

**truth® Campaign Successful in Saving Lives and Preventing Youth Smoking**  
*New Study Finds Campaign Stops More Than 300,000  
Youth and Young Adults from Smoking over the Course of a Year*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec. 7, 2017)** – With research showing that almost 99 percent of adult smokers start by age 26, [Truth Initiative®](#) – the national nonprofit dedicated to making tobacco a thing of the past – reveals today in new research published in the [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#) that brand equity of the organization’s award-winning [truth](#) campaign prevented more than 300,000 U.S. youth and young adults from becoming smokers during 2015-2016.

**truth**, one of largest and most successful youth smoking prevention campaigns in history, goes toe-to-toe with an industry that spends more than \$8 billion each year to market tobacco products in the U.S., and billions more across the globe. **truth** exposes the facts about the health and social consequences of tobacco use and the marketing tactics of the industry behind it.

This new research finds that building brand equity among teens not only improves message recall, but also influences behavioral outcomes. Youth and young adults who feel more favorably toward the **truth** brand are less likely to be current smokers, and for those who do smoke, the research shows that they are more than twice as likely to report intentions to quit within one year.

“We are proud that this once again confirms the power of the **truth** campaign to create social change and save lives,” said Robin Koval, CEO and president at Truth Initiative. “We’re inspiring young people to end the smoking epidemic for good by exposing the tactics of the tobacco industry, giving teens facts about smoking that are relevant to their lives today and empowering them to use their creativity and social influence to share the message at scale.”

The recently published report finds that:

- Youth and young adults who feel more favorably toward the **truth** brand are less likely to be current smokers, holding constant recall of ad executions and other factors which influence smoking.
- Increasing **truth** brand equity or relevance was associated with preventing an estimated 301,930 U.S. youths and young adults aged 15-21 years from becoming current smokers during 2015-2016.
- Additionally, **truth** brand relevance is significantly associated with a greater likelihood to intend to quit smoking cigarettes in the next year. Other factors significantly associated with increased odds of being a current smoker include reporting average or below-average school achievement, living with someone who smokes, as well as greater peer cigarette use.
- Youth and young adults who live in states with higher cigarette taxes are less likely to be current smokers.
- Building brand equity is a key strategic process for health promotion campaigns, not only to improve message recall and salience, but also to influence behavioral outcomes.

“Unlike many other health-related campaigns, truth fully embraces branding to help raise awareness and engagement with our message given the current crowded and multi-platform media environment. Branding is a promising and growing strategy that has been employed by commercial marketers, but has not been completely adopted by many health promotion efforts,” said Donna Vallone, Ph.D., M.P.H., chief research officer at Truth Initiative and lead author on the study. “This

study provides compelling evidence that our branding approach has helped young people reject tobacco.”

Since 2000, **truth** has spoken to youth and young adults in a voice and through the channels they understand and trust. The **truth** campaign is continuously evolving to meet young people with contextually and culturally relevant messages recognizing that the youth target is one of the most elusive to reach, given that it completely turns over every 10 years.

In 2014, **truth** reinvented itself for a new generation of late-stage millennials and Gen Z with its “FinishIT,” campaign, aimed at empowering youth and young adults to be part of a movement to make their generation the one that finally ends smoking. Through our multi-channel program, **truth** rallied a volunteer army of youth and young adults to use their influence and creativity to de-normalize smoking among their peers. The campaign connects with youth culture and seeks to connect smoking and the effects of tobacco to the things young people really care about, such as relationships, pets, money and social justice. **truth** is known for its bold tone, use of pop-culture celebrities and online influencers. Over the past three years, the campaign has connected its smoking prevention message to everything from getting “left swiped” on a dating app, to the potential dire effects of secondhand smoke on pets and the subsequent elimination of cat videos from the Internet, a phenomenon, **truth** labeled “CATmageddon.” Since the re-launch of the **truth** campaign in 2014, its behavior-changing videos have been viewed over a billion times.

Most recent campaigns include:

- [Business or Exploitation?](#) (Aug. 2017) – People with mental health conditions (depression and ADHD, for example) and substance use disorders are estimated to account for 40 percent of cigarettes smoked in the United States, and 38 percent of military smokers start after enlisting. The campaign employed a journalistic approach to explore the exploitation practices of the tobacco industry with a focus on Big Tobacco’s targeting of the military and those with mental health conditions.
- [#STOPPROFILING](#) (Feb. 2017) – For decades, African Americans, people in low-income neighborhoods and the LGBTQ community have been disproportionately affected by tobacco use as a result of profiling by the tobacco industry. This work effectively called attention to the fact that Big Tobacco looks for and singles out individuals who are most vulnerable to their marketing efforts.
- [#SQUADLESS](#) (Aug. 2016) – With money being an important topic for teens, this campaign highlighted the disparity in earning potential between smokers and non-smokers – on average, smokers earn 20 percent less than non-smokers.
- [#CATmageddon](#) (Feb. 2016) – With more than 1.1 million cat channels on YouTube, the threat of an Internet without cat videos underscores the urgency of the tobacco epidemic for a pet-loving generation connected by strong social networks. The humorous ad carries a serious message about second-hand smoke: Dogs and cats who live in a smoking household are twice as likely to get cancer.
- [Left Swipe ‘Dat](#) (Feb. 2015) – Profile pictures that include smoking get rejected with “left swipes” almost twice as often as those that do not. The music video, introduced during the 57th Grammy Awards, used humor to deliver the message that tobacco is not only bad for your health, it’s a killer for your love life.
- [Unpaid](#) (Aug. 2014) – Tobacco companies continue to adapt their tactics to attract new customers, and smokers themselves have inadvertently become their best ‘marketers’ –

whether they recognize it or not. Every 'like' and every 'share' of a smoking-related picture on social media is a big win for Big Tobacco, contributing toward the re-glamorization and societal acceptance of smoking. This effort called attention to the power and influence that social media provides – for celebrities and individuals alike.

### **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).

### **About truth**

**truth** is one of the most successful and one of the largest national youth tobacco prevention campaigns. The campaign exposes the tactics of the tobacco industry, the truth about addiction, and the health effects and social consequences of smoking. **truth** gives teens facts to make their own informed choices about tobacco use and inspires them to use their creativity in the fight against tobacco. The campaign is credited with preventing hundreds of thousands of teens from starting to smoke, and is working to make this the generation that ends smoking for good. To learn more, visit [thetruth.com](http://thetruth.com). **truth** is part of Truth Initiative, a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. To learn more about Truth Initiative's work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).