

Tobacco history in the United States

Early history

Tobacco as a gift from the Creator: Tobacco was first discovered by the native people of North and South America and long used before Europeans arrived. Tobacco was used as an accepted trade item, for sacred ceremony and believed to carry one's thoughts and prayers to the spirits. Because of its sacred nature, tobacco abuse is seriously frowned upon by the Algonquin tribes of Canada.

1528

Early introduction of tobacco to Europe: The Spanish introduced tobacco to Europeans. The French, Spanish, and Portuguese initially referred to the plant as the "sacred herb". The popular demand fueled colonization and became a driving factor for African slavery.

Late 1700s

Revolutionary War also known as "The Tobacco War": Tobacco helps finance the Revolution by serving as collateral for the loan Benjamin Franklin arranged from France—the security was 5 million pounds of Virginia tobacco. George Washington once appealed to his countrymen for aid to the army: "If you can't send money, send tobacco." During the war, it was tobacco exports that the fledgling government used to build up credits abroad. When the war was over, Americans turned to tobacco taxes to help repay the revolutionary war debt.

1886

Women and Cameo: JB Duke targets women with "Cameo" brand.

1889

Lung cancer is an extremely rare disease: There are only 140 documented cases worldwide. In 2018, 154,050 Americans were expected to die from lung cancer.

1912

First link to lung cancer: The first strong link was made between lung cancer and smoking. In a monograph, Dr. Isaac Adler was the first to strongly suggest that lung cancer is related to smoking.

1930s - 1940s

The first modern anti-smoking campaign: Nazi Germany condemned tobacco use, funding research and levying increasing sin taxes. In 1941 tobacco was banned in various public places as a health hazard. The anti-tobacco campaign was also associated with racism and antisemitism, Jews being blamed for its initial import, and the need to keep the "Master Race" healthy being cited for the effort to squelch its use.

World War II: Rates of smoking increase among both men and women as army rations include cigarettes—often provided free by cigarette companies—and many women, entering the workforce for the first time, began smoking on the job.

1963

Peak consumption: Yearly per capita consumption of cigarettes in the U.S. reaches its peak, at 4,336 cigarettes per person per year — more than a pack of cigarettes every two days.

1964

Cigarette Advertising Code: The tobacco industry's Cigarette Advertising Code was announced in Spring 1964 to minimize the Federal Trade Commission's ad restrictions. Drawn up by the Policy Committee of Lawyers, its administrator is respected ex-NJ-governor Robert B. Meyner, who was given authority to fine violators up to \$100,000. The code banned advertising and marketing directed mainly at those under 21 years old, and ended advertising and promotion in school and college publications. No violations or fines were ever levied.

First Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health report: The report had an impact on public attitudes and policy. In 1958 only 44% of Americans believed smoking caused cancer, by 1968 it was 78%. The report named smoking as the most important cause of chronic bronchitis and pointed to a correlation between smoking and emphysema, and smoking and coronary heart disease. It insisted that the "tobacco habit should be characterized as an habituation rather than an addiction," in part because the addictive properties of nicotine were not yet fully understood, in part because of differences over the meaning of addiction.

1969

Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act: Congress passes the Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act, banning cigarette advertising on television and radio and requiring a stronger health warning on cigarette packages: "Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health." Ads will actually come off the air in 1971.

Since 1971

Big Tobacco and Native Americans: Philip Morris has sponsored Native American events since 1971 beginning with the art exhibit "200 Years of North American Indian Art" as a way to clean up their corporate image. Over the years, sponsored programs have included education, festivals, and other political organizations and programs.

The amount of money has ranged from \$1,000 to the National Museum of American Indians to \$20,000 to Oklahoma City's Red Earth Festival. Many programs have accepted funding from tobacco companies because they believed "no strings" were attached. However, these events support their façade as a good corporation who cares about poor communities. When in actuality it only contributes to their long-term goal of positive image enhancement.

1980

Health Consequences of Smoking for Women report: First U.S. Surgeon General Report on the Health Consequences of Smoking for Women was released. While smoking rates remain lower among women than men, initiation of smoking among adolescent females continues to rise. The report projected that lung cancer death rate will surpass that of breast cancer in the early 1980s. The risk of spontaneous abortion, fetal death, and neonatal death increases directly with increasing levels of maternal smoking during pregnancy.

1983 – 1990

Targeting youth: The creative director of a New York advertising agency spoke of working on tobacco advertisements, "We were trying very hard to influence kids who were 14 to start smoking." Marketing firm Spector M. Marketors, under contract for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company developed plans to promote "Dakota" brand cigarettes to the "virile female," including 18- through 20-year-old women.

1985

Lung cancer surpassed breast cancer as the number one killer of women. A distinction that still holds today.

1992

Sale to minors: The Synar Amendment to the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration Reorganization Act required states to enact laws prohibiting the sale and distribution of tobacco products to minors.

1994

"Nicotine is not addictive": Seven big tobacco company executives testified before a congressional subcommittee, swearing that nicotine was not addictive. The televised panel, led by Representative Henry Waxman, questioned the executives for six hours. One executive insisted that cigarettes were no more addictive than coffee, tea or Twinkies. "The difference between cigarettes and Twinkies," Waxman replied, "is death."

Congress protects Big Tobacco: 124 members of the House sent a sharply worded letter to the FDA, claiming

the agency's tobacco proposal would put 10,000 jobs at risk and "trample First Amendment rights to advertise legal products to adults." Two weeks later, 32 senators signed a virtually identical letter. According to Common Cause, those senators who signed the letter had received an average of \$31,368 from tobacco, compared to \$11,819 for those senators who did not sign. Similarly, the House signatories received an average of \$19,446, in contrast to \$6,728 for other Congress members.

Big Tobacco and Latinos: Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds each gave the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce \$75,000. That same year, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce mailed 92,000 letters urging business owners and employees to lobby against a proposed tobacco tax increase.

1998

Master Settlement Agreement: The Attorneys General of 46 states signed the Master Settlement Agreement with the four largest tobacco companies in the United States to settle state suits to recover billions of dollars in costs associated with treating smoking-related illnesses. The Agreement also imposed restrictions on the advertising, marketing and promotion of cigarettes — for example, prohibiting youth-targeted ads including the use of cartoons such as Joe Camel. In Fiscal Year 2014, states collected \$25 billion in revenue from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but spent only 1.9 percent of it — \$481.2 million — on programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit.

Surgeon General's report on "Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups": The report was the first to address the diverse tobacco control needs of four major U.S. racial/ethnic minority groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics. The report noted that African Americans suffer the greatest burden of tobacco-related mortality of any ethnic or racial group in the United States, and that complex relationships and robust outreach from tobacco companies to these communities could hamper progress in reducing that burden.

2002

Oregon Clean Air Act: The Oregon Clean Air Act prohibited smoking in public places including educational facilities and prohibited any person under the age of 18 to possess tobacco products on school grounds, in school facilities or at school-sponsored activities.

2004

Electronic cigarettes: E-cigarettes were introduced to the global market.

2006

Tobacco companies liable for marketing to children: On August 17, Judge Kessler issued a 1,683 page opinion holding the tobacco companies liable for fraudulently covering up the health risks associated with smoking and their marketing to children. The judge concluded, "From the 1950s to the present, different defendants, at different times and using different methods, have intentionally marketed to young people under the age of twenty-one in order to recruit 'replacement smokers' to ensure the economic future of the tobacco industry."

2007

Marketing to low-income and people of color: Studies emerged documenting the disproportionate amount of tobacco advertising in low-income, minority communities. A 2007 study found that there were 2.6 times more tobacco advertisements per person in areas with an African American majority compared to white-majority areas.

2014

National Youth Tobacco Survey: The 2014 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that for the first time, e-cigarette use exceeded cigarette use among students in all three grades surveyed (8th, 10th and 12th), with more than twice as many 8th and 10th graders reporting using e-cigarettes compared to regular cigarettes.

Oregon — Smoking down, e-cig up: As the smoking rate among youth dropped, advertising of e-cigarettes rose along with use of among youth.

2015

E-cig and Big Tobacco: Tobacco companies, recognizing the development of a potential new market sector that could render traditional tobacco products obsolete, are increasingly involved in the production and marketing of their own brands of e-cigarettes and in acquiring existing e-cigarette companies. A 2017 study by the Truth Initiative Schroeder Institute® found that 6 percent of youth and 10 percent of young adults have used a JUUL e-cigarette in the last 30 days. The study also found that while many young people are aware of JUUL, many are unaware that the product always contains the addictive chemical nicotine.

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