

MMWR Highlights:

Smoking in Top-Grossing Movies — United States, 1991–2009

Overview

- Exposure to onscreen smoking in movies increases the probability that youth will start smoking.
- Youth who are heavily exposed to onscreen smoking are approximately 2-3 times more likely to begin smoking than are lightly exposed youth.
- This study counted tobacco incidents (the use or implied offscreen use of a tobacco product by an actor) and in-theater tobacco impressions (number of incidents viewed by moviegoers) for top-grossing films in the United States from 1991 to 2009.

Recent Onscreen Smoking Trends

- During 1991–2001, the total number of in-theater onscreen smoking impressions varied from 30–60 billion per year.
- The number of onscreen smoking incidents peaked in 2005 and then steadily declined over the next 4 years (in top-grossing films sampled).
 - Between 1991 and 1997, onscreen smoking incidents ranged from 2,106–3,386 per year.
 - The number of onscreen smoking incidents then declined, but rose again to peak at 3967 in 2005.
 - From 2005 to 2009, the number of onscreen smoking incidents dropped 52% (to 1,935 in 2009).

Onscreen Smoking in 2009

- Approximately 54% of PG-13 films contained incidents of tobacco use in 2009.
- By 2009, the total number of in-theater onscreen smoking impressions had declined to an estimated 17 billion per year.
- The percentage of smoke-free films reached a high point in 2009.
 - Approximately 51% of all top-grossing films did not show tobacco use in 2009.
 - Approximately 61% of all top-grossing youth-rated films (G, PG, or PG-13) did not show tobacco use in 2009.