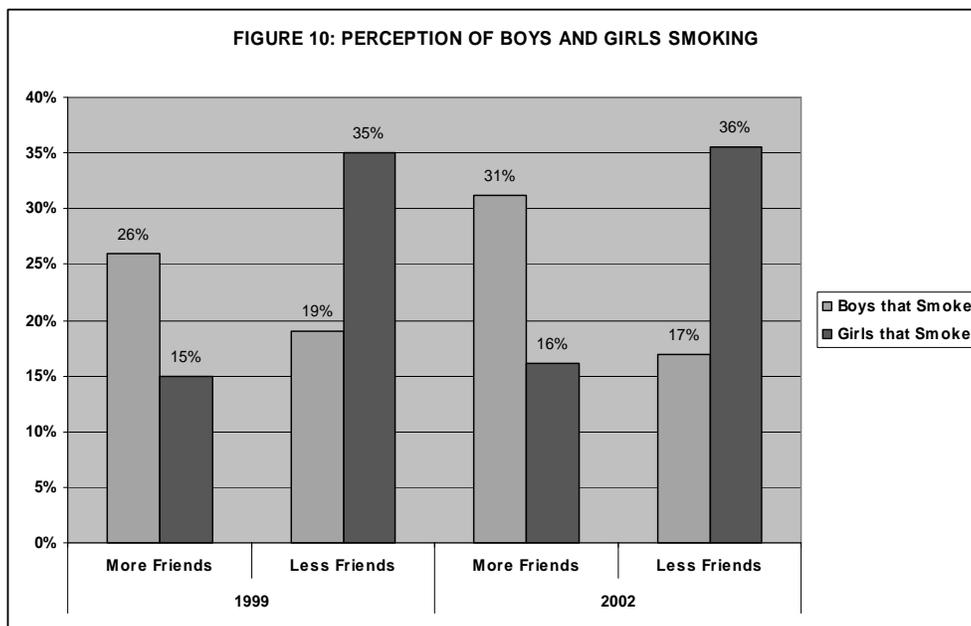


## 8.0: KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOBACCO:

Here students were asked a range of questions about various aspects of their attitudes towards smoking and some interesting perspectives emerged. Peer influences were included in this group of questions that normally required a response based on *perception* and not *experience*. Hence the entire sample would have been required to respond to these questions.

Most students did not feel that they would have been influenced to smoke by an offer made by one of their best friends. Here 75% of students said that they would definitely not smoke, even if offered by a close friend, while 10% indicated that they would have been influenced. The quantity of students indicating that they would not be influenced is similar to the 72% of students who indicated a similar level of resistance to peer influence in 1999. There was, however, a 23% group in the sample that indicated uncertainty about the influence by responding “*probably*,” instead of “*yes*”, or “*no*”.

Based on figure 10, it is clear that among students surveyed, smoking was not seen to be a significant popularity boost and this fact remains unchanged over the years that intervened between this and the last study. However, if it could be said to boost popularity, it would be more so for boys than girls. The analysis of responses to this question from a gender perspective is interesting and suggests that girls think that smoking will make boys more popular than it will make girls. Curiously, however, there is still no significant difference in their perception of the negative effect of smoking between genders. Evidently therefore there is still some gender bias in the perception of smoking being more socially acceptable for boys than girls.



Similar perceptions were conveyed in relation to questions that investigated the reactions of students to persons who smoked based on their gender. Here students were asked to categorise their perception of smokers using specific labels. A cumulative total of 94% of students expressed negative sentiments towards the sight of a woman smoking and this is an increase over 1999 when negative sentiments totalled 90%. These suggested that female smokers lacked confidence, were stupid or losers. Comparatively men were viewed slightly less harshly, with 92% being viewed negatively. It was noticeable here that the presumably positive label “*ladies man*” was associated with only 6% of men that smoked, while only 3% of female smokers were categorised as sophisticated.

<b>TABLE 01: SMOKING IN THE FUTURE</b>				
	<b>Definitely Not</b>	<b>Probably Not</b>	<b>Probably Yes</b>	<b>Definitely Yes</b>
<b>Smoking in 12 Months?</b>	78.5%	14%	6%	2%
<b>Smoking in 5 Years?</b>	75%	19%	5%	1%
<b>Ok to smoke short Term [1 year and then Quit]</b>	72%	17%	8%	3%
<b>Difficult to Quit?</b>	18%	15%	37.5%	29%

Information in table 01 presents the responses to questions which asked students if they felt that they would be smoking 12 months and 5 years from the time the survey was taken and suggests that most students perceive smoking as a short-term activity. The largest quantity (78.5%) said they would definitely not be smoking in 12 months and a slightly smaller quantity (75%) said they would not be smoking in five years time. Although a majority of them indicated that it is not OK to smoke short term, it can be seen that a small number of students see themselves smoking in 12 months, and even smaller number see themselves smoking in 5 years.

These data reflect an improvement over the 1999 situation where slightly larger numbers of students saw themselves smoking in the long term. It is also evident that more than 82% think that smoking is addictive, since a very small number think that they could easily quit this activity. This correlates with responses to the question that asked students if they felt it was ok to smoke on a “*short term*” basis, since the 72% of students who expressed this view, was not dissimilar to the quantity of persons that expressed an intention to stop smoking within 12 months, or 5 years. Against this background, it was interesting to note that cumulatively 66.5% of students expressed the view that it would be difficult to quit smoking.

Students surveyed indicated in almost equal numbers that persons in their family discussed the harmful effects of smoking with them. 58% of students stated that they had family discussions on the harmful effects of cigarettes and this is marginally higher than in 1999 when 56% of students reported having such conversations. It is noteworthy that reports of such discussions did not vary significantly beyond 2% between boys and girls.