Smoking Among U.S. Adults Continues to Decline; Those Who Do Smoke Are Smoking Less

Smoking among adults in the United States continues to decline, according to the results of a national Gallup poll of adults conducted last month. After peaking at 45% in 1954, the percentage of adults reporting smoking in the past week has gradually declined, reaching 21% in 2008. The poll also found that Americans who do smoke are smoking less now than in the past. Only 6% of adult smokers reported that they smoked more than one pack a day in 2008, compared to the peak of 30% in 1978 (data not shown). Various factors likely have contributed to this decline, including an increase in the perceptions of harm from smoking, tobacco regulation, and price increases.

NOTES: Data for 2008 are from national telephone (land-line and cellular) interviews with 1,016 adults ages 18 and older conducted July 10-13, 2008. The margin of error is ±3 percentage points for the total sample and ±8 percentage points for the sample of smokers (n=184). If more than one poll was conducted in a year, the poll that occurred closest to the month of July was used in the above graph. Surveys were only conducted in years that have a data point marker.