

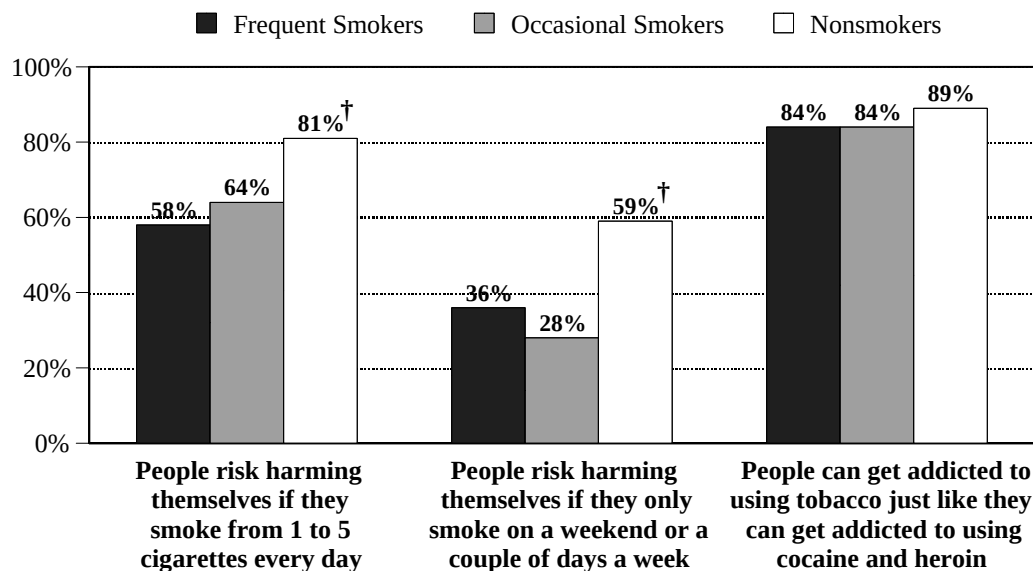
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

College Students Who Smoke Less Likely Than Nonsmokers to Perceive Health Consequences of Smoking

College students who smoke are less likely than non-smokers to perceive short-term risks of smoking, according to a survey of freshmen at two U.S. public colleges.* Regardless of smoking status, all students agreed that people can get addicted to nicotine. However, frequent and occasional smokers were significantly less likely than nonsmokers to believe that there is a risk of harm from smoking 1 to 5 cigarettes a day or from smoking on the weekend or a couple of days a week (see figure below). The authors speculate that “college students may not perceive much harm in smoking, especially because many express the view that they will be able to stop smoking at some future time” (p. 374). They suggest that “[f]or young adult smokers, antitobacco messages need to communicate more effectively the concept that each cigarette smoked is doing them damage” (p. 374).

Perceived Risks of Smoking Among Freshmen College Students,* by Smoking Status, 2001
(N=1,020)



† p < .01

*The survey was conducted with a convenience sample of 1,020 college students 18 to 24 years old from two (Buffalo, NY, and Atlanta, GA) public four-year arts and sciences colleges.

NOTES: Frequent smokers had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days out of the past 30 days. Occasional smokers had smoked cigarettes on 1 to 19 of the past 30 days. Nonsmokers had not smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Murphy-Hoefer R., Alde, S., and Higbee C. “Perceptions About Cigarette Smoking and Risks Among College Students,” *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* 6(S3):S371-S374, 2004.

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