Tennessee Tobacco Surveillance Program
East Tennessee State University

2000 Tennessee Youth Tobacco Survey Report Two: Environmental Tobacco Smoke

Volume II, Report 2 April 2001

During the Spring of 2000, the TN Department of Health in cooperation with the TN Department of Education, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and numerous partners from local health organizations and school districts, conducted the first comprehensive regional survey of tobacco use among Tennessee youth. Respondents were 10,779 middle school students (grades 6-8) from 119 middle schools and 9,959 high school students (grades 9-12) from 105 high schools.

The Tennessee Youth Tobacco Survey (TnYTS) tracks tobacco use, attitudes, and related behaviors among Tennessee's youth. Baseline data were collected in the spring of 1999, prior to the implementation of the first program activities.

This report addresses adolescent smoking on school property, adolescent exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), potential exposure to ETS, and parental knowledge and acceptance of adolescent tobacco use.

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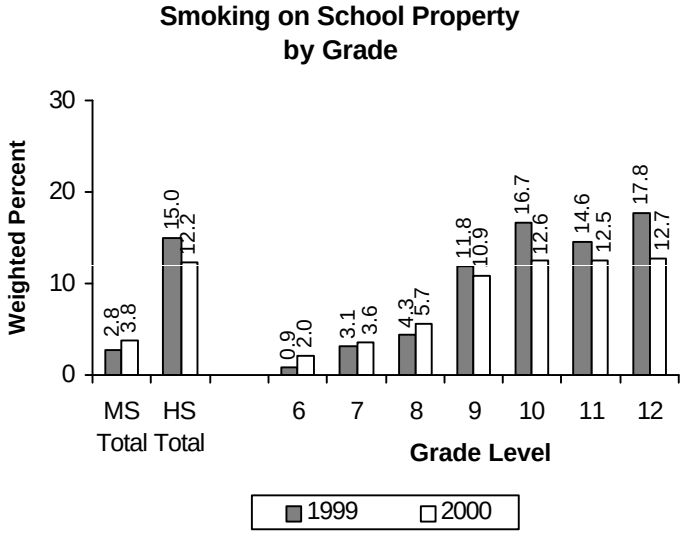
Smoking on School Property

- 15% of Tennessee high school students smoked cigarettes on school property in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- 26% of Tennessee high school students reported that they or someone they know received a citation for using or possessing tobacco products.
- 3% of Tennessee middle school students smoked cigarettes on school property in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- 24% of Tennessee middle school students reported that they or someone they know received a citation for using or possessing tobacco products.

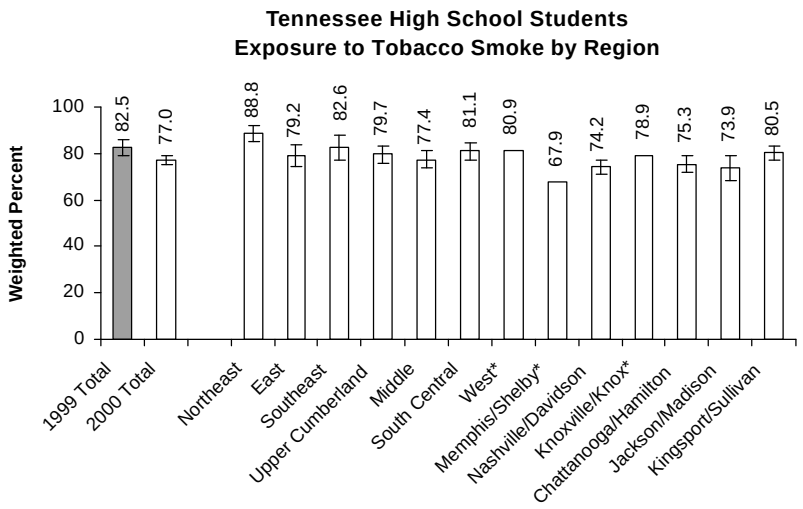
Applying strong tobacco-free policies is only the first step. Schools should rigorously enforce these policies to protect children from the hazards of tobacco smoke at school, to model a tobacco-free environment, and to reduce opportunities for young people to experiment with tobacco on school grounds.
(Surgeon General's Report on Reducing Tobacco Use, 2000)



Student cigarette smoking on school property increases with rising grade levels. The greatest increase occurs between 8th (4.3%) and 9th (11.8%) grades.

The 1999 survey was conducted prior to state legislation allowing law enforcement officials or school personnel to issue a juvenile court citation to students who unlawfully possessing tobacco products. The 2000 survey was the first survey to address the issue since implementation of tobacco citation laws. While there was a slight increase of middle school and a slight reduction in high school students smoking on school property, there were no significant differences between 1999 and 2000.

Adolescent Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke

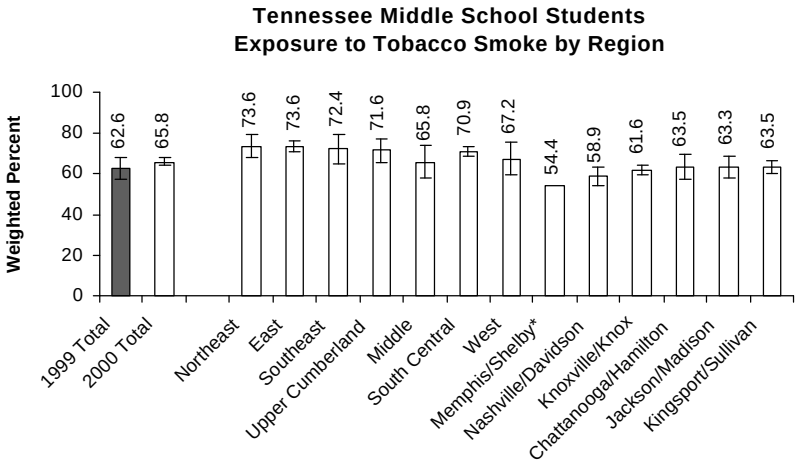


- 77% of all Tennessee high school students were in the same room with someone who was smoking cigarettes in the seven days prior to the 2000 survey. There were no significant changes from the 1999 survey, which documented an 83% percent occurrence.

- There was a measurable variation of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in the high school population across the regions. Northeast and Southeast reported the highest rates while Nashville/ Davidson and Jackson/Madison reported the lowest rates of weekly exposure to tobacco smoke.

- 66% of all Tennessee middle school students were in the same room with someone who was smoking cigarettes in the seven days prior to the 2000 survey. There was no change from the 1999 survey, which also documented a 63% percent occurrence.

- There was a measurable variation of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in the middle school population across the regions. Northeast and East reported the highest rates while Nashville/ Davidson reported the lowest rates of weekly exposure to tobacco smoke.



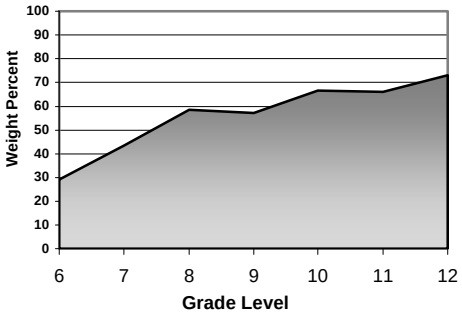
ETS exposure in children irritates the upper respiratory tract and increases both the frequency of episodes and severity of symptoms in asthmatic children. It is also a risk factor for new cases of asthma in children who have not previously displayed symptoms.

- The 2000 TnYTS documented an exposure rate of ***non smoking*** high school students who were in the same room with someone who was smoking cigarettes in the seven days prior to the survey as 74%. This compared unfavorably to the national rate of 54% in 1999 (percent difference of 20%).

- The 2000 TnYTS documented an exposure rate of ***non smoking*** middle school students who were in the same room with someone who was smoking cigarettes in the seven days prior to the survey as 55%. This compared unfavorably to the national rate of 44% in 1999 (percent difference of 11%).

Potential Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke

Percentage of Students With One or More Friends Who Smoke by Grade



Overall, the percentage of students who have one or more friends who smoke cigarettes increases significantly between 6th grade (29%) and 12th grade (73%).

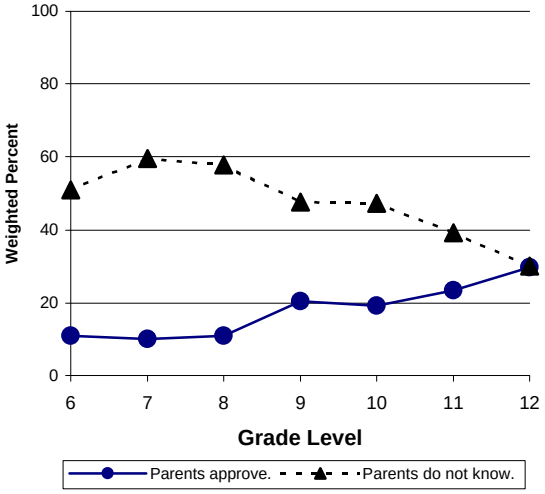
- 65% of Tennessee high school students have one or more friends who smoke cigarettes.
- 49% of Tennessee high school students live with someone who smokes cigarettes.
- 44% of Tennessee middle school students have one or more friends who smoke cigarettes.
- 51% of Tennessee middle school students live with someone who smokes cigarettes.

Adolescents with friends who use tobacco are more likely than their peers to use tobacco. Among environmental factors, peer influence seems to be particularly potent in the early stages of tobacco use; the first tries of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco occur most often with peers, and the peer group may subsequently provide expectations, reinforcement, and cues for experimentation. *(MMWR, Vol.43, No.RR-4)*

Parental Knowledge and Acceptance of Adolescent Tobacco Use

- Of those Tennessee high school students who are current smokers, 58% say their parents know they smoke. Yet only 23% report their parents approve of their smoking.
- Of those Tennessee middle school students who are current smokers, 43% say their parents know they smoke. Yet only 11% report their parents approve of their smoking.
- Parental awareness of their children's use of tobacco increases slightly with each grade level, but the percent of parents who approve of smoking doubles in the same time period. Parental use of tobacco products or acceptance of tobacco use as an appropriate behavior has also been shown to be a major factor in social role modeling.

Parental Knowledge & Acceptance of Adolescent Tobacco Use



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Acknowledgements

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