



# Student Smoking Spring 2007

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this survey is on students' smoking behavior and attitudes related to smoking. Included in the survey are questions concerning students' tobacco use, their perceptions of the risks of smoking and of secondhand smoke, and their attitudes toward clean air policies. This survey, conducted by Student Affairs Research and Assessment, was administered at the request of Penn State's Office of Health Promotion and Education. Similar surveys were conducted in 1999 and 2004 allowing comparisons over time for several of the questions.

In total, 1,574 undergraduate students responded to the survey for a 36.6% response rate. By phone, 523 responded, and 1,051 participated by Web. The confidence interval for the total sample is +/-2.41%.

Of the respondents, 82.5% are between 18 and 21 years of age, 51.1% are male, 85.5% are White/Caucasian, 55.5% live off campus, and 55.5% are juniors or seniors. For additional information on the Pulse methodology, please visit <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/qa.shtml>.

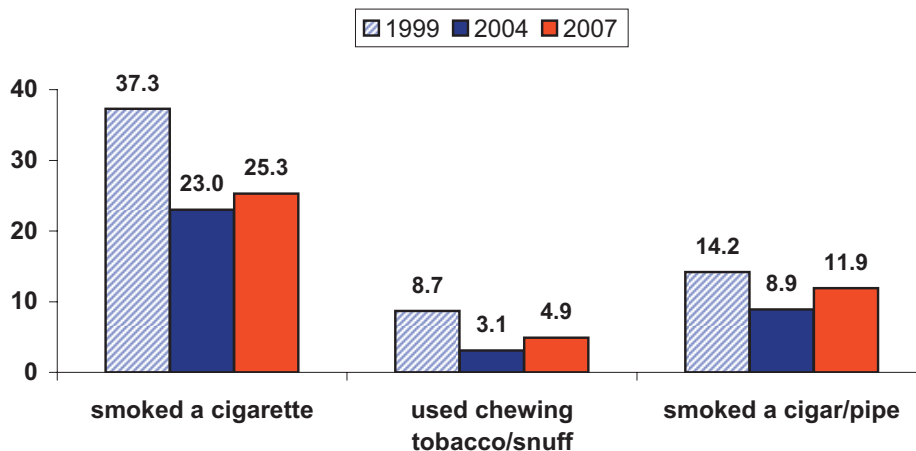
## FINDINGS

### Tobacco Use

All students were asked about their tobacco use in the last 30 days. In Chart 1, the percentages of students who had smoked a cigarette, used chewing tobacco/snuff, or smoked a cigar/pipe are presented. Data suggest a decline in tobacco use among Penn State undergraduate students since 1999 but a slight increase since 2004. Furthermore, comparisons indicate that men smoke more than women but that white students and students of color smoke at similar rates (data not shown).

**Students' smoking behavior and attitudes related to smoking**

Chart 1. Percentage who Used Tobacco in the Last 30 Days



For more information please visit Student Affairs Research and Assessment at <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara>



Penn State Pulse is a project of Student Affairs Research and Assessment.  
For further information, please contact Dr. Andrea Dowhower.  
222 Boucke, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 863-1809, [ald101@psu.edu](mailto:ald101@psu.edu)

Division of Student Affairs  
U.Ed. STA 07-102

---

---

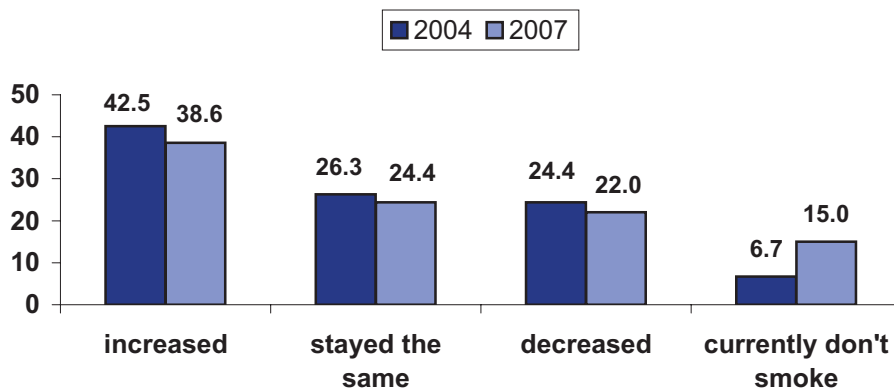
## Smoking Behavior

When all students were asked to describe their current smoking behavior, 72.1% responded they don't smoke; 13.3% smoke mostly in social situations; 5.8% smoke cigarettes every day; 5.5% used to smoke but quit; and 3.2% smoke occasionally (these percentages are similar to what was found in 2004) (data not shown).

When students who smoked<sup>1</sup> were asked a series of questions about their smoking behavior, the data reveal the following:

- they average 4.27 (compared to 4.85 in 2004) cigarettes on the days they smoke (data not shown),
- 30.7% (compared to 37.5% in 2004) typically smoke 5 or more cigarettes on the days they smoke (data not shown),
- 69.6% (compared to 76.0% in 2004) smoked before coming to Penn State (data not shown),
- 38.6% (compared to 42.5% in 2004) indicated their smoking increased since coming to Penn State (see Chart 2),

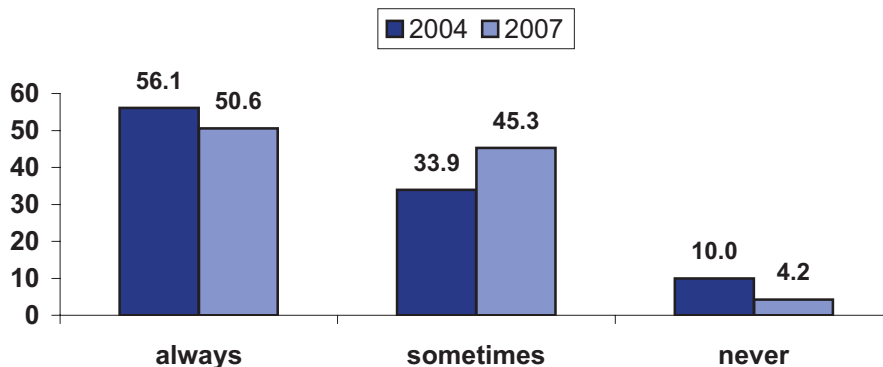
**Chart 2: Change in Smoking Behavior Since Coming to Penn State (percentage of students who smoked)**



In addition, among students who smoked:

- 50.6% (compared to 56.1% in 2004) responded that their smoking always coincides with drinking alcohol (see Chart 3),
- 63.0% (compared to 65.7% in 2004) have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lives (data not shown), and
- 77.1% (compared to 76.0% in 2004) do not have their first cigarette until after they have been awake for over an hour (data not shown).

**Chart 3. Frequency in Which Smoking Coincides with Drinking Alcohol (percentage of students who smoked)**



---

---

<sup>1</sup>These include students who indicated they used to smoke but quit, smoked occasionally, smoked every day, or were social smokers.

Students were asked the most influential reason they smoked; 42.4% (compared to 35.5% in 2004) responded that drinking is the most influential reason they smoke (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Primary Reason Students Smoke**

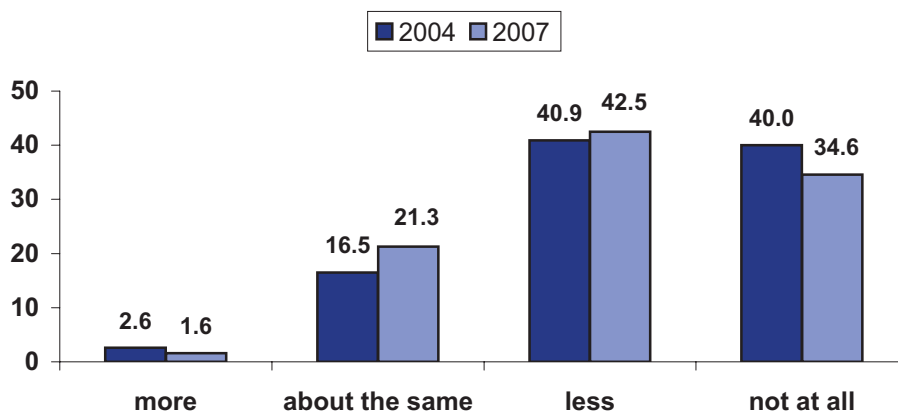
Most influential reason students smoke:	2004 percent	2007 percent
Drinking (parties/bars/tailgates)	35.5	42.4
Friends who smoke (peer pressure)	16.1	18.7
Personal stress	13.2	10.8
Addiction/habit	14.5	9.4
Academic stress	3.9	5.8
Other social occasions (meals/sports/sex)	7.1	5.5
Other	9.6	7.4

### Quitting

Of students who smoked on a regular basis (some days or every day),

- 66.2% (compared to 76.5% in 2004) said they are “very likely” to quit smoking, and another 28.8% (compared to 17.6% in 2004) said they are “somewhat likely” (data not shown),
- 38.1% (compared to 40.5% in 2004) had not tried to quit in the last 12 months, while 40.3% (compared to 34.5% in 2004) had tried to quit 1 to 3 times, and 21.6% (compared to 25.0% in 2004) tried to quit 4 or more times, (data not shown),
- 39.0% indicated they are aware of the Quit and Win Challenge and other smoking cessation services at University Health Services<sup>2</sup> (data not shown), and
- 34.6% (compared to 40.0% in 2004) predicted they would not smoke at all after graduating from Penn State, and 42.5% (compared to 40.9% in 2004) predicted they would smoke less (see Chart 4).

**Chart 4. Predicted Smoking Behavior after Graduating**



### Perceptions of Risk

All students (regardless of their smoking status) were asked about their awareness or perceptions related to the risks of smoking and secondhand smoke.

- Approximately 84% (compared to 91% in 2004) agreed that smoking is physically addictive (data not shown).
- Eighty-seven percent (compared to 93% in 2004) agreed that secondhand smoke is harmful to one’s health (data not shown).
- In Table 2, data are presented on students’ awareness of the medical conditions associated with smoking. In addition, in 2007, 94.0% believe that smoking contributes to wrinkles/premature aging of skin (data not shown).

**Table 2: Medical Conditions Associated with Smoking (percent who agree)**

Caused by smoking	2004 percent	2007 percent	Caused by secondhand smoke	2004 percent	2007 percent
Lung cancer	99.0	99.0	Respiratory problems in children	95.1	96.2
Heart attack	82.6	86.0	Lung cancer in adults	92.1	91.9
Stroke	77.3	79.1	Heart disease in adults	76.6	75.3
Impotence	54.4	58.1	Colon cancer	40.9	39.2

<sup>2</sup>Comparable data are not available from 2004.

---

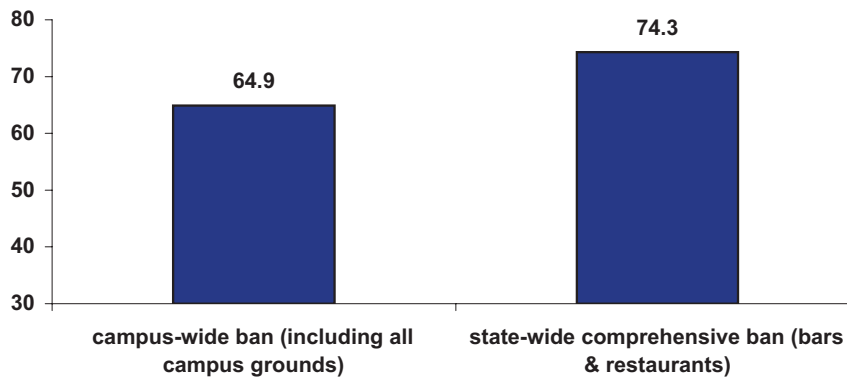
---

## **Clean Air Policies**

All students were also asked a series of questions regarding clean air policies. Students said the following:<sup>3</sup>

- 61.6% (compared to 28.0% in 2004) are aware of the Penn State policy banning smoking near most campus buildings (data not shown),
- 64.9% support a campus-wide ban on smoking (see Chart 5),
- 74.3% support a state-wide, comprehensive ban on smoking (similar to the bans in New York and New Jersey) (see Chart 5),
- the majority of students responded that the health effects of even a minimal exposure to secondhand smoke is the primary reason for their support of such bans (53.9% for campus-wide ban and 59.8% for state-wide ban) (data not shown),
- the smell of and irritation caused by secondhand smoke also contributed to support of the smoking bans,
- 45.1% reported being aware of the student-run smoke-free bar campaign (data not shown), and
- 15.1% indicated having smoke-free bar options in State College increases how frequently they go out (45.2% said it hasn't changed the frequency in which they go out; 2.9% indicated they go out less; and 36.8% said they didn't go out.

**Chart 5. Percent who Support Smoking Bans**



<sup>3</sup>Comparable data from 2004 are not available for most of the questions in this section.

---

---