

Reductions in U.S. teen smoking stalled: CDC

August 9 2012, By Steven Reinberg, HealthDay Reporter



Photo: National Institutes of Health

30 percent of high school males now use some form of tobacco, study shows.

(HealthDay) -- New data shows that while fewer American teenagers are smoking now than a decade ago, the rate of decline has slowed considerably.

"Despite an 11-year downward trend among middle and high school students, there has been little or no change in [tobacco use](#) between 2009 and 2011," said Dr. Tim McAfee, director of CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, which issued the new report.

From 1997 to 2003, the United States saw robust declines in teen smoking rates, the CDC says, but since 2002 those gains have slowed as states cut funding for tobacco-cessation programs.

In fact, [teen smoking](#) rates haven't changed significantly since 2009, while the number of high school students who smoke has remained at stubbornly high levels. Among high school-age males, "nearly 30 percent were using some form of tobacco in 2011," McAfee said. That includes [tobacco products](#) that are smoked, chewed or sniffed.

In 2011, almost 18 percent of high school girls used tobacco, the report noted. Among middle school students, more than 8 percent of boys and 6 percent of girls used some form of tobacco product.

"Another disturbing finding was that cigar use among black high school students increased significantly just in that two-year period," McAfee noted. The increase appears to be driven by the availability of cigarette-like cigars that [tobacco companies](#) have marketed in an effort to circumvent federal and state tax laws and U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) regulations, McAfee said.

There were some heartening trends. From 2000 to 2011, overall tobacco use among [middle school students](#) dropped from about 15 percent of students to just over 7 percent, and for high school students from 34.4 percent to just over 23 percent, the researchers noted.

Hispanic [high school students](#) also saw significant, recent declines in cigarette smoking, from about 19 percent in 2009 to just under 16 percent in 2011, the researchers pointed out.

Still, the bottom line, according to McAfee, is that "18- to 25-year-olds have the highest rates of tobacco use of any age group in the U.S. Basically, the adult rate has been declining and the tobacco industry marketing has been focusing aggressively on the 18- to 25-year-old age bracket."

In addition, states have cut funding for tobacco-control programs by up

to 40 percent, at a time when revenue from tobacco has risen more than 30 percent, McAfee said.

"That's why we are so concerned," he said. "If we want to get the decline moving again we are going to have to become refocused, as a society, on the goal of having our youth be tobacco-free," he said.

The report is published in the Aug. 10 issue of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

More information: For more information on teen smoking, visit [Smokefree Teen](#).

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Citation: Reductions in U.S. teen smoking stalled: CDC (2012, August 9) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-08-reductions-teen-stalled-cdc.html>

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