



# IOWA YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY

2000-2008

## Executive Summary

Findings about behaviors, attitudes and knowledge among  
youth concerning tobacco use

Prepared for the Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control  
Iowa Department of Public Health

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<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/tobacco/>  
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### ***Division Mission:***

***To establish a comprehensive partnership among state government,  
local communities, and the people of Iowa to foster a social and legal  
climate in which tobacco use becomes undesirable and unacceptable.***

October 2009

To obtain a copy of the full Iowa 2008 Iowa Youth Tobacco Survey Report of this executive summary, visit the Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Website: [www.idph.state.ia.us/tobacco](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/tobacco).



# *Iowa Youth Tobacco Survey 2008*

## *Executive Summary*

### **BACKGROUND AND MAJOR FINDINGS:**

The Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control has conducted the Iowa Youth Tobacco Survey (IYTS) every two years beginning in 2000. The purpose of the tobacco survey is to monitor youth tobacco and to measure the effectiveness of youth tobacco prevention programs within Iowa. With the completion of the 2008 IYTS, trends among youth across eight years have been established for: prevalence of tobacco use; behaviors, knowledge and attitudes toward tobacco use; exposure to secondhand smoke; tobacco marketing exposure; and, exposure to tobacco use prevention messages.

During the 2008 – 2009 school year, 2,591 students from 50 public middle and high schools completed the survey. In order to guarantee that responses by participating students were representative of all middle and high school students in Iowa, initial survey findings were weighted using methods provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Since 2000, there has been a dramatic decrease in the prevalence of tobacco use by youth in Iowa. In middle school between 2000 and 2008, cigarette smoking dropped from 12% to just 3% (a decrease of 76%). In high school during those eight years, cigarette smoking dropped from 33% to 20% (a decline of 40%). The rate of smokeless tobacco use has also decreased, falling to 1% among middle school students (down 75%) and to 9% among high school students (down 18%). Overall, tobacco use in all forms declined 31% among high school and 80% among middle school youth during this time.

Among current smokers, the frequency of smoking and the number of cigarettes smoked have also been falling. Both middle and high school smokers are now less likely to be moderate to heavy smokers compared to students in 2000: the proportion of current smokers in middle school who were heavy to moderate smokers dropped from 21% to 10%, while the proportion of current high school smokers who were heavy to moderate smokers dropped from 30% to 22% between 2000 and 2008.

# SMOKING AND SMOKELESS TOBACCO USE PREVALENCE

Students were considered to be current cigarette or smokeless tobacco users if they reported using the product anytime within the past 30 days.

In 2008, current cigarette use was reported by 3% of middle school students and 20% of high school students. Cigarettes were the most commonly used form of tobacco for both middle and high school students.

Among middle school students the rate of use of both smokeless tobacco and cigarettes declined more than 75% between 2000 and 2008. Among high school students, cigarette use declined by almost 40%, while smokeless tobacco use declined just 13% during these eight years. An estimated 45,00 students continue to use tobacco.

Figure 1  
Percent of middle school students who currently use tobacco, IYTS, 2000-2008

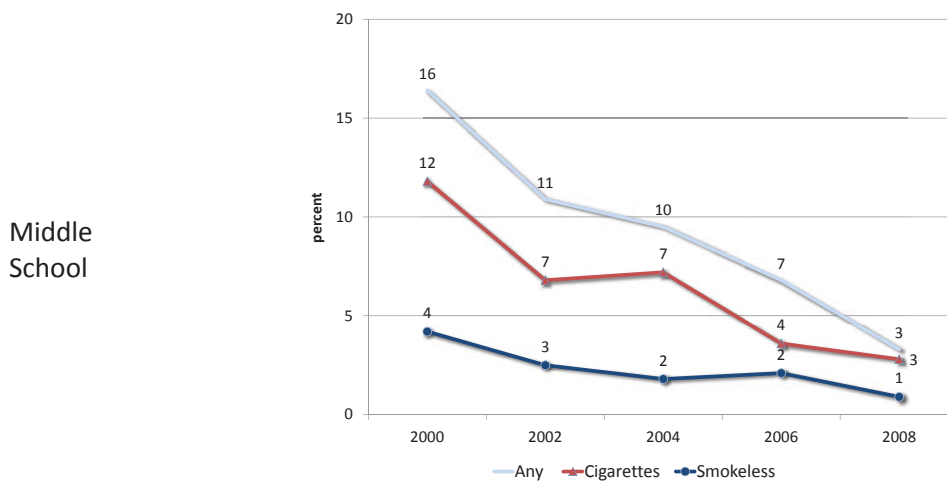
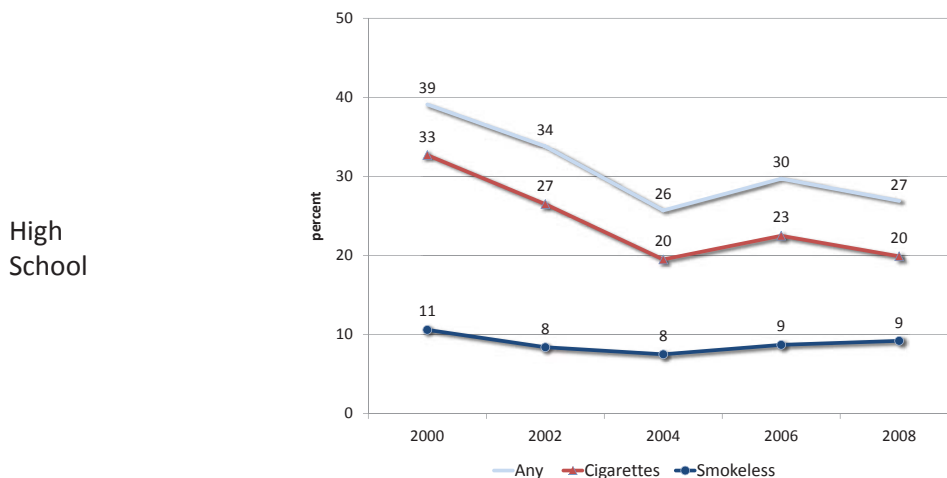


Figure 2  
Percent of high school students who currently use tobacco, IYTS, 2000-2008

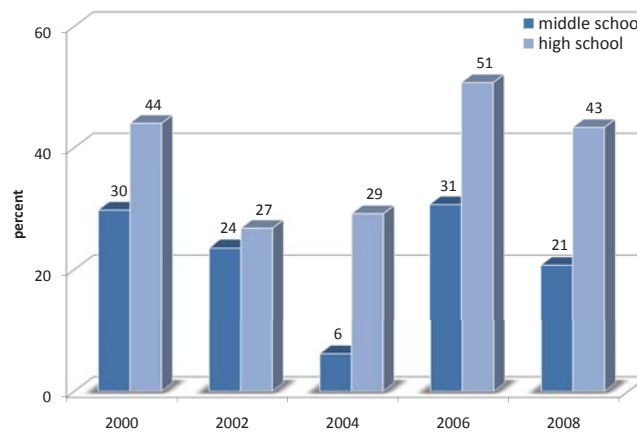


# FREQUENCY OF CIGARETTE USE

Students who smoked were asked about how many days they smoked per month.

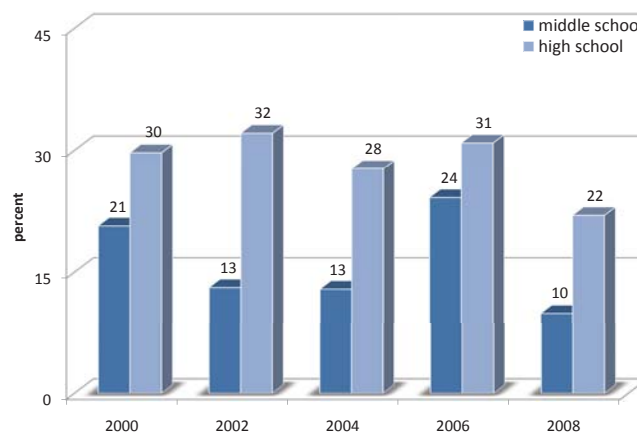
Frequent use of cigarettes (smoking on 20 or more of the past 30 days) in adolescence is an indication of addiction to tobacco and more heavy smoking into adulthood. Frequent cigarette use declined for middle school but not for high school students between 2000 and 2008.

Figure 3  
Percent of current cigarette smokers who smoked on 20 or more of the past 30 days IYTS, 2000-2008



The IYTS also asks about how many cigarettes per day students smoke. Frequent smoking during the day is a predictor of long-term addiction to tobacco. Smoking six or more cigarettes per day is considered to be moderate to heavy use.

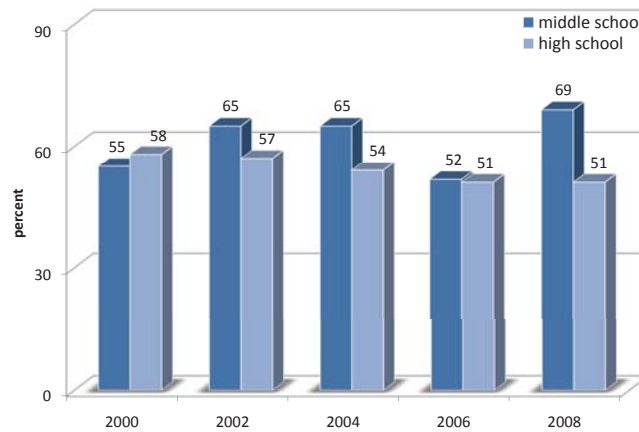
Figure 4  
Percent of current cigarette smokers who smoked 6 or more cigarettes per day on days that they smoked, IYTS, 2000-2008



# CESSATION

Students were asked if they wanted to quit smoking and if they had tried to quit smoking within the past 12 months. In 2008, 60% of smokers in middle school and 40% in high school wanted to quit smoking. That year, close to 70% of middle school and 50% of high school students who smoked had tried to quit at least once during the past 12 months.

Figure 5  
Percent of current cigarette smokers who tried to quit in the past year, IYTS, 2000-2008



Almost 40% of middle school and 27% of high school smokers had tried three or more times to quit smoking in the past 12 months, but were unable to stay off cigarettes.

Figure 6  
Smokers by number of attempts to quit during the past 12 months

	middle school	high school
Number of times during the past 12 months you stopped smoking for one day or longer because you were trying to quit smoking.		
have not tried to quit	31%	48%
1 time	21%	15%
3 or more times	39%	27%
Total	90%	90%
Percent of current smokers that tried to quit at least once in the past 12 months.	69%	51%
Percent of current smokers who when they tried to quit but stayed off cigarettes for 30 days or less.	50%	36%

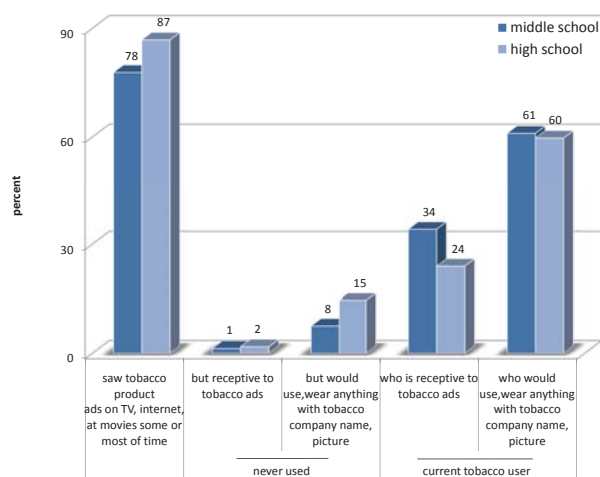
# EXPOSURE TO PRO-TOBACCO MESSAGES

Students were asked about their exposure both to tobacco company advertisements and to items with tobacco company names or pictures on them. Exposure and receptivity to tobacco advertising and promotions is a predictor of future tobacco use.

In 2008, more than 70% of middle school students and almost 90% of high school students reported having seen tobacco product advertising.

Among current tobacco users, 44% in middle school and 32% in high school had bought or been given an item with a tobacco company name or picture on it. Among those who had never used tobacco, only 5% in middle school and 4% in high school had been given or bought a tobacco company promotional item. Smokers were also much more willing to use or wear items with tobacco company names or signage than were students who had never smoked.

Figure 7  
Percent of exposed or receptive to pro-tobacco messages  
IYTS, 2008

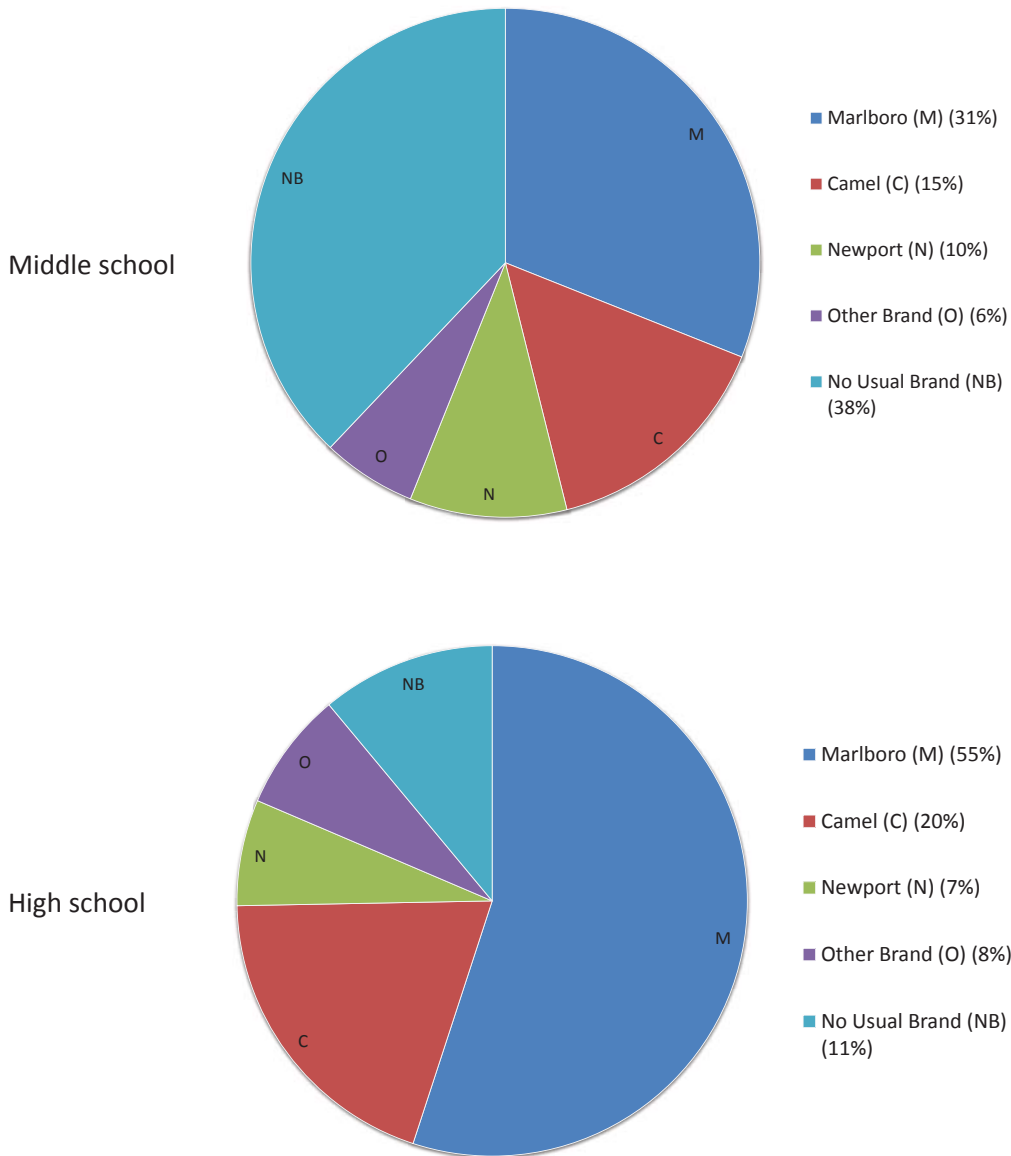


# USUAL BRAND OF CIGARETTES

Students who adopt a usual brand of cigarettes are more established smokers than those who have no usual brand. Among middle school smokers, 38% identified themselves as having no usual brand. By the time they were in high school, only 11% of smokers reported having no usual brand.

The most heavily advertised cigarette brands — Marlboro, Camel, Newport — are the most popular brands among both middle and high school students.

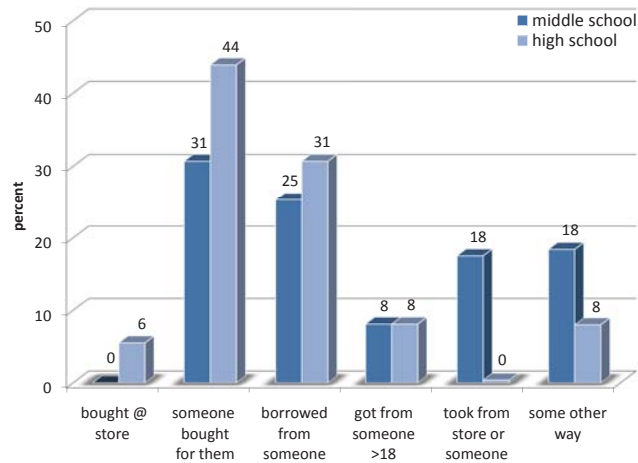
Figure 8  
Percent of current smokers by usual brand of cigarettes, IYTS, 2008



# HOW UNDERAGE SMOKERS ACQUIRE CIGARETTES

The survey asked smokers less than 18 years of age about how, during the past 30 days, they usually got their cigarettes. Only a small percentage of underage smokers actually purchase cigarettes for themselves. Most have someone else buy cigarettes for them or borrow them from a family member or friend.

Figure 9  
Percent of current smokers under age 18 years, by how they usually acquired their cigarettes, IYTS, 2008



In 2006, the first year for which these data are available, 25% of middle school and 37% of high school smokers usually acquired their cigarettes by having someone else complete the purchase for them. In 2006, 14% of middle school and 27% of high school smokers usually borrowed their cigarettes from someone else.

# EXPOSURE TO PREVENTION MESSAGES: JUST ELIMINATE LIES

Just Eliminate lies (JEL) is Iowa’s youth-led tobacco use prevention program. JEL’s outreach to high school students continues to be effective. Students state that JEL is “convincing”, “gets the message across”, and “has changed their attitudes about the tobacco industry”.

Figure 10  
Percent of all students who have heard about JEL, find JEL effective, IYTS, 2008

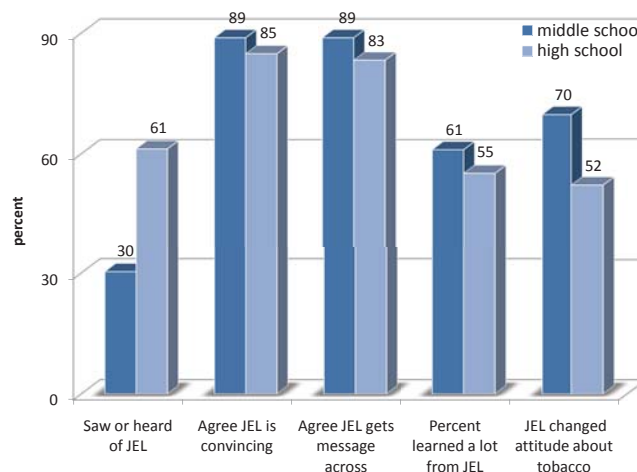


Figure 11  
Trends in knowledge, attitudes about JEL, 2002-2008

Percent that:	middle school					
	percent				% change	% change
	2002	2004	2006	2008	2002-08	2006-08
has seen or heard of JEL	78.9%	53.8%	36.7%	30.3%	-62%	-17%
agrees JEL is convincing	91.1%	87.4%	88.4%	88.8%	-3%	1%
agrees JEL gets message across	91.7%	89.2%	87.8%	88.8%	-3%	1%
learned a lot from JEL	78.3%	71.4%	69.7%	61.0%	-22%	-13%
finds JEL has changed their attitude about tobacco	76.3%	73.0%	76.0%	69.6%	-9%	-8%

Percent that:	high school					
	percent				% change	% change
	2002	2004	2006	2008	2002-08	2006-08
has seen or heard of JEL	85.3%	84.6%	72.9%	61.2%	-28%	-16%
agrees JEL is convincing	84.7%	86.9%	84.2%	84.8%	0%	1%
agrees JEL gets message across	84.4%	87.4%	84.3%	83.2%	-1%	-1%
learned a lot from JEL	61.8%	61.9%	61.7%	55.1%	-11%	-11%
finds JEL has changed their attitude about tobacco	56.1%	60.7%	59.8%	52.0%	-7%	-13%

# DISCUSSION

It is widely known that between 80% and 90% of cigarette smokers start to smoke when they are in middle or high school. With this knowledge, during the past ten years, in Iowa and across the nation, substantial public health resources have been directed at reducing tobacco use initiation among youth and helping youth who are addicted to tobacco to quit. Often these public health efforts have been met with resistance from the tobacco industry and with increased pro-tobacco counter-marketing – marketing specifically directed at encouraging tobacco use among youth.

The resources that the tobacco-industry spends on pro-tobacco messages aimed at youth have always exceeded the capacity of public health advocates to match. Nevertheless, efforts to reduce cigarette smoking among Iowa youth during the past ten years have met with remarkable success.

In middle school between 2000 and 2008, cigarette smoking dropped from 12% to just 3%, a 76% decrease. In high school during those eight years, cigarette smoking dropped from 33% to 20%, a decline of 40%.

Among middle school students the rate of use of smokeless tobacco and cigarettes declined almost 80% between 2000 and 2008, while, among high school students, smokeless tobacco use declined 13%.

However, not all students have been reached equally by recent public health efforts. High school males' use of smokeless tobacco remains virtually unchanged at 16% and now rivals cigarette use in that cohort. Among students who do smoke, trends do not indicate a steady decline in the number who are heavy or frequent cigarette smokers. In 2008, 43% of high school student smokers were frequent smokers (smoked on 20 of the past 30 days), virtually the same percentage as were frequent smokers in 2000. The reach of certain anti-tobacco media messages has declined during the past eight years. And, at least 45,000 Iowa youth continue to use tobacco.

Marketing to youth of mentholated cigarettes has resulted in youth smokers increasingly using Newport and other mentholated cigarettes. Mentholated cigarettes are no safer at best, and according to some research, much less safe than non-mentholated cigarettes as smokers tend to inhale more deeply when smoking them.

For the success of public health efforts of these past ten years to continue and grow, interventions that prevent and discourage youth from starting to use tobacco and that help them stop once they have become addicted must continue. The multi-level interventions of enforcing strict public policy on youth access to tobacco, increased tobacco taxes, youth-led youth anti-tobacco campaigns, mass media counter-marketing, local community anti-tobacco campaigns as well as the increased availability of cessation counseling and medications all must continue if the successes of the past decade are not to be lost and goals to reduce further tobacco use among Iowa youth are to be met.

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Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Division of Tobacco Use Prevention & Control

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