

Table6C: Media and Advertising – Bidis India-Delhi GYTS, 2001

Category	Percent offered a free bidi by a tobacco company		Seen any of advertisement and media messages about bidis on:			
			Outside		Social Events	
	Total	Never Tobacco User	Total	Never Tobacco User	Total	Never Tobacco User
Total	8.6 (3.7)	8.2 (±3.7)	84.7 (2.9)	84.5 (±3.1)	82.7 (3.7)	82.6 (±4.1)
Sex						
Boys	10.6 (4.7)	9.9 (±5.1)	86.0 (2.5)	85.9 (±2.5)	84.7 (4.1)	84.1 (±4.3)
Girls	6.5 (4.1)	6.5 (±4.1)	83.3 (4.3)	83.2 (±4.7)	80.4 (5.4)	80.9 (±6.1)

Discussion: The prevalence of tobacco use in any form among both boys and girls in this age group is in agreement with earlier published findings.¹¹ Detailed profiling of current smokers, with respects to beliefs and behaviours, was not performed since the total number was small (n=35).

A very small number of students reported to have participated in any discussion on health consequences of tobacco or reasons for tobacco onset indicating that there is a definite need for including this topic in the curriculum at schools. This is important since students are at an impressionable age and prior research show this age to be vulnerable, as young people start experimenting at this age. Knowledge imparted in an interesting manner at this age will help in preventing young people from starting tobacco use out of ignorance about its impacts on health.

Second hand smoke is now known to be an important cause of preventable death and disease. It is a matter of concern that 3 out of 10 never smoking students were exposed to smoke from others in their family and 5 in 10 outside their home. This requires immediate attention in terms of policy intervention and awareness among the public. There seems to be a definite need to educate people about harmful effects of passive smoking. It is to be noted that not just the non smoking students but even the smokers supported banning of smoking in public places. Thus highlighting the need for effective tobacco control laws to be enforced.

This study has also brought forth an important issue regarding attitudes among youth. Both boys and girls reported that students who use tobacco irrespective of gender, look more attractive. This finding is similar to the results as reported by GYTS-Nepal.⁹ This indicates a strong need for attitude change which can be brought about by meaningful education and awareness among the youth. More students had reported chewing and applying tobacco to be more harmful to their health as compared to

smoking. This is contrary to earlier findings which state that people consider smoking to be more harmful than chewing or applying tobacco.

The availability and accessibility of tobacco products is a key contributor to the increased level of tobacco use among children and teenagers. The Delhi GYTS results revealed a very important area of policy intervention as about 1 in 10 never tobacco users were offered a free cigarette and gutkha/pan masala by a tobacco company representative or a vendor and similarly about 1 in 10 were offered bidis. Such a finding has not been reported earlier. This finding indicates the need for watch dogging the free distribution of these tobacco products to youth. The results for access and availability of tobacco products are alarming since 4 in 10 current tobacco users reported freely purchasing tobacco products in a store inspite of there being a Law in Delhi stating refusal to sell tobacco products to anyone below the age of 18.

The results of this survey have a special significance as this information is an important resource for decision makers to base their interventions and formulate effective laws to protect the youth of the country. This has pointed out the lacunae in our existing policies, which needs appropriate modification and strict implementation. This also indicates a significant role that NGOs and other organization can play in spreading mass awareness among the students and the community which can act as a deterrant for people to initiate tobacco use.

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