

North Carolina has a growing population, with 8,049,313 residents recorded in the 2000 Census.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 7 percent, or 577,508 individuals were between the ages of 20 and 24. An additional 285,378 were young adults of 18 or 19 years of age.

### Targeting Young Adults: The Tobacco Industry Need for “Replacement” Smokers

Young people are a critical target market for tobacco companies, who look to younger people as lucrative customers because of their longer potential years for smoking, and because companies must find new customers to replace the one in three people who die from using their products.

**“This young adult market, the 14-24 group,...represent[s] tomorrow’s cigarette business. As this 14-24 age group matures, they will account for a key share of the total cigarette volume for at least the next 25 years.”** (Presentation from C.A. Tucker, Vice President of Marketing, to the Board of Directors of RJR Industries, September 30, 1974)

Industry competition also means more advertising, because each tobacco company is continually looking for ways to increase its market share and promote use of its brand. Despite the evidence of harm caused by their products, (including over 4.8 million deaths globally per year), tobacco companies continue to cite the fact that their products are legal as justification for continued marketing.

To reach young adults, tobacco companies spend billions of dollars per year to develop and implement alluring advertising campaigns for youth markets. Figures from the Federal Trade Commission reported at [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org) show that between 1998 and 2001, the tobacco companies increased their marketing expenditures by more than 84 percent to a record \$12.7 billion a year, or \$34.8 million a day.



The industry has increased their advertising through special events, giveaways and flashy marketing in geographic areas, convenience stores, night clubs and college campuses frequented by young adults. Marketing through the use of images of young people is nothing new. However, the increase in spending on this age group and the use of newer techniques such as “bar promotions”<sup>2</sup> (sponsoring special clubs for smokers in college towns, providing merchandise and free cigarettes in bars, collecting names for databases, paying beautiful young women to smoke in bars and providing major incentives to bar owners to carry brand names) is particularly disturbing.

<sup>1</sup> <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/> Accessed 1/10/05.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Sepe, MS, Pamela M. Ling, MD, MPH, and Stanton A. Glantz, PhD. Smooth Moves: Bar and Nightclub Tobacco Promotions that Target Young Adults. *Am J Public Health*. 2002;92:414-419

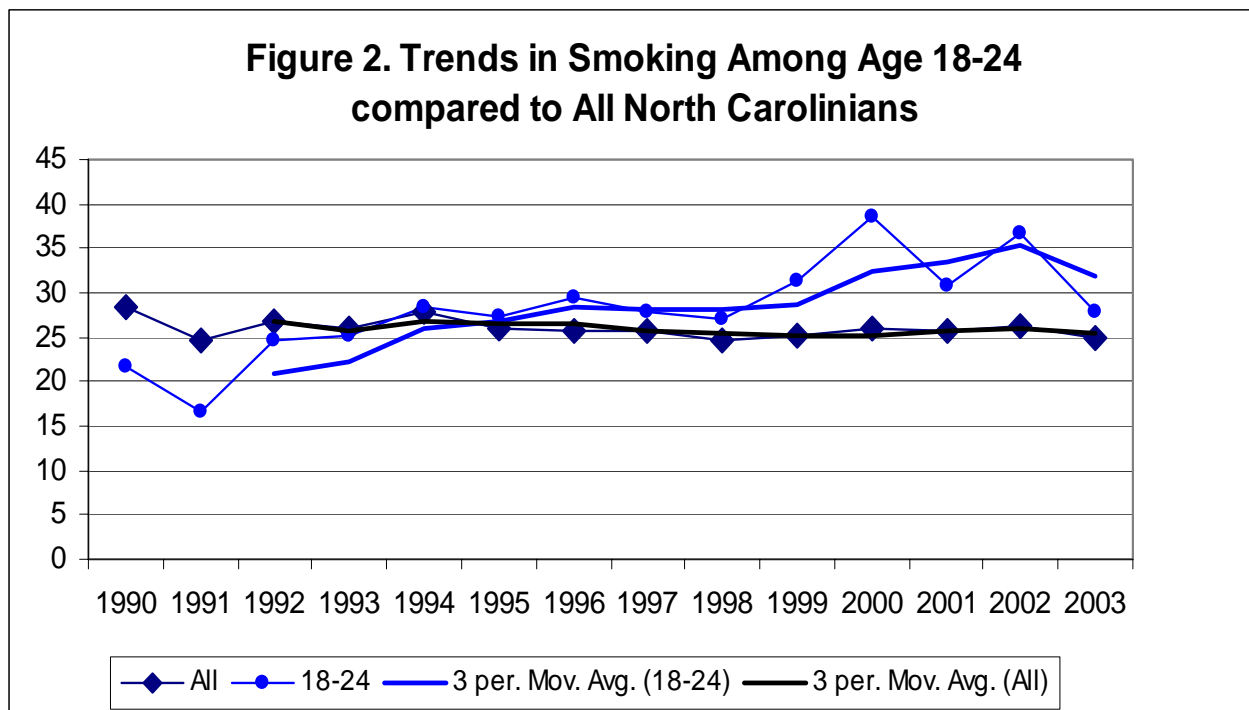
### Smoking Rates Among Young Adults

North Carolina relies on a surveillance system called the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) to provide us with data on smoking rates. The survey is conducted continuously and the data are summarized every year by the North Carolina Center for Health Statistics.<sup>3</sup>

Young adults aged 18 to 24 reported the highest rates of smoking among age groups, at about 30% during 2001 – 2003. Both males and females in this age group smoked at higher rates than their older counterparts.

A major concern for public health advocates in North Carolina is the trend toward higher smoking rates among young adults during the past decade. While the rate of smoking in the overall population remained fairly stable between 1990 and 2003, the rate among young adults actually rose during the same period. Figure 2 shows the reported rate by year and the “moving average”, which averages the rates for the previous 3 years. The moving average helps to “smooth out” the fluctuations between years due to small sample size.

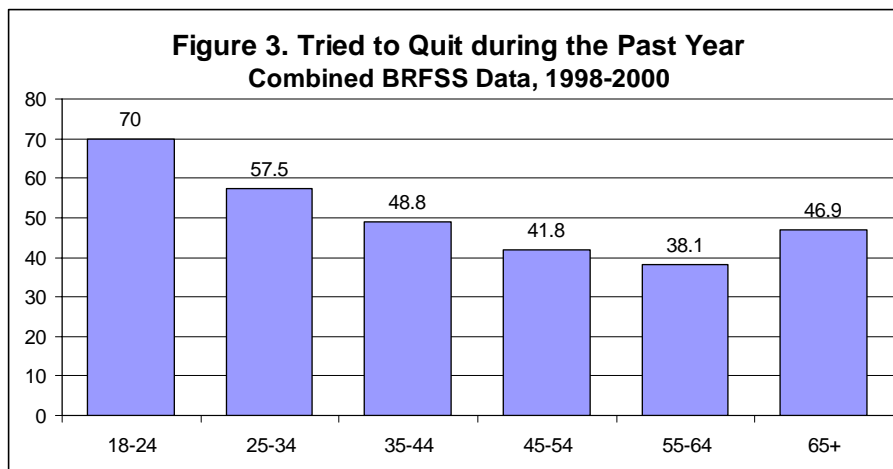
A substantial decline was reported during 2002 - 2003. However, it is difficult to conclusively state whether or not this trend has begun to reverse due to yearly fluctuations. Efforts to continue to monitor the rates among young adults through the BRFSS will be an important part of tobacco control in the coming years.



<sup>3</sup> NC State Center for Health Statistics. Data available at <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/brfss.cfm>.

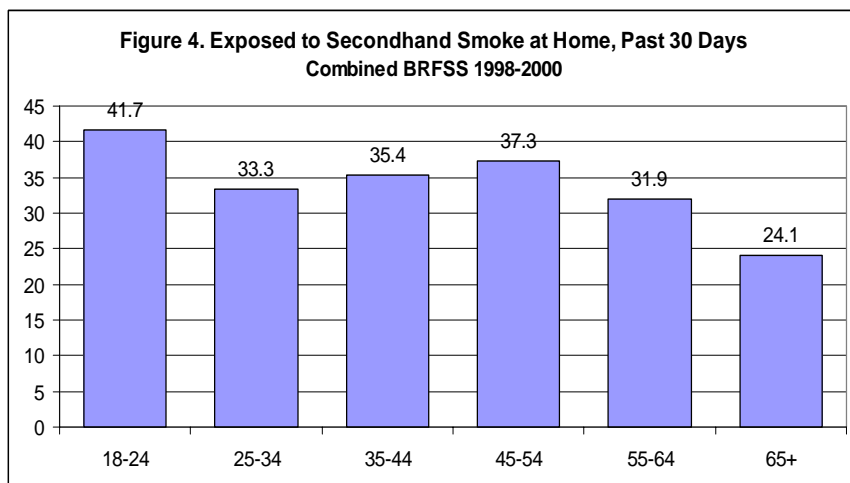
### Quitting

Interestingly, young adults have the highest smoking rate, and yet young adult smokers also report the highest number of attempts to quit.<sup>4</sup> Seven out of ten young adult smokers tried to quit at least once per year compared to 57.5% among aged 25-34, which is the next highest rate among age groups (Figure 3). Unfortunately, very few cessation services have been developed specifically for young adults. College settings have just begun to encourage student quitting, and initial results show some success using policy change (smoke free dorms and campuses) and education (social norms campaigns).<sup>5, 6</sup> Other strategies for non-college populations have yet to be explored, but may include a focus on creating tobacco-free worksites and promoting telephone quitline services, (1-800-Quitnow) which are proven ways to help people quit.



### Secondhand Smoke – Are We Protected?

Young adults deserve protection from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, which is the smoke coming off of a lit cigarette or exhaled from the mouth of a smoker. Secondhand smoke has increasingly been linked to life-threatening heart and asthma attacks and long-term health conditions. Youth who live or work in smoke-free environments are less likely to become smokers, while smokers are more likely to quit.<sup>7</sup> *At Home.* Young adults reported high rates of exposure to secondhand smoke within the home. Figure 4 shows that over 40% were exposed to smoke in their home during the past month, the highest for all age groups.



<sup>4</sup> In order to obtain a more stable sample, we combined BRFSS data from 1998 through 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Wechsler H, Lee JE, Rigotti NA. Cigarette Use by College Students in Smoke-Free Housing: Results of a National Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2001; 20(3): 202-207.

<sup>6</sup> Case studies from UW and VCU. Available at [www.socialnorms.org/CaseStudies/tobacco.php](http://www.socialnorms.org/CaseStudies/tobacco.php) Accessed 3/30/05.

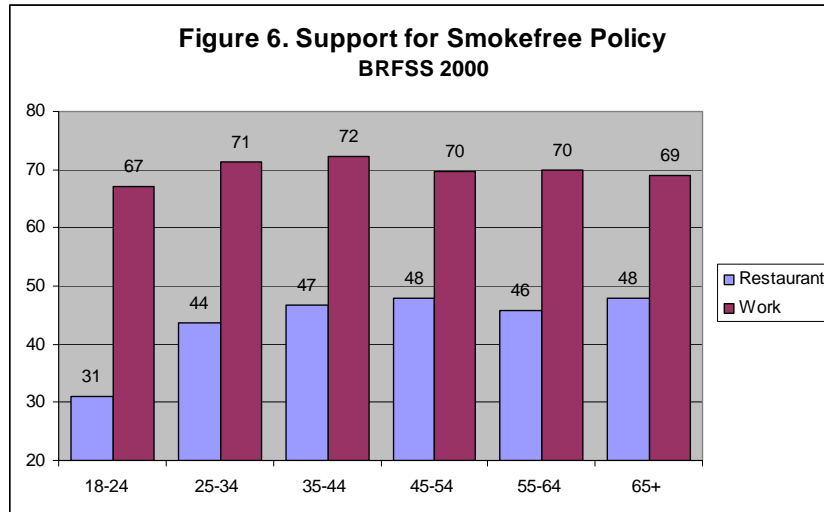
<sup>7</sup> Farkas AJ, Gilpin EA, White MM, Pierce JP. Association between household and workplace smoking restrictions and adolescent smoking. *JAMA* 2000;284:717-722

*At Work.* Twenty six percent (over one in four young adults) reported that their worksite did *not* have policies protecting them from secondhand smoke in public and/or private areas. This is slightly more than the 22.5% reported by the overall state population.

### Policy Matters – Are We Supportive?

Unfortunately, the little data that we have available suggest the young adults are less supportive of public policies that have been proven to reduce tobacco addiction and exposure to secondhand smoke, including restricting smoking in public places, increased taxation on cigarettes and adding cessation benefits to health insurance packages.

According to results from BRFSS special questions in 2000, *less than one-third of young adults supported*



*smoke free restaurants*, the lowest of all age groups (Figure 4). While twice as many supported smokefree worksite policies, young adults still showed less support for this key policy area than other age groups. Education on the importance of policy initiatives for prevention of death and disability caused by tobacco is needed among young adults, and building support will be critical for success at reducing the cost of tobacco for future generations of North Carolinians.

### Young Adult Advocacy in North Carolina

North Carolina is home to a strong group of advocates who are working to educate and protect young adults from further harm. Several campuses in North Carolina have completed successful policy change campaigns to create smokefree residence halls and campus communities. Others are conducting peer education on tobacco effects, producing radio shows and developing merchant education to reduce advertising and access on or new campus. New initiatives are

currently underway to reach more young adults in community colleges and other university settings across the state.

**Student survey finds that majority of students want smoke-free residence halls.**

In spring 2003 we surveyed over 300 NCCU students about tobacco use on campus. Here's what we found:

- Fewer than 20% reported using tobacco.
- Almost three-fourths of students living on campus reported smelling tobacco smoke in their dorms.
- Two thirds of students living on campus said they'd prefer a smoke-free residence hall.

What could be clearer? The air in our dorms.

Sign the SCAT petition for smoke-free dorms.

<p><b>Our Vision</b> Eagles soaring above &amp; beyond tobacco use at NCCU.</p>	<p>Help us create campus tobacco policies that protect all members of the NCCU community.</p>
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To learn more about these efforts, or to become involved in advocacy to protect young adults, contact Melanie Davis at the Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch ([melanie.davis@ncmail.net](mailto:melanie.davis@ncmail.net).)

*Left: Campus newspaper ad from the Student Coalition Against Tobacco (SCAT) policy campaign at North Carolina Central University in Durham*