

>> TOBACCO STATISTICAL BULLETIN

self reported behaviours of
secondary school students NSW 1999
tobacco

This statistical bulletin is part of a series of bulletins and reports on the results of a survey conducted in 1999 of NSW secondary school students aged 12 to 17 years. The aim of the survey was to provide up-to-date data on the prevalence of smoking, drinking and illicit drug use, sun protection behaviours, physical activity, injury, eating patterns and criminal offences.

Key trends

Between 1996 and 1999:

- there was an overall decline of 2.4% in the proportion of students who reported smoking in the week prior to the survey.
- the decline in smoking rates was recorded for 13 to 15-year-old females and for all males except 16-year-olds.
- the proportion of students reporting they had bought their last cigarette fell by 4%.

Smoking amongst young people – what we are doing

Smoking amongst young people is a concern that The Cancer Council NSW, NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Training are addressing through a range of different policy and program initiatives. These include:

- Legislation for effective tobacco control under the Public Health Act 1991 which prohibits tobacco sales to minors. A comprehensive sales to minors program has substantially reduced young people's access to tobacco products.
- Laws introduced in August 1999 which prohibit most tobacco advertising and govern the way tobacco products can be displayed at point of sale. These laws also require health warnings with the Quitline telephone number to be

displayed where tobacco products are sold. In addition, the government has recently introduced the Smoke-free Environment Act that bans smoking in most enclosed public spaces in NSW.

- The Tobacco Action Plan launched in May 2001 by the Minister for Health provides the foundation for further initiatives in NSW to 2004.
- The Cancer Council's Schools Program. A comprehensive consultancy service which provides policy support and information, curriculum support materials and advice to NSW school communities as well as to health and education professionals.
- Smoke screen: a smoking prevention resource by the Department of Education and Training targeting years 5 to 8 students. It aims to provide young people with knowledge relating to the effects of smoking and the skills to advocate against smoking. Particular attention is given to product placement in movies and television and cigarette packaging used to recruit young people, especially females.
- Drug education in schools. The Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus provides the curriculum context for drug education. Schools encourage students to make responsible decisions about drug use. Young people need messages about risks, strategies for reducing risks and ways of reducing and ultimately stopping the use of drugs.

Terminology

Recent smoker

Students who reported smoking on at least one day in the week prior to the survey.

Ever smoked

Students who reported having experienced at least a few puffs of a cigarette in their lifetime.

Population estimates of the number of smokers

Based on the survey results, it is estimated that in 1999 approximately **85,000** NSW secondary school students aged 12 to 17 years had smoked in the last week (41,800 males and 43,200 females), of whom approximately 30,100 were aged 12 to 14 years.

Research methodology

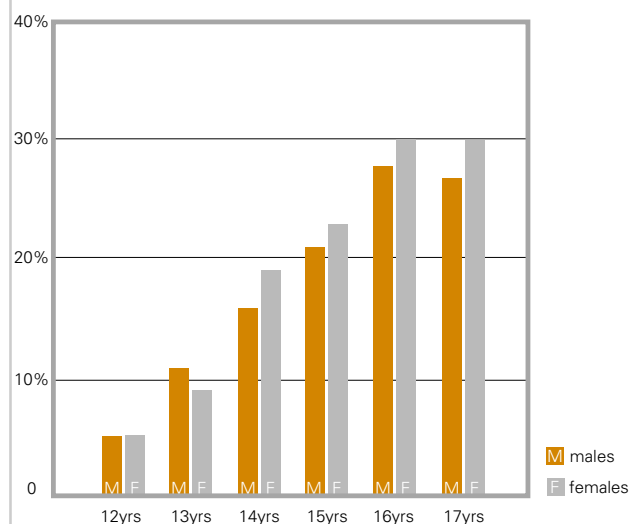
The target population for the survey comprised all students enrolled in school years 7 to 11 in government and non-government schools across NSW and the sample was designed to match this population. Survey data were gathered in a core and two supplementary self-completion questionnaires. Each supplementary questionnaire was answered by approximately half of the core sample. The survey was administered in schools by external research staff. Students were randomly selected and had no prior working knowledge of the contents of the survey.

A total of 122 NSW schools participated with a total of 7,544 students from years 7 to 11 taking part in the survey. Students whose essential information (age and gender) was missing or who were outside the 12 to 17 year age range were excluded, leaving a final sample size of 7,475. All results reported in this bulletin are for students aged 12 to 17 years. The NSW survey is part of the Australian Secondary Students Alcohol and Drug Survey 1999.

Smoking prevalence

- Across all age groups, 54% of males and 52% of females reported ever smoking.
- Overall, 18% of males and 19% of females were recent smokers.
- Overall, more females reported recent smoking than males. At all ages after 13 years, the prevalence of cigarette smoking was higher for females than for males.
- The greatest increase in the prevalence of recent smoking was before 16 years for both males and females. The numbers of recent smokers leveled off at 16 years for both males (28%) and females (30%).

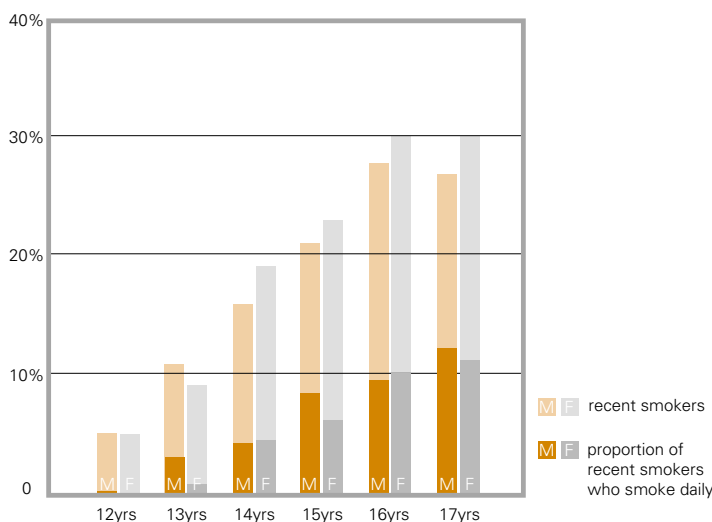
Figure 1. Recent smoking by age and gender



Number of days per week students smoked

- Overall, approximately 9.6% of respondents aged 12 to 17 years smoked on three or more days a week with 5.5% smoking daily. When this is expressed as a percentage of recent smokers then 30% of recent smokers smoked every day and 53% smoked on three or more days.
- Among all students, the proportion of males and females smoking daily increased with age. For males, the increase between 13 and 17 years was from 3% to 12% and for females the increase was from 1% to 11%.
- For male recent smokers, 38% reported smoking on every weekday (41% of 17 year olds) as did 33% of female recent smokers (42% of 17 year olds).
- For 17-year-old recent smokers, 56% of males smoked on both days of the weekend and 22% on only one weekend day. The comparable values for 17-year-old females were 60% and 30% for both or one weekend day respectively.

Figure 2
Percentage of recent smokers who smoke daily

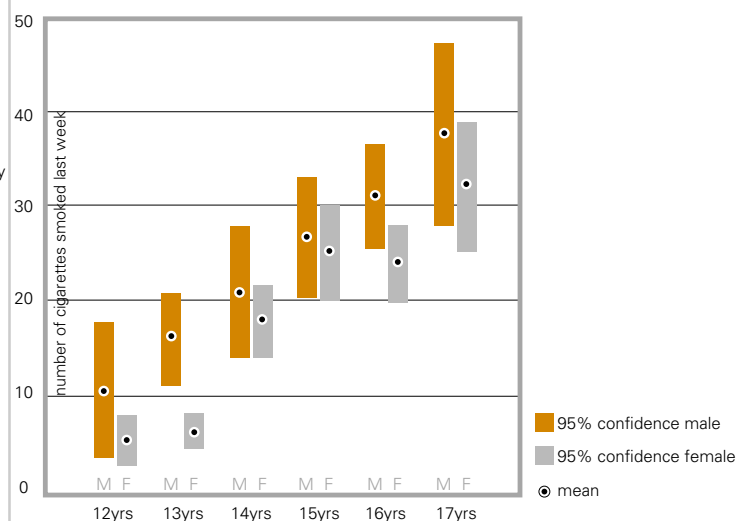


Number of cigarettes smoked

- Males tended to have smoked more cigarettes per week than females. The average number of cigarettes smoked in the previous week by recent smokers aged 12 to 17 years was 23 (24 males; 21 females).
- At 12 years of age, recent male smokers reported smoking 10 cigarettes a week and recent female smokers smoked 5 cigarettes per week. At 17 years, males and females smoked about 37 and 32 cigarettes a week respectively. For males the year by year increase in the mean was fairly steady. For females there was a notably steep increase between 13 and 15 years when the mean number of cigarettes smoked increased by almost 300% compared to a 63% increase for males across the same age groups.

- On the basis of the present results it is estimated that NSW secondary school students aged 12 to 17 years smoked nearly 2 million cigarettes (1,992,400) in the week preceding the survey.
- It is estimated that last financial year (2000-2001) NSW secondary students smoked at least 100 million cigarettes worth at least \$36m.

Figure 3
Number of cigarettes smoked per week (mean and 95% confidence limits)



Source of cigarettes

- Most recent smokers aged 12 to 17 years did not purchase their last cigarette from a retail outlet (66% males; 78% females). The most likely source for those who did not buy their last cigarette was a friend (55% males; 53% females). Twenty four per cent of males and 23% of females had someone else buy the cigarette for them, and 6% of males and 8% of females took it from home without parental permission.
- Overall, 34% of male recent smokers and 22% of female recent smokers purchased their last cigarette from a retail outlet. Recent smokers reported starting to purchase cigarettes at 13 years. The most likely source of cigarettes for those who had bought their own was a tobacconist (15% males; 25% females), a petrol station (23% males; 14% females), or a take-away food shop (14% males; 19% females).
- 51% of males and 38% of females had tried to buy cigarettes from a shop. This proportion increases with age as a larger proportion of older males and females had tried to buy a cigarette from a shop compared to those in the 12 to 14 age groups.
- Of those who tried to buy cigarettes from a shop:
 - 74% of males and 63% of females said they had been refused service on one or more occasions;
 - the same proportion said that they had been asked for proof of age when trying to buy cigarettes;
 - 75% of males and 79% of females said they had never used a friend's ID or fake identification when trying to purchase cigarettes.
- Of those who smoked in the last week and bought their last cigarette:
 - 5% had bought the cigarette from a coin operated machine;
 - 25% had bought single cigarettes, the majority of these (66%) were bought from a friend or relative; 26% from someone else and 8% from a shop.

Place of smoking

- Of those who had ever smoked, most reported smoking at parties (21% males; 27% females), a friend's home (14% males; 19% females), at parks (11% males; 13% females) and at home (10% males; 11% females).

Giving up smoking

- Overall, 87% of males (79% if only recent smokers included) and 92% of females (88% recent smokers) said it would be 'fairly', 'very hard' or 'impossible' for someone to give up smoking forever. Among the younger age groups (those less likely to be smokers) these opinions were even more widely held.

Smoking intentions

- An intention to smoke cigarettes in the next year depended upon how recently students had smoked. Of those who had smoked in the last 12 months, 21% of males and 24% of females thought it 'likely', 'very likely' or 'certain' that they would be smoking next year. Of those who had smoked in the last four weeks, 30% of males and 34% of females thought it 'likely', 'very likely' or 'certain' that they would be smoking next year.
- If a friend offered a cigarette to them, 20% of males and 22% of females reported that they would smoke it and 15% of males and 20% of females were unsure.

Cigar smoking

- Across all age groups 28% of males and 18% of females reported ever smoking cigars, i.e. had experienced at least a few puffs. Males were more likely than females to have ever smoked at least part of a cigar for all age groups. As

with cigarettes, the incidence of those who had ever smoked even part of a cigar (part, whole, or more than one) increases with age from 11% among 12-year-old males to 48% among 17-year-old males. For females the percentage increases from 7% to 35%.

Trends in the prevalence of smoking

- In 1999, there was a 2.4% overall decline recorded for recent smoking prevalence (19% in 1996 to 18% in 1999 for males; 21% to 19% for females).
- The decline was recorded in the 13 to 15 year age groups for females, and for males in all age groups except 16-year-old males. However, the proportion of recent smokers aged 17 years has remained largely unchanged for males (27%) and for females (31% in 1996, 30% in 1999).
- The levelling off in prevalences with age in 1999 appeared at a later age for females than in 1996. The prevalence for female recent smokers reached a plateau at 30% by 16 years, compared with about 30% at 15 years in 1996. For males, recent smoking prevalences reached a plateau at 16 years in both 1996 (27%) and in 1999 (about 28%).
- In 1996, 32% of the last cigarettes smoked were bought and 68% were given, while in 1999, 28% were bought and 72% given. This question was only answered by respondents who had smoked in the previous week.
- There was a shift in the degree of difficulty attributed to giving up smoking forever. In 1996, 65% of males and 71% of females thought giving up smoking would be 'fairly'/'very hard' or 'impossible' increasing to 86% and 93% respectively in 1999.

Figure 4
Trends in the prevalence of male recent smokers 1984 to 1999

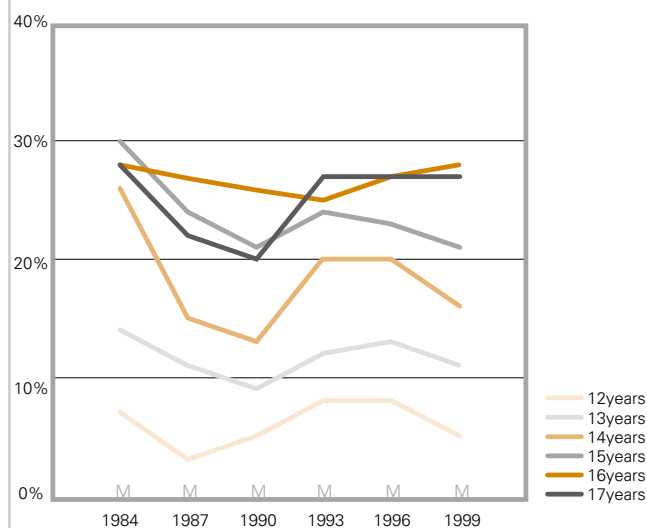
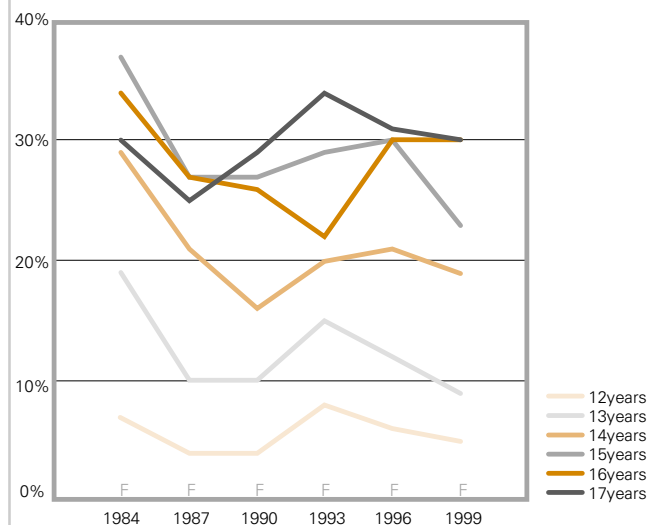


Figure 5
Trends in the prevalence of female recent smokers 1984 to 1999



Self reported behaviours of secondary school students.
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153 Dowling Street Woolloomooloo NSW 2011
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Tobacco Resource Officer
Telephone 02 9879 0443 • Fax 02 9879 0994
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