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**U of T study finds that fewer school-aged children are smoking cigarettes**  
*Overall provincial smoking rates haven't changed in five years*

TORONTO — The Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy Monitoring Report finds that fewer school-aged children are smoking, but the overall prevalence of cigarette smoking in the general population hasn't changed in five years.

The Report, produced by the [Ontario Tobacco Research Unit](#) (OTRU) at the University of Toronto's [Dalla Lana School of Public Health](#) and the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#) (CAMH), will be published on February 12. Researchers analyzed Smoke-Free Ontario partner program evaluations, performance reports and administrative data. OTRU's Tobacco Informatics Monitoring System provides population-level data analysis using data from a number of key Canadian and Ontario-based surveys.

OTRU found that smoking rates declined by five percentage points since 2000, but have now plateaued at 18 per cent. In 2010, Ontario's Scientific Advisory Committee recommended further policy interventions, public education and interventional programs to support quitting and prevent initiation.

"Strong scientific evidence supports further prohibitions on smoking in public spaces, restricting retail availability of cigarettes and increased funding for intensive public education and media campaigns," said Robert Schwartz, Executive Director of OTRU, Associate Professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and Senior Scientist at CAMH.

Proposed new legislation and changes in regulations about outdoor smoking and flavoured cigarettes together with renewed investments in social marketing and cessation system development indicate that the Ontario Government is attuned to the need to do more.

One important indicator for which the Report demonstrates progress in reducing cigarette prevalence is the measure of past 30-day (current) smoking among school-aged youth. In 2013, six per cent of grade 11 and 12 students had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days, compared to 12 per cent in 2005. The decline in youth smoking rates will likely result in a gradual overall decrease in smoking rates if more young adults are able to remain smoke-free.

Other interesting Report insights include:

- 18 per cent of Ontarians aged 12 years and older are current smokers;
- 22 per cent of Ontarians aged 12 years and older report tobacco use in the last 30 days;
- 19 per cent of grade 12 students have used a water pipe or hookah device;
- 7.6 per cent of Ontario smokers quit for at least 30 days in the past year, but 79 per cent relapse, meaning that less than 2 per cent of Ontario's smokers successfully quit each year.

U of T researchers led a webinar outlining key findings to more than 200 public health policymakers and practitioners, and the report will be presented to five provincial advisory groups coordinated by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. Past reports have informed the



development and adoption of new tobacco control measures.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy is a comprehensive tobacco control program involving a broad coalition of partners including provincial and local governments, boards of health, voluntary health organizations, hospitals, and universities. Primary funding for the Strategy comes from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, with direct and in-kind funding from other Strategy partners.

For more information, please contact:

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#### **About the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit**

Established in 1993 with funding from the Ontario Government, the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit is a unit of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and is co-sponsored by the University of Waterloo and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit is a leader in tobacco control monitoring and evaluation, research, teaching and training and a respected source of science-based information on tobacco control. For more information, visit the [website](#).

#### **About the Dalla Lana School of Public Health**

The Dalla Lana School of Public Health is a Faculty of the University of Toronto that originated as one of the Schools of Hygiene begun by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1927. After a period of decline, the School went through a dramatic renaissance after the 2003 SARS crisis and it is now the largest public health school in Canada, with over 300 faculty, 450 students, and research and training partnerships with institutions throughout Toronto and the world. With more than \$30-million in research funding per year, the School supports discovery in global health, tobacco impacts on health, occupational disease and disability, air pollution, inner city and circumpolar health. For more information, visit the [website](#).