

Fact Sheet #13: Young Adult Tobacco Use - Then and Now

Back in 2001, 18-24 year olds in California had a smoking prevalence of 23.6%.¹ For the year 2005, the most recent year statistics are available, this rate had declined to 18.0%.²

Then

- 1999: The most recent Department of Defense figures show that 37.4% of US active duty military personnel nationally are ages 18-24.⁵ Nearly 30% of all military personnel smoke cigarettes.⁶
- 2001: 18-24 year olds in California have the highest smoking prevalence of any age group.¹
- 2001: An estimated 840, 000 young adults in California are smokers.
- 2001: Tobacco industry expenditures for advertising and promotions is \$11.2 Billion.⁴
- 2002: According to the 2002 Monitoring the Future survey, the national daily smoking prevalence of young adults is 32%, twice the daily smoking rate of their college counterparts.³

Now

- 2004: Despite the decline in overall smoking prevalence, 18-24 year olds in California continue to have the highest smoking rate of any age group.²
- 2004: An estimated 658, 091 young adult Californians are smokers.
- 2005: The current Monitoring the Future survey puts the national daily smoking prevalence of young adults not in college at 28%, still twice the rate of their college peers.⁷
- 2005: The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) releases its annual Cigarette Report for the year 2003, the most recent year statistics are available. Tobacco industry spending on advertising and promotions has risen to its highest level ever - 15 Billion dollars, the most ever reported to the FTC.⁸
- 2005: Of active duty US military personnel stationed in California, 31.1% reported using tobacco. However, this rate jumps to 33.3% for active duty males ages 18-24.⁹

Our first Young Adult Fact Sheet was completed in December of 2003. What has changed since then?

Although young adults in California are smoking less than they were in 2003, they are still the age group with the highest prevalence. Tobacco manufacturers are continuing to look for new ways to reach this population, constantly reinventing their brands, corporate image, and marketing tactics.

The emergence of new tobacco products, such as Taboka and Camel Snus, or the reintroduction of products like hookah, is an example of the changes in the tobacco industry that are poised to have an impact on 18-24 year olds. Hookah bars are already sprouting in college communities and neighborhoods with large numbers of young people. Marketed as a social activity, hookah smoking is uniquely positioned to appeal to young adults of all cultures. Taboka and Camel Snus, the new smokeless tobacco products by Philip Morris and RJR, are just now being tested in limited markets, but have the potential to bring a recognizable brand name and marketing dollars to a product with a small market.

In the past few years, tobacco control has begun to make a difference in the acceptability and use of tobacco in the young adult community. These upcoming issues in give advocates the opportunity to create new interventions and have an even greater impact on this highly targeted age group. Prevalence rates can continue to fall as we continue our work.

¹ California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. "18-24 Year-Olds." 2003.

² California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. Available at www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco/documents/press/2005/smokingprevalence.pdf.

³ Monitoring the Future, 2002.

⁴ Federal Trade Commission. *Cigarette Report for 2001*. 2003.

⁵ Department of Defense. *Defense Almanac*. "How Old They Are." May 1999.

⁶ Department of Defense. *1998 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Military Personnel*. 1998.

⁷ Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., Bachman, J.G., & Schulenberg, J.E. (2005).

Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2004: Volume II, College students and adults ages 19-45 (NIH Publication No. 05-5728). Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.

⁸ Federal Trade Commission. *Cigarette Report for 2003*. 2005.

⁹ Crawford R, Olsen C, Thompson B, Barbour G. *California Active Duty Tobacco Survey-2004*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Health Services, 2005.

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