

Mississippi, 1999-2008: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Robert McMillen, PhD, Brittany Wright,

Annaliese Simms, Lauren Colvin, Nell Valentine, M.S.



Abstract

Introduction

Mississippi initiated a comprehensive tobacco control program in 1998. These programs were funded at the recommended CDC levels until June 2006. In FY2008, the Mississippi Legislature allocated \$8 million to the State Health Department to implement a statewide tobacco control program. This proposed session will summarize changes in tobacco use and the social climate of tobacco in this state during this period, with an emphasis on the period in which funds were cut and then partially re-instated.

Key Points

Mississippi has experienced a substantial decrease in the prevalence of current cigarette smoking in the years following the implementation of a statewide comprehensive tobacco control program. From 1998 to 2006, the prevalence of current smokers decreased by 38% among public high school students and decreased by 59% among public middle school students. The state programs were eliminated in mid 2006, and the prevalence of current smoking increased slightly in 2008. There have been substantial improvements in the prevalence of smoking bans in public and private places, but a substantial disconnect remains between public policy and public opinion.

Benefits

The audience will learn about:

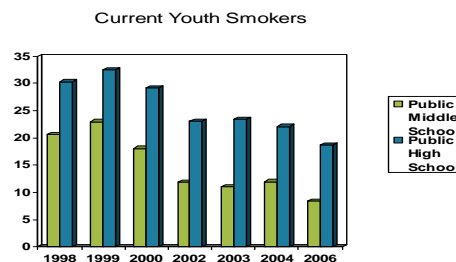
- several primary and secondary data sources available for tobacco surveillance
- the relationship between financial support for tobacco control programs with tobacco use and the social climate of tobacco control
- measure that have improved and those that have not
- disparities in tobacco use and social climate indicators

Conclusion

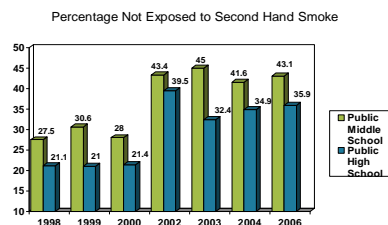
Mississippi experienced profound reductions in the prevalence of youth smoking, as well as dramatic increases in smoke-free places, during the years in which the state adequately funded tobacco control programs. Data from the MS YTS and the MS Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control indicate that some of this progress was diminished after funding was eliminated.

The Good

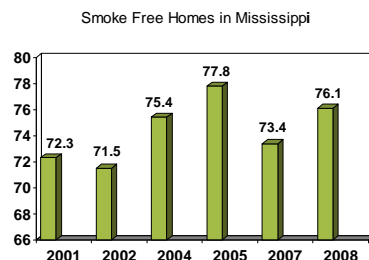
The Youth Tobacco Survey measures students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. In addition, the Social Climate Survey assessed the prevalence of smoke-free households. The YTS and the SCS indicate that there has been significant improvements from 1998-2008. According to the chart, the decrease in the prevalence of current smoking for public middle school students is a 59% decrease and for public high school students there is a 38% decrease.



In addition, the YTS indicates that there has been a significant drop in youth exposure to second hand smoke. The graph below illustrates that in 1998 only 27.5% for Public Middle Schools reported not being exposed to second hand smoke but in 2006 43% said they had not been exposed to second hand smoke.

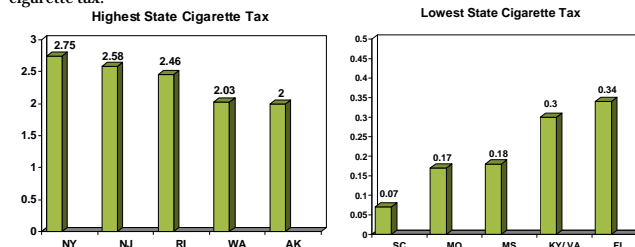


The Social Climate Survey is comprehensive data about the attitudes and practices of U.S. adults in regards to tobacco control. There has been an increase in the regulation of smoking within the home from 2001 to 2008. The chart below visualizes the percentage of Mississippi homes that are smoke free.



The Bad

Mississippi has the third lowest state cigarette tax in the country. Mississippi is behind on raising the tax compared to the highest state cigarette tax which is currently at \$2.75 in New York. The charts below display the five states that have the highest cigarette tax compared to the five states that have the lowest cigarette tax.



Currently, more than two-thirds (70.2%) of the U.S. population lives in a state or community that has a comprehensive smoke-free law. Where 39.4% live in a place where all public indoor places are smoke free, Washington is included in this category. However, Mississippi is one of the twenty states that does not have a statewide smoke free policy that would apply to smoking in indoor work areas, restaurants, or bars. Only 9.53% of Mississippians are protected by law from secondhand smoke, this includes twenty four communities as of April, 28, 2009. Jackson, the capital of Mississippi, recently passed a smoke-free ordinance banning smoking in restaurants. This ordinance took effect on February 1, 2009. However, smoking is still allowed in bars.

The Ugly

The continuation of funding for the successful tobacco prevention program run by the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi was denied in May of 2006. The funding was still denied despite the acknowledgement from Jackson County Chancellor Jaye Bradley "arguably the most successful tobacco cessation program in the nation." After the program was implemented the prevalence of smoking declined by 48% among public middle school students. As the Current Youth Smokers graph illustrates that 23% of public middle school students smoked in 1999, but then in 2004 only 12% of students smoked. The graph also signifies the improvements among the rate of public high school smoking with a 32% decrease, after the program began. In 1999 there was 32.5% of public high school students who smoked but then in 2004 there was only 22.1% of students who smoked. The decline in the percentage of high school and middle school smokers has outpaced the national decline during this period as well which also advocates for why the program was essential in benefiting Mississippians. Regardless of the empirical evidence of the improvement the program brought to Mississippians health, Judge Bradley ruled that only the state legislature should have the power to fund a program with state money. Future funds will go into the Health Care Trust Fund, to be used as the state legislature sees fit.

