

Executive Summary

The GYTS is a WHO collaborative, school-based survey of 13 to 15 year olds conducted in selected countries to provide the necessary data for the documentation and ongoing surveillance of tobacco use among adolescents and to facilitate the development and implementation of measures for the prevention and control of tobacco use.

In 2000, the first of such surveys was conducted in Jamaica among 2,014 school-children in Grades 7-13 within classes consisting of 40 or more students throughout 50 schools, utilizing a two-staged cluster sample design. The first stage sampling frame was comprised of all schools within grades 7-13 containing the stipulated number of adolescents. The second sampling stage involved systematic equal probability sampling (with a random start) of classes from each school which participated in the survey. All 2nd period classes in the selected schools were incorporated into the sampling frame and all students in the selected classes were eligible to participate in the survey.

The questionnaire used in the Jamaican study was mainly comprised of the core questions. The overall response rate was 86.5% as 1,742 of the sampled students completed questionnaires which could be analyzed. It is important to note that 98.2% of the respondents in the sample were in grades 7-10. Analysis involved the application of a weighting factor to compensate for differing patterns of non-response. Prevalence Rates were derived with 95% Confidence Intervals utilizing Epi-Info.

Extensive data was obtained on Tobacco Use including the following:

- a. Prevalence
- b. Cigarette Smoking initiated prior to age ten (10)
- c. Susceptibility to initiating cigarette smoking
- d. Knowledge and Attitudes
- e. Access and Availability
- f. Environmental Tobacco Smoke
- g. Smoking Cessation
- h. Promotion of the Use of Tobacco Products via the Media and other channels
- i. The extent of Tobacco Use Prevention Education in the School Curriculum.

Key Findings on Tobacco Use

Among Jamaican school-children (13 to 15 years old), the initiation of cigarette smoking prior to age 10 is high - 35.3% - while Lifetime Prevalence (ever smoked cigarettes, even one or two puffs) is also high - 33.8%. However, the Current Prevalence of Cigarette Smoking (smoked cigarettes on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey) is moderately high - 15.2%; Current Use of Any Tobacco Product - moderately high at 19.0% and Current Use of Other Tobacco Products - 8.3%. The Susceptibility of Never Smokers to initiate smoking is moderately high - 15%.

Almost one third of Never Smokers and a little over a third of Current Smokers However, less than 20% of Never Smokers (17.9%) and Current Smokers (16.6%) think that girls who smoke have more friends. Almost the same%age of Current Smokers (13.5 % and 13.6% respectively) and a lower%age of Never Smokers (7.8% and 6.8% respectively) think that smoking makes boys look more attractive and smoking makes girls look more attractive respectively.

Current cigarette smoking at home is very high (50.8%). A little over a third of students (34.6%) bought cigarettes in a store while a significant%age of them (73.9%) were not refused because of their age.

In general, exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) is high. A larger%age of Current Smokers and Never Smokers were exposed to smoke from others in public places (77.9% and 54.2%, respectively) than their homes (56.7% and 22.9% respectively) while Current Smokers (56.7% and 77.9% respectively) are significantly more likely than Never Smokers (22.9% and 54.2% respectively) to be exposed to smoke from others in their homes and public places.

As expected, a higher proportion of Never Smokers (71.9%) than Current Smokers (63.5%) think that smoking should be banned from public places. Moreover, Never Smokers (78.4%) are significantly more likely than Current Smokers (67.3%) to think that smoke from others is harmful to them. However, this also revealed that a very high%age of both Never Smokers and Current Smokers are aware of the negative health effects of Exposure to ETS and thus feel that smoking should be banned from public places.

A very high%age of Current Smokers desired (73.3%) to stop smoking immediately and attempted (68.1%) to stop smoking that year (2000). Exposure to anti-smoking (74.4%) and pro-tobacco media messages among students is also very high. Current Smokers (71.4%) are significantly more likely than Never Smokers (58.4%) to have viewed pro-tobacco media messages. However, with respect to forms of tobacco promotion, apart from media messages, exposure is moderate to low. As is the norm, however, Current Smokers (23.1%) are significantly more likely than Never Smokers (10.6%) to have had an Object with a Cigarette Brand Logo on it. Current Smokers (14.6%) are also significantly more likely than Never Smokers (10.6%) to have been offered free cigarettes by a tobacco company.

With regard to the School Curriculum, a fairly high proportion of students (40.8%) have been taught the dangers of smoking while a much lower proportion (26.7%) have discussed reasons why people their age smoke.

These findings are concrete proof of the need to monitor tobacco use, particularly among adolescents, by instituting such an activity as an integral part of the surveillance system of the Ministry of Health; provide the appropriate legal framework for the prevention and control of tobacco use and develop relevant adolescent-specific school and community-wide interventions as well as adult-focused programmes.