



## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

Almost equal percentages of adults and adolescents in South African are current users of cigarettes. Adolescent specific tobacco control interventions are necessary to avert the potential escalation in tobacco-related health care costs and especially to protect the health of the future workforce of SA.

Despite low ever-smoking and current smoking rates among females compared to males, an equal percentage of females and males have smoked their first cigarettes before the age of 10. The implication is that female smoking rates in SA, as in the international arena, can be expected to increase in the future. Therefore, concerted efforts are needed to prevent this international trend from flourishing in South Africa.

The data suggests a decreasing age of initiation of cigarette usage among South African adolescents. Tobacco control education therefore needs to start at a very young age. However in SA, very limited levels of tobacco-related issues are currently discussed in the formal school curriculum. Even if this education is introduced at an early age, possibly at school inception, it needs to continue throughout the schooling career. While the study could provide an indication of whether tobacco control was taught in the school, it cannot comment on the content or intensity of the lessons given. It is therefore recommended that further research be pursued in this area.

South African adolescents are faced with the double burden of cigarette use and the use of other forms of tobacco products such as chewing tobacco, snuff, etc. Determinant studies are needed to explore why "Black/African" learners display higher levels of usage of other tobacco products. In addition, tobacco control interventions must address all forms of tobacco use.

The level of underage sales of tobacco products is unacceptably high. A combination of strategies is required to enforce a ban of underage sales viz.:

- 1) create awareness of the regulations and the rationale that underpins them
- 2) lobby the community and suitable agencies to enforce the tenets of the law
- 3) prosecute transgressors of the law.

Adolescents want to stop smoking, but are experiencing difficulty in trying to quit and are

displaying signs of addiction. The traditional practice has been to develop prevention programmes for adolescents and cessation programmes for adults. However, the data supports the need for the development of both prevention and cessation interventions specifically designed for adolescents.

Adolescent exposure to environmental tobacco smoke both in the home and outside of the home is high. In addition, awareness of the effects of environmental tobacco smoke is limited. Community wide interventions are necessary to educate, encourage and support adults so that they can protect themselves and their children from environmental tobacco smoke.

A significant proportion of SA adolescents have been exposed to extensive tobacco advertising, marketing and promotion. It is therefore commendable that the new tobacco legislation limits adolescent exposure to tobacco advertising, marketing and promotion. It would be expedient to monitor how the tobacco industry adapts its strategy to recruit young smokers.

While the sample was not stratified by "race", the results indicate significant differences along historical "racial lines". Furthermore, provincial differences do emerge in the findings. While the study is representative of the country at large, in order to tailor programmes to the needs of the various provinces and "race" groups, provincial and "racial" specific determinant studies are needed.

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey should be repeated periodically and it should become an integral part of the surveillance system to monitor tobacco-use. It would also serve to evaluate the effectiveness of the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control.

In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of tobacco-using behaviour and related determinants among youth, this school-based survey needs to be expanded to youth who are outside of the school environment, for example those who are homeless or in correctional facilities.