ABSTRACT

Since the initiation of a statewide tobacco control program in 1998, several distinct yet methodologically comparable surveys have provided estimates of youth smoking prevalence in Mississippi. In the fall of 2002, the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Mississippi State University administered the Youth Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control (YSCS-TC) to a representative sample of public middle and high school students. The YSCS-TC includes social and environmental indicators and measures smoking prevalence using the same protocol as both the YTS and YRBS. To ensure that results from the YSCS-TC could be compared to extant YTS and YRBS prevalence estimates from previous years, researchers at the SSRC collaborated with the CDC to draw the sample as well as to weight and process the data. Results indicate that youth smoking declined significantly in 2002. High school smoking prevalence declined from a high of 23.5% in 1999 to a low of 21.1% in 2002. The middle school decrease was more significant with a decrease from a high of 23% in 1999 to a low of 11.9% in 2002. Significant decreases were also found among several subpopulations. Discussion highlight trends in smoking prevalence among middle and high school students, as well as trends within specific demographic groups.

METHODS

Data were collected in the fall semester of 2002 via anonymous self-administered questionnaires. A multi-stage sample design was applied with public middle and high schools selected with a probability proportional to enrollment size. Classrooms were chosen randomly within the selected schools and all of the students in selected classes were eligible for participation. A weighting factor was applied to each student record to adjust for non-response at the school, class, and student levels. SUDAAN software was used to calculate standard errors for estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Thirty-nine of the 45 (86.67%) sampled public high schools participated in the survey, and 2,707 of the 3,762 (71.96%) sampled students completed usable surveys. The overall response rate for public high school students was 62.36%. Forty-five of the 52 (86.54%) sampled public middle schools participated in the survey, and 3,287 of the 4,205 (78.17%) sampled students completed usable surveys. The overall response rate for public middle school students was 67.65%.

These findings indicate that substantial progress is being made towards reducing the smoking levels among Mississippi public middle and high school students. These results are consistent with a growing body of evidence from several states, including Oregon, Florida, Massachusetts, and Mississippi, which have reported declines in youth smoking after implementing statewide comprehensive tobacco control programs.