

Smoking in the Movies

Background

- The 2012, the Surgeon General's Report concluded that exposure to onscreen smoking in movies causes young people to start smoking.¹ Because of this exposure to smoking in movies:
 - 6.4 million children alive today will become smokers, and 2 million of these children will die prematurely from diseases caused by smoking.²

- From 2002 to 2015:²
 - Almost half (46%) of top-grossing movies in the United States were rated PG-13.
 - 6 of every 10 PG-13 movies (59%) showed smoking or other tobacco use.
 - The percentage of youth-rated movies (G, PG, PG-13) that were smokefree increased from 35% to 62%; however, in youth-rated movies that showed any smoking, the average number of tobacco incidents per movie climbed to historically high levels in 2014 [n=38] before returning to 2002 levels [n=20] in 2015.²

- The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the studios' organization that assigns ratings, provides a "smoking label" along with the regular rating for some movies that contain smoking. However, almost 9 of every 10 (89%) youth-rated, top-grossing movies with smoking do not carry an MPAA "smoking label."²
- All six major movie companies that belong to MPAA have published individual policies addressing tobacco depictions in their movies.
 - Disney (2004)
 - Time Warner's Warner Bros. (2005)
 - Comcast's Universal (2007)
 - Fox and Sony (2012)
 - Viacom's Paramount (2013)

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Movie Ratings^{3,4}

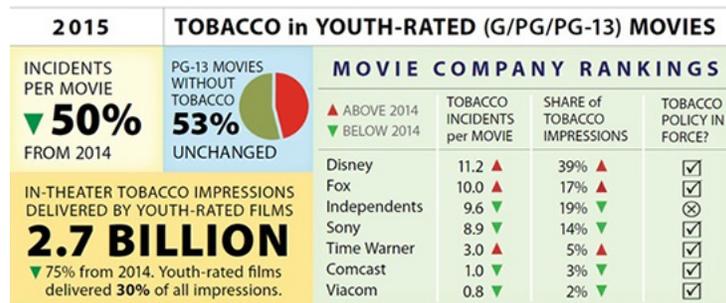
G (General Audience): All ages admitted

PG (Parental Guidance Suggested): Some material may not be suitable for children

PG-13 (Parents Strongly Cautioned): Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13

R (Restricted): Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian

NC-17 (Adults Only): No one 17 and under admitted



[Text description of this infographic](#) is available on a separate page.

Notes:

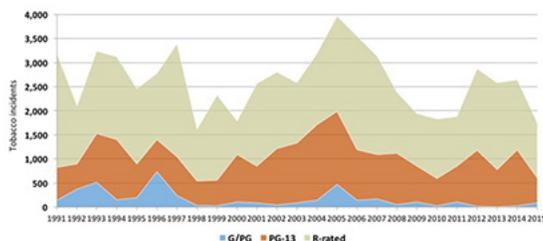
- A "tobacco incident" is one occurrence of smoking or other tobacco use in a movie.
- "Incidents" are a measure of the number of occurrences of smoking or other tobacco use in a movie.
- A "tobacco impression" is one person seeing one incident.
- "Impressions" are a measure of total audience exposure.
- This report's movie sample comprises all movies that ranked among the top 10 in ticket sales ("top-grossing movies") in any week of their first-run release to U.S. theaters.

Additional 2015 Findings²

- The percentage of PG-13 movies with tobacco incidents was virtually unchanged from 2014. (2014: 46%; 2015: 47%)

- About half of PG-13 movies (53%) remained tobacco-free in 2015—a level substantially unchanged since 2010 (57% tobacco-free).
- In 2015, the number of tobacco incidents in the average youth-rated movie with tobacco (20 incidents) was lower than in any year since 2009. The number in the average R-rated movie with tobacco (30 incidents) was lower than in any year since at least 2002.
- Movies rated G were tobacco-free for the fourth year in a row. However, the total number of tobacco incidents in movies rated PG more than tripled from 2014 to 2015 (from 27 to 88).
- PG-13 movies included fewer than half as many total tobacco incidents in 2015 (519) as they did in 2014 (1,165). The total number of incidents in youth-rated movies in 2015 (607) was approximately half the number in 2002 (1,296).

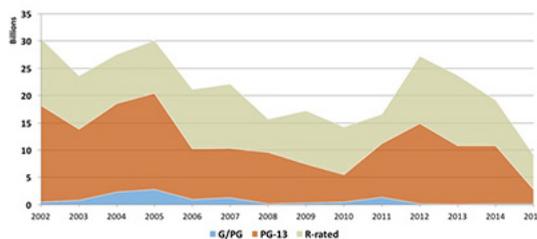
Figure 1. Tobacco Incidents in Top-Grossing Movies by Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) Rating, 1991–2015²



[Text description of this graph](#) is available on a separate page.

- The number of tobacco incidents in movies varies by movie company. From 2010 to 2015,²
 - Tobacco incidents increased in youth-rated movies from independent movie companies, Disney, Fox, and Time Warner (Warner Bros.).
 - Tobacco incidents decreased in movies from Comcast (Universal), Sony, and Viacom (Paramount).

Figure 2. In-Theater Tobacco Impressions by Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) Rating, 2002–2015²



[Text description of this graph](#) is available on a separate page.

Conclusions

- The data show that individual movie company policies alone have not been efficient at minimizing smoking in movies. Movie companies with tobacco depiction policies included tobacco in as many of their youth-rated movies in 2015 as they did in 2010 [18 in 2010; 19 in 2015] and each of these movies included nearly as many tobacco incidents, on average [25 incidents per movie in 2010; 22 incidents per movie in 2015].
- Reducing the number of tobacco incidents in movies will further protect young people from starting to use tobacco.² Several strategies have been identified to reduce youth exposure to onscreen tobacco incidents:^{1,2}
 - The 2012 Surgeon General's Report concluded that an industrywide standard to rate movies with tobacco incidents R could result in reductions in youth smoking.¹
 - The 2014 Surgeon General's Report concluded that youth rates of tobacco use would be reduced by 18% if tobacco incidents and impressions in PG-13 films were eliminated by such actions as having all future movies with tobacco incidents receive an R rating.⁴
 - States and local jurisdictions could also work toward reducing tobacco incidents in movies.²

References

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012 [accessed 2016 Dec 1].
2. Polansky J, Titus K, Atayeva R, Glantz S. [Smoking in Top-Grossing U.S. Movies, 2015](http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0qw7b0rh) (<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0qw7b0rh>) University of California, San Francisco, Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, 2016 [accessed 2016 Dec 1].

3. Motion Picture Association of America. [Film Ratings \(http://www.mpa.org/film-ratings/\)](http://www.mpa.org/film-ratings/). [accessed 2016 Dec 1].
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta: 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, 2014 [accessed 2016 Dec 1].

For Further Information

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