

## **Tobacco Use on the Big & Small Screens is a Public Health Concern** *New CDC Report Reveals Smoking in 1 in 4 Youth-Rated Films*

A new report released today by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) analyzing smoking in top-grossing movies finds that one in four youth-rated movies continue to include tobacco imagery and the decline in the number of movies with smoking has stalled.

The report released today finds:

- Last year's crop of top-grossing movies rated PG and PG-13 contained fewer movies with smoking than any year since 2002. Overall, 1 in 4 youth-rated films featured smoking, a 61 percent decline since 2002. Although that decline is good news, the number of tobacco incidents crept back up in 2016 from a historic low of less than 600 in 2010. In 2016, there were over 800 incidents.
- The report also highlights the need for a measure that many public health experts have long advocated: An R Rating for any movie with tobacco use, except for films that "portray tobacco use by actual people who used tobacco, such as the subject of a biographical drama or documentary" and "realistically depict the health consequences of tobacco use."
- Other measures could also help protect youth in addition to the R rating, including disqualifying productions featuring tobacco use from receiving public subsidies, such as tax credits.

Smoking imagery is also prevalent in video games, including many teen-rated games. A report released by Truth Initiative, [Played: Smoking and Video Games](#), found that smoking is prevalent and often glamorized in video games played by youth and video game content descriptors often fail to mention tobacco use, making it difficult for parents to monitor games for tobacco imagery.

"The expansion of the media landscape into many screening platforms has created more opportunities for tobacco exposure—a cause for serious concern," said Robin Koval, CEO and President of Truth Initiative. "As smoking has become a less socially acceptable behavior, it continues to be portrayed positively in movies and increasingly in streaming video content and in video games. While we've made huge progress in reducing the youth smoking rate to 6 percent, we need to make sure we don't backslide by giving youth the impression that smoking is the norm. Smoking imagery has no place in pop culture."

Tobacco use on screen is a public health concern because, as the U.S. Surgeon General reported in 2012, exposure to smoking imagery in movies can cause young people to start smoking. In fact, youth who are heavily exposed to onscreen smoking imagery are approximately two to three times as likely to begin smoking, compared to youth who are lightly exposed.

The CDC report finds that if all films with smoking were rated R, teen smoking rates would decline 18 percent, according to a 2014 Surgeon General report. That same year, the CDC determined that giving an R rating to movies with tobacco content would prevent 1 million tobacco deaths among children and teens alive today.

The report includes data from the University of California, San Francisco and Breathe California on tobacco incidents (images of actual or implied tobacco use in each scene) in top-grossing movies, including those with youth ratings G, PG and PG-13.

### **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 its proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**<sup>®</sup> public education campaign, its rigorous and scientific research and policy studies, and 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 Truth Initiative's work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).

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