

Tobacco Free Living

The use of tobacco products and exposure to second-hand smoke combined represent the number one cause of preventable deaths in the United States. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases and affecting the health of smokers in general. Each year, approximately 443,000 Americans die from tobacco-related illnesses. Annually, tobacco use is estimated to cost the United States \$193 billion in direct medical expenses and lost productivity. Quitting smoking has immediate as well as long-term benefits for smokers and their loved ones. Community-level action is needed to effectively help tobacco users quit use of cigarettes and other tobacco products, prevent youth and others from starting to use tobacco products, and to help nonsmokers avoid exposure to second-hand smoke.

The Tobacco Free Living action team (TFL) of the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership is dedicated to improving tobacco related health outcomes in St. Mary's County. Partners are now collaborating to implement evidence-based strategies that support local tobacco free living. **Visit healthystmarys.com to learn more about this and other Healthy St. Mary's Partnership action teams.**

Selected objectives and indicators:

While numerous tobacco related issues are being addressed in the Healthy St. Mary's 2020 Plan, two objectives with associated indicators are included here.

- The reduction of illness, disability, and death related to tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure is a guiding principle of the activities of TFL. A primary indicator of the success of the evidence-based strategies policies being implemented will be the reduction of tobacco use among St. Mary's County adults (Figure 1).
- The majority of adult cigarette smokers initiated and established the habit during adolescence. According to the Surgeon General, "Nearly all first use of cigarettes occurs by 18 years of age (88%)." Reducing the percentage of adolescents who use tobacco is a major objective of the plan (Figure 2). Additionally, TFL and its partners are currently assessing the impact of "electronic cigarettes" on St. Mary's County youth.



Figure 1. Adults who currently smoke, 2013¹

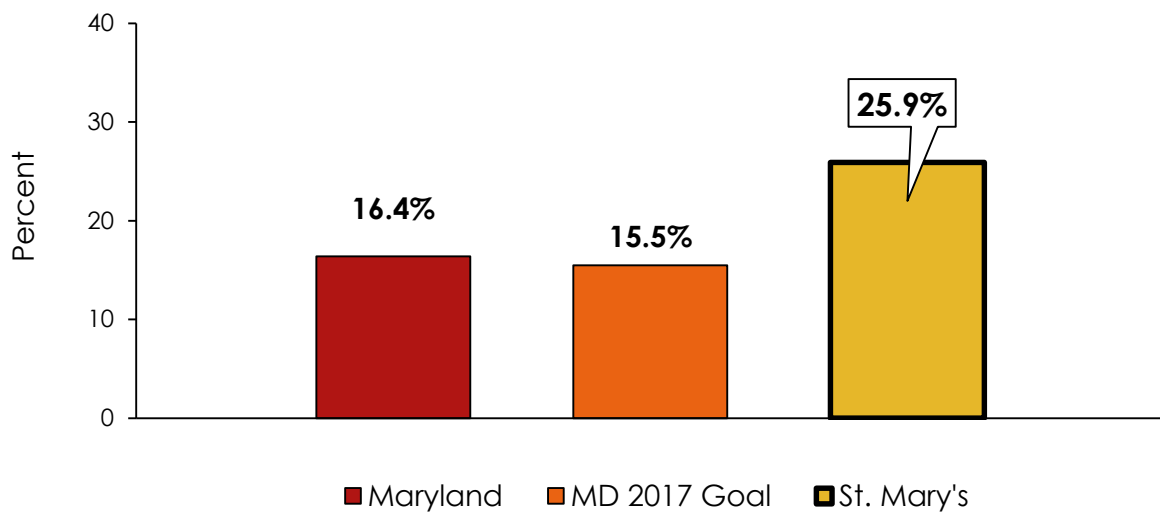
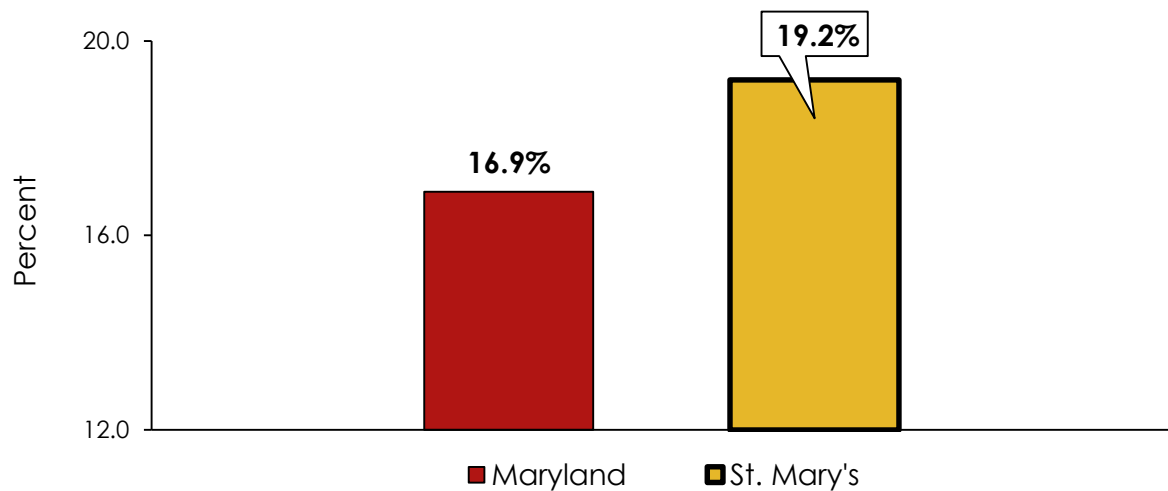


Figure 2. High school students currently using tobacco, 2013²



1. Maryland DHMH Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2. Maryland Youth Tobacco Survey

