Background

- In 2012, the Surgeon General concluded that there is a causal relationship between depictions of smoking in the movies and smoking initiation among young people\(^1\).
- Almost one-half (45%) of top-grossing films in the United States between 2002 and 2012 were rated PG-13, making them easily accessible to youth.
- Recent content analysis of tobacco imagery in movies showed a decline in the appearance of tobacco incidents in PG-13 movies from 2005 to 2010\(^2\). However, in 2011, incidents increased\(^3\) and this increase continued in 2012.
In 2012, there were a total of 2,818 tobacco incidents in top-grossing movies, compared to 1,880 in 2011 and 1,819 in 2010, when the total number of incidents reached its lowest level since 2002. This included 1,155 tobacco incidents in PG-13 movies (vs. 565 in 2010). Tobacco incidents in R rated films also increased, from 1,220 in 2010 to 1,640 in 2012. Despite the low amount of smoking in G and PG movies (30 incidents in 2010 and 23 in 2012), total tobacco incidents in youth-rated movies and incidents per youth-rated movie doubled between 2010 and 2012.

In 2012, tobacco incidents per youth-rated movie ranged from 4.3 (Comcast: Universal) to 26.5 (Time Warner: Warner Bros.). The percent of youth-rated movies without tobacco incidents ranged from 46% (Sony) to 92% (Disney).

By January 2013, five studios had policies in place to discourage smoking in youth-rated movies. However, all allow exceptions.

- Between 2010 and 2011, companies with policies in place had an increase in tobacco incidents per youth-rated film.
- While Comcast and Disney had slightly fewer incidents in 2012, Time Warner incidents increased. Most companies without policies in place continued to show an increase in 2012.

In 2012, youth-rated movies delivered 14.8 billion tobacco impressions (paid admissions X tobacco incidents), an increase of 33% over 2011.
Conclusions

- The data suggest that current movie studio policies are not sufficient to maintain reductions in on-screen tobacco incidents, as studios with policies had more incidents in 2012 than in 2010.
- Several strategies have been identified to reduce youth exposure to on-screen tobacco incidents.\(^1\),\(^2\).
- The 2012 Surgeon General’s Report concluded that an industry-wide standard to rate movies with tobacco imagery R, would result in reductions in youth smoking.\(^3\)
- States and local jurisdictions could also work towards reducing tobacco imagery in movies through business incentive programs.\(^2\)

References


For Further Information

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