schoolers and over 50% of high schoolers want to quit smoking cigarettes. Research shows that smoking cessation has major and immediate benefits for smokers of all ages. Almost immediately, circulation begins to improve and pulse rate and blood pressure, which may be abnormally high while smoking, begin to return to normal. Within a few days of quitting, a person's sense of taste and smell return, and breathing becomes increasingly easier. After one year of quitting cigarettes, the excess risk of heart disease caused by smoking is reduced by about one-half. ▶

**Percentage of N.C. and U.S. middle and high school students who currently smoke cigarettes, by gender: N.C. YTS 2003**



**Percentage of N.C. and U.S. middle and high school students who currently smoke cigarettes, by race/ethnicity N.C. YTS 2003**



After ten years, the risk of lung disease of former smokers is less than one-half that of a continuing smoker.

In five to 15 years, the risk of stroke for former smokers returns to the level of those who have never smoked. People who quit smoking will live longer than those who continue to smoke.

Several methods are available that can help smokers quit. Less intensive interventions, such as physicians advising their patients to quit smoking, can produce cessation rates of 5% to 10% per year. More intensive interventions that combine both behavioral counseling and pharmacological treatment can produce 20% to 25% quit rates in one year.

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In North Carolina, 63.1% of current high school smokers and 55.6% of current middle school smokers have tried to quit in the last year. However, 26% of middle schoolers and 40.2% of high schoolers stayed off cigarettes for less than 30 days when they last tried to quit. Perhaps more revealingly, only 12% of current middle school smokers and 6% of current high school smokers have participated in a program to help them quit using tobacco.

So, over half of youth smokers try to quit, but less than 60% of those quit attempts are successful. And, just a handful of teen smokers participate in a tobacco cessation program to help them quit. This indicates one potential area to vastly improve cessation efforts—participation in supportive quit programs can improve cessation results and we must provide quit programs, make them easily accessible, and encourage youth to use them.



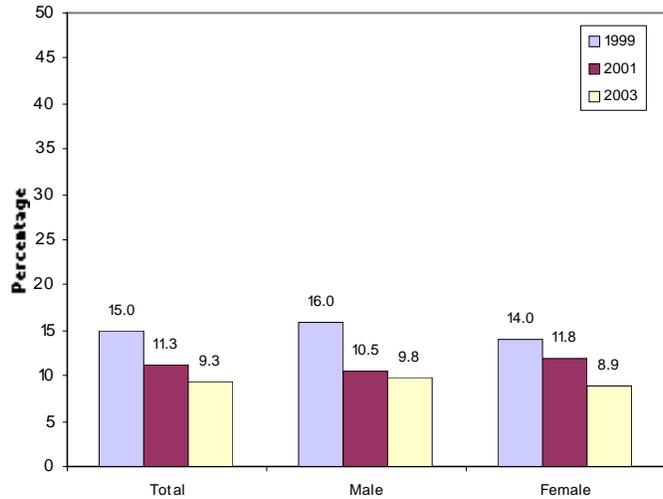
In North Carolina, 55.6% of current middle school smokers and 63.1% of current high school smokers have tried to quit within the last year.

In November 2005, the N.C. Division of Public Health and the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund will launch a tobacco use telephone quitline. This premier service is available toll-free to all North Carolinians, both youth and adults, and is staffed by trained tobacco cessation specialists to help tobacco users quit.

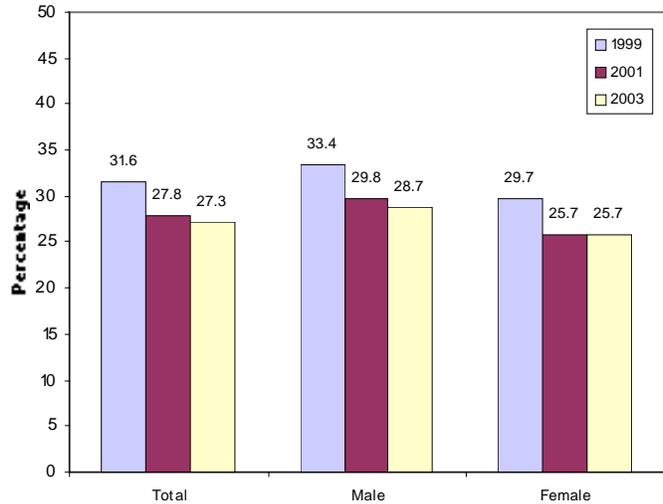
Specifically, cessation specialists are prepared to help young people quit, addressing issues and barriers to quitting that are unique to young tobacco users. The quitline will be available from 8 am to midnight, 7 days per week, at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. It will feature a proactive service, so that once the tobacco user makes the first call, the cessation specialist can arrange to call the tobacco user back to check on progress and answer questions.

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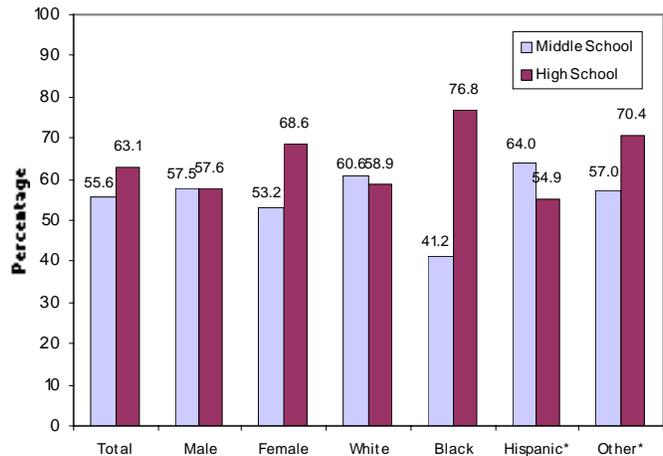
Percentage of N.C. middle school students who report current smoking, by year: N.C. YTS, 2003



Percentage of N.C. high school students who report current cigarette smoking, by year: N.C. YTS, 2003



Percentage of students who report quit smoking for one day or longer in the past year, by gender and race/ethnicity: N.C. YTS, 2003



Also available will be a fax referral system whereby health care providers or others working with tobacco users will determine if the tobacco user wants to make a quit attempt within 30 days and then get consent for the quitline to make the initial call. This way the tobacco user need not make the first call—the quitline will call them to initiate the cessation process.

This evidence-based service will be an effective resource to help North Carolinians of all ages quit the use of tobacco. For more information, contact the Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch at 919-707-5400.

For more information on tobacco use prevention and control, please visit the CDC Office on Smoking and Health’s Tobacco Information and Prevention Source page at [www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco).

References:  
 2004 National Youth Tobacco Survey, Preliminary Results: [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5412a1.htm#tab1](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5412a1.htm#tab1)  
 National Cancer Institute: Cancer Facts: [cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/10\\_19.htm](http://cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/10_19.htm)



For more information, please contact:  
**Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch**  
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 1932 Mail Service Center  
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 (919) 715-3497  
[www.communityhealth.dhhs.state.nc.us/tobacco.htm](http://www.communityhealth.dhhs.state.nc.us/tobacco.htm)

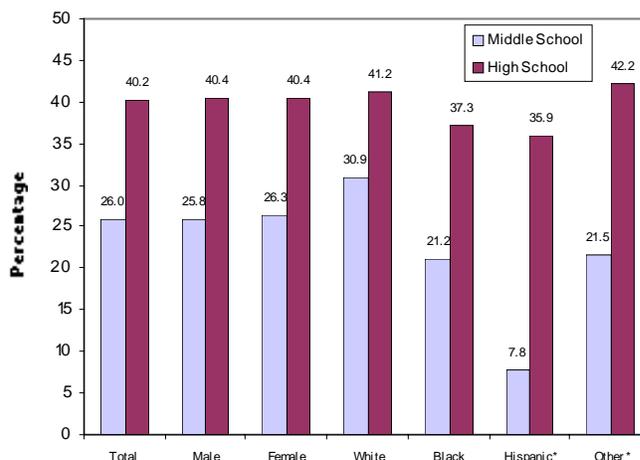


More information on NC Prevention Partners or QuitNow NC is available at: [www.quitnownc.org](http://www.quitnownc.org)



More information on North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey (NC YTS) is available at: [www.communityhealth.dhhs.state.nc.us/tobacco.htm](http://www.communityhealth.dhhs.state.nc.us/tobacco.htm)

**Percentage of N.C. middle and high school students who quit for less than 30 days on their last quit attempt, by gender and race/ethnicity: N.C. YTS, 2003**



**Percentage of N.C. middle and high school students who have ever participated in a cessation program, by gender and race/ethnicity: N.C. YTS, 2003**

