

Smoking among New York City Public High School Students

Smoking is the number one preventable cause of death in New York City. Large decreases in smoking among adults followed recent intensive citywide tobacco control efforts that raised the cost of cigarettes, made workplaces smoke-free, and helped smokers quit.

The rate of current smoking among New York City public high school students — students who smoked at least one cigarette in the past month — has fallen dramatically. However, even these lower levels of smoking are of concern. Those who start

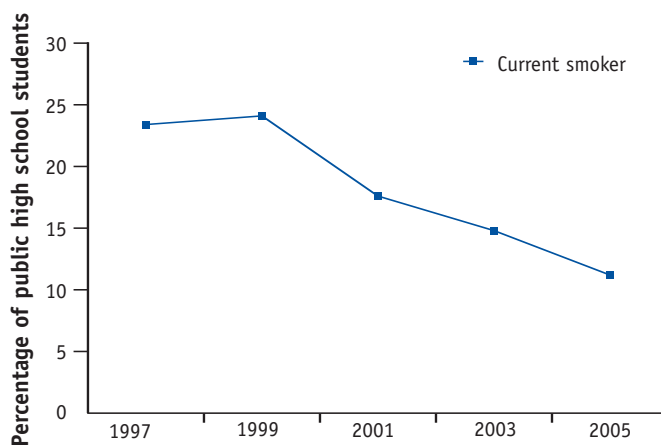
smoking as adolescents are less likely to quit smoking, and roughly one third of smokers will die prematurely from smoking-caused disease. In 2005, 30,000 of the 280,000 public high school students in New York City currently smoked, half the number who smoked in 1997.

This report presents new information about smoking among New York City public high school students and provides recommendations to help youth be tobacco free.

Smoking among New York City public high school students has decreased by 52% since 1997

- The proportion of NYC public high school students who smoke fell to 11% in 2005, from 23% in 1997. Despite similar declines in the U.S. through 2003 (the most recent year comparable data is available), the rate of smoking in the U.S. is higher than in NYC.
- In NYC, smoking rates dropped in both male and female students of all races/ethnicities, particularly Hispanic students.
- Among all NYC public high school students, 11% tried smoking before the age of 13, down from 18% in 1997.
- Although the use of smokeless tobacco remains rare in NYC, it has increased recently.

Cigarette smoking among public high school students, 1997–2005

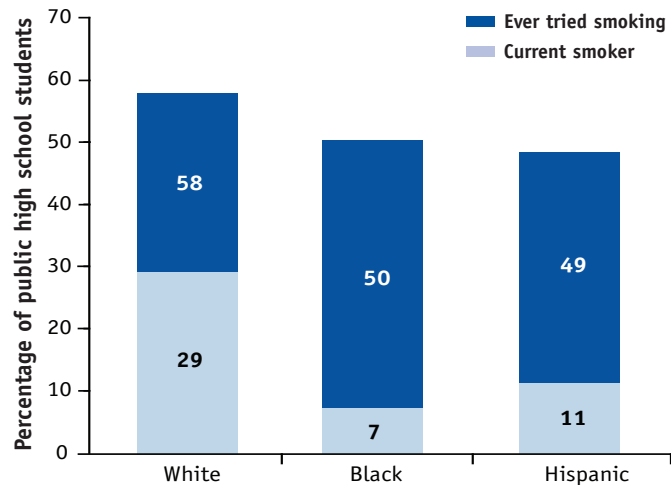


Note: This report is based on results of the 2005 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire. Adapted for New York City from protocols developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the survey is implemented by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Education. Conducted every other year since 1997, it collects information about health risk behaviors of New York City public high school students. In 2005, a representative sample of New York City students in 87 public high schools, grades 9 through 12, completed the survey. This sample provides prevalence data for the city as a whole, for each of the five boroughs, and for the three NYC DOHMH District Public Health Office target areas in the South Bronx, North and Central Brooklyn, and East and Central Harlem. For full details, see the My Community's Health section at nyc.gov/health.

About half of all students try smoking, but white students are much more likely to continue

- Overall, about half of all public high school students in NYC have tried smoking.
- Almost half of white students who have ever tried smoking are current smokers (29% of all white students).
- Black and Hispanic students who have ever tried smoking are much less likely to be current smokers than white students who have ever tried smoking.
- About 1 in 5 white students tried smoking before age 13; only 1 in 10 black and Hispanic students tried smoking before age 13.

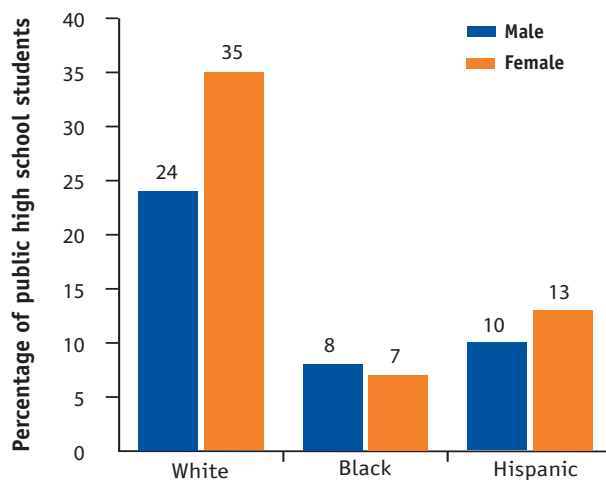
Ever tried smoking and current smoking by race/ethnicity, 2005



Smoking is most common among white females

- About 16,000 females and 14,000 males currently smoke.
- Overall, 11% of males and 12% of females are current smokers.
- 1 in 3 white students smokes, compared to 1 in 10 Hispanic students, and 1 in 15 black students.
- The largest gender difference is among white students, among whom females (35%) are more likely to be smokers than males (24%).

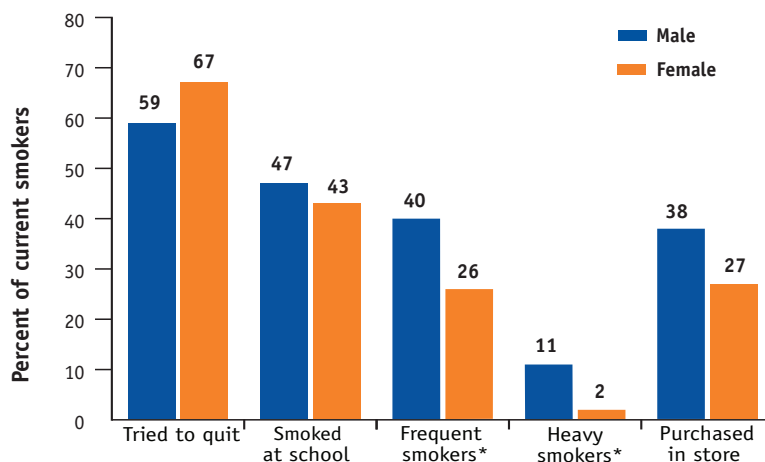
Current smoking by sex and race/ethnicity, 2005



Male smokers are more likely to be frequent smokers and much more likely to be heavy smokers

- Nearly two thirds of students who smoke have tried to quit.
- Despite having decreased 40% since 1997, smoking on school property is still reported by almost half of smokers.
- Among smokers, more males report smoking frequently and many more report smoking heavily.
- Selling cigarettes to minors is illegal, yet more than 30% of smokers under 18 report buying cigarettes in a store. Male smokers are more likely to purchase cigarettes at a store than female smokers.

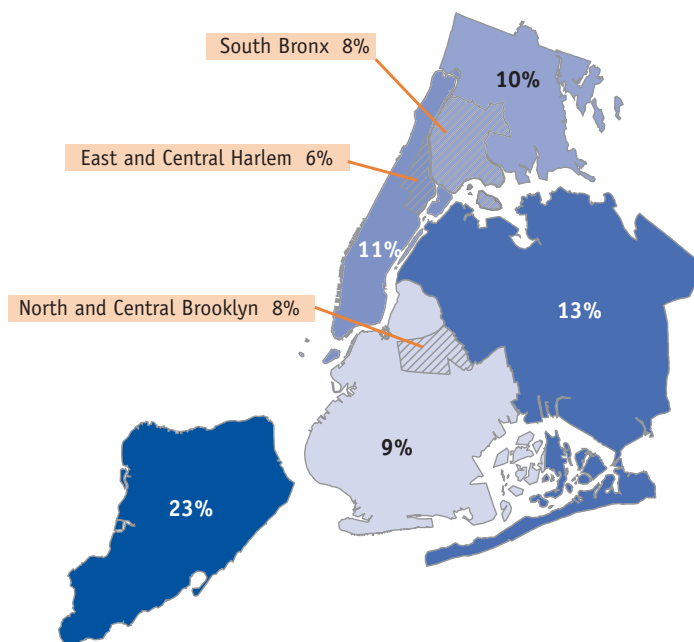
Smoking behaviors of current smokers by sex, 2005



* Frequent smokers report smoking at least 20 of the last 30 days; heavy smokers report smoking at least 10 cigarettes per day on the days they smoked.

Smoking rates are highest among Staten Island youth

Current smokers by location of school, 2005



- The level of current smoking is more than twice as high in Staten Island (23%) as it is in Brooklyn (9%), the Bronx (10%), and Manhattan (11%). Among adults, smoking rates are also highest in Staten Island.
- The estimated number of public high school students who smoke is about 9,500 in Queens, 7,200 in Brooklyn, 5,700 in Manhattan, 4,300 in the Bronx, and 3,400 in Staten Island.
- Smoking rates are lower in the South Bronx (8%), East and Central Harlem (6%), and North and Central Brooklyn (8%) than they are in New York City, as a whole.

Recommendations

Schools should provide strong anti-tobacco messages and strictly enforce no-smoking rules:

- Enforcing policies and providing anti-tobacco messages should occur both during the school day and during after-school activities, and must reach students, teachers and other staff.
- Educators should target anti-tobacco messages to groups with the highest smoking rates (youth in Staten Island and whites), as well as to areas with the largest number of youth smokers (Queens and Brooklyn).

Parents, schools, business owners, and others should seek opportunities to limit youth access to tobacco and reinforce prevention messages:

- Parents who smoke should quit; youth with parents who smoke are twice as likely to become smokers themselves.
- Parents, teachers, counselors, coaches, other school staff and community members should be educated about the impact that adult smoking has on youth smoking and create opportunities to talk with young people about smoking.
- Parents should make their homes smoke-free. See Health Bulletin #33: A Smoke-Free Home. (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/public/dohmhnews4-09.pdf>)
- Business owners who do not comply with state and city laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco to youths less than 18 years of age should be reported to 311.

For more information

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
tobaccofreekids.org/

Truth Campaign/Legacy Foundation
americanlegacy.org/americanlegacy/skins/atf/home.aspx

Centers for Disease Control Prevention
resource for parents
cdc.gov/tobacco/educational

Health care providers should increase opportunities for cessation treatment.

- Health care providers should ask adolescents about tobacco use at every medical visit and provide appropriate interventions.
- School-based services should include tobacco screening and cessation treatment.

A report from the New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey



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