

**Played: This Year's Video Games Glamorize Tobacco Use to Youth**  
*New Research Supports Truth Initiative® Findings That Teen-Targeted  
Video Games Contain Smoking Images*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec. 19, 2017)** – In the midst of the holiday shopping season, new research reveals that a staggering 93.5 percent of popular video games that contain tobacco images portray its use in a positive or neutral light. Truth Initiative® – the national nonprofit dedicated to making tobacco a thing of the past – has conducted a crowdsourcing study to gain additional insight into this pervasive and hyper-relevant issue.

This new survey supplements the annual release of the report “[Played: Smoking and Video Games](#)” by Truth Initiative. The report helped shed light on the prevalence of tobacco use in video games and the correlation between exposure to such imagery and the likelihood to smoke amongst youths. In fact, the report found that 44 percent of adolescents who start smoking do so from seeing it on the screen.

“There are no winners when it comes to smoking in video games when you consider that almost half of all teens that smoke are influenced by smoking imagery in pop culture,” said Robin Koval, CEO and president at Truth Initiative. “This is especially concerning, given that teens are 25 times more likely to play video games than go to the movies. These reports should sound alarms for parents and serve as a wakeup call to the industry that tobacco has no place in video games. This time of year is an especially apt moment to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking imagery given the fact that video games top the holiday wish lists of many young people.

The Truth Initiative survey found that nearly half of the new video games released in 2017 – ones that are sure to top holiday wish lists – contain smoking images. These recent releases include “Call of Duty: WWII,” “Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus,” “Cuphead,” “Life is Strange: Before the Storm” and “Uncharted: The Lost Legacy.” While most games are rated “Mature” (content generally suitable for ages 17 and up), they are played by teens nationwide. Further compounding the issue, video game content descriptors often fail to mention tobacco use, making it difficult for parents to monitor games.

[Played](#) revealed that tobacco use was viewed as making a character “tougher” or “grittier,” and more than 50 percent of teens expressed concern about the impact smoking images would have on their younger siblings. An additional study found that 77 percent of participants surveyed said the characters in their video games never experienced a health consequence in the game from their tobacco use.

Advertising is a key factor in youth tobacco use initiation. The depiction of tobacco use in games serves, in effect, as both free advertising for tobacco companies and a way to recruit the “replacement smokers” needed to make up for the 1,300 people who die each day from tobacco-related disease.

**Research Methodology:** The Amazon Mechanical Turk Crowdsourcing Study was conducted from a survey of 200 participants aged 18 and over. Surveys were taken with a specific game in mind that was verified via video clip (from each participant) to contain images of tobacco.

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**[About Truth Initiative](#)**

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization that is inspiring tobacco-free lives and building a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**<sup>®</sup> public education campaign, our rigorous and scientific research and policy studies, and our innovative community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco. The Washington D.C.-based organization, formerly known as Legacy, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more about our work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).