



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

## Key Points

### Questions

What are NYU students' perceptions of NYU's Smoke-Free Policy? How well do students adhere to the policy?

### Findings

In this cross-sectional survey of 121 NYU students, few students reported use of tobacco or marijuana products both at large and on campus. However, a large majority of students reported witnessing violations of the smoke-free policy in the past thirty days, usually indoors. Most students were both aware and in support of the smoke-free policy, but a sizable portion were either completely unaware or unaware that the policy included e-cigarettes. Students reported minimal engagement with materials promoting the policy and minimal awareness and minimal experience of policy enforcement.

### Meaning

Results of this survey suggest that the majority of students are not violating the smoke-free policy and that most are satisfied with its enforcement. However, most students also reported observing routine violations of the policy. This may suggest that non-negative normative perceptions of tobacco and marijuana on campus contribute to the lack of university-wide compliance, but more analysis is required.

## Report

### Introduction

Although tobacco prevalence has been significantly reduced, tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). Approximately 18.7% of US adults use tobacco products and 17.6% of young adults report using tobacco products "every day" or "some days" (Cornelius et al., 2022). A large portion of young adult tobacco use is attributable to the recent proliferation of e-cigarettes. Recent data from the New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) indicates that 10.4% of young adults aged 18-24 use electronic cigarettes (New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research, Bureau of Tobacco Control, 2022). These data are concerning because of the association between electronic cigarette use and poor health outcomes both physical and mental (Jones et al., 2021), in addition to later adoption of combustible cigarette smoking and its concomitant health risks (Khouja et al., 2021).

College campuses are unique settings to address this public health concern because of their proximity to youth initiation of tobacco and nicotine use (Carter, Brandon & Goldman, 2010; Sidnai, Shensa, Yabes, Fertman, & Primack, 2018). One strategy that has been effective in addressing cigarette use on campus in



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

recent years has been the adoption of tobacco-free campus policies (Seo et al., 2011). However, adherence to these policies has been limited partly due to the norms surrounding e-cigarettes such as “stealth vaping,” vaping discreetly in places where electronic cigarette use is prohibited (Ramamurthi et al., 2019; Yingst et al., 2019).

Research is necessary to understand if and how tobacco-free campus policies might be better implemented to address combustible cigarette and e-cigarette use sufficiently. This study offers insight into the problem by evaluating the implementation of a tobacco-free policy at a large private urban university. By evaluating students’ experiences and perceptions of the tobacco-free campus policy and its capacity to address cigarette and e-cigarette use, this study provides insight into the barriers to and facilitators of the policy’s implementation across all tobacco products.

## Methods

To collect data on the multilevel barriers to NYU's tobacco free policy compliance and enforcement, we distributed a cross-sectional survey of students currently enrolled in a degree granting program at New York University. From September 2023 to October 2023, participants were recruited to participate in an online survey on their demographics, behaviors concerning tobacco use, and perceptions of enforcement, violations, and awareness of resources of the smoke-free policy. Recruitment entailed the distribution of flyers around the NYU Washington square campus, emails distributed by student organizations, and tabling sessions at university common spaces. As an incentive to participate in the survey, all respondents were entered in a raffle to receive a 25\$ Amazon gift card; respondents who completed the survey from a tabling event received a donut. Participation in the survey was voluntary and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Informed consent was provided prior to participating in the survey. IRB approval was obtained from the University institutional review board prior to survey distribution.

In total, 1512 survey responses were recorded, however, many of these responses appeared to be generated by online bots. In order to handle an influx of survey bot responses, various measures were implemented to ensure that only legitimate responses were included. Bot-detection tools from Qualtrics were used to filter through incoming responses, and those responses which did pass through Qualtrics security measures were then re-evaluated to ensure that they were completed in 1) New York City Metropolitan Area and 2) associated with NYU email addresses. After all the bot responses had been eliminated from the survey responses, care was taken to ensure that only those students who had completed the survey entirely were included in the analysis. Ultimately we were left with a convenience sample of 121 valid and complete survey responses. Univariate descriptive statistics were done to examine all variables collected in the survey including gender, age, smoking habits, perception of smoke policy, etc. All analyses were done in RStudio Version 2023.06.2+561.



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

## Results

This survey's convenience sample was not entirely representative of the NYU student body. Overrepresented in this survey were students identifying as female (71%, 86), Asian (41.3%, 50), and white (36.4%, 44). Underrepresented were students identifying as Male (25.6%, 31) and Hispanic/Latinx (9.9%, 12). A majority of respondents were undergraduate students (55.4%) and lived in off-campus housing (64.5%, 78). Most students surveyed did not report use of any of the tobacco or marijuana products in question (cigarettes, 82%; e-cigarettes, 85%; marijuana, 72%; marijuana vape, 82%). Of those who did report tobacco or marijuana use, most stated that they rarely did so (cigarettes, 47.6%; e-cigarettes, 29.4%; marijuana, 55.9%; marijuana vape, 45%). Additionally, these students usually reported infrequent use of those products on campus (cigarettes, 20%; e-cigarettes, 37.5%; marijuana, 25%; marijuana vape, 20%).

Many students surveyed held non-negative normative perceptions of tobacco and marijuana product use (cigarettes, 43%; e-cigarettes, 53%; marijuana, 52%; marijuana vape, 51%), though combustible tobacco was viewed less favorably than electronic cigarette and marijuana products were. Fewer students reported non-negative views of the use of these products on campus (cigarettes, 35%; e-cigarettes, 43%; marijuana, 35%; marijuana vape, 39%). Most students were aware of the NYU smoke-free policy, but a large portion were either entirely unaware of the policy or unaware that it included a prohibition on e-cigarette use (61% aware, 26% entirely unaware, 13% unaware of e-cigarette inclusion).

While students reported infrequent encounters with materials advertising the smoke-free policy (85%), most students supported the policy and were satisfied with its enforcement (76% support, 70% satisfaction). Almost all of the students surveyed had witnessed a violation of the smoke-free policy within the past thirty days (87.8%). Most of these infractions were observed indoors (80.5%) and frequent locations included student life centers, and bathrooms followed closely by dormitories and libraries. Very few students were ever involved with any disciplinary action regarding the smoke-free policy (97%) nor were they aware of any disciplinary action ever being taken in response to a violation (92%).

## Next Questions

Further analysis is warranted on the potential predictors of violations of the smoke-free policy, satisfaction with NYU's enforcement of the policy, and reception of disciplinary action. Future analysis should aim to explore environmental factors associated with perceptions and adherence to the smoke-free policy. These factors might include the urban campus environment and the impact of marijuana legalization in the state.



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

**Table 1: Demographic Summary Statistics**

Characteristic	Frequency <sup>1</sup>
Gender (n=121)	
<i>Male</i>	31 (25.6%)
<i>Female</i>	86 (71.0%)
<i>Non-binary</i>	4 (3.40%)
Age <sup>2</sup> (n = 117)	21 (4.26)
Race (n = 121)	
<i>Asian</i>	50 (41.3%)
<i>Black/African American</i>	14 (11.6%)
<i>White</i>	44 (36.4 %)
<i>White &amp; Asian</i>	2 (1.65%)
<i>Other/Unknown</i>	5 (4.10%)
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	4 (3.30%)
<i>N/A</i>	2 (1.65%)
Ethnicity (n = 121)	
<i>Hispanic/Latinx</i>	12 (9.90%)
<i>Not Hispanic/Latinx</i>	104 (86.0%)
<i>N/A</i>	5 (4.10%)
Programs (n = 121)	
<i>Undergraduate Freshman</i>	17 (14.0%)
<i>Undergraduate Sophomore</i>	21 (17.4%)
<i>Undergraduate Junior</i>	14 (11.6%)
<i>Undergraduate Senior</i>	15 (12.4%)
<i>Graduate Masters</i>	49 (40.5%)
<i>Graduate Doctoral</i>	2 (1.60%)
<i>N/A</i>	3 (2.50%)
Housing (n = 121)	
<i>Off-campus housing</i>	78 (64.5%)
<i>On-campus housing</i>	40 (33.2%)
<i>Other ["with parents"]</i>	1 (0.83%)
<i>N/A</i>	2 (1.65%)
<sup>1</sup> n(%)	
<sup>2</sup> Median (SD)	



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

**Table 2: Information on Smoking & Vaping Habits**

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 121) <sup>1</sup>
How often do students smoke combustible cigarettes?	
<i>Never</i>	98 (82.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	10 (8.40%)
<i>Somedays</i>	2 (1.70%)
<i>Most days</i>	3 (2.50%)
<i>Everyday</i>	6 (5.00%)
How often do students smoke marijuana?	
<i>Never</i>	86 (72.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	19 (16.0%)
<i>Somedays</i>	10 (8.30%)
<i>Most days</i>	3 (2.50%)
<i>Everyday</i>	2 (1.70%)
How often do students vape nicotine?	
<i>Never</i>	97 (85.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	5 (4.40%)
<i>Somedays</i>	4 (3.50%)
<i>Most days</i>	1 (0.90%)
<i>Everyday</i>	7 (6.10%)
How often do students vape marijuana?	
<i>Never</i>	94 (82.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	9 (7.90%)
<i>Somedays</i>	5 (4.40%)
<i>Most days</i>	3 (2.60%)
<i>Everyday</i>	3 (2.60%)
<sup>1</sup> n(%)	



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

**Table 3: On-Campus Smoking Information**

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 121) <sup>1</sup>
Do students smoke combustible cigarettes on campus?	
Yes	12 (11.0%)
<i>Never</i>	7 (50.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	1 (8.30%)
<i>Somedays</i>	-
<i>Most days</i>	2 (17.0%)
<i>Everyday</i>	2 (17.0%)
No	101 (89.0%)
Do students smoke electronic cigarettes on campus?	
Yes	17 (15.0%)
<i>Never</i>	9 (53.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	-
<i>Somedays</i>	3 (18.0%)
<i>Most days</i>	3 (18.0%)
<i>Everyday</i>	2 (12.0%)
No	99 (85.0%)
Do students smoke marijuana on campus?	
Yes	11 (9.40%)
<i>Never</i>	7 (63.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	1 (9.00%)
<i>Somedays</i>	2 (19.0%)
<i>Most days</i>	1 (9.00%)
<i>Everyday</i>	-
No	106 (91.0%)
Do students vape marijuana on campus?	
Yes	12 (10.0%)
<i>Never</i>	7 (58.0%)
<i>Rarely</i>	1 (8.30%)
<i>Somedays</i>	2 (17.0%)
<i>Most days</i>	2 (17.0%)
<i>Everyday</i>	-
No	104 (90.0%)
<sup>1</sup> n(%)	



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

**Table 4: On-Campus Smoking Locations of Students\***

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 22) <sup>1</sup>
Bathrooms	7
Dormitories	5
Libraries	6
Student Housing	2
Campus Transportation	2
Student Life Centers	3
Classrooms	2
Sport Centers & Gymnasiums	2
Cafeterias & Dining Halls	4
Outdoors (on-campus property)	7
Other ["in their office"]	1
<sup>1</sup> n(frequency reported)	
*students reported smoking in multiple locations	

**Table 5: Normative Perceptions of Smoking Habits**

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 121) <sup>1</sup>
Would their closest friends approve of combustible cigarette use?	
Yes	27 (23.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	24 (20.0%)
No	68 (57.0%)
Would their closest friends approve of electronic cigarette use?	
Yes	40 (34.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	23 (19.0%)
No	56 (47.0%)
Would their closest friends approve of marijuana use?	
Yes	47 (40.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	14 (12.0%)
No	56 (48.0%)
Would their closest friends approve of marijuana vape use?	
Yes	36 (31.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	23 (20.0%)
No	57 (49.0%)



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

Would their closest friends approve of combustible cigarette use on campus?	
Yes	18 (15.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	24 (20.0%)
No	77 (65.0%)
Would their closest friends approve of electronic cigarette use on campus?	
Yes	22 (19.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	28 (24.0%)
No	68 (58.0%)
Would their closest friends approve of marijuana use on campus?	
Yes	18 (15.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	25 (20.0%)
No	77 (65.0%)
Would their closest friends approve of marijuana vape use on campus?	
Yes	23 (20.0%)
Maybe/Unsure	22 (19.0%)
No	72 (62.0%)
<sup>1</sup> n(%)	

**Table 6: Awareness of Smoke-Policy & Perceptions**

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 121) <sup>1</sup>
How many students were aware of the NYU smoke-free policy?	
Yes, and they knew it included e-cigarettes	73 (61.0%)
Yes, but they didn't know it included e-cigarettes	16 (13.0%)
No, they were not aware	31 (26.0%)
Do students support the NYU smoke-free policy?	
Yes	91 (76.0%)
No	12 (10.0%)
Unsure	17 (14.0%)
Are students satisfied with NYU's enforcement of the policy?	
Yes	84 (70.0%)
No	36 (30.0%)
Do students support an explicit ban on the use of marijuana on campus being added to the smoke-free policy?	
Yes	58 (49.0%)
No	24 (20.0%)
Unsure	37 (31.0%)





# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

How often have students seen materials/advertising about the smoke-free policy on campus in the past 6 months?	
<i>Never</i>	46 (38.0%)
<i>Once</i>	14 (12.0%)
<i>A few times</i>	42 (35.0%)
<i>Sometimes</i>	13 (11.0%)
<i>Many times</i>	5 (4.20%)

**Table 7: Observed Violations of the Smoke-Free Policy**

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 121) <sup>1</sup>
In the past 30 days, how often were violations observed?	
<i>Never</i>	14 (12.0%)
<i>Once</i>	8 (6.80%)
<i>A few times</i>	40 (34.0%)
<i>Sometimes</i>	12 (10.0%)
<i>Many times</i>	43 (37.0%)
*Where were these violations observed? (n = 94 observed violations)	
<i>Bathrooms</i>	19 (21.0%)
<i>Dormitories</i>	17 (18.0%)
<i>Libraries</i>	18 (19.0%)
<i>Student Housing</i>	12 (12.0%)
<i>Campus Transportation</i>	7 (7.40%)
<i>Student Life Centers</i>	24 (25.5%)
<i>Classrooms</i>	12 (12.0%)
<i>Sport Centers &amp; Gymnasiums</i>	6 (6.40%)
<i>Cafeterias &amp; Dining Halls</i>	14 (14.0%)
<i>Outdoors (on-campus property)</i>	23 (24.0%)
<i>Other ["elevators, hallways"]</i>	2 (2.10%)
*What was the product being used in these observations? (n = 9 responses where product was known)	
<i>Tobacco cigarettes</i>	5 (56.0%)
<i>Electronic cigarettes</i>	6 (66.7%)
<i>Marijuana cigarettes</i>	4 (44.4%)
<i>Marijuana vaporizer</i>	3 (33.3%)
<sup>1</sup> n(%) *percentages won't add up to 100% as students reported violations occurring in many locations	



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

**Table 8: Actions Taken Following Violations**

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 121) <sup>1</sup>
Have students heard or seen someone receiving disciplinary action?	
Yes	10 (8.30%)
No	110 (92.0%)
Have students ever filed a complaint themselves?	
Yes	6 (5.00%)
No	113 (95.0%)
Have students received disciplinary action themselves for a violation?	
Yes	4 (3.40%)
No	113 (97.0%)
<sup>1</sup> n(%)	



# Evaluating NYU's Smoke-Free Policy

Internal Report for the Evidence to Global Impact Lab

## References

- Carter, A. C., Brandon, K. O., & Goldman, M. S. (2010). The college and noncollege experience: A review of the factors that influence drinking behavior in young adulthood. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 71, 742–750. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsad.2010.71.742>
- Cornelius, M., Loretan, C., Wang, T., Jamal, A., & Homa, D. (2022). Tobacco Product Use Among Adults—United States, 2020. (No. 71; MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep, pp. 397–405). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7111a1>
- Jones RD, Asare M, Lanning B. A Retrospective Cross-Sectional Study on the Prevalence of E-cigarette Use Among College Students. *J Community Health*. 2021 Feb;46(1):195-202. doi: 10.1007/s10900-020-00869-x. PMID: 32592159; PMCID: PMC7317082.
- Khouja, J. N., Suddell, S. F., Peters, S. E., Taylor, A. E., & Munafò, M. R. (2021). Is e-cigarette use in non-smoking young adults associated with later smoking? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Tobacco Control*, 30(1), 8. <https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2019-055433>
- New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research, Bureau of Tobacco Control. (2022). Electronic Cigarette Use: New York State Adults, 2020 (Number 2022-23).
- Ramamurthi, D., Chau, C., & Jackler, R. K. (2019). JUUL and other stealth vaporisers: Hiding the habit from parents and teachers. *Tobacco Control*, 28(6), 610. <https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2018-054455>
- Seo, D.-C., Macy, J. T., Torabi, M. R., & Middlestadt, S. E. (2011). The effect of a smoke-free campus policy on college students' smoking behaviors and attitudes. *Special Section: Epidemiology, Risk, and Causation*, 53(4), 347–352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yjmed.2011.07.015>
- Sidani, J., Shensa, A., Yabes, J., Fertman, C., & Primack, B. (2018). Waterpipe tobacco use in college and non-college young adults in the USA. *Family Practice*, 36(2), 103–109. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmy037>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2020). Smoking Cessation. A Report of the Surgeon General. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.
- Yingst, J. M., Lester, C., Veldheer, S., Allen, S. I., Du, P., & Foulds, J. (2019). E-cigarette users commonly stealth vape in places where e-cigarette use is prohibited. *Tobacco Control*, 28(5), 493. <https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2018-054432>