
And the Oscar goes to...the tobacco industry

Of the 10 films nominated for Best Picture this year, 80% include tobacco depictions which research shows leads to youth smoking and vaping

WASHINGTON, D.C. (March 24, 2022) Truth Initiative[®], the national public health organization inspiring lives free from smoking, vaping and nicotine, released data on the pervasive tobacco imagery in this year's Oscar nominated films. Of the 10 films nominated for Best Picture, 80% featured smoking and vaping depictions including, "Don't Look Up," "CODA," "Drive My Car," "King Richard," "Licorice Pizza," "Nightmare Alley," "The Power of the Dog" and "West Side Story." Of all the feature film nominees across categories, [61% depicted tobacco use](#), including the box office hits: "The Lost Daughter," "No Time to Die," and "House of Gucci."

Many of this year's [Oscar nominated films](#), which appeal to youth and young adults, point to a troubling trend of the renormalization and glamorization of tobacco use in entertainment media and pop culture. Nearly 40% of rated films containing tobacco imagery were PG-13. Well established research shows exposure to smoking in movies causes young people to start using tobacco, a conclusion reached almost a decade ago in a [2012 Surgeon General report](#). A more recent landmark study published in [Preventive Medicine](#), found that exposure to on-screen smoking imagery can triple a young person's odds of starting to vape nicotine. This is cause for concern given the ongoing youth e-cigarette epidemic and the role that smoking and vaping imagery plays in initiating youth tobacco use. According to the [2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey](#), more than two million high school and middle school students used e-cigarettes. Of the high schoolers who vaped, 43% did so almost daily, signaling signs of nicotine addiction.

Truth Initiative monitors tobacco imagery across the most popular streaming and broadcast shows among 15- to 24-year-olds through its annual While You Were Streaming report. As new movie releases were increasingly streamed at home, the fourth edition of the report, [While You Were Streaming: Nicotine on Demand](#), released earlier this year included movies for the first time. More than a third (38%) of top grossing movies in 2020 depicted tobacco with nearly 1,000 incidents, according to an analysis by the [National Opinion Research Center](#) (NORC) at the University of Chicago included in the report. These include 10 movies that are youth-rated, such as Amazon's PG-rated "The Personal History of David Copperfield" and "Wonder Woman 1984." Beyond tobacco



depictions in PG movies, many of the top offenders included movies that appeal to youth, such as 2021 Oscar-winner “Promising Young Woman.”

While some progress has been made from studios like Warner Bros. and Disney for keeping tobacco imagery out of iconic films like “Cruella” and “The Batman,” inconsistencies remain. Truth Initiative and a coalition of partners including NORC, Breathe California and the University of California San Francisco, among others, are raising awareness of this issue in hopes of educating and collaborating with writers, directors, and actors who all have a responsibility to protect their young fans and viewers. They are also collectively calling on the entertainment industry to [take actions](#) to protect their young viewers, including:

- States can change their film production subsidy policies to provide tax and other incentives for productions that do not promote tobacco use.
- Call on directors, writers and producers to keep tobacco imagery out of their shows.
- Educate parents about the impact on their children seeing tobacco use onscreen.
- Conduct additional research on the harmful effects of tobacco imagery in video entertainment across all channels including broadcast, cable, streaming and web-based platforms.
- Ensure advertising dollars don’t target youth with addictive products and making tobacco companies prove they have not paid for product placement in media popular among youth.

To read the full [While You Were Streaming: Nicotine on Demand](#) report and to learn more about the actions needed to address [tobacco in pop culture](#) visit truthinitiative.org.

About Truth Initiative®

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all young people reject smoking, vaping and nicotine and a future where tobacco and nicotine addiction are a thing of the past. In 2020, we celebrated 20 years of saving lives and preventing millions of youth from smoking. Our impact has helped drive the teen smoking rate down from 23% in 2000 to under 3% in 2021. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**® public education campaign. As youth e-cigarette use threatens to addict a new generation to nicotine, we are leading the fight against tobacco and nicotine addiction in all forms. Our rigorous scientific research and policy studies, community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk



of using tobacco, and innovation in tobacco dependence treatment are also helping to end one of the most critical public health battles of our time. Based in Washington D.C., our organization, formerly known as the American Legacy Foundation, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more, visit truthinitiative.org.

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