

# Running the Numbers

*A Periodic Feature to Inform North Carolina Healthcare Professionals  
About Current Topics in Health Statistics*

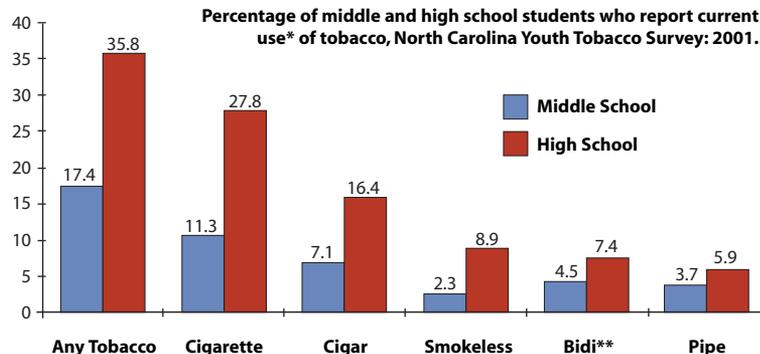
From the State Center for Health Statistics, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS

## Youth Tobacco Use in North Carolina

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the nation and the state.<sup>1</sup> Many negative health outcomes are associated with tobacco use, most notably lung cancer and cardiovascular diseases.<sup>2</sup> More than 80% of tobacco use starts before the age of 19; therefore prevention efforts among youth are an important opportunity to curb use. Healthcare professionals play a critical role in youth tobacco prevention. Even brief clinical efforts to “ask and advise” lead to a reduction in use or ever starting.

The North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey (NC YTS) is the largest, most comprehensive source of data on youth tobacco use, behaviors, and attitudes in the state. The NC YTS is conducted in coordination with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2001, more than 10,000 middle and high school students from across the state participated in the survey. The overall survey response rate was 71%. The survey data were weighted to be representative of the entire population of middle and high school students in North Carolina.

Results from the 2001 NC YTS indicate that an estimated 36% of high school and 17% of middle school students had used some type of tobacco on one or more of the past 30 days. There is a marked difference between use by middle (6th - 8th grade) and high school (9th - 12th grade) students for each type of tobacco. Cigarette smoking accounted for the majority of tobacco used in both middle and high school students followed by cigars, smokeless tobacco, bidis, and pipe tobacco. Some students reported using more than one of these types of tobacco during the past 30 days. Most of these percentages are slightly higher than national rates of tobacco use among middle and high school students.



Note: \* Current use of cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, pipes, or bidis on 1 or more of the 30 days preceding the survey.

\*\* Bidis are small round hand-wrapped cigarettes typically from India.

Based on data from the NC YTS, the state allocated \$18.6 million to address teen tobacco use through the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, created as part of the multi-state Master Settlement Agreement with the tobacco companies. It is hoped that school and community interventions will decrease youth consumption and reduce North Carolina's tobacco-related morbidity and mortality.

1. McGinnis JM, Foege WH. Mortality and morbidity attributable to the use of addictive substances in the United States. Proceedings from the American Association of American Physicians 1999; 111: 109-118.

2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Surgeon General report: the health consequences of smoking. Atlanta, GA:USDHHS, CDC, Office on Smoking and Health, 1981.

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