

messages, the low cigarette prices and the lack of monitoring tobacco use in practically every country of Latin America. Targeting young people with preventive programs against tobacco use, will help to prevent the life-long dependence on nicotine that is associated with several diseases and to reduce the severe economic and social impact related to illness and premature death.

## Methods

### *Sampling procedures*

The sampling frame included 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders from regular schools in 1999. Two-stage cluster sample design was used to produce a representative sample of those students. Schools were selected with probability proportional to school enrollment size.

A systematic equal probability sampling of classes from each participating school in the survey was the second stage sampling and all students in the selected classes were eligible to participate in the study.

As in many other countries, in Costa Rica the overall response rate for the GYTS was very high. The response rate of the 62 selected schools was 100% and the student's response rate was 90.4% from the 5114 students selected. A weighting factor was applied to each student record to adjust for non-responses and for the varying probabilities of selection

### *Data gathering*

A self-administered core questionnaire containing 57 multiple-choice questions and 14 further questions to meet local needs was administered. Permission procedures and the protection of student's privacy were possible by anonymous and voluntary participation. Student's responses were registered directly on an answer sheet that could be scanned by a computer.

Data was collected by 20 surveyors from the National Institute on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. The fieldwork was done from September 16 to October 22, 1999.

As can be seen in (Table 1) most of the students have 15 years of age or less and most of them are in the first years of middle schools.

Table 1  
Sociodemographic characteristics of 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders  
Costa Rica, 1999

Variable	Frequency	Weighted percent
<b>SEX</b>		
Male	2472	48.1
Female	2126	51.9
Missing	25	
<b>AGE</b>		
11 years	15	0.4
12 years	158	3.8
13 years	1198	28.8
14 years	1412	29.2
15 years	1229	25.4
16 years	423	9.0
17 years	160	3.5
Missing	28	
<b>GRADE</b>		
7 <sup>th</sup> year	1898	47.8
8 <sup>th</sup> year	1567	29.0
9 <sup>th</sup> year	1138	23.2
Missing	20	

## Results

### *Prevalence*

Students who had ever smoked cigarettes represent a 46.4% of the sample. Interestingly this percentage prevalence is higher than the one found in the general population four years earlier<sup>1</sup> and higher if compared with other studies in costarican youth<sup>2</sup>.

As showed in (Table 2), girls were more likely than boys to have ever smoked cigarettes, being a current smoker and even a frequent current smoker. Although, differences are not statistically significant. Non published studies in Costa Rica have revealed similar tendencies in middle