

By the Numbers: Addressing Tobacco Use on College Campuses

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly nine in 10 cigarette smokers say they tried smoking for the first time by age 18, and 99 percent say they had their first cigarette by age 26. With so much tobacco use by those in adolescence and early adulthood, prevention efforts among youth and college students are critical to reducing lifelong tobacco use and its damaging effects on health.¹

To learn more about the public's views of tobacco use and tobacco-free campus policies, we worked with our partners at the [Truth Initiative](#) and the [American Cancer Society](#) to conduct a national poll of 2,880 adults, which included a representative sample of current college students and parents of current college students.

Respondents See Tobacco Use among Youth and College Students as a Problem

More than eight in 10 respondents agree that youth smoking and tobacco use is a public health problem in the United States. What's more, three-quarters of respondents say smoking and tobacco use is also a problem among college students.

Many Support Tobacco-Free Campus Policies to Help Address Tobacco Use

Given that so many view tobacco use as a problem, it's no surprise that about three-quarters of respondents support policies that prohibit smoking and/or other tobacco use on college campuses:

- Nearly half of those (45 percent) surveyed said they believe tobacco-free campus policies help reduce tobacco use among college students, and the rate is even higher among college students and parents of college students, at 49 percent.
- Tobacco-free campus policies that prohibit smoking indoors have the greatest support, with 69 percent supporting smoking bans in dorms and other campus-owned or leased buildings, and 71 percent supporting smoking bans in indoor public places.
- Eight in 10 college students (83 percent) say it's important that inside and around their living quarters are smoke- and/or vape-free.

The Role of Tobacco-free Campuses in College Choice

Respondents indicated that campus tobacco policies are important and would play a role in their college choice:

- Fifty-three percent of parents and 57 percent of college students consider whether a campus is tobacco-free to be an important factor in college choice.
- More than half of each group (53 percent) feels there are too few tobacco-free campuses nationwide.
- Nearly three in 10 parents of college students say they would not be comfortable with their child attending a college or university that does not have a tobacco-free campus.

College Students Are Much More Likely to See Tobacco in Advertising and Media

To understand why tobacco use among youth and college students continues to occur, it's helpful to consider the pro-tobacco media they see day-to-day. One poll question asked respondents how frequently they encounter advertising on posters, billboards, magazines or in-store ads and in media like movies, television shows or video games:

- Nearly three in four college students (73 percent) encounter advertising for tobacco one or more times per week, compared to just 51 percent of respondents overall.
- About eight in 10 college students (79 percent) encounter depictions of tobacco use in media once per week or more, compared to 58 percent of respondents as a whole.

Expanding Tobacco-Free Campuses for a Tobacco-Free Generation

We are committed to broadening the public's understanding of the risks of tobacco use to help deliver the first tobacco-free generation. Our five-year, \$50 million initiative, Be The First, supports education, advocacy, tobacco control and healthy behavior programming – including on college campuses.

In partnership with the American Cancer Society and Truth Initiative, the CVS Health Foundation has funded millions of dollars in grants to nearly 150 schools as they work toward creating a 100 percent tobacco-free campus. Spanning the U.S., the campuses include:

- Sixty-three major academic institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, Indiana University and Stanford University
- Thirty-four Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Howard University
- Forty-nine community colleges

Grantees range from colleges in the early stages of considering whether to go tobacco-free to those that have adopted policies and need support to successfully implement them.

To learn more about CVS Health's campus initiative or to apply for a grant, visit <https://cvshealth.com/social-responsibility/be-the-first/tobacco-free-generation-campus-initiative>

To learn more about our efforts to reduce smoking rates, visit our [Tobacco Prevention & Cessation information center](#). And to stay informed about the most talked-about topics in health care, [register for content alerts and our bi-weekly health care newsletter](#).

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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Youth and Tobacco Use." Accessed August 2017. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm

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