

REPORT

2004 Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) SURINAME

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Executive Summary

This report describes the knowledge, attitude and behavior of young people regarding tobacco use, their exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, pro-tobacco as well as anti-tobacco advertisement. In addition, it reveals the extent to which these young people receive anti-tobacco information in schools. We conducted a multistage, school-based, two-cluster survey in government and private schools using a standardized questionnaire based on the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS).

Smoking prevalence was 17.4% for boys and 6.4% for girls. 21.9% of students 1st tried smoking at less than ten years of age. More than 50% of non-smokers and more than 70% of current smokers are exposed to ETS in their homes and in their homes and in public places. More than 70% of boys and girls saw a tobacco advertisement, and 26.9 % of them were offered free cigarettes from a tobacco company representative. Moreover, 40% of young people buy their cigarettes from stores, and 90% of them were not refused to buy cigarettes because of their age.

The youth prevalence of smoking is alarming; especially in the presence of an environment that supports smoking. Young people are daily exposed to ETS, tobacco advertisement and can access tobacco products easily. Immediate action is required to limit youth exposure to ETS and accessibility, issue legislation to prohibit selling smoking to minors, ban tobacco advertisement and create a supportive environment to the health of young people.

1. Introduction

Tobacco use is one of the chief preventable causes of death in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) attributes some four million deaths a year to tobacco use, a figure expected to rise to about 10 million by 2030. By that time, 70% of those deaths will be in developing countries. Most people begin using tobacco in their teens, and recent trends indicate rising smoking prevalence rates among children and adolescents and earlier age of initiation.

The international society spearheaded by the Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI), WHO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office on Smoking and Health (OSH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has been developing international programs and initiatives to combat this man-made plague, which is devastating the lives of millions of people worldwide.

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) is the first comprehensive and representative school-based study of students aged 13 to 15 years of smoking knowledge, attitudes and beliefs conducted in Suriname. It assesses student's attitudes, knowledge and behavior related to tobacco use and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, as well as youth exposure to prevention activities in school curricula, community programs, and media messages aimed at preventing and reducing youth tobacco use. This study, which was conducted in 2000 by the Ministry of health and repeated in 2004, used an internationally standardized instrument that facilitates comparing youth behavior regarding tobacco use at the regional level as well as the international level.

Objectives of the GYTS

- To document and monitor the prevalence of tobacco-use including: cigarette smoking and current use of smokeless tobacco, cigars or pipes.
- To better understand and assess student's attitudes, knowledge and behaviors related to tobacco use and its health impact, including: cessation, environmental tobacco use, media advertising, minors access, and school curriculum.

The GYTS will attempt to address the following issues:

- Determine the level of tobacco use
- Estimate the age of initiation of tobacco use
- Estimating the levels of susceptibility to become a cigarette smoker
- Estimating the exposure to tobacco advertising
- Identifying key intervening variables, such as attitudes and beliefs on behavioral norms with regard to tobacco use among young people
- Assessing the extent to which major prevention programs are reaching school-based populations and establish the subjective opinions of those populations regarding such interventions

11. Methods

Study design and sampling

The GYTS uses a two-stage cluster sample design that produces representative samples of students in grades associated with ages 13-15 years in both government and private schools. In Suriname, this age range is covered by the first, second and third years of secondary school. The data extracted from the Ministry of Education documents was forwarded to OSH/CDC to draw the sample. Schools were selected with probability proportional to school enrollment size and a total of 25 schools were selected. At the second stage, classes within the selected schools were randomly selected. All students attending school in the selected classes on the day the survey was administered were eligible to participate. The school response rate was 100%; the students response rate was 94.4%; the overall response rate was 94.4%; and 2,205 students completed the GYTS.

The questionnaire

The Suriname version of the questionnaire consisted of 56 core questions and 1 additional question. The official language in Suriname is Dutch and it was necessary to translate the questionnaire, the parent notification form and the script for survey administrators from English to Dutch. Survey procedures were designed to protect the student's privacy by allowing for anonymous and voluntary participation. The self-administrated questionnaire was administered in the classroom. Students recorded their responses on an answer sheet.

Data Collection

The Ministry of Education provided assistance in terms of issuing necessary letters to the selected schools and contacting schools.

The Research Coordinator was responsible for selecting, training and supervising the research team, members of which were mainly selected from University Students depending on experience and proximity to the location of the randomly selected schools. Three research teams were formed, each including one Supervisor and 3- 4 researchers depending on the number of schools in each district. The supervisors of these teams reported back to the Research Coordinator on daily basis. A training workshop was conducted for the research team and they were assigned to schools and were responsible for the delivery and collection of all survey documentations.

111. Results

A total of 2,205 students completed the survey, representing a 94.4% overall response rate.

Table 1: Percent of students who use tobacco

| Category | Ever Smoked Cigarettes, Even One or Two Puffs | Current Use | | | Never Smokers B Susceptible to Initiating Smoking |
|----------|---|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---|
| | | Any Tobacco Product | Cigarettes | Other Tobacco Products | |
| Total | 43.5 (± 4.0) | 15.2 (± 1.6) | 11.5 (± 1.4) | 6.3 (± 1.5) | 18.5 (± 2.7) |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Male | 54.9 (± 5.5) | 20.0 (± 3.1) | 17.4 (± 3.2) | 6.9 (± 1.7) | 19.1 (± 4.2) |
| Female | 33.1 (± 4.0) | 10.6 (± 1.8) | 6.4 (± 1.6) | 5.4 (± 1.8) | 18.0 (± 2.9) |

One in two (43.5%) of all students have ever smoked cigarettes (Table 1), with ever smoking nearly twice as high for males (54.9%) compared to females (33.1%). One in five (21.9%) of students who ever smoked cigarettes first tried smoking at less than ten years of age.

One in six students (15.2%) currently use any tobacco product, one in ten (11.5%) currently smoke cigarette and one in fourteen (6.3%) currently use other tobacco products. Compared to females, more than two times as many males currently smoke cigarettes and there were no differences by gender regarding other tobacco products. There exists a statistically significant difference between males and females regarding tobacco use where male users are twice as many as female users. Moreover, there are as many males susceptible to initiate smoking as current users but three times as many females are susceptible to start smoking compared to current female smokers.

Table 2: School Curriculum

| Category | Percent taught dangers of smoking | Percent discussed reasons why people their age smoke |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Total | 48.1 (± 3.7) | 42.7 (± 3.3) |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 45.7 (± 4.1) | 41.2 (± 3.8) |
| Female | 50.2 (± 6.0) | 44.0 (± 5.4) |

Less than half of all students were taught in schools during the past year about the dangers of smoking (48.1%), and less than half of all students had discussed during the past year reasons why people their age smoke (42.7%) (Table 2). There were no significant differences by gender.

Table 3: Cessation

| Category | Current Smokers | |
|----------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Percent desire to stop | Percent tried to stop this year |
| Total | 79.5 (±7.3) | 64.0 (±9.0) |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 81.9 (±8.0) | 63.2 (±10.1) |
| Female | * | 65.2 (±8.8) |

* Denotes cell size of less than 35.

Eight in ten students who currently smoke cigarettes stated that they currently desire to stop smoking (79.5%) (Table 3), and almost two third tried to stop smoking during the past year but failed (64.0%).

Table 4: Environmental Tobacco Smoke

| Category | Exposed to smoke from others in their home | | Exposed to smoke from others in public places | | Percent think smoking should be banned from public places | | Definitely think smoke from others is harmful to them | |
|----------|--|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers |
| Total | 45.2 (±6.4) | 71.6 (±8.4) | 59.4 (±5.3) | 87.1 (±6.3) | 92.6 (±2.4) | 72.8 (±6.0) | 68.5 (±3.4) | 57.6 (±6.1) |
| Sex | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 44.4 (±4.5) | 66.8 (±8.8) | 61.8 (±6.8) | 88.7 (±6.7) | 91.0 (±2.8) | 68.5 (±8.3) | 67.1 (±3.9) | 59.1 (±6.8) |
| Female | 46.0 (±7.9) | 83.4 (±11.6) | 58.5 (±5.5) | 83.0 (±9.1) | 94.2 (±2.7) | 82.2 (±13.5) | 69.6 (±4.5) | 53.8 (±10.9) |

Almost half of never smokers and more than two thirds of current smokers were exposed to smoking in their homes and in public places. (Table 4). In both places the exposures to environmental tobacco smoke for current smokers was approximately one and a half as high as the exposure for never smokers, in their homes 71.6% of current smokers and 45.2% of never smokers was exposed, while in public places 87.1% of current smokers and 59.4% of never smokers were exposed. Approximately all the never smokers (92.6%) and three-fourths of current smokers (72.8%) think smoking should be banned in public places. More than two thirds of never smokers (68.5%) and half of current smokers (57.6%) think smoke from other places is harmful to them. There were no significance differences by gender.

Table 5: Knowledge and Attitudes

| Category | Think boys who smoke have more friends | | Think girls who smoke have more friends | | Think smoking makes boys look more attractive | | Think smoking makes girls look more attractive | |
|----------|--|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers |
| Total | 30.1 (±3.2) | 23.0 (±6.4) | 21.0 (±1.9) | 13.6 (±5.1) | 26.7 (±3.6) | 26.3 (±6.6) | 19.8 (±3.7) | 14.9 (±6.6) |
| Sex | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 27.9 (±5.8) | 18.8 (±7.9) | 19.6 (±5.5) | 13.9 (±6.7) | 27.3 (±5.1) | 21.9 (±8.9) | 21.3 (±5.6) | 13.0 (±7.6) |
| Female | 31.7 (±3.0) | 33.5 (±7.1) | 21.9 (±2.4) | 13.4 (±6.7) | 26.4 (±3.8) | 37.3 (±12.3) | 19.0 (±3.5) | 18.3 (±12.1) |

Approximately three in ten never smokers think that boys who smoke have more friends and look more attractive (30.1% and 26.7% respectively) (Table 5). The same trend is evident among current smokers where more than two in ten of them think that boys who smoke have more friends and look more attractive (23.0% and 26.3% respectively). Approximately two in ten never smokers think that girls who smoke have more friends and look more attractive (21.0% and 19.8% respectively). The attitude towards the acceptance of smoking does not vary by gender.

Table 6: Media and Advertising

| Category | Percent Saw Anti-Smoking Media Messages | Percent Saw Pro-Tobacco Messages in Newspapers and Magazines | | Percent Who Had Object With a Cigarette Brand Logo On It | | Percent Offered a Free Cigarettes by a Tobacco Company Representative | |
|----------|---|--|-----------------|--|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| | | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers | Never Smokers | Current Smokers |
| Total | 78.8 (±1.7) | 68.6 (±3.9) | 67.5 (±7.2) | 16.6 (±2.8) | 22.0 (±8.1) | 8.9 (±2.2) | 26.9 (±6.3) |
| Sex | | | | | | | |
| Male | 79.5 (±2.4) | 69.0 (±5.2) | 68.0 (±10.1) | 19.0 (±2.9) | 21.7 (±9.2) | 11.1 (±3.9) | 27.4 (±8.6) |
| Female | 78.5 (±3.0) | 68.6 (±5.8) | 65.9 (±6.1) | 14.8 (±2.8) | 21.1 (±7.1) | 7.2 (±1.9) | 25.3 (±5.1) |

Almost three-fourths of students (78.8%) saw an anti-tobacco media message in the past 30 days (Table 6). Approximately seven in ten never smokers (68.6%) and current smokers (67.5%) saw a pro-tobacco message in newspapers and magazines during the past 30 days. Approximately two in ten never smokers (16.6%) and current smokers (22.0%) had an object with a cigarette brand logo on it. One in ten never smokers (8.9%) and less than three in ten current smokers (26.9%) were offered free cigarettes by a tobacco company representative.

Table 7: Access and Availability

| Category | Percent Current Smokers who Usually Smoke at Home | Percent Current Smokers who Purchased Cigarettes in a Store | Percent Current Smokers Who Bought Cigarettes in a Store Who Were Not Refused Because of Their Age |
|----------|---|---|--|
| Total | 21.5 (± 6.8) | 37.8 (± 5.5) | 89.7 (± 5.4) |
| Sex | | | |
| Male | 16.1 (± 5.2) | 44.3 (± 7.7) | 89.6 (± 6.8) |
| Female | 36.0 (± 11.5) | 21.7 (± 10.8) | * |

* Denotes cell size less than 35.

Over two in ten current smokers (21.5%) usually smoke at home; however, over three times as many female current smokers (36.0%) smoke at home compared to male current smokers (16.1%). (Table 7). Approximately four in ten of current smokers (37.8%) purchase their cigarettes in a store, and almost nine in ten of those (89.7%) had not been refused because of their age. There is a significant difference by gender regarding usually smoking at home and purchasing cigarettes in a store.

1V. Discussions

The discussions will focus on the topics presented earlier.

Tobacco use

Recent data suggests that one-fifth of ever smokers first tried their cigarettes at less than ten years of age. The study results also show that the likelihood of the burden of tobacco use will increase in the near future where 19.1% of male never smokers and 18.0% of female never smokers are susceptible to initiating smoking.

School curriculum

The fact that more than half of the students in grades 7 – 10 were not taught about the dangers of smoking and did not discuss the reasons that makes young people their age smoke, creates a major gap in the scope and nature of health information and instructions included in the curriculum regarding tobacco use.

Cessation

The indication that more than three-fourth of current smokers desire to stop smoking and have actually tried to stop, dictates the urgent need to establish youth – oriented counseling services and smoking cessation programs to help young smokers quit smoking.

Environmental Tobacco Smoke

Approximately half of young people (49.7%) live in home where others smoke, and two-third of current smokers (65.5%) has one or both parents who smoke. It is a fact that an environment conducive to smoking will encourage young people to smoke, especially if role models like parents and peers smoke. The dangers of ETS are well known by current young smokers in Suriname where more than half of them (57.6%) think that smoke from others is harmful to them. Therefore, this emphasizes the urgent need to advocate for legislation to ban smoking in public places especially that the majority of both never smokers (92.6%) and current smokers (72.8%) approve of such measures.

Knowledge and attitudes

There is no gap regarding the knowledge of the harmful effects of smoking on health between never smokers and current smokers. This might lead to the conclusion that a large number of young people are aware of the harmful effects of smoking on health. More than one-quarter of never smokers think that boys and girls who smoke have more friends and look more attractive. Therefore, there is an urgent need for intervention to remove these misleading and false images of smokers that are usually promoted.

Media and advertising

The results of this study provide clear evidence that the majority of young people are bombarded with pro-tobacco messages. Almost one-fourth of current smokers are offered free samples carrying cigarette brand logo on them and even offered free cigarettes which demonstrates a clear violation for the claimed responsibility of the tobacco industry concerning youth protection from smoking.

Access and availability

The ease at which young people can access cigarettes is yet another aspect that encourage those youngsters to smoke, and despite the fact that more than one-third of the current smokers (37.8%) can purchase cigarettes from stores, either borrow cigarettes from someone else (7.7%), or get it from an older person (15.9%).

V. Conclusion

The prevalence rates of tobacco use presented in this report are alarming. This study provides key intervening variables, such as knowledge, attitude and beliefs on behavioral norms with regard to tobacco use among young people, which can be used in prevention programs, such as banning smoking in schools, health awareness campaigns and extracurricular health activities.

VI. Recommendation

From the discussions above, the following recommendations are given:

- Reducing exposure to environmental tobacco smoke through banning all forms of tobacco use on school grounds and public places
- Reducing youth access to tobacco and tobacco products through issuing laws and regulations to reduce illegal tobacco sales to under 16 of age

Besides drafting such policies, their enforcement needs to be considered

- Restrict the advertisement of cigarettes smoking on billboards, newspapers, radio and television, and at the same time increase public awareness campaign on the harmful effects of smoking cigarettes, as well as other tobacco use, on the mass media
- Promoting tobacco cessation through school-based counseling programs