

# *Epidemiology and Health Information Branch*

## *Information Circular No. 9*

### **Smoking Among Secondary School Students**

#### **Queensland**

- Prevalence figures for Queensland secondary school students aged 12 to 15 show a significant decrease between 1987 and 1990 in the percentage of girls and boys who smoked in the last 12 months and those who smoked during the past week<sup>1</sup> (Figures 1 & 2).
- However, in the upper age groups (16 to 17) there have been no significant changes in prevalence rates<sup>1</sup> (Figures 1 & 2).
- Approximately one-fifth to one-third of Queensland students aged 12 to 17 did not receive a lesson or any part of a lesson in school regarding smoking during 1989 (Figure 3).
- By the age of 13, the majority of boys and by the age of 14, the majority of girls in Queensland, have experimented with smoking (Figure 4) and by 14 years of age nearly one-quarter of the students had smoked 10 or more cigarettes.
- Nearly 40,000 Queensland secondary school students can be considered to be current smokers (smoked in last week - Table 1). Research evidence indicates that if these students continue smoking in their adult life approximately 10,000 of them will die from smoking related illnesses<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Australia**

- There is a higher rate of tobacco use among non-students than among students for boys and girls in the 16-17 year age group<sup>3</sup>.
- Studies of smoking among Australian schoolchildren aged 9 to 15 have shown that there are no significant differences in the prevalence of current cigarette smoking with differences in socio-economic status<sup>4</sup>.
- The economic cost of smoking related illness in 1987 has been calculated as exceeding \$2,000 million nationally. Nationally in 1987 cigarette taxation totalled \$1,416 million<sup>5</sup>.

## **Uptake of Smoking**

- . Predictors for the intention to smoke vary by sex<sup>6</sup>.
- . Prior experimentation with tobacco has been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of smoking uptake within 30 months with those who have tried smoking only once or twice having odds four times greater than never smokers<sup>7</sup>.
- . The uptake of smoking tends to occur during the teenage years. The proportion of persons who start smoking after the age of 20 is relatively small<sup>8</sup>.
- . Only 35 per cent of smokers succeed in stopping permanently before the age of 60<sup>8</sup>.
- . Children smoking on a daily basis appear to be inhaling similar doses of nicotine per cigarette to adult smokers<sup>8</sup>.
- . The majority of young smokers perceive themselves to be dependent on their cigarettes<sup>7</sup>.
- . Among children, smoking cigarettes is seen to represent independence, maturity, vitality, popularity and success<sup>2</sup>.

## **Intervention**

- . A review of successful and unsuccessful models of drug education has identified specific components employed in successful drug prevention programs<sup>9</sup> (Table 2).

## **Comment**

- . Tobacco consumption among teenagers remains a significant health problem in Queensland.
- . Past intervention programs in Queensland have not significantly reduced the prevalence of smoking among girls and boys in the 16 - 17 age group.
- . Young smokers are more likely than adults to quit smoking due to an increase in the price of cigarettes<sup>5</sup>.
- . Behavioural, economic and legal strategies targeted at teenage smokers should be pursued.

Figure 1: SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS REPORTING SMOKING IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS IN 1984, 1987 AND 1990 FOR BOYS (above) AND GIRLS (below), QUEENSLAND, 1990.

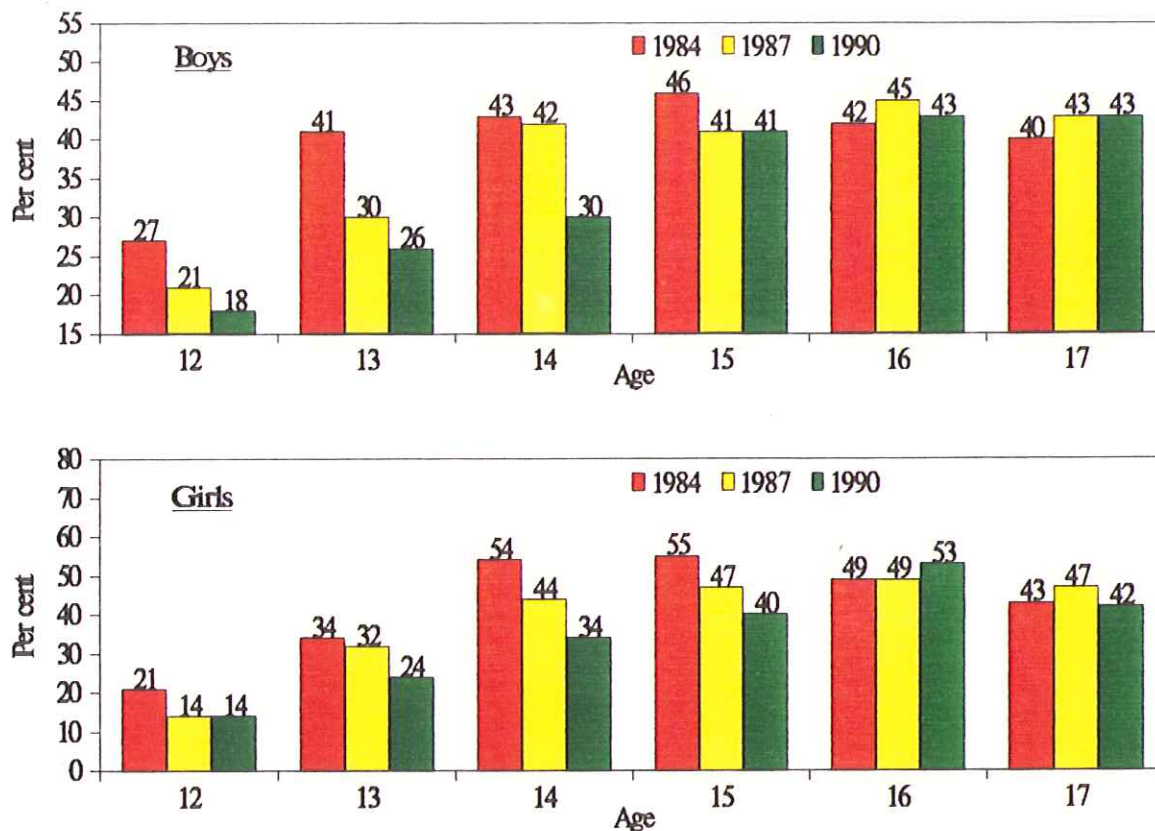
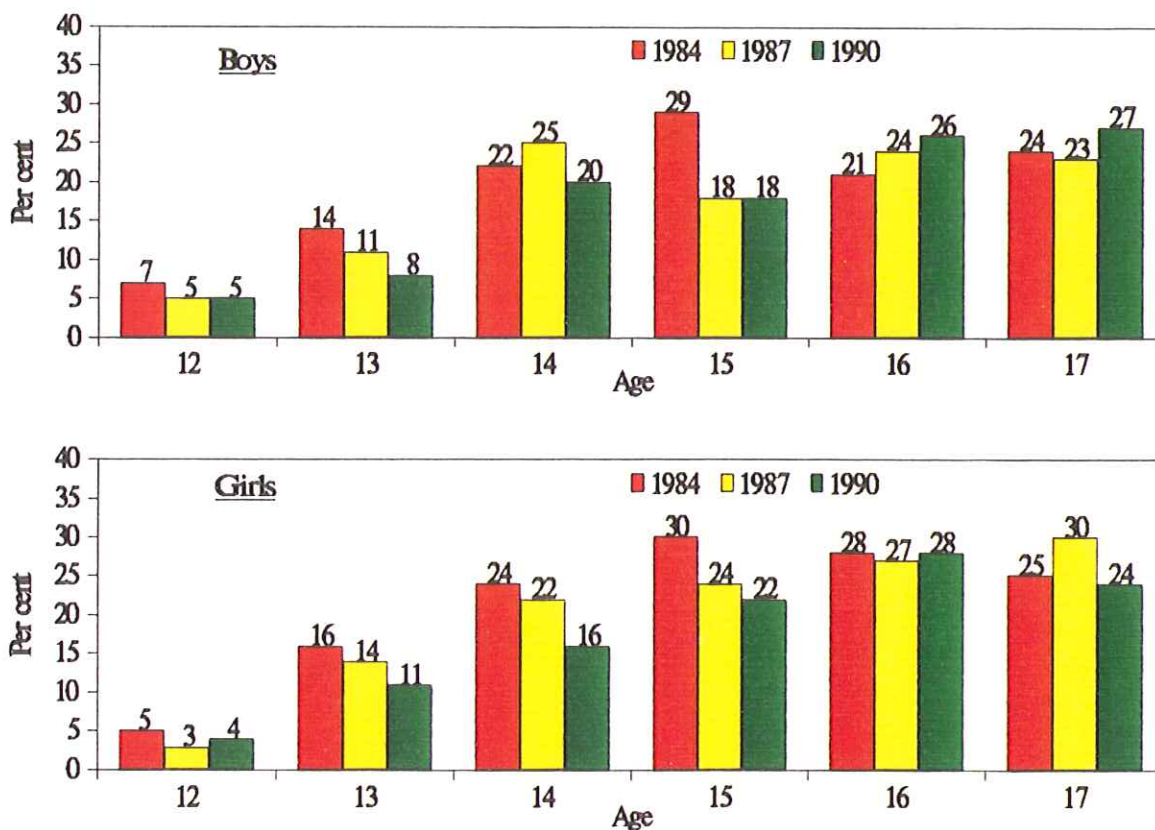
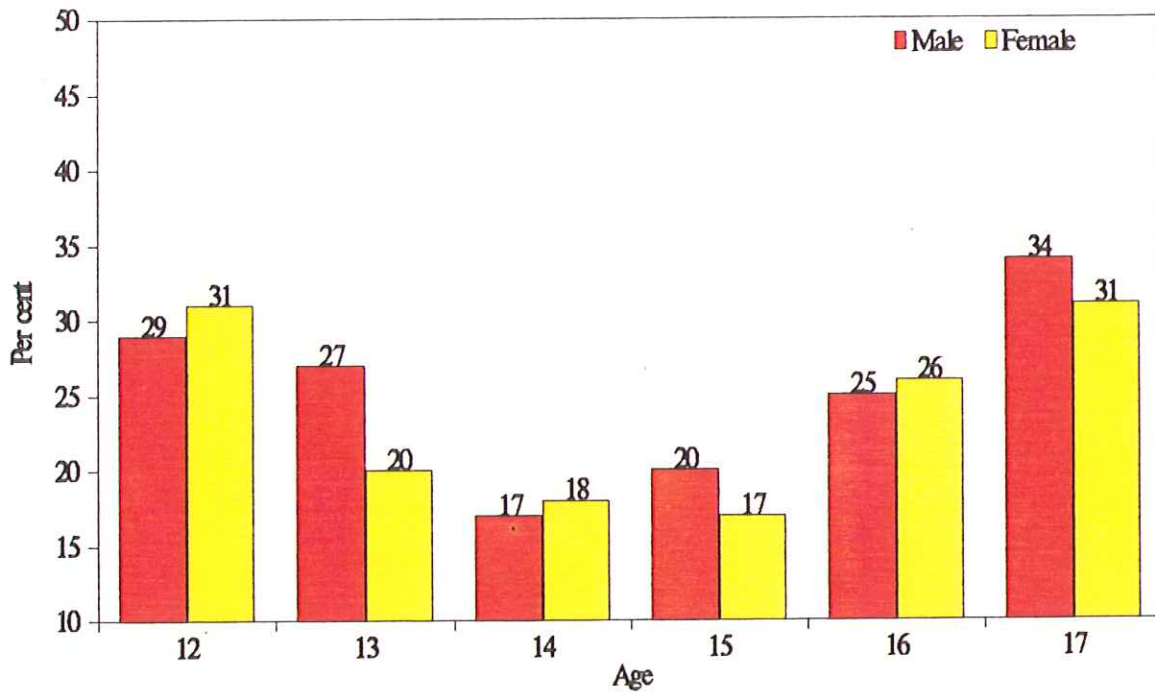


Figure 2: SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS REPORTING SMOKING IN THE PAST WEEK IN 1984, 1987 AND 1990, QUEENSLAND 1990.



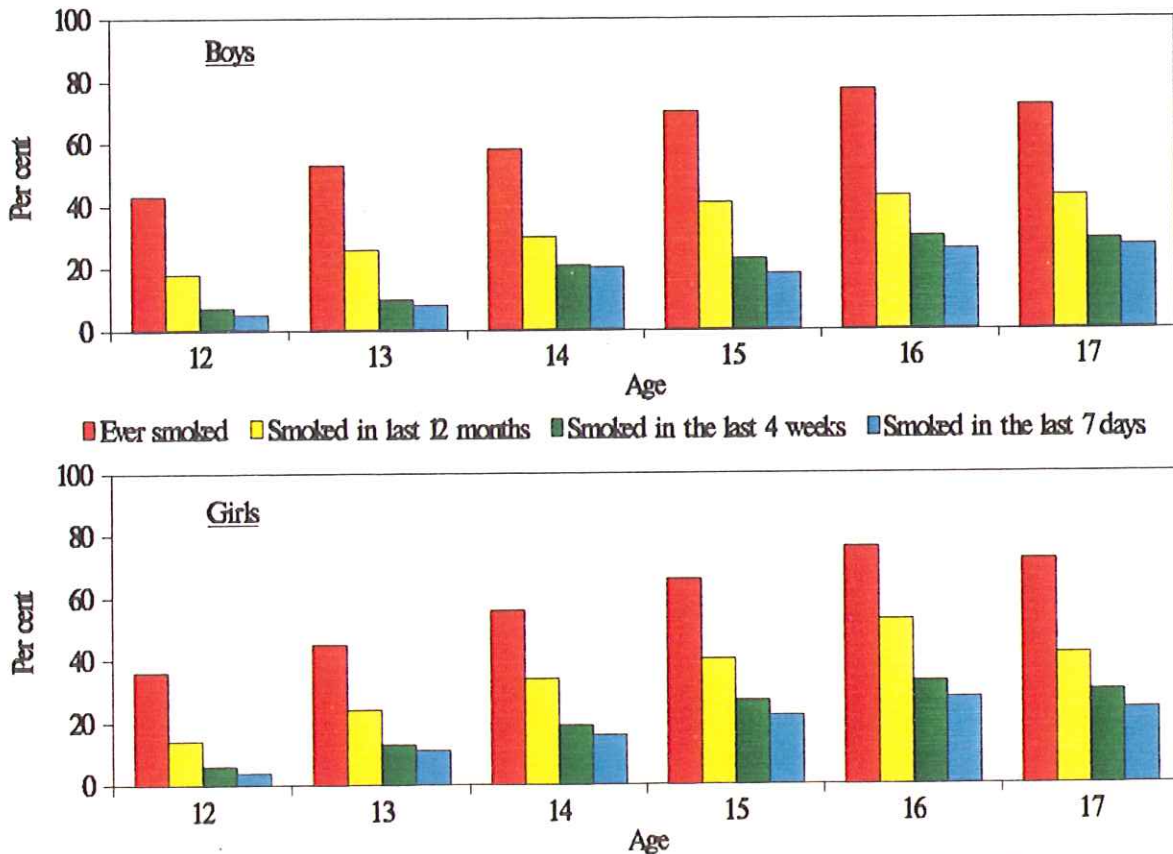
Source: Ballard, R., White, V.M., and Hill, D.I. 1992. Cigarette and Alcohol Consumption among Queensland Secondary Schoolchildren in 1990

Figure 3 SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS NOT RECEIVING A LESSON AT SCHOOL ABOUT SMOKING DURING 1989, QUEENSLAND



Source: Cigarette and Alcohol Consumption among Queensland Secondary Schoolchildren in 1990 (R. Ballard, V.M. White & D.I Hill)

Figure 4: SMOKING AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS AGED 12 TO 17 YEARS FOR BOYS (above) AND GIRLS (below), QUEENSLAND 1990.



Source: Ballard, R., White, V.M. and Hill, D.I. 1992. Cigarette and Alcohol Consumption among Queensland Secondary Schoolchildren in 1990.

**Table 1: Estimated numbers of school children smoking in Queensland, 1990**

Response	Sex	Age						Total
		12	13	14	15	16	17	
Any smoking experience	Males	9343	12007	15945	15175	12998	7007	72475
	Females	7513	9599	12372	13859	13747	6874	63964
Smoked in last 12 months	Males	3854	5796	8377	8920	7281	4210	38438
	Females	3055	5180	7526	8491	9701	4050	38003
Smoked in last 4 weeks	Males	1618	2289	5835	4893	5000	2784	22419
	Females	1355	2901	4322	5690	5960	2897	23124
Smoked in last week	Males	1044	1824	5473	3812	4397	2625	19175
	Females	949	2277	3569	4623	5068	2309	18795

Source: Ballard, R, White, VM, and Hill, D, 1992. *Cigarette and alcohol consumption among Queensland secondary schoolchildren in 1990*, Carlton, VIC: Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria.

**Table 2: An identification of specific components employed in successful drug prevention programs in the 1980s**

- A. media material used with similar age peers and instructional material used with peers as leaders;
- B. role playing and explicit learning of behavioural skills;
- C. information on the immediate physiological effects of smoking;
- D. a public commitment procedure;
- E. correction of 'myths' and misperceptions about the prevalence of smoking (and use of other drugs);
- F. discussion of family and media influences on smoking and ways of dealing with them;
- G. programs of extended duration;
- H. programs that teach about and encourage the use of 'alternatives' to drug use; and
- I. family-based communications programs.

Source: Wragg, J, 1991. A review of successful models of drug education, *Drug Education Journal of Australia*, 5: 15-26.

## References

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