

## BRITISH COLUMBIA HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YOUTH SMOKING SURVEY

### INTRODUCTION

#### Description of the Survey

Health Canada, in conjunction with Statistics Canada, conducted a survey in 1994 to collect information on the smoking behaviour of Canadian youth. Previous surveys have typically collected information on the smoking behavior of adults 15 years of age and older. The information gained from this survey will help fill a data gap with respect to smoking behaviors and the knowledge and attitudes toward smoking among the youth of British Columbia and Canada.

The survey covered two age groups, 10-14 year olds and 15-19 year olds. Data for youth 10-14 years of age were collected from a sample of students in randomly selected schools across Canada. Data for youth 15-19 years of age were collected as a supplement to the Labour Force Survey. The data collection period was from September to December 1994.

#### Terminology

**Age Groups** - For the purpose of this report the following names have been given to the age groups covered in the survey:

- **Youth:** Total survey population 10-19 years old.
- **Children:** 10-14 year old population.
- **Young Adults:** 15-19 year old population.

**Current smoker** - has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in his/her lifetime, and includes the following:

- **Current Daily:** a current smoker who has smoked at least one cigarette per day for each of the 30 days preceding the survey

- **Current non-daily:** a current smoker who has smoked at least one cigarette during the past 30 days, but has not smoked every day

**Former Smoker** - smoked 100 or more cigarettes in his/her lifetime and has not smoked at all during the past 30 days.

**Never smoker** - has smoked fewer than 100 cigarettes in his/her lifetime.

**Prevalence of Smoking** - the proportion of cigarette smokers in the target population.

**Sampling Variability** - Any data in this report superscripted with a <sup>q</sup> carry a warning of a high sampling variability associated with the estimate. These data should be accompanied by a warning if used in any other report.

### BRITISH COLUMBIA HIGHLIGHTS

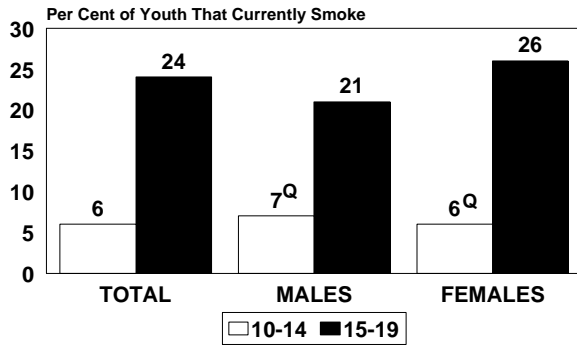
#### Prevalence and Amount Smoked

Almost one quarter (24%) of young adults (15-19 year olds) in British Columbia are current smokers. Of the estimated 55,000 young adults that do smoke, 72 per cent smoke daily. The remainder are non-daily smokers.

Among young adults, there is a higher prevalence of smokers among females, 26 per cent than among males, 21 per cent. However, among those who smoke daily, males smoke an average of 14.6 cigarettes per day, while females smoke a lower average of 10.2 cigarettes per day.

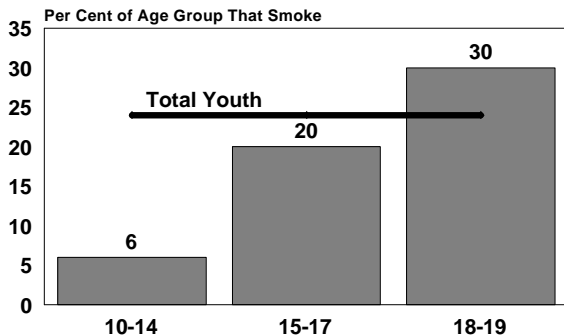
Among British Columbia children (10-14 year olds), 6 per cent reported that they were current smokers. Among children who smoke daily, an average of 8.2 cigarettes a day are consumed, which is the lowest in Canada. Unlike the situation with the young adults, male and female children smokers consume essentially the same amount of cigarettes per day.

### Female Youth In B.C. Are More Likely To Smoke Than Males - 1994



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### Almost One in Three B.C. Youth Aged 18-19 Smoke - 1994



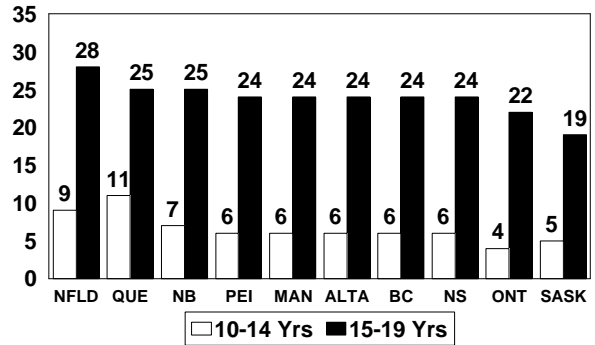
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### BC Comparisons to Canada

The per cent of young adults that currently smoke ranges from a low of 19 per cent in Saskatchewan to a high of 28 per cent in Newfoundland. For the remaining eight provinces, smoking prevalence is within 2 percentage points of the Canadian average of 24 per cent. There are, however, some interesting differences between male and female smokers. In the eastern provinces, with the exception of Quebec, the per cent of young adult male smokers is higher than

that of females. The opposite is true in the western provinces. In Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, the per cent of young adult females that smoke is higher than that of males.

### Most Provinces Share Similar Youth Smoking Patterns - 1994

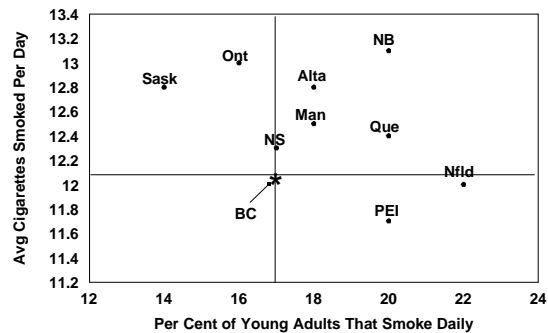


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The overall per cent of children that are current smokers is 7 per cent, ranging from a low of 4 per cent in Ontario to a high of 11 per cent in Quebec. In all but two provinces, Alberta and Quebec, a larger per cent of male children smoke than females.

Seventeen per cent of young adults in British Columbia smoke on a daily basis and they smoke an average of 12.1 cigarettes per day. In the following chart British Columbia is shown by the intersection of the lines in the chart. The five provinces in the upper right hand quadrant have a higher per cent of daily smokers and they smoke more than the young adults in British Columbia.

### Young Adults in BC Smoke Less Per Day and Not As Many Smoke Daily



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Young adults in Newfoundland have the highest per cent of daily smokers at 22 per cent and New Brunswick's young adults smoke the highest number of cigarettes per day at 13.1 per cent.

### Reasons For Starting

When asked to give one or more reasons why they thought people their age start to smoke, the most common response given was the smoking behavior of friends (i.e. 'friends smoke/peer pressure'). Sixty-nine per cent of British Columbia children and 72 per cent of young adults surveyed reported this reason. This was cited by more non-smokers than by their peers who are current smokers.

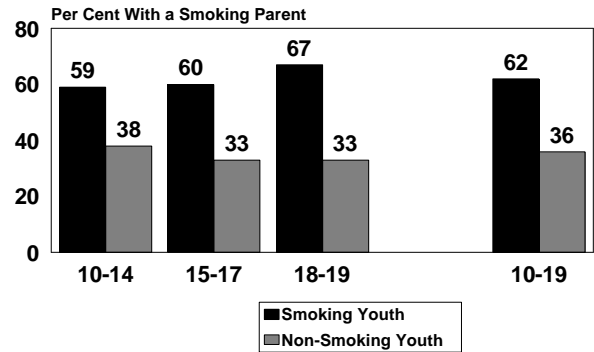
Among children, over 50 per cent (again mostly non-smokers) suggested that curiosity was a reason that youths in their age group started smoking. Another reason that received a high 'yes' response was 'It's Cool' to smoke. Over 44 per cent of children and 35 per cent of young adults felt that this was an important factor.

### Parents Smoking & Smoking at Home

Sixty-two per cent of smoking youth have at least one parent who currently smokes. However, among the non-smoking youth, only 36 per cent reported that at least one of their parents smoke. Interestingly, the influence of the parents' actions appears to increase as the child gets older. By the time a child is 18 years old, the probability that he/she will smoke is twice as high if the parent(s) smoke than when they do not smoke.

The influence that the smoking behavior of parents have on their children tends to be more pronounced for females than males. Seventy per cent of female youth smokers have a parent that smokes, while 54 per cent of male smokers live in a smoking family. This is a much more notable difference than the Canadian average where 63 per cent and 59 per cent of smoking females and males respectively have a parent that smokes.

### Parent Smoking Habits Have a Strong Influence on Their Children - 1994



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Among the youth that smoke, 62 per cent say that their mother and/or father does not like it that they smoke. Seventeen<sup>a</sup> per cent of young adults believe that their parent(s) do not know that they smoke. This increases to 45<sup>a</sup> per cent with children.

### Friends Smoking

Fifty-four per cent of youth in B.C. say that one or more of their close friends smoke. That jumps to 95 per cent of current smokers. The incidence of friends that smoke tends to increase with age. Twenty-nine per cent of the children aged 10-12 said that they have one or more friends that smoke compared to 71 per cent of 18-19 year olds.

### Accessibility of Cigarettes

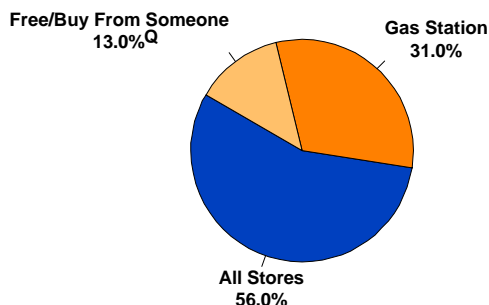
Young smokers are very much aware of the legal age required to purchase cigarettes. Overall, 80 per cent of smoking B.C. youth know the legal age required for the purchase of cigarettes, lower than the Canadian average of 88 per cent.

There seems to be significant differences amongst the provinces regarding ease of purchase of cigarettes for underage smokers. B.C. youth tend to buy their cigarettes either at small grocery/corner stores, 39 per cent, or gasoline stations, 27 per cent. One in two children smokers either buy them or get them free from a friend or family member. Canada wide, a much higher proportion of youth, 58 per cent, say they buy

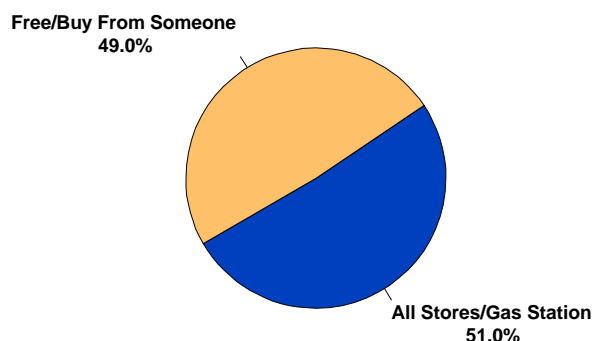
from a grocery/corner store, while a lower per cent, 16 per cent, buy from gasoline stations.

## Where Do Youth Get Their Cigarettes?

### Young Adults



### Children



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Figures on the size of packages usually purchased by youth are quite different in B.C. than the rest of Canada. In B.C., four out of five smokers buy packs of 20 while the same number buy packs of 25 in the rest of Canada. This is likely due to differences in availability from province to province.

## Smoking Restrictions at School

Ninety per cent of youth were attending school at the time of the survey. This includes 80 per cent of young adults and 100 per cent of children.

Thirty-seven per cent of student youth stated that there is a total ban on smoking at school and 36 per cent say there is a partial ban (i.e. smoking is restricted to

certain areas). In those schools that have a total or partial ban, 50 per cent of students feel that the rule is generally obeyed.

Very few smoking students in British Columbia report that a school ban or partial ban has any impact on their smoking. Twenty-seven per cent of Canadian youth smokers say that they have either cut down or don't smoke at school due to school bans/partial bans compared to only 17 per cent of B.C. youth.

## Smoking Restrictions at Work

Approximately 53 per cent of B.C. youth report that they have a paying job (which can be from any source such as cutting lawns, delivering newspapers, etc.). Of those, roughly half say that smoking is restricted at the workplace. Thirty-two per cent remarked that there is a total ban on smoking and 14 per cent say that there is a partial ban.

As result of these restrictions, 19<sup>a</sup> per cent of working youth who smoke say they either don't smoke at work or they have cut down. Twenty<sup>a</sup> per cent declare that it doesn't make any difference to their smoking habit.

## Attempts to Quit

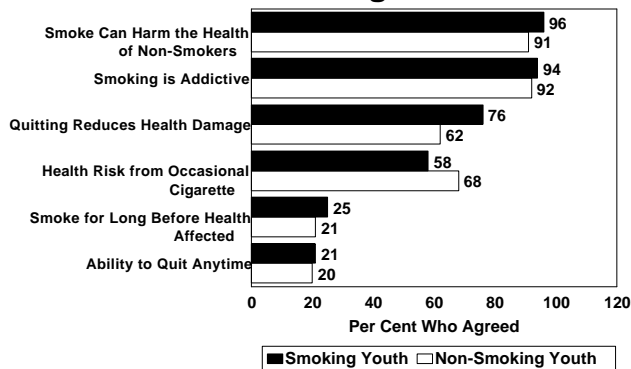
Over eighty per cent of current smoking youths say that they have thought about quitting. Approximately two thirds say that they have tried to quit (65% of males and 71% of females). Although a higher percentage of young adults say they have 'thought about quitting' or 'tried to quit', more than half of children stated that they have tried to quit in the last six months compared to only one third of young adults.

## Beliefs about the Health Effects of Smoking

When asked 'Do you think people can become addicted to tobacco', 92 per cent of youths answered yes. The same per cent believe that tobacco smoke can be harmful to the health of non-smokers. There was no notable difference between males and females in their beliefs.

Non-smoking youth are more likely to think that 'there is danger to your health from an occasional cigarette' than their peers who currently smoke (68 per cent of non-smokers compared to 58 per cent of smokers). Non-smoking youth are also less likely to think that 'quitting smoking reduced health damage even after many years of smoking' (62 per cent) compared to 76 per cent of current smokers.

### Youth Beliefs About Health Effects and Smoking - 1994



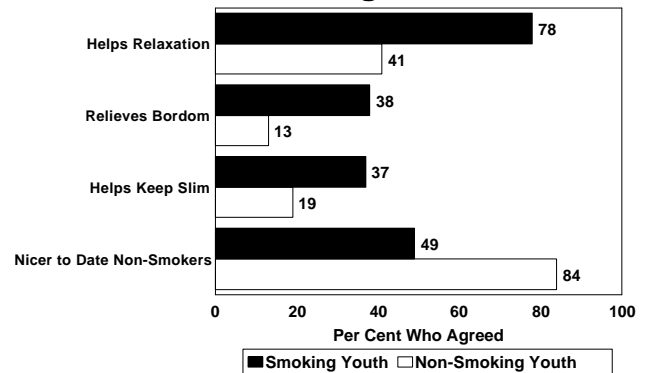
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Eighty-two per cent of youth say that they are aware of the health warning messages on cigarette packages. Essentially 100 per cent of smoking females and 95 per cent of male smokers are aware of the health warnings. Almost 70 per cent of smokers and non-smokers alike agree that health warnings messages should be displayed on cigarette packages. Among smoking youth, however, 10<sup>a</sup> per cent disagree with the displaying health warnings.

### Perceived Benefits of Smoking

The answers given about the possible benefits of smoking reflect very different attitudes and beliefs among smokers and non-smokers. More than three quarters of current smoking youths agree that smoking helps people relax, compared to 41 per cent of non-smokers. Thirty-eight per cent of smokers (42 per cent of males and 35 per cent of females) also believe that smoking relieves boredom. Thirty-seven per cent of smokers believe that smoking helps people stay slim.

### Youth Beliefs On Perceived Benefits of Smoking - 1994



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When asked 'Do you think it's nicer to date people who don't smoke', almost 50 per cent of smokers said yes and 84 per cent of non-smokers agreed. An interesting comparison here is that 58 per cent of male smokers believe it is nicer to date people who don't smoke compared to only 42 per cent of female smokers.

### Brand Preferences

Young smokers are very loyal to a particular brand. Eighty-four per cent of youth smokers usually smoke the same brand. At 88 per cent, female smokers tend to be somewhat more loyal to a particular brand than their male counterparts at 80 per cent. In the case of children, over 90 per cent of smokers usually smoke the same brand.

Despite the high degree of loyalty to particular brands, 32 per cent of youth smokers reported changing brands within the last 12 months. A much higher per cent of children, 58 per cent, report switching brands within the past 12 months.

Fifty-three per cent of smoking youth that usually smoke the same brand state that the reason they smoke a particular brand is because of taste. Females were more likely than males to answer that one of the reasons for smoking a particular brand was 'they are the least toxic'.

## Sponsorship and Promotion

Approximately half of B.C. youth report seeing advertisements for events sponsored by tobacco companies. A higher per cent of males, 57 per cent, than females, 44 per cent, reported to have seen these advertisements.

Of those who have seen advertisements, 58 per cent relate that they have seen them on television. After television, the other most frequent cited venues for advertisements for tobacco-sponsored events were magazines/newspapers at 47 per cent and billboards at 44 per cent.

When asked their opinion of the purposes of billboards and signs for sporting and cultural events sponsored by tobacco corporations, a high per cent of both smokers and non-smokers agree that these 'billboards and signs are a way of advertising particular brands of cigarettes (92 per cent of smokers and 87 per cent of non-smokers). However, when asked if 'these billboards and signs are a way of advertising particular sporting or cultural event', 73 per cent of smokers agreed while only 52 per cent of non-smokers agreed.

Forty per cent of all youth state that they know sporting or cultural events that are sponsored by tobacco corporations. A much higher per cent of smokers, 62 per cent, report awareness of sponsored events than do non-smoking youth, 36 per cent. Male smokers, at 73 per cent, are more aware of these events than females, at 53 per cent. Car racing was sited as the most recognizable event sponsored by a tobacco corporation with 21 per cent reporting it. Hockey, golf, and tennis were the only other sporting events getting a recognition worth mentioning.

Prepared by: Labour and Social Statistics Section  
**BC STATS**  
Ministry of Finance & Corporate Relations