



## Press Release

New York City Department of Health  
and Mental Hygiene  
Office of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **NEW YORK CITY'S SMOKING RATE DECLINES RAPIDLY FROM 2002 TO 2003, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ONE-YEAR DROP EVER RECORDED**

*100,000 Fewer New Yorkers Smoking;*

*30,000 Fewer Smoking-Related Deaths in Coming Years*

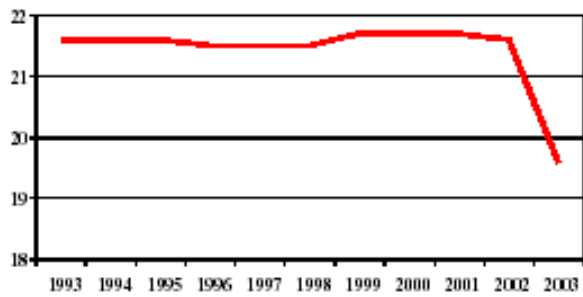
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NEW YORK CITY – May 12, 2004 – The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) today announced an 11% decline in the number of smokers in New York City from 2002 to 2003. This decline came after a decade of limited progress in tobacco control in New York City and nationally and constitutes the fastest drop in smoking rates ever recorded nationally. New data collected by the survey unit at Baruch College on tobacco use and a variety of other health issues showed that the proportion of New Yorkers who smoke dropped to 19% in 2003, down from 22% in 2002 (survey margin of error +/- 1%). This drop represents 100,000 fewer New Yorkers smoking in 2003 compared with 2002.

DOHMH Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH said, “This is extraordinarily good news for the health of New Yorkers: Among the 100,000 now former smokers, at least 30,000 premature deaths will be prevented. Coordinated policies and actions can stop the nation’s leading epidemic. The increase in the cigarette tax, implementation of the Smoke Free Air Act, our nicotine patch distribution program, and public education about the health risks associated with tobacco have prevented literally tens of thousands of premature deaths.”

“Fewer New Yorkers are smoking today than at any point in at least 50 years,” Dr. Frieden continued. “Most smokers want to quit and, for the first time ever, there are more former smokers than there are smokers in New York City. Despite this remarkable decline, much more needs to be done. With these new data, we will continue to focus our efforts to reduce tobacco use.”

## Rapid decline in smoking in New York City, 2003



Michael Fiore, MD, MPH, Director of the Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention and Professor of Medicine at the University of Wisconsin Medical School and a nationally recognized expert on smoking cessation, said, “New York City has done all the right things – reducing exposure to secondhand smoke, increasing the excise tax, and helping current smokers quit. As a result, rates of smoking have declined and needless illness and death has been prevented. New York City is a model for the what we need to do across America.”

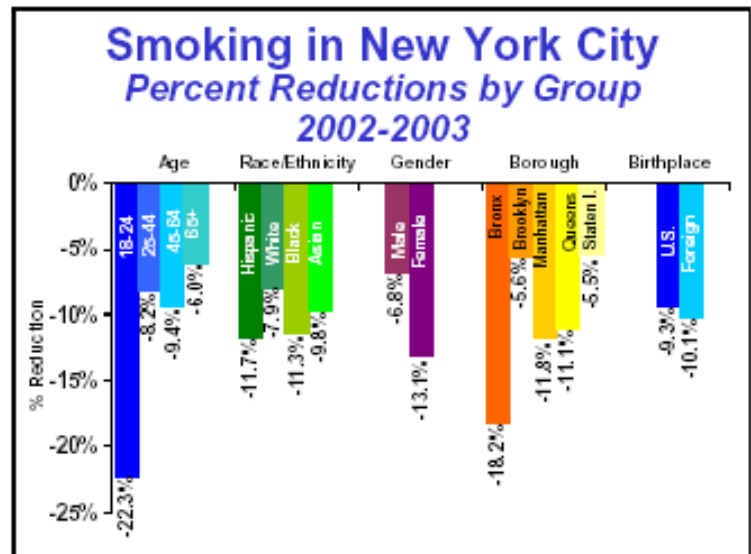
Steven A. Schroeder, MD, Distinguished Professor of Health and Health Care at the University of California at San Francisco’s Department of Medicine and former President of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, said, “These findings are great news

for the health of the public. All too often people are cynical about whether smokers really can quit. Thanks to the courageous leadership of New York City, we know that a combination of cigarette tax increases, clean indoor air laws, and appropriate treatment to aid cessation can translate into major declines in smoking. That, in turn, means healthier people who live longer lives.”

“We were delighted to follow New York’s lead by investing in a comprehensive educational campaign to combat inaccurate rhetoric on clean indoor air policies,” said Dr. Cheryl Heaton, President and CEO of the American Legacy Foundation. “We believe that, as goes New York, so goes the nation. When people know more, they smoke less. So we are tremendously proud to have been a part of this successful education campaign and to celebrate with New Yorkers this enormous public health victory,” she said.

### Other Data Highlights:

- Smoking rates declined among all age groups, racial/ethnic groups, all boroughs and among both men and women.
- The proportion of young adults (ages 18-24) who smoke decreased by 22%.
- There were 42,000 fewer smokers in the Bronx; 18,000 fewer in Brooklyn; 31,000 fewer in Manhattan; 39,000 fewer in Queens; 5,000 fewer in Staten Island.
- Smoking declined 12% among Hispanics; 11% among blacks; 10% among Asians; and 8% among whites.
- The proportion of women who smoke decreased by 13%; men by 7%.
- Those who continue to smoke are smoking less.
- These decreases translate into 700 million fewer cigarettes smoked in one year.
- 150,000 fewer New Yorkers are exposed to second-hand smoke on the job, and another 100,000 fewer are being exposed to second-hand smoke at home.
- See [attachment](#) for other data.



### Survey Methods

The surveys were conducted by the Baruch College Survey Research Unit, using standard and validated random-digit dial telephone survey methods of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Computer-assisted telephone interviews of adult NYC residents were conducted from May to July 2002 and April to November 2003. The survey asked about socio-

demographics, health status, health care access, use of clinical preventive services, health behaviors, health conditions, and home and community environment. A tobacco module included detailed questions on current smoking practices, exposure to second-hand smoke, response to recent taxation, health care providers' advice to quit, and smoking cessation. Surveys were conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese, Greek, Korean, Russian, Yiddish, Polish and Haitian Creole. Survey data are representative of the age, race/ethnicity and gender composition of New York City.

### **New York City's Five-Point Tobacco Control Plan**

*Taxation:* To discourage youth smoking and encourage cessation by increasing the price of cigarettes.

- New York City increased its tax on cigarettes to \$1.50 (an increase of \$1.42) in July 2002, soon after New York State's tax increase of \$0.39.

*Legislation:* To reduce exposure to second-hand smoke, counteract tobacco industry tactics, and promote tobacco control.

- DOHMH implemented the Smoke Free Air Act in March 2003, protecting virtually all workers from secondhand smoke.

*Cessation:* To help New Yorkers who want to stop smoking succeed by increasing the use of effective quitting techniques.

- In 2002, DOHMH provided 35,000 New Yorkers who wanted to quit smoking with a free six-week course of the nicotine patch. One third (about 11,000) of those New Yorkers successfully quit smoking. DOHMH works closely with the Health and Hospitals Corporation and medical providers throughout New York City to increase access to cessation treatment.
- Smoking cessation aids, including medication such as the patch and counseling from a medical provider, greatly increase the likelihood of a successful quit attempt. Most smokers want to quit and should talk to their medical provider or call 311 to find out how.

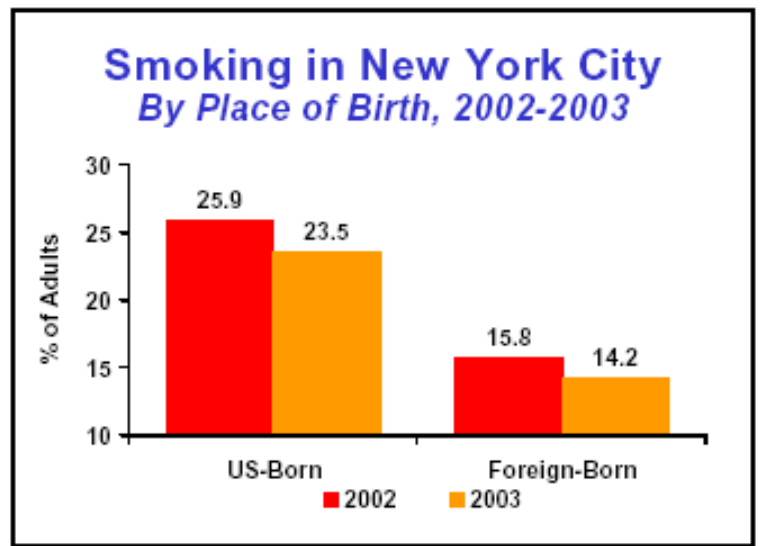
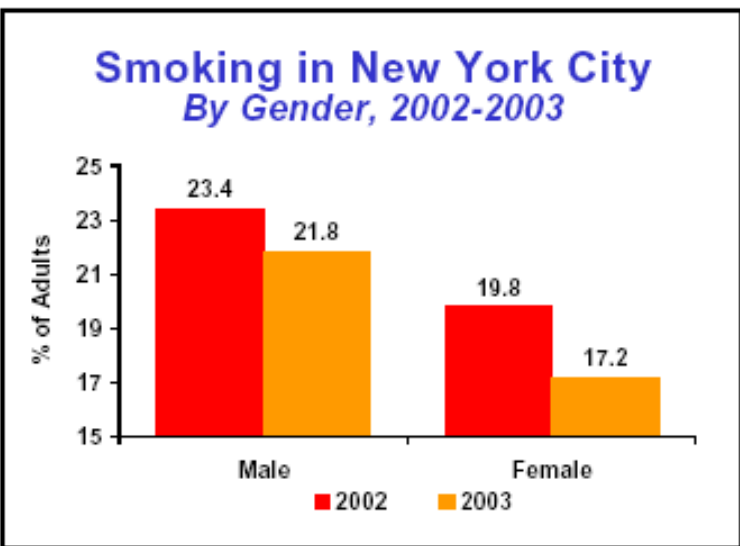
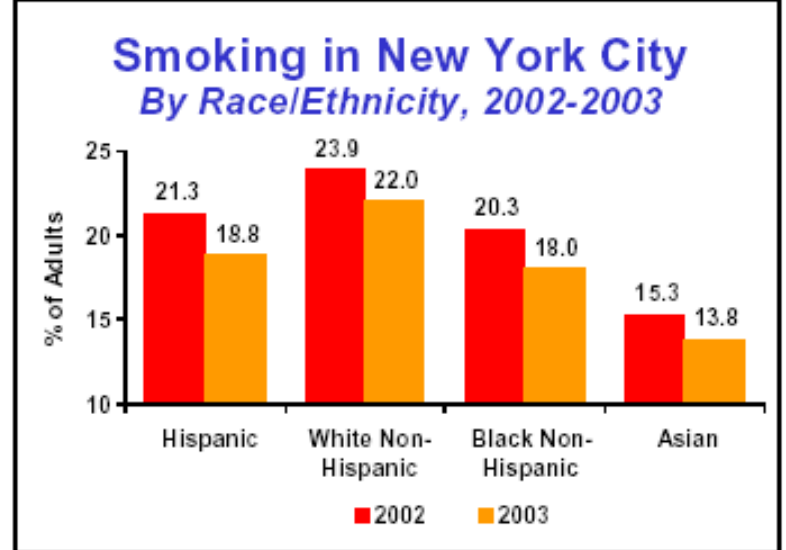
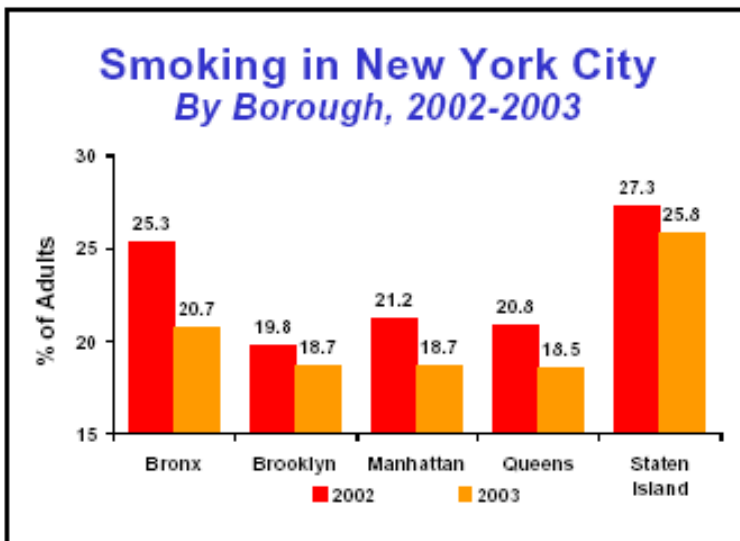
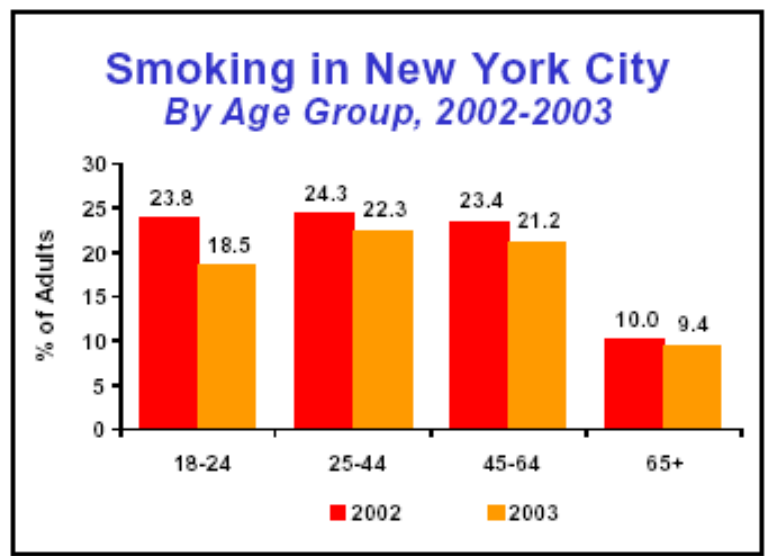
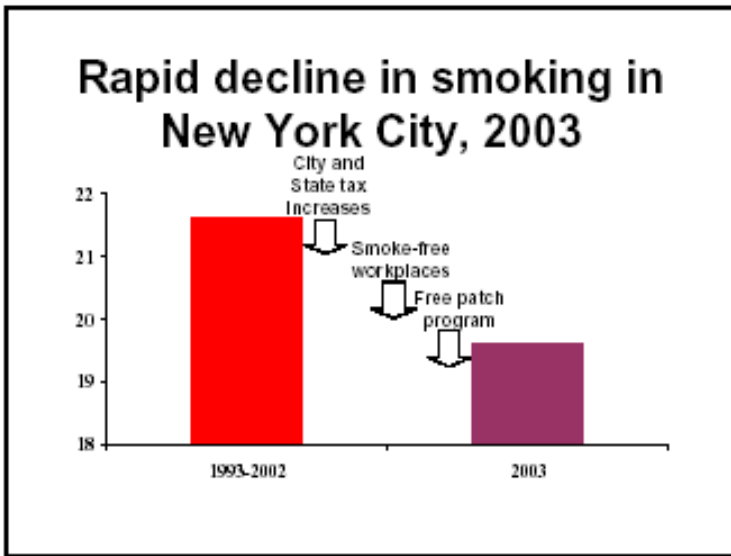
*Education:* DOHMH disseminates information on the dangers of smoking and of second-hand smoke.

- The Health Department, working with the American Legacy Foundation, increased awareness of the risks of second-hand smoke. More recently the Department and the American Legacy Foundation launched a reality-based education campaign entitled "Bob Quits." The widely publicized and recognized campaign was featured in print, online and on mass transportation.
- DOHMH has produced treatment recommendations on smoking cessation, which have been distributed to the City's 60,000 medical providers.

*Evaluation:* DOHMH conducts surveys to continuously improve the effectiveness of tobacco control efforts.

- Starting in 2002, DOHMH began its Community Health Survey of 10,000 individuals over the age of 18. The survey asks New Yorkers about their health, health care, and health behaviors, including smoking, eating, exercising, and access to and use of medical care.
- Working closely with the Department of Education, DOHMH conducts a Youth Behavior Risk Survey (YRBS), a biennial survey of 7,500 public school students ages 14-18 to assess risky behaviors of high school students in New York City. It is modeled after the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's national YRBS and asks about alcohol and other drug use, smoking, sexual behavior, mental illness, physical activity and violence.

To find out how you can quit smoking, to help someone else quit smoking, or for information about New York City's tobacco control efforts, **call 311** or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health).



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