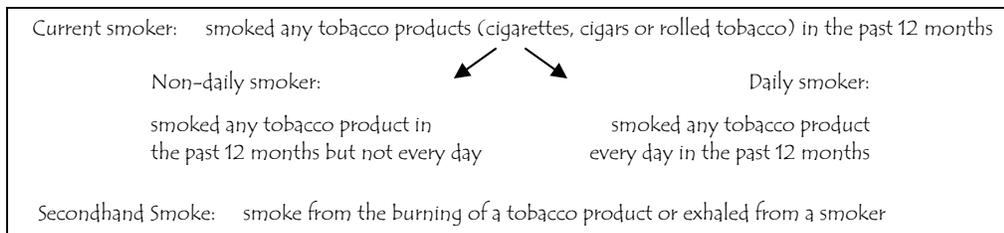
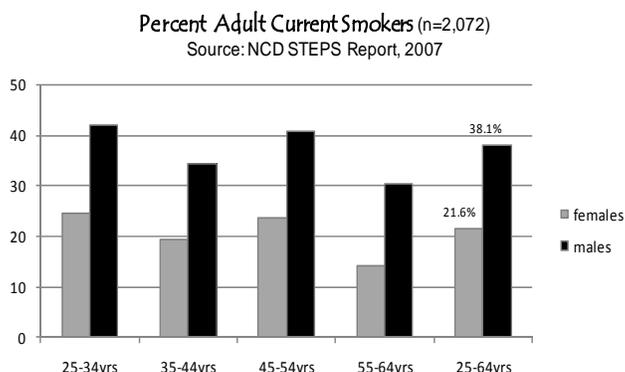


# What we know about tobacco use in American Samoa

Tobacco smoke contains 4,000 chemicals, 50 of which are known to be carcinogenic (1). Smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke has been linked to cancer of the lung, oral cavity, bladder, liver and cervix, respiratory infections, and adverse effects on infant and child development (1,4).



## Adults



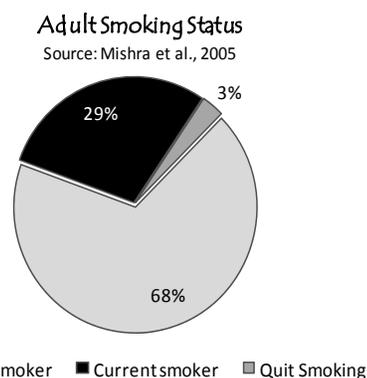
The 2004 STEPS assessment of non-communicable disease risk factors in American Samoa found 29.9% of adults are 'current smokers'—21.6% of females and 38.1% of males (2). This rate has remained stable for the past two decades with a slight increase in female smokers (2,3).

Amongst current smokers, the majority, 77.8%, are daily smokers. Most male smokers start the habit before more women and smoke more. The

mean initiation age for males who smoke daily is 20 and they smoke an average of 14.2 manufactured cigarettes a day. The mean age for a female to start daily smoking is 21 and women smoke an average of 12.4 manufactured cigarettes a day. Smoking also appears to be a lifelong behavior as current daily smokers report smoking an average of 19.9 (males) and 17.4 (females) years (2). According to a 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey of 752 adults, 80% of current smokers report trying to quit in the last 12 months and 65% would accept free cessation treatment (3).

Smoking is more common amongst Samoans residing in American Samoa than in Hawaii or Los Angeles. The strongest predictors of smoking include being younger, male, married, less educated, with lower income and more acculturated--having adopted more Western ways. Current smokers are less likely than non-smokers to identify smoking as a risk factor for developing cancer or to agree that most deaths from lung cancer are caused by cigarette smoking. But the majority of both smokers and non-smokers feel smoking while pregnant may harm the baby and even if a person has smoked for more than 20 years there is a health benefit to quitting (4).

Overall smoking cessation rates are low (4). But a survey of 179 American Samoan women age 40 or older found 18% were former smokers (49% non-smokers, 33% current smokers). Women with 4 or more years college education were the most likely to have quit smoking (5).



# What we know about tobacco use in American Samoa

## College Students

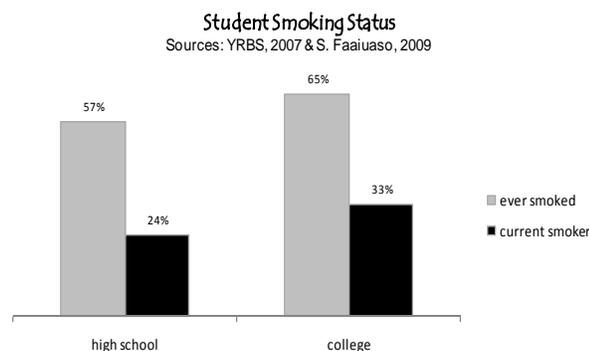
A survey of 100 American Samoa Community College students ages 18-24 found 65% had tried smoking and 33% are current daily smokers. The majority recall seeing anti-tobacco use media messages and no smoking signs, but three-quarters have seen a smoker in a restricted area and have asked a friend or a family member to not smoke near them. College students feel secondhand smoke exposure is equally as harmful as firsthand smoking. The majority (70%) report being exposed to secondhand smoke daily. More than half (57%) of college students live with at least one smoker and 95% have at least one friend who smokes. College students are primarily exposed to secondhand smoke from their peers on campus or in popular public 'hangouts' such as stores, parks, parking lots, and bus stops. Most (71%) are in favor of a smoking ban especially on buses and around schools and the hospital (1).

## Youth

The 2007 American Samoa Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 3,625 public high school students grades 9-12 revealed that 57% have tried cigarette smoking. In the past 30 days, 24% have used cigarettes or cigars and 5% have used smokeless tobacco. Nine percent (9%) of youth appear to be 'regular smokers', consuming cigarettes 20 or more days in the past 30 days. Boys are twice as likely as girls to be current regular smokers, often buying their own cigarettes at a store or gas station. Among students who currently smoke cigarettes, 84% tried to quit in the past year.

Students are receiving mixed messages about tobacco use. Nearly all (94%) college students recall being taught about the dangers of smoking in high school, but 81% remember seeing a teacher smoking on campus (1) because only 4% of high schools prohibit all tobacco use, by all persons, at all times, in all campus locations (6).

Tobacco-free school zone signs are posted at 42% of schools but enforcement appears to be lacking with 10% of students reporting smoking cigarettes and 3% using smokeless tobacco on school property in the last 30 days. Males are nearly 3 times more likely to have used chewing tobacco on school property one or more days in the past month (6).



## Sources

(1) Faaiuas S. *Youth exposure to secondhand smoke*. Presentation given at the American Samoa Community Cancer Investigator Program Community Forum, May 13, 2009. American Samoa Community College. NCI # U01CA114590 (2) American Samoa NCD Risk Factors STEPS Report. World Health Organization. March 2007. (3) American Samoa Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2002. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (4) Mishra SI, Osann K, Luce PH. *Prevalence and predictors of smoking behavior among Samoans in three geographical regions*. *Ethnicity & Disease* 15:2,305-15. 2005. (5) Krosch S and Tuitoelau V. *Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Cancer in American Samoa*. Pacific-CEED Legacy Project formative research for the development of a radio serial drama. April 2009. CDC #5U58DP000976-03 (6) American Samoa Youth Risk Behavior Survey Summary, 2007. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American Samoa Department of Education.