

# NCYTS

## 2003 North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey

### Executive Summary

#### Introduction:

Health consequences of tobacco use are pervasive, expensive and deadly. Tobacco use continues to be the leading preventable cause of death and illness in North Carolina and in the United States. Deaths from tobacco use outnumber deaths from obesity, violence, and alcohol use.

Tobacco use causes heart disease, stroke, and several kinds of cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that between one-half to one-third of cigarette smokers will die or become seriously ill from a tobacco-related illness. Most smokers want to quit but cannot.

Tobacco use also has a detrimental impact on the economy. The CDC estimates health care expenditures directly caused by cigarette smoking cost North Carolinians \$1.9 billion--\$255 per person--every year. Lost productivity from tobacco-related illnesses costs an additional \$2.8 billion annually.

Teenage tobacco use is an especially serious problem. 80% of adult U.S. smokers started before they were 18. Teenagers who start smoking may later become lifetime smokers, lung cancer and heart attack patients.

In 1999 the CDC developed the Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS) to collect information about how young people use and think about tobacco products. Most states administer the YTS on a regular basis, and North Carolina conducted the YTS in 1999, 2001, and 2003. YTS findings can help to guide youth tobacco-prevention programs across the state.

#### 2003 Methods:



Eighty-seven of the 91 randomly selected North Carolina school districts agreed to participate in the 2003 YTS. All students in middle school (grades 6-8) and high school (grades 9-12) were eligible. 3,073 middle school students and 3,261 high school students took the YTS.

More than three-fourths of randomly selected students (77.1% of middle school students, and 77.4% of high school students) completed the 2003 NC YTS. Data from the 2003 NC YTS are weighted to represent middle and high school students throughout North Carolina.

#### 2003 Results:

##### Who is using tobacco?

- More than one-third of middle school students (37.6%) and almost two-thirds (65.5%) of high school students reported that they used some tobacco product. Cigarettes are the most commonly tried tobacco products.

- One out of ten middle school students (9.3%) and three out of ten high school students reported smoking at least one cigarette in the past month.

# Results

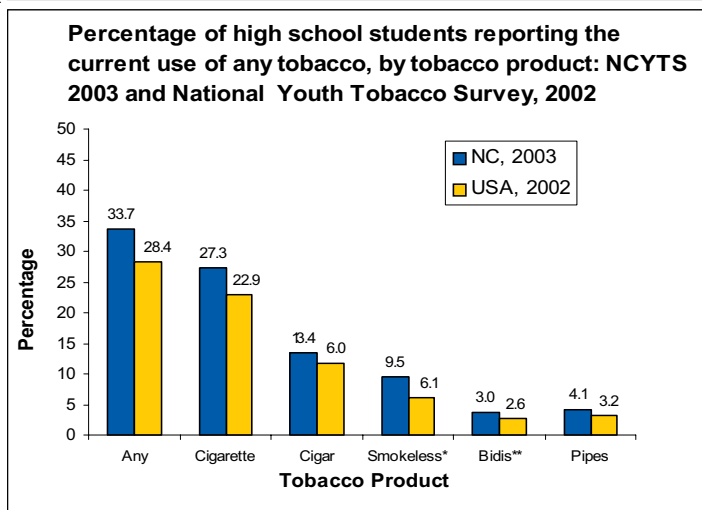
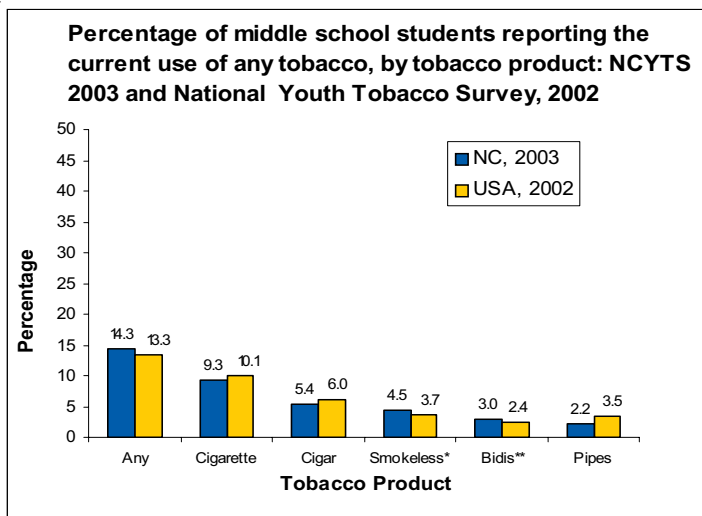
- The percentage of middle school students in North Carolina who smoke cigarettes roughly matches the national average. However, the percentage of high school students in North Carolina who smoke cigarettes is significantly above the national average.

- Female students were as likely to smoke cigarettes as male students. But male students were ten times more likely to use smokeless tobacco (dip, spit, or chew).

in 2003. A middle school class with 33 students that fit the state average would have five smokers in 1999 but only three smokers in 2003.

- Despite clear national decreases in high school smoking from 1999 to 2003, the number of North Carolina high school students who were cigarette smokers remained relatively unchanged, declining only from 31.6% in 1999 to 27.3% in 2003.

- Fewer students tried tobacco in 2003 than in 2001 or 1999. Last year more than two-thirds of middle school students (70.5%) and one-third of high school students (40.4%) said they have never tried any tobacco product.

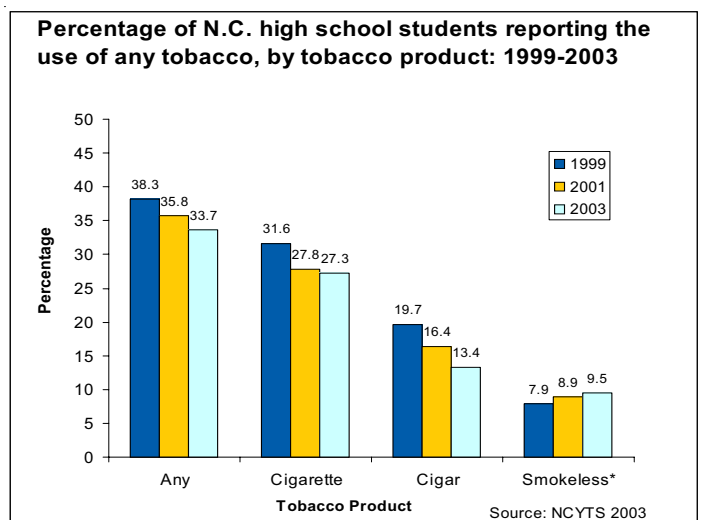
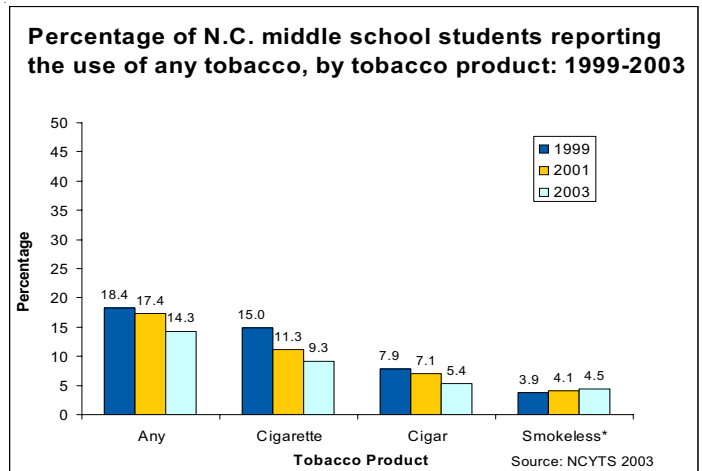


\*Includes dip, spit and chew

\*\*Small, handrolled cigarettes often imported from India or Southeast Asia

## Trends in tobacco use

- Cigarette smoking among middle school students declined from 15% in 1999 to 9.3%



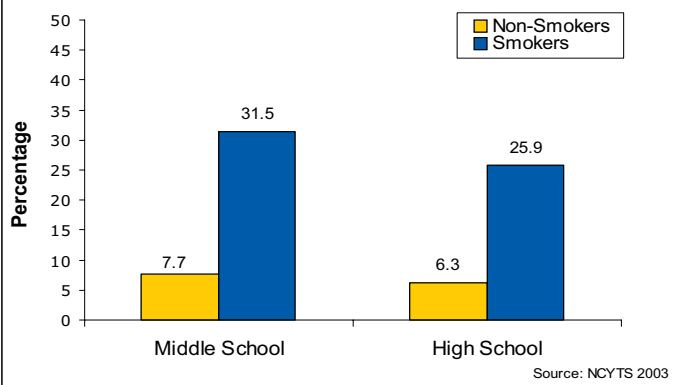
\*Includes dip, spit and chew

# Results

## Beliefs of smokers and nonsmokers

•Students who smoked cigarettes were less likely than students who had never smoked cigarettes to think that smoking on a daily basis “could be dangerous to young people.” They were also much more likely to agree that cigarette smoking is safe “as long as you quit in a year or two.”

Percentage of N.C. students who agreed that “it is safe to smoke for a year or two, as long as you quit after that,” by school level and smoking status



•Nine out of 10 current high school cigarette smokers said they have a close friend who smokes. Only one-third of high school students who never smoked said they have a close friend who smokes.

## Susceptibility

•One out of five middle school students (19.6%) and almost one out of four high school students (23.3%) who did not smoke were vulnerable to start smoking, within the next school year.

**More than one out of five nonsmoking students are thinking about starting to smoke in the near future.**

## School Spotlight

*About one out of 40 middle school students and one out of eight high school students reported smoking on school property in the past month.*

*Less than half of middle school students and only about one-quarter of high school students said they were taught about the dangers of tobacco in the past school year.*

*Four out of five middle school students and two out of three high school students agreed with the statement “it is important that my school is 100% tobacco-free.”*

## Access to tobacco products

•Most current smokers in middle school (57.5%) and high school (67.1%) received their cigarettes from “social sources,” (borrowing or accepting cigarettes from adults or other smokers).

•About two-thirds of current smokers in middle school (68.7%) and high school (62.2%) said they purchased cigarettes from stores despite being under the legal age to do so.

## Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

•More than half of middle school students (58%) and more than three-quarters of high school students (75.8%) reported being in the same room or car with someone smoking a cigarette in the past week.

# More than just numbers...

## Conclusions:

- More than one-fourth of North Carolina high school students (27.3%) reported smoking at least one cigarette within the past month. This is significantly higher than the national rate of high school smoking (22.9%).
- The percentage of North Carolina middle school students who reported smoking at least one cigarette in the past month (9.3%) is similar to the national average (10.1%). Fewer middle school students smoked cigarettes in 2003 than in 1999 or 2001.
- Fewer middle school and high school students tried cigarettes in 2003 than students in 1999 or 2001.
- Many North Carolina students who don't smoke cigarettes are at high risk to start within the next year.
- Most students encountered secondhand tobacco smoke on a regular basis.
- Students of both genders and all races use tobacco. Underage tobacco use, especially among high school students, remains a serious problem in North Carolina.



## Acknowledgments:

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