

Fact Sheet #2: Young Adults in Community Settings

The daily smoking prevalence of young adults without a college education is 32%, twice the daily smoking rate of their college counterparts.

Who are young adults? What is happening?

- Nearly 13% of immigrants to California in 2002 are 18-24.¹ The smoking prevalence for male South Korean immigrants is 33%, which is higher than the national prevalence rate for native-born citizens at 22.6%.²
- It is estimated anywhere from 1% to 10% of the US population is gay or lesbian. 30.8% of the gay and lesbian population smoke.³
- 22,845 of California's 18-24 year-olds are in prison. They comprise nearly 15% of California's total prison population.⁴ Recent surveys show that 70-80% of the total incarcerated population are smokers.⁵
- Women between the ages of 20 and 24 have the highest pregnancy rate in the country.⁶ As of 1998, smoking prevalence during pregnancy was highest among the 18-24 year old population.⁷
- Of those under the age of 25 whom are renters or homeowners, 87% rent.⁸
- 82.5% of Californians agree strongly or agree somewhat that apartment common areas, such as pools and laundry rooms, should be smoke-free.⁹
- The most recent Department of Defense figures show that 37.4% of US active duty military personnel are ages 18-24.¹⁰ Nearly 30% of all military personnel smoke cigarettes.¹¹

¹ State of California, Department of Finance. *Legal Immigration to California in 2002*. Sacramento, California. October 2003.

² Keck School of Medicine of USC. *Immigration Status, County of Origin Reveal Important Differences*. <http://www.usc.edu/schools/medicine/departments/preventive_medicine/research/ipr/research/ttuc/news/news_release_0902.html>

³ National Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Centers. *New Data Shows Smoking Rates Above Average Among California's Ethnic and Gay and Lesbian Communities*. 23 April 2003. <<http://www.lgbtcenters.org/documents/caminoritysmoking.pdf>>

⁴ California Department of Corrections. *Prison Census Data Total Institution Population*. "Offenders by Age Group and Gender." 30 June 2003.

⁵ Join Together Online. "Tobacco Firms Target Prisoners" 29 August 2003. <<http://www.jointogether.org/sa/news/summaries/reader/0,1854,566539,00.html>>

⁶ National Center for Health Statistics. *U.S. Pregnancy Rate Down from Peak; Births and Abortions on the Decline*. 31 October 2003. <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/03facts/pregbirths.htm>>

⁷ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General." 2001.

⁸ US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Issues In Labor Statistics*. "Housing Expenditures." March 2002.

⁹ Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. *The Survey of California Adults on Secondhand Smoke*. "Californians Attitudes Toward Smoke-free Environments." April 2001.

¹⁰ Department of Defense. *Defense Almanac*. "How Old They Are." May 1999.

¹¹ Department of Defense. *1998 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Military Personnel*. 1998.

¹² Berkeley Media Studies Group. "Bucking Tobacco Sponsorship at Rodeos: Strategies for Media Advocacy and Public Engagement." 2003.

¹³ The Advertising Council, MTV. "Engaging the Next Generation: How Nonprofits Can Reach Young Adults." 2003.

Why?

Young adults are college students, workers, apartment dwellers, immigrants, gays and lesbians, mothers, and members of the military. The high smoking prevalence rates in these communities can be tied to one commonality: age. While college students are easy to reach by the tobacco industry and tobacco control advocates because of their common setting, 18-24 year olds in community settings are much harder to access. Unfortunately, there is no one venue for the general population, and the availability of tobacco control services and data is as varied as the age group itself.

Sponsorship is one of the most powerful marketing tools the tobacco industry has to target 18-24 year olds in community settings. By sponsoring bar night events, rodeos, sporting events, community groups, public events, and local charities, the tobacco industry ensures that young adults are able to see the imprint of the tobacco industry no matter where they go. There are several advantages that only sponsorship can offer: First, sponsorship can provide direct targeting of a particular population; secondly, sponsorship increases the visibility of the brand in a positive way; and lastly, sponsorship can generate favorable press coverage, casting the industry in a positive light even to community members whom don't attend sponsored events.¹²

Despite the attractiveness of 18-24 year olds to the tobacco industry, this community also has specific features that are advantageous to tobacco control advocates. According to research by the Ad Council and MTV, the young people of today are highly optimistic, and are committed to creating change in many ways, from participating in letter writing campaigns to organizing protests. In 1998, less than half of 18-24 year olds were asked to volunteer. Of that group, 87% volunteered.¹³ **By including young adults in efforts aimed at the 18-24 year old community, tobacco control can harness the power of peer advocacy and peer education in this hard-to-reach population.**

Stay tuned...More Fact Sheets Are Coming Your Way



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