

June 2009

# Disparities in Youth Tobacco Use in Washington State

*Executive Summary*



Washington State Department of Health  
Tobacco Prevention and Control Program



# Identifying and Addressing Disparities in Youth Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease and death in the United States.\* Most recent data show that about 70,000 youth in Washington still smoke cigarettes and 45 kids start smoking every day.

While rates of youth cigarette smoking have declined overall in Washington since 2000, smoking among some groups of young people remains high. Additionally, data in recent years show more youth using other types of tobacco. For example, cigar smoking is now just as common as cigarette smoking, and more are using smokeless or chewing tobacco, smoking a pipe, and smoking bidis (flavored cigarettes).

This summary highlights key findings in youth tobacco use rates and the relationship between cigarette smoking and other behaviors and risk factors, including:

- Substance use, such as alcohol, marijuana, and other drug use.
- Risk factors at school, such as academic achievement, suspension, and safety.
- Health risk factors, such as skipping breakfast and depression.

The data in the report helped answer two key questions:

- Who are the youth most in need of tobacco prevention now?
- What other behaviors and risk factors associated with cigarette smoking do tobacco prevention programs need to consider?

These data are from more than 15,600 eighth- and tenth-grade students from across Washington who participated in the 2008 Healthy Youth Survey. Information about the Healthy Youth Survey is available at <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/hys> and [www.askhys.net](http://www.askhys.net).

## Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

The Washington State Department of Health began a comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in 2000. A primary goal of the program was to prevent youth from beginning to use tobacco.

The program has conducted a variety of activities to reach youth across the state, in their schools, communities, and homes. These efforts have included school-based prevention education activities, traditional and alternative media campaigns, tobacco prevention policy development, and data dissemination and analysis.



\*Mokdad AH, Marks JS, Stroup DF, Gerberding JL. Actual causes of death in the United States, 2000. JAMA. 2004 Mar 10;291(10):1238-45.

# Disparities in Youth Tobacco Use



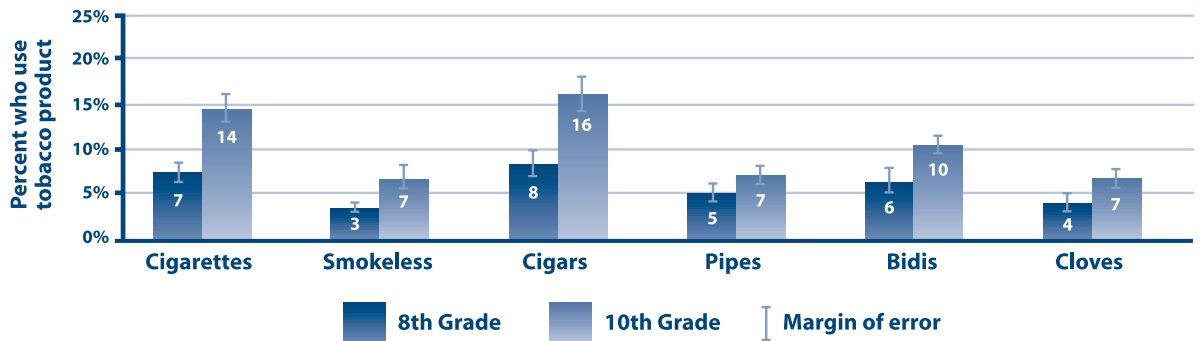
## Tobacco Product Use by Grade Level

In Washington, the rate of tobacco use in 2008 was 12 percent among eighth graders and 23 percent among tenth graders.

Cigarettes and cigars were the most commonly used types of tobacco among both eighth and tenth graders. Other products, such as smokeless tobacco, pipes, bidis, and cloves, were used less often than cigarettes and cigars.

Tenth graders had higher tobacco use rates for every type of tobacco compared to eighth graders. From eighth to tenth grade, cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and cigar use rates nearly doubled.

**Tobacco Use by Grade Level**  
(2008 HYS)



## Tobacco Product Use by Gender

Eighth-grade boys had higher rates of smokeless tobacco use and pipe smoking compared to girls. Tenth-grade boys had higher rates of all tobacco products compared to girls except for cigarette use, which was similar for boys and girls.

## Cigarette Smoking by Race/Ethnicity

Comparing cigarette smoking rates among youth in various racial/ethnic groups\* to White/Caucasian youth: eighth- and tenth-grade American Indian/Alaska Natives had higher rates, and tenth-grade Asians had lower rates.

## Cigarette Smoking by Socio-Economic Status

Eighth and tenth graders from homes with a lower socio-economic background were more likely to smoke cigarettes than those from a higher socio-economic background.

## Cigarette Smoking by Location (Urban/Rural)

Smoking rates did not vary between urban and rural communities for either eighth or tenth graders.

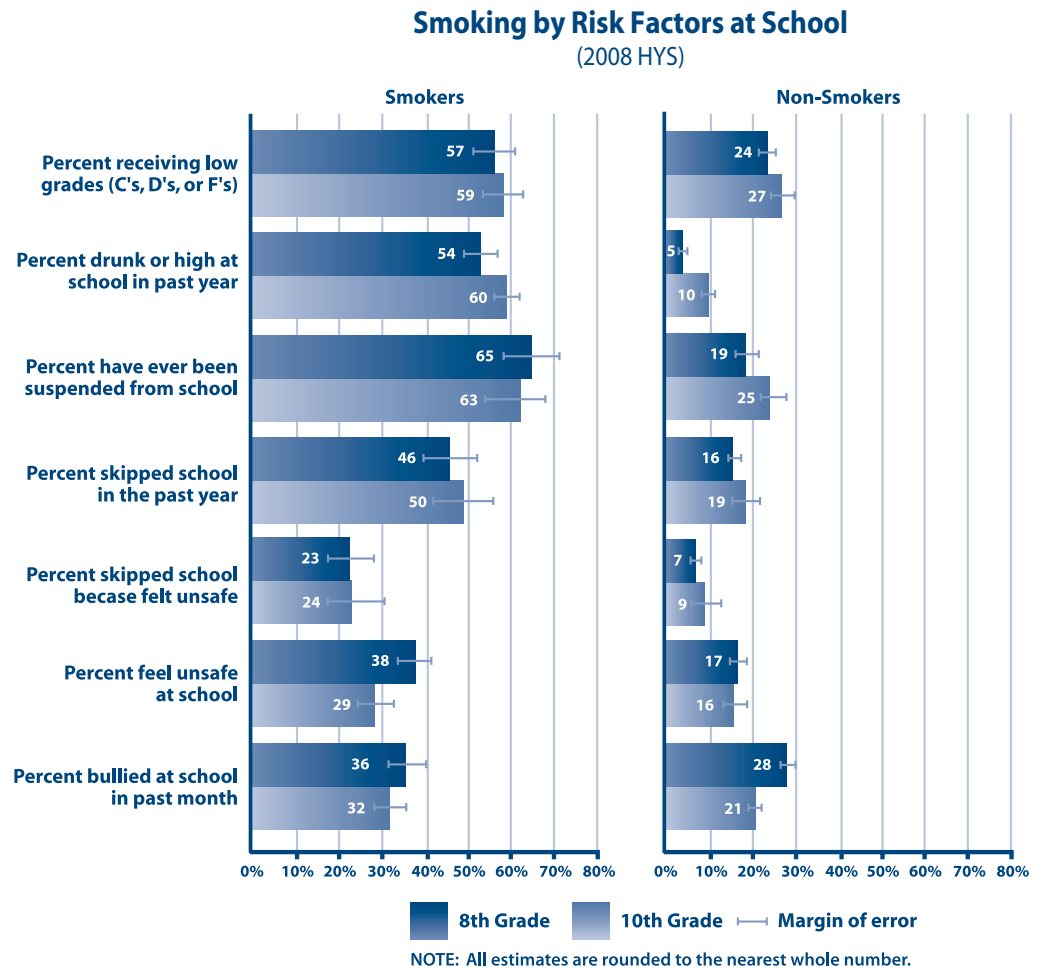
\*Racial/ethnic groups included American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

# Youth Smoking and Risk Factors

## Smoking Is Associated With Risk Factors at School

Risk factors at school were substantially higher among youth who smoked cigarettes as compared to non-smoking youth. Eighth- and tenth-grade smokers were more likely to:

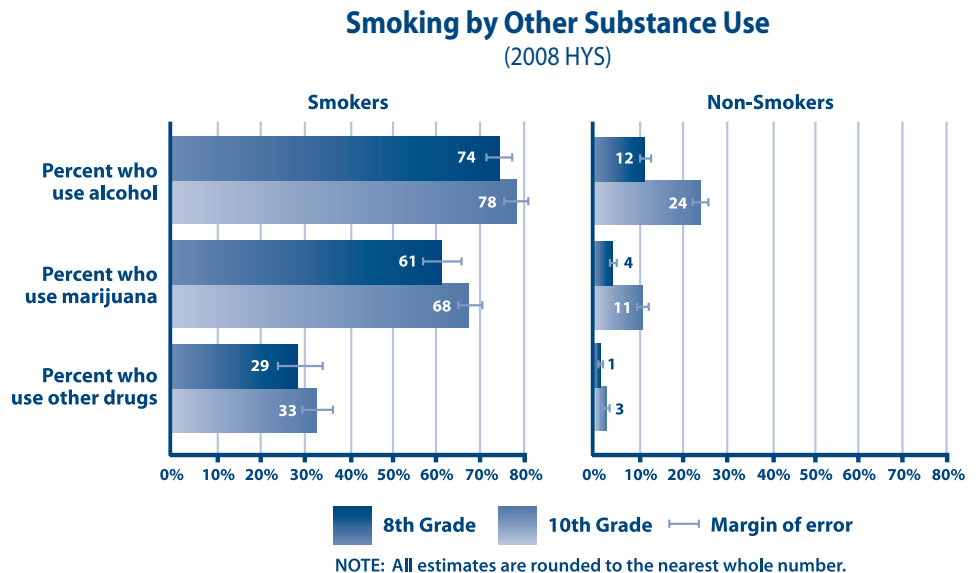
- Get C's, D's, and F's in school.
- Get drunk or high at school.
- Get suspended.
- Skip school.
- Skip school because they felt unsafe.
- Feel unsafe at school.
- Be bullied at school.



## Smoking Is Associated With Other Substance Use

Substance use was substantially higher among youth who smoked cigarettes as compared to non-smoking youth. Eighth- and tenth-grade smokers were more likely to:

- Drink alcohol.
- Use marijuana.
- Use other drugs (not including alcohol or marijuana).



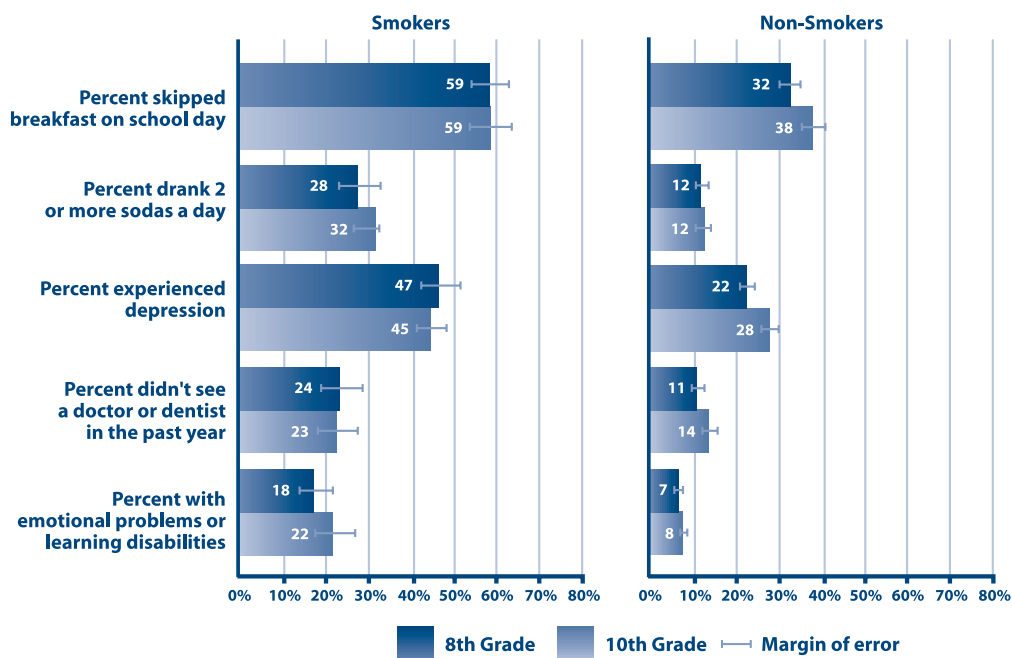
## Smoking Is Associated With Health Risks

Health risks were higher among youth who smoked cigarettes as compared to non-smoking youth. Eighth- and tenth-grade smokers were more likely to:

- Skip breakfast on a school day.
- Drink two sodas per day.
- Be depressed.
- Not see a doctor or dentist in the past year.
- Have an emotional problem or learning disability.

### Smoking by Health Risk Factors

(2008 HYS)



NOTE: All estimates are rounded to the nearest whole number.



# Next Steps

The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program is committed to continuously improving its data gathering and analysis capabilities to ensure it identifies populations at greatest risk of tobacco use.

The data in this report will help the program and its school, community, and statewide partners design programs and activities to improve the health of youth at greatest risk for tobacco use.

Since eighth- and tenth-grade youth who smoke are more likely to get lower grades in school than those who don't smoke, the program encourages school districts across the state to evaluate how tobacco prevention is addressed in local schools and to utilize available resources.

Washington's educational service districts receive funding to help all schools improve and enforce tobacco-free policies, provide intervention services for students, deliver research-based curricula, train teachers and staff, provide information to families, and assist administrators to address the link between tobacco use and the academic achievement gap.

School administrators, teachers, and counselors can contact their educational service district to receive tobacco prevention information and services. A listing of education service districts is available at [www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/other/edcoord.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/other/edcoord.htm).



## For More Information

Washington State Department of Health  
Tobacco Prevention and Control Program  
P.O. Box 47848 • Olympia, WA 98504-7848 • 360-236-3730 • [www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco](http://www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco)

This report is also available at [www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/news/facts.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/news/facts.htm).

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats.  
To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY 1-800-833-6388).



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