

RESULTS OF THE 1999 POLISH YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY: A LOOK AT TOBACCO INDUSTRY VS. TOBACCO CONTROL POLICY

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Introduction: Previous studies showed that smoking prevalence among Polish teenagers rapidly increased in the 1990s, especially among 15-years-old girls (16% - 1990, 28% - 1998). It was probably an effect of massive cigarette advertising. However, tobacco control policy was also developed at that time and had potential impact on smoking behaviours of teenagers.

Objective: To evaluate exposure and relationship of Polish schoolchildren to tobacco industry and tobacco control policy. **Method:** National school-based randomised survey of 3,209 schoolchildren aged 13-15 was conducted in December 1999 (as part of the WHO GYTS).

Results: Study showed that 34% of urban and 20% of rural students smoked tobacco in last 30 days. Children were also massively exposed to enforced passive smoking (EPS) at their homes (55% of never smokers and 82% of current smokers) and public places (respectively, 52% and 92%). Around 50% of current smokers and 30% of never smokers did not consider EPS hazards as harmful to them. Their smoking behaviours and exposure to EPS substantially influenced their willingness to ban smoking in public places (respectively, 92% and 50%). Percentages of teenagers who saw pro- and anti-tobacco media messages were very high but balanced (approx. 90%). However, too many teenagers tobacco industry offered free cigarettes (60% - current smokers, 30% - never smokers) or objects with a cigarette brand logo (respectively, 32% and 20% have got these objects). There are weak social barriers in the access of minors to cigarettes. Around 10% smoked at their homes and 45% purchased cigarettes in stores. Only 50% were taught about smoking hazards in school and 45% discussed there reasons why teenagers smoke.

Conclusion: This suggests to intensify youth programs but major changes have to be made in their environment. Most important is to enforce existing legal regulations and to build up social norms for protecting children from tobacco.