

AUA STUDENTS & SMOKING

Survey Results

Garry Aslanian

Public Health Program, AUA

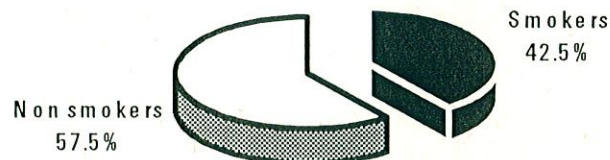
The aim of conducting a survey in AUA is to find out how many of the students smoke, what their attitude to smoking is and what they know about tobacco use.

Here are given the results of the research on smoking rate among the students of AUA. The research was done anonymously through a questionnaire including 15 questions on different aspects of smoking. The questionnaire was also aimed at finding out how well the students were informed about the danger of tobacco abuse. The survey was carried out during the fall quarter in November 1994 among the students of the 1st—, 2nd years of study and the English Program, as well as different colleges, departments and programs of the university.

286 questionnaires were distributed, of which only 2 were not filled completely, i.e. 284 students were asked.

The percentage ratio of those 284 students according to the colleges, departments and programs is as follows: Business and Management — 26%, Engineering — 20%, Political Science — 32%, Public Health — 16%, Teaching of English — 6%.*

The percentage of smokers among the respondents turned out to be 42.5%, the majority of which (60%) smokes 12-17 cigarettes with filters per day.

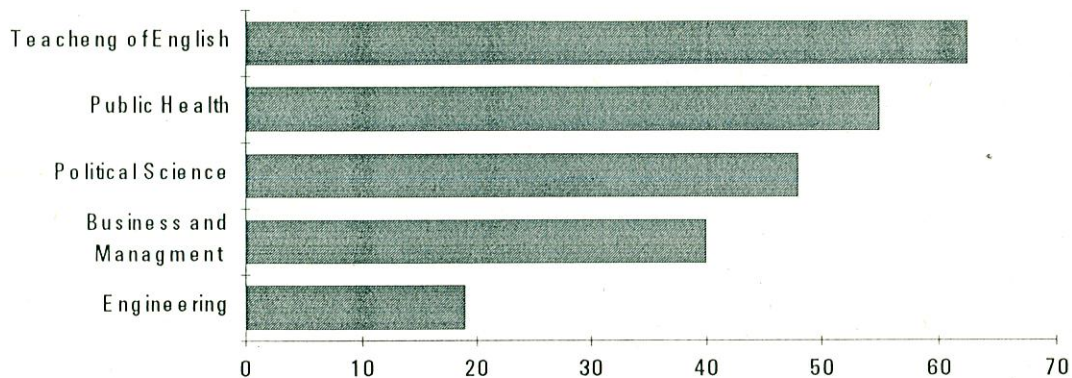


In terms of the number of male and female smokers, the figures are 53% and 47%, respectively.

* It must be noted that the colleges were not represented according to the actual proportion of the students. Another survey will be conducted and additional data will be collected and processed.

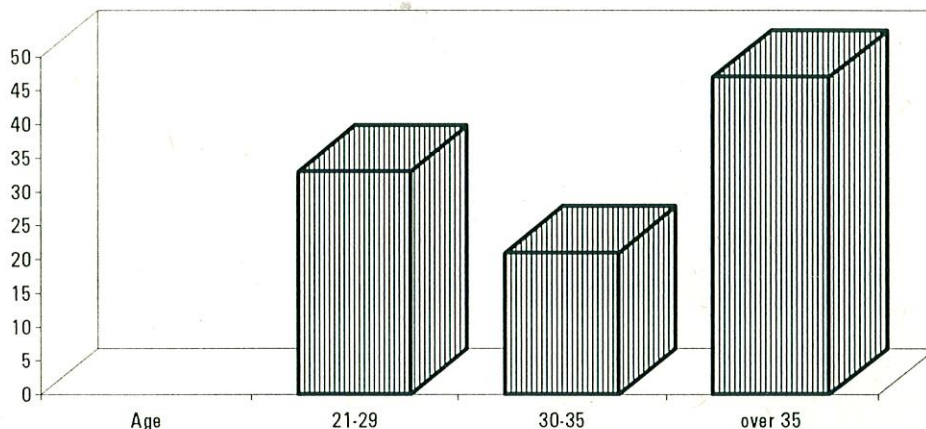
The survey revealed the following regularity: parents/one parent of the majority of smokers (70%) also smoke.

The figure given below shows the number of smokers at different colleges, departments and programs.



It is very interesting to note that most of the smokers are Teaching of English Program students — (62.5%), then come Public Health — (55%), Political Science — (48%), Business and Management — (40%), and Engineering students (19%).

The study of interrelation between smoking and age gave the following results: the age group of 21-29 — 33% smokers; 30-35 — 21% smokers; and over 35 — 47% smokers.



The serious intention or attempt to give up smoking has been ever made by only 31.5% of smokers. Interestingly enough, 60% of respondents think that they need to give up smoking in order to save money.

Very few smokers (30%) think that smoking is harmful not only for themselves, but also for those people who are around, and they set a bad example for adults and children in their environment.

Respondents were asked to show their attitude to the danger of smoking to their health. Several diseases, such as heart and artery disturbance, lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, and oral and laryngeal cancer were enumerated. Only 40% of respondents

noted that smoking is a major or contributory cause of these diseases, i.e. most of them lack the knowledge and information about the role of smoking in the development of these diseases, which are a great threat to human health.

More disappointing were the following results: 52% of the interviewed women have no idea or relevant information about the harm that smoking can cause to the unborn fetus. The majority does not know about the frightening rate of neonatal mortality, which is the result of cigarette abuse during the period of pregnancy.

Conclusions

The present survey has shown that a great number (42.5%) of the students at AUA has the bad habit of cigarette-smoking. A small per cent of smokers (30%) take seriously the fact that smoking is really harmful to their health. Very few of them make serious effort to give up smoking and, in the majority of cases, those efforts fail. This is due to the fact that they are not completely sure they make the right choice. Besides, people are not sufficiently informed that smoking could be the cause of serious diseases (heart diseases, cancer) that take away the greatest number of human lives all over the world, i.e. are number 1 on the rate of mortality in general.

The survey has also shown that there is a direct correlation between smoking of the students and that of their parents, which proves that students follow the example of their parents.

It is well known that there has been almost no propoganda against smoking in Armenia, especially in academic institutions. That is why the aim of this research is to keep students on their guard, i.e. to draw their attention to this vital problem and to take the first step towards the solution of it.

Acknowledgements

The author is thankful to all the students who participated in the survey. He acknowledge the help of Professor A. Harutunian, Head of Departament of Social Hygiene and Organizing of Health care of Yerevan State Medical Institute in helpful discussions of this study. He is also grateful to the Administration of AUA for the approval and kind support during the time the survey was conducted.

