

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Study Identifies Five Types of NC College Student Smokers

The traditional definition of a smoker is someone who reports smoking on at least one of the past 30 days, which groups smokers who only smoke 1 or 2 days in a month together with smokers who smoke every day of the month. However, a recent web-based study of smokers from 10 North Carolina colleges found that college students who smoke are not one homogenous group. The study found five types of college student smokers based on smoking behaviors and contexts (see table below). Slightly more than one-fourth (28%) of the smokers were “heavy smokers” or “puffers” (26%). Twenty-two percent of the college smokers were “moderate smokers,” 19% were “social smokers”, and an additional 4% were “no-context smokers.” According to the authors, “future research should evaluate the efficacy of different types of interventions, including environmental- and individual-level interventions, among the different subclasses of smokers” (p. 452).

Types of NC College Student Smokers
(N=1,102 past month smokers from 10 NC colleges)

Smoker Type	%	Smoking Behavior		Smoking Context
		Days per Month	Cigarettes per Day	
Heavy Smoker	28%	Daily	6 to 10	weekends and weekdays; social and nonsocial
Puffer	26%	1 or 2 days	1 or fewer	no specific context except while drinking alcohol
Moderate Smoker	22%	10 to 19 days	2 to 5	weekends and weekdays; slightly more in social than nonsocial
Social Smoker	19%	3 to 5 days	2 to 5	weekends; social
No-Context Smoker	4%	10 to 19 days	2 to 5	no specific context

NOTE: The authors note that while regional variations in tobacco use among college students may limit the ability to generalize the results of this study to college students outside of North Carolina, the demographic profile of this sample generally reflects that of undergraduate students in the United States.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Sutfin, E., Reboussin, B., McCoy, T., Wolfson, M. “Are College Student Smokers Really a Homogeneous Group? A Latent Class Analysis of College Student Smokers,” *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* 11(4):444-454, 2009. For more information, contact Dr. Erin Sutfin at esutfin@wfubmc.edu.

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