



NB anti-tobacco
COALITION
antitabac du N.-B.

Tobacco Free. Everyone. Everywhere.
Sans tabac. Pour tous. Partout.

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SMOKING

AMONGST YOUTH IN NEW BRUNSWICK



New Brunswick
Health Council

Engage. Evaluate. Inform. Recommend.

WHO IS AT RISK OF FUTURE SMOKING?

Tobacco use is a leading cause of preventable illness, disability and death in Canada.¹ In New Brunswick, grade 12 students who have tried smoking reported smoking their first whole cigarette by the age of 14.² Accordingly, thoughts about experimenting with smoking likely occurred before then.

Susceptibility to smoking is defined as “the absence of a firm decision not to smoke.”³ This represents youth who have never tried smoking, but are at risk of smoking in the future. Susceptibility is therefore useful for predicting which youth may become smokers. Susceptible youth are more likely to experiment with tobacco and to become regular smokers than non-susceptible youth.⁴

About 9,500 students in grades 6 to 12 are at risk of future smoking

(New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey 2012/13)

Although current smoking rates among youth in New Brunswick have remained fairly low (7%), 24% of grade 6–12 students who have never tried smoking indicate they are susceptible to future smoking.

WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED ABOUT SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SMOKING?

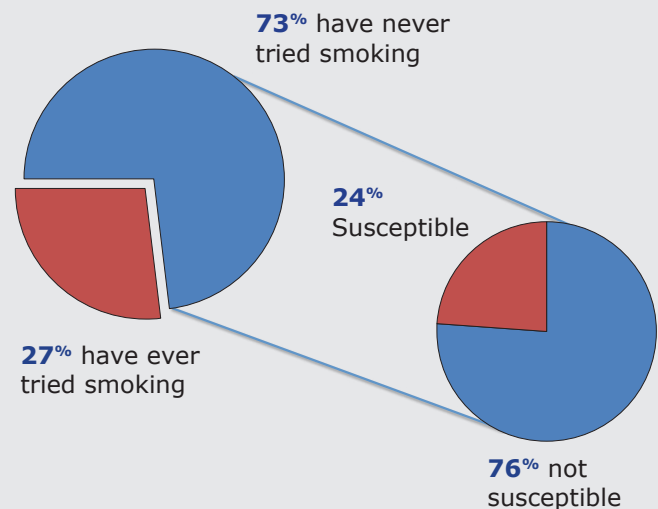
Youth who are susceptible and at risk of future smoking may be more vulnerable to personal, social and environmental influences that encourage them to experiment with tobacco. Susceptible youth do not express a firm commitment not to smoke and therefore are more vulnerable to tobacco marketing strategies and pro-smoking messages.⁵

Youth are classified as **NOT** susceptible if they have never tried smoking before and respond “definitely not” to the following three questions:

1. “Do you think in the future you might try smoking cigarettes?”
2. “If one of your best friends was to offer you a cigarette would you smoke it?”, and
3. “At any time during the next year do you think you will smoke a cigarette?”

all other youth are classified as susceptible.

SMOKING PREVALENCE AND SUSCEPTIBILITY 2012–13



*Reported percentages are based on weighted sample Department of Health and Inclusive Communities, The New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey 2012–2013

- 177 schools participated in the 2012–2013 New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey.
- The survey data was collected from 36,000 students across New Brunswick. The students surveyed were in grades 6 to 12

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SMOKING IN NEW BRUNSWICK?

According to the 2012–2013 New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey (NBSWS) for grades 6 to 12:²

- Twenty four percent (24%) of students who had never tried smoking were classified as susceptible to smoking;
- A greater percentage of males (27%) were susceptible to smoking, compared to females (22%);
- Smoking susceptibility was less prevalent among students in the Francophone sector (23%) in comparison to the Anglophone sector (25%). Anglophone North School District had the highest percentage of youth at risk of future smoking (27%) (Figure 1);

"It (susceptibility to smoking) gives a glimpse of the potential magnitude of tobacco-related problems we may encounter down the road."

Dr. Steve Manske, National Youth Smoking Survey, 2010/11

FIGURE 1. Susceptibility to smoking among New Brunswick students Grades 6–12, by school district and education sector (NBSWS 2012–2013)

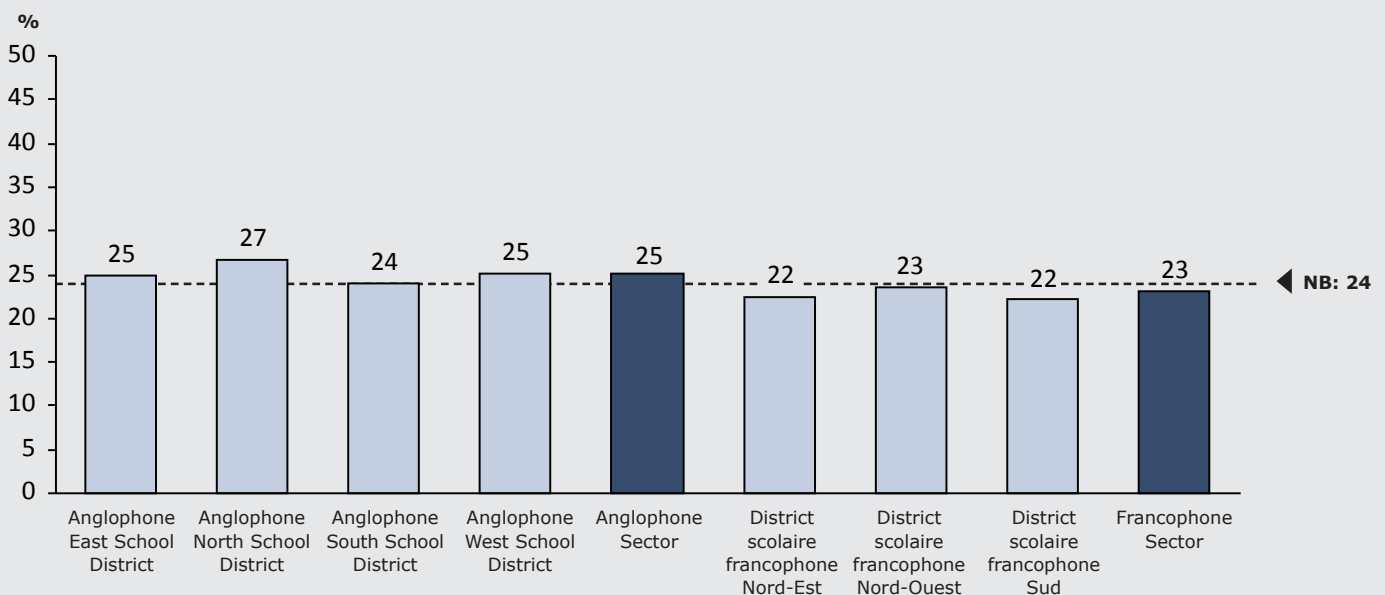
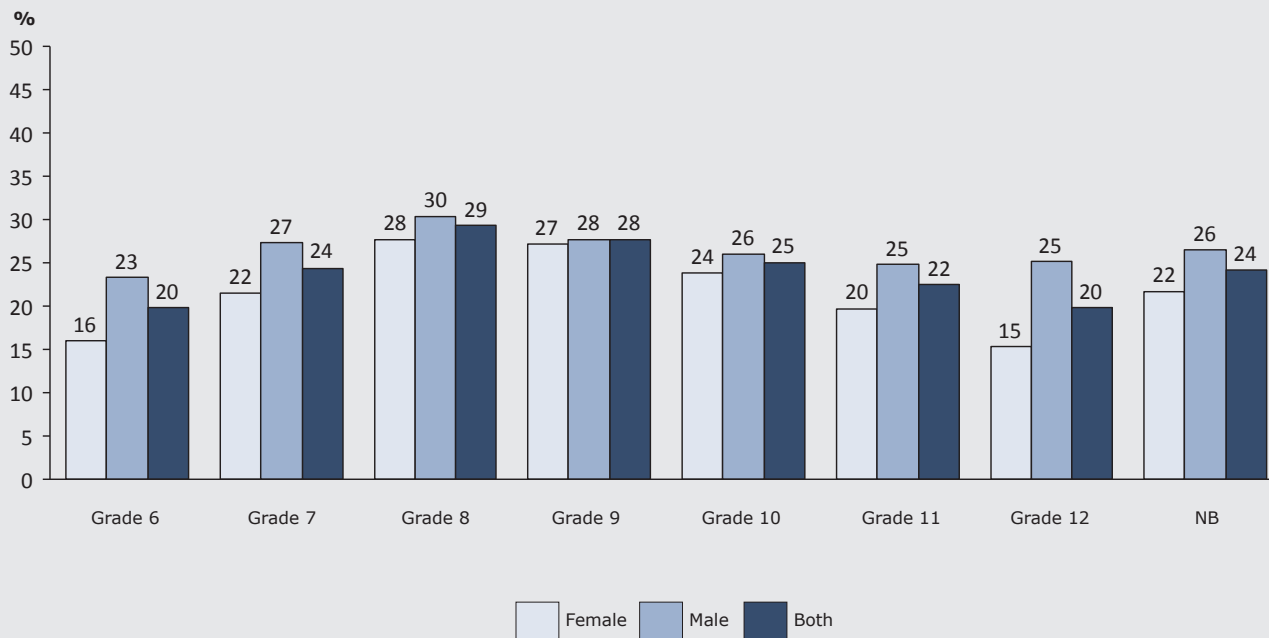


FIGURE 2. Susceptibility to smoking among New Brunswick students Grades 6–12, by grade and sex (NBSWS 2012–2013)



- About 31% of students who self-identified as aboriginal were at risk of future smoking;
- Immigrant students were similar to other New Brunswick students with overall smoking susceptibility at 24%;
- About 90% of students in the Alternative Education Program (who represent a group of students at high risk of unhealthy behaviours) had already tried smoking. This demonstrates an early onset of smoking experimentation and therefore a need for early intervention in addressing susceptibility to smoking;
- The rates of susceptibility to smoking varied across grades and by sex. The biggest difference between males and females was demonstrated in grade 12;
- Females were almost as susceptible to smoking as males in grades 8, 9 and 10. These are the grades where susceptibility to smoking is most prevalent (Figure 2).

WHO IS AT RISK FOR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SMOKING?

To prevent youth from becoming smokers, it is important to understand the personal, social and environmental factors that cause them to become susceptible to smoking.

As previously demonstrated, students in grade 8, 9, 10 as well as male students in grades 6 to 12, are at highest risk of future smoking.

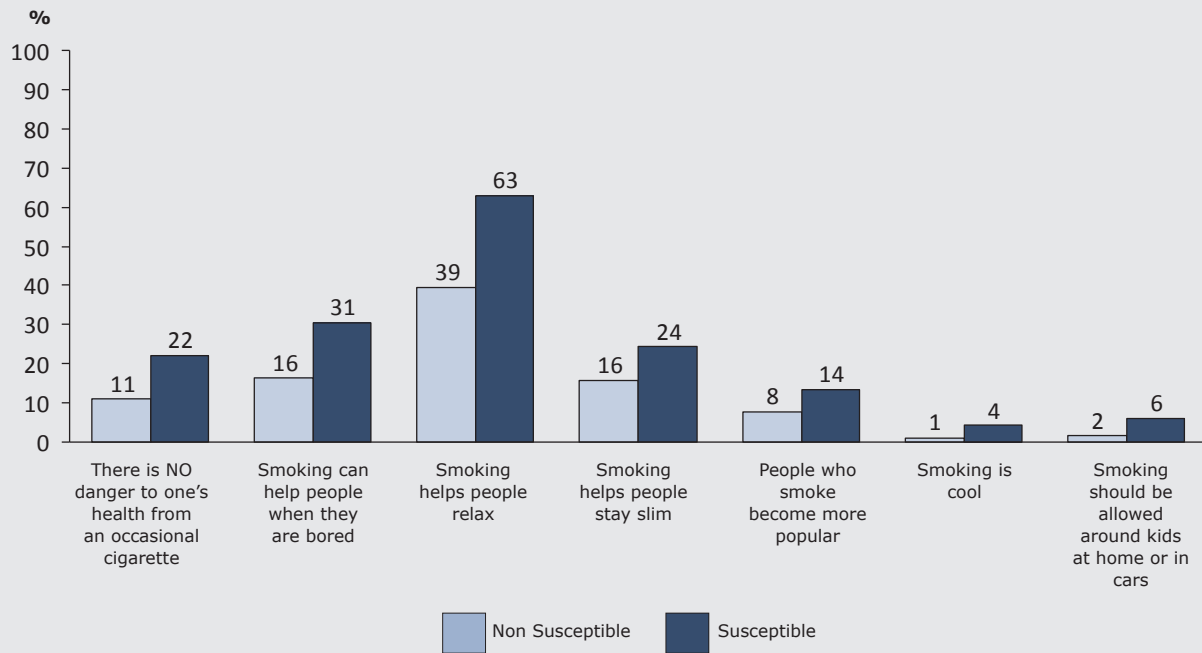
In addition, according to the findings of the NBSWS, youth susceptible to smoking most likely: ²

- Are children of or siblings to a smoker,
- Live in households with no “no smoking” ban,
- Rode in vehicles with a smoker in the week before the survey,
- Have friends who smoke,
- Have average to poor academic performance, and/or
- Are less connected to their schools.

These youth were also more likely to demonstrate unhealthy behaviours such as:

- Having tried marijuana or alcohol,
- Drinking 2 or more servings of sweetened non-nutritious beverages per day,
- Consuming energy drinks the day before the survey,
- Eating less than 5 fruits and vegetables per day, and/or
- Spending more than 2 hours of screen time per day.

FIGURE 4. Perceptions and attitudes around smoking between students (Grades 6–12) susceptible and those non-susceptible to smoking (NBSWS 2012–2013)



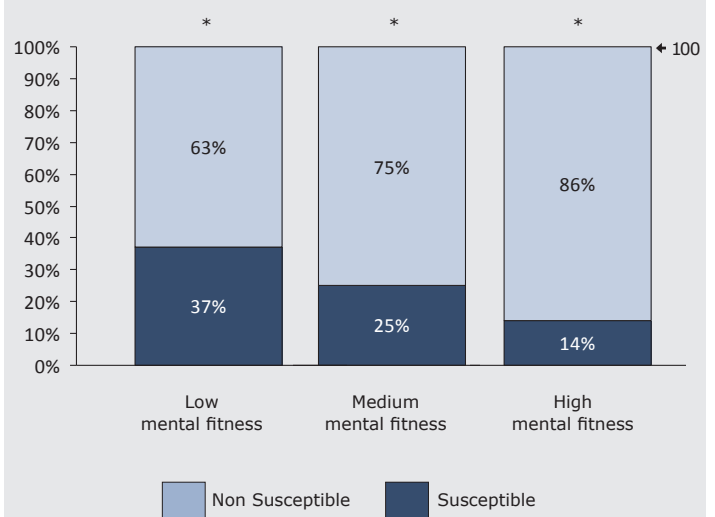
Mental fitness means having a positive sense of how we feel, think, and act, which improves our ability to enjoy life. High levels of mental fitness are associated with positive social behaviors, engagement in learning, positive lifestyle changes, positive emotions and tobacco-free living. Forty percent (40%) of students with low mental fitness are susceptible to future smoking compared to only 17% of students with high mental fitness (Figure 3).

New Brunswick students also demonstrated notable differences in perceptions and attitudes around smoking between susceptible and non-susceptible students (Figure 4). Students susceptible to future smoking were more likely to have pro-smoking attitudes as compared to non-susceptible students.²

HOW TO REDUCE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SMOKING?

Youths' attitudes towards smoking and their decisions to stay smoke-free are shaped by many factors in their environment.^{6,7} A comprehensive approach, based on building and supporting protective factors in youth will reduce susceptibility to smoking as well as other related unhealthy behaviours.

FIGURE 3. Susceptibility to smoking by levels of mental fitness (NBSWS 2012–2013)



* Statistically significant difference

+ Reported percentages are based on weighted sample Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities, The New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey 2012–2013

• 177 schools participated in the 2012–2013 New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey.

• The survey data was collected from 35,954 students across New Brunswick. The students surveyed were in grades 6 to 12

This will have the greatest influence on youth health, and ultimately decrease smoking rates.

Factors to consider include individual factors (i.e. being male, or being in grades 8, 9 or 10), the immediate social environment (i.e. family, friends) as well as the broader social environment (i.e. school, community).

Environments and relationships “where one’s perspective is considered, feelings are recognized, meaningful information is given, and opportunities for choice are provided, promote optimal functioning.”⁸ Such environments also increase mental fitness which is associated with lower levels of susceptibility to smoking.

TAKING ACTION:

IMMEDIATE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- Encourage strong non-smoking messages and expectations at home.
- Support smoking bans at home and inside vehicles.
- Provide youth with knowledge and skills to resist smoking.
- Support adult cessation efforts as this sets an example for youth.

- Intentionally create environments for youth where: a sense of belonging is fostered, their skills are recognized, and they are provided choices and a voice.

BROADER SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- Support comprehensive anti-smoking initiatives in schools in order to change pro-smoking attitudes (start early in elementary schools).
- Support ban on tobacco advertising and promotion and closely monitor social media influence on youth.
- Support smoke-free public policy (including in outdoor spaces where youth are present).
- Align efforts to reduce susceptibility with others who are working to prevent unhealthy behaviors.
- Work to create supportive environments, at school and in community, that promote a sense of belonging, where skills are recognized, a voice is given and choices are provided and thus improving mental fitness.
- Build understanding of and share knowledge about susceptibility by supporting further research.

REFERENCES

- 1 Reid JL, Hammond D, Burkhalter R, Rynard VL, Ahmed R. Tobacco Use in Canada: Patterns and Trends, 2013 Edition. Waterloo, ON: Propel Centre for Population Health Impact, University of Waterloo. This report is available online at www.tobaccoreport.ca and www.propel.uwaterloo.ca
- 2 New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey 2012-13. GNB, Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities, Wellness Branch.
- 3 Leatherdale ST, Wong SL, Manske SR, Colditz GA (2008). Susceptibility to smoking and its association with physical activity, BMI, and weight concerns among youth. *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, 10(3). http://www.tobaccoreport.ca/2013/ytu_si_susc.cfm .
- 4 Pierce, JP, Choi, WS, Gilpin, EA, Farkas, AJ, & Merritt, RK (1996). Validation of susceptibility as a predictor of which adolescents take up smoking in the United States. *Health Psychology* 15, 355-361
- 5 Unger, J. (1998). Susceptibility to smoking among adolescent never smokers, Tobacco Related Disease Research Program, University of California http://www.trdrp.org/fundedresearch/grant_page.php?grant_id=478
- 6 Schultz, ASH, Nowatzki, J, Dunn, DA, Griffith, EJ. (2010) Effects of socialization in the household on youth susceptibility to smoking: a secondary analysis of the 2004/05 Canadian Youth Smoking Survey. *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, Vol 30, No 3
- 7 Veeranki, SP, Mamudu, HM, Anderson, JL, Zheng, S. (2014) Worldwide Never-Smoking Youth Susceptibility to Smoking, *Journal of Adolescent Health*. Volume 54, Issue 2, 144-150.
- 8 Moreau, E. & Mageau, G.A. (2013). Conséquences et corrélats associés au soutien de l'autonomie dans divers domaines de vie. *Consequences and correlates of autonomy support in various life domains. Psychologie française* 58: 195-227