

2000 Suriname Global Youth Tobacco Survey

Introduction

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) formed part of the Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), at which technical support was given by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, U.S. The GYTS was the first phase of a project of the United Nations Foundation for International Partnerships (UNIFIP), "Building Alliances and Taking Action to Create a Generation of Tobacco-free Children and Youth". The purpose of this project was to gather evidence, extend technical support and create strategic collaborations in order to call attention, in a positive manner, to the negative results of smoking and to stimulate and support children and young people at making a choice for a healthy, active and tobacco-free lifestyle. Based on the results from the GYTS, relevant programs can then be planned, executed and evaluated.

The GYTS has been executed in various parts of the world since December 1998. Barbados was the first Caribbean country to participate, namely in 1999 via UNICEF, and an increased participation in the year 2000, of countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, was encouraged. Via the PAHO/WHO Office of Caribbean Program Coordination (CPC) and the PAHO Secretariat in Washington, U.S., invitations had been sent earlier that year to countries in the Caribbean and Latin America in which the conditions for participation were also mentioned. The main conditions were: the appointment of a research-coordinator who would be in charge of the research; providing data about the number of young people between age 13 and 15, attending school, who would be the target group; and the execution of the research in the period prior to the start of the school-vacation. Thanks to the work of Dr. Barnett of the PAHO/WHO Office of Caribbean Program Coordination (CDC), Suriname has participated in the GYTS activities since 1999. In the same year, Gerold Vliet of the Foundation World Wide Promotions was appointed by PAHO as research-coordinator of the project for Suriname with support of the Ministry Of Public Health in Suriname.

Purpose:

- The purpose of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey is, among others, providing a standard research- and measuring instrument and the methodology for gathering information with regard to smoking among young people and relevant issues which can be used for setting up programs and making comparisons between countries.
- Gathering up-to-date information with regard to the health problems amongst young people and adolescents related to smoking.

Please note that the absolute numbers of certain groups (for example, ETO, or otherwise young people age 12) are too low to reach definite conclusions in this regard. The observed values rather indicate trends therefore.

Methodology

50 VOS schools in Suriname participated in the period July – August 2000, in a research into the smoking habit among youngsters: the Global Youth Tobacco Survey research project was aimed at school-going youngsters between age 13 – 15. The selection among classes of the participating schools was made arbitrary. All students of the selected classes could participate in the research. The cooperation of both students and teachers has been optimal. A total number of 1788 persons have been surveyed.

I. Smoking habit

19 questions have been asked with regard to the smoking habit of students.

Total number

In answer to the question “*Have you ever experimented with cigarettes?*”, 54.3 % of the interviewees said “*Yes*”. This means that more than half of the teenagers going to school in Suriname, are ‘ever smokers’. This is indeed a high percentage. 16.3% also admitted, moreover, to have smoked on at least one or more days within the last 30 days. It gets alarming when 8.5%, so almost a tenth of all teenage youngsters in Suriname admitted to have used other forms of tobacco in the past 30 days. These were rolling tobacco, cigars, small cigars etc. It would not be a surprise if further research showed that marijuana is also used. There are already fervent smokers amongst these groups of pupils and students since, in total, 3% admitted to have smoked on at least 20 days within the past month when they were asked the question “*Have you smoked on at least 20 days within the past 30 days?*”. This percentage corresponds with the group of young people who have been surveyed and whose answer was ‘yes’ (4.1%) to the question “*Do you long for a cigarette in the morning or at all times?*”.

Table 1: A few questions put before students with regard to their smoking habit

Questions	%
<i>Have you ever experimented with cigarettes?</i>	54.3
<i>Have you smoked on at least 20 days within the past 30 days?</i>	3.0
<i>Do you long for a cigarette in the morning or at all times?</i>	4.1

Almost a fourth (22.5%) of the youngsters smokes regularly at home whilst only 5.4% smokes at school. More is allowed at home, therefore, than at school. It is striking, however, that young people do not dare to smoke at a friend’s home since only 9.7% admitted to do so. The number of smokers among young people is highest during social events. 39.0% admitted to smoke during social events. There is less zest for smoking at public places (16%) and the answer can be found in the fact that smoking is not allowed in the shopping center, young people do not often visit a park and many school-going youngsters do not hang out at the corner of streets.

The fact that almost a fourth of all young people smoke at home can be attributed to the fact that 32.4% of the parents smoke. Please note that 45.7% of the youngsters indicated that they do not smoke and of this group 48.3% of the parents do not smoke either.

There are not many restrictions in Suriname, legally or socially, with regard to selling cigarettes to young people. Thus it appears that 83% of the active smokers can buy cigarettes without any form of resistance. This was definitely significant among young people above 16 (among girls, 90%).

Gender

More boys (62.8%) than girls (46.0%) admitted to have experimented once with cigarettes. The number of boys was also higher (23.4) than the number of girls (10.0) admitting to have smoked on 1 or more days within the past 30 days. Fervent smokers can also be found more among boys (5.7%) than among girls (0.6%) when the question is asked “*Have you smoked on at least 20 days within the past 30 days?*”. It is no surprise therefore that only boys (6.6%) have the urge to smoke at all times or in the morning. Notwithstanding this strong urge amongst boys, smoking is less allowed at home to boys than to girls. 9.9% of the boys admitted to smoke regularly at home, 40.2% smokes regularly during social events while 22.2% claimed that they smoke in public places (park, shopping center, street-corners). The proportions are different among girls. Almost more than half (48.7%) admitted to smoke regularly at home. 35.6% smokes regularly during social events while only 4.3% smokes regularly in public places. The impression is given parents are more lenient towards girls than towards boys with regard to smoking. Even so, boys are more daring since 8.9% smokes regularly at school while none of the girls was doing so.

Table 2: A few questions put to boys and girls with regard to smoking

Questions	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
<i>Have you ever experimented with cigarettes?</i>	62.8	46.0
<i>Have you smoked on at least 1 or more days during the last 30 days?</i>	23.4	10.0
<i>Have you smoked on at least 20 days during the last 30 days?</i>	5.7	0.6
<i>Do you long for a cigarette in the morning or at all times?</i>	6.6	0.0

Schools

The ETO schools show the highest score because a percentage of no less than 72.1% of the interviewees answered with ‘yes’ to the question “Have you ever experimented with cigarettes?” while the percentage was lowest among LBGO students (49.3%). The percentage among LTS students is high as well, namely 69.0% while it is a surprising fact that more than half of all MULO students (52.4%) has experimented with cigarettes once. To the question “*Have you smoked on 1 or more days within the last 30 days?*” the MULO students showed the lowest percentage (12.6%) while the percentage was highest among ETO students,

namely 30.6%. Still, there are no fervent smokers among the ETO students while a percentage of 7.4% was reached among LTS students when they were asked the question “Have you smoked on 20 days during the last 30 days”? The urge to act tough is highest among LTS and ETO students because they are not allowed to smoke at home.

Only 6.7% and 7.9% respectively smoke regularly at home. These groups of students also smoke more regularly at school, 8.8% and 7.9% respectively, at social events, 43.1% and 48.8% respectively and in public places 30.8% and 27.0% respectively. The fact that a fourth of all MULO students (22.5%) smoke at home regularly nonetheless while only 6.5% smokes regularly at school. We find a similar situation at the LBGO schools. 32.1% smokes at home regularly while none of the interviewees admitted to smoke at school.

Table 3: A few questions put to students with regard to their smoking habit

Questions	MULO %	LBGO %	LTS %	ETO %
<i>Have you ever experimented with cigarettes?</i>	52.4	49.3	69.0	72.1
<i>Have you smoked on at least 1 or more days during the last 30 days?</i>	12.6	18.2	29.0	30.6
<i>Have you smoked on at least 20 days during the last 30 days?</i>	2.6	2.1	7.4	0.0
<i>Do you long for a cigarette in the morning or at all times?</i>	6.7	0.0	5.4	0.0

Age groups

It is alarming, still, that almost half of the youngsters age 12 (43.7%) answered with ‘yes’ to the question “Have you ever experimented with cigarettes?” This percentage is even somewhat higher than the percentage of the group age 13 (38.2%). Youngsters age 16, for the largest group (61.4%).

The group of young people age 16 received the highest percentages at most questions. 22.0% smokes at home regularly while 7.6% smokes regularly at school. The percentage of young people age 16 smoking during social events regularly is high (40.9%). It is striking that 4.5% of the group age 16 has smoked on at least 20 days during the last 30 days and the same number (4.1%) admits to have a longing for a cigarette all the time or in the morning.

Remark

Since the age group 12 till 15 years is small, it is better to make it one group.