

Fact Sheet #1: Young Adults and the Tobacco Industry

According to California's most recent estimates, **18-24 year olds** have the **highest smoking prevalence** of any age group at **23.6%.**¹

What is Happening?

- A prevalence rate of 23.6% means that out of the 3,551,495 Californians between the ages of 18 and 24², nearly 840,000 of them are smokers.
- Between 1994 and 2000, the smoking prevalence of 18-24 year olds living in California jumped 32.4%.³
- Young adult smoking rates differ by gender, ethnicity, and income.
- The number of 18 and 19 year olds who are casual smokers is more than 2x the number of established 18 year old smokers.⁴
- 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.⁵
- 60% of young women (ages 16-24) tried to quit smoking in 2002, but less than 3% succeeded in quitting for at least a year.⁶
- Young adults encounter the tobacco industry and its adverse effects everywhere they turn, including at colleges, rodeos, workplaces, community events, bars, apartments, rental housing, convenience stores, alternative papers and magazines, overseas, and in the military.

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

² US Census Bureau. "State Population Estimates by Selected Age Categories and Sex." 1 July 2002.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ling, Pam M. And Stanton A. Glantz. "Why and How the Tobacco Industry Sells Cigarettes to Young Adults: Evidence From Industry Documents." American Journal on Public Health. June 2002. Vol 92, No 6.

⁵ Monitoring the Future, 2002.

⁶ TTAC Exchange. 30 October 2003. Vol 1, No.5.

⁷ Federal Trade Commission. "Cigarette Report for 2001." 2003.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ling, Pamela M. And Stanton A Glantz. "Using Tobacco-Industry Marketing Research to Design More Effective Tobacco-Control Campaigns." Journal of the American Medical Association. 12 June 2002. Vol 287, No. 22.

Why?

The most recent Federal Trade Commission reports on tobacco industry spending indicate industry expenditures for advertising and promotions grew to \$11.4 Billion, the most ever reported to the FTC.⁷ Since the MSA was passed, young adults are the youngest legal target available to the tobacco industry. The billions of dollars spent every year on advertising aimed at young adults is paying to create a new generation of smokers, from both the 18-24 year old age group and the teens who look up to them.

So how does the tobacco industry know that the billions of dollars spent marketing to young adults will pay off? First, tobacco industry research has discovered that the transition from the first cigarette to a pack-a-day smoking habit can occur up to the age of 25. Second, young adults are involved in many transitional periods in their professional (school, work, military) and social (attendance in bars and concerts) lives that encourage young adults to adopt new behaviors. Lastly, the ease of infiltrating young adult's physical and social environments allows the tobacco industry to study their ideas, beliefs, and attitudes to market their deadly products more efficiently.⁸

Young adults are uniquely affected by the targeted marketing campaigns of the tobacco industry because of the transitional stage from youth to adulthood. Anti-tobacco attitudes learned in youth can be unlearned through intensive marketing campaigns.⁹ Promotions that offer free items weigh heaviest on the price-sensitive young adult market. And young people are highly sensitive to the social pressures of smoking, while tending to ignore the traditional tobacco control health-centered message.¹⁰

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California Youth Advocacy Network
Email: info@cyanonline.org
www.cyanonline.org