# Evaluating Tobacco Policies in Schools and Institutions of Higher Education in St. Louis County

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# BACKGROUND

Comprehensive school tobacco policies address tobacco use by students, staff, and school visitors and build healthy communities by encouraging cessation, discouraging initiation, changing social norms around tobacco use, and preventing exposure to secondhand smoke. As part of the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) initiative, the Center for Tobacco Policy Research (CTPR) evaluated tobacco-related policies of public and private kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) schools and institutions of higher education in St. Louis.

## METHODS

We collected tobacco-related policies from all 23 St. Louis County public school districts, 50 private schools in St. Louis County Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4, and 10 colleges and universities located in St. Louis City and St. Louis County. The public and private school policies were evaluated using the CTPR *School Tobacco Policy Index*, a tool based on a "gold standard" of policy recommendations from the literature. The index was adapted for the evaluation of institutions of higher education.

## **Tobacco Policy Indices**

Tobacco-related policies were evaluated on the following domains:

#### ■ TOBACCO-FREE ENVIRONMENT

This domain measures the extent to which the school or institution's buildings, grounds, vehicles, and events are tobacco-free. The *Higher Education Tobacco Policy Index* also includes items to assess on- and off- campus residential policies and accounts for the relative advantages of a tobacco-free versus a smokefree campus environment.

#### ENFORCEMENT

This domain measures the degree to which the policy is enforced.

#### PREVENTION & TREATMENT SERVICES

This domain measures the level of tobacco prevention curriculum and cessation services available to students and faculty/ staff.

#### POLICY ORGANIZATION & COMMUNICATION

This domain measures the strategies for communicating the policy, the rationale for instituting the policy, and the management of the policy

■ PROMOTION OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS (Higher Education Tobacco Policy Index only)
This domain measures the extent to which the institution prohibits tobacco-related sales, advertising, and funding.

#### Types of documents referencing tobacco

#### Document

Student, staff, faculty, parent, and family handbooks

Curriculum handbooks and academic catalogs

Residential Life handbooks and housing contracts

Athletic handbooks and codes

Student and staff dress codes

Constitution, bylaws, and Board policies

Student and staff codes of conduct

Counseling, cessation, and wellness resources and policies

Admission applications

Press releases

# RESULTS

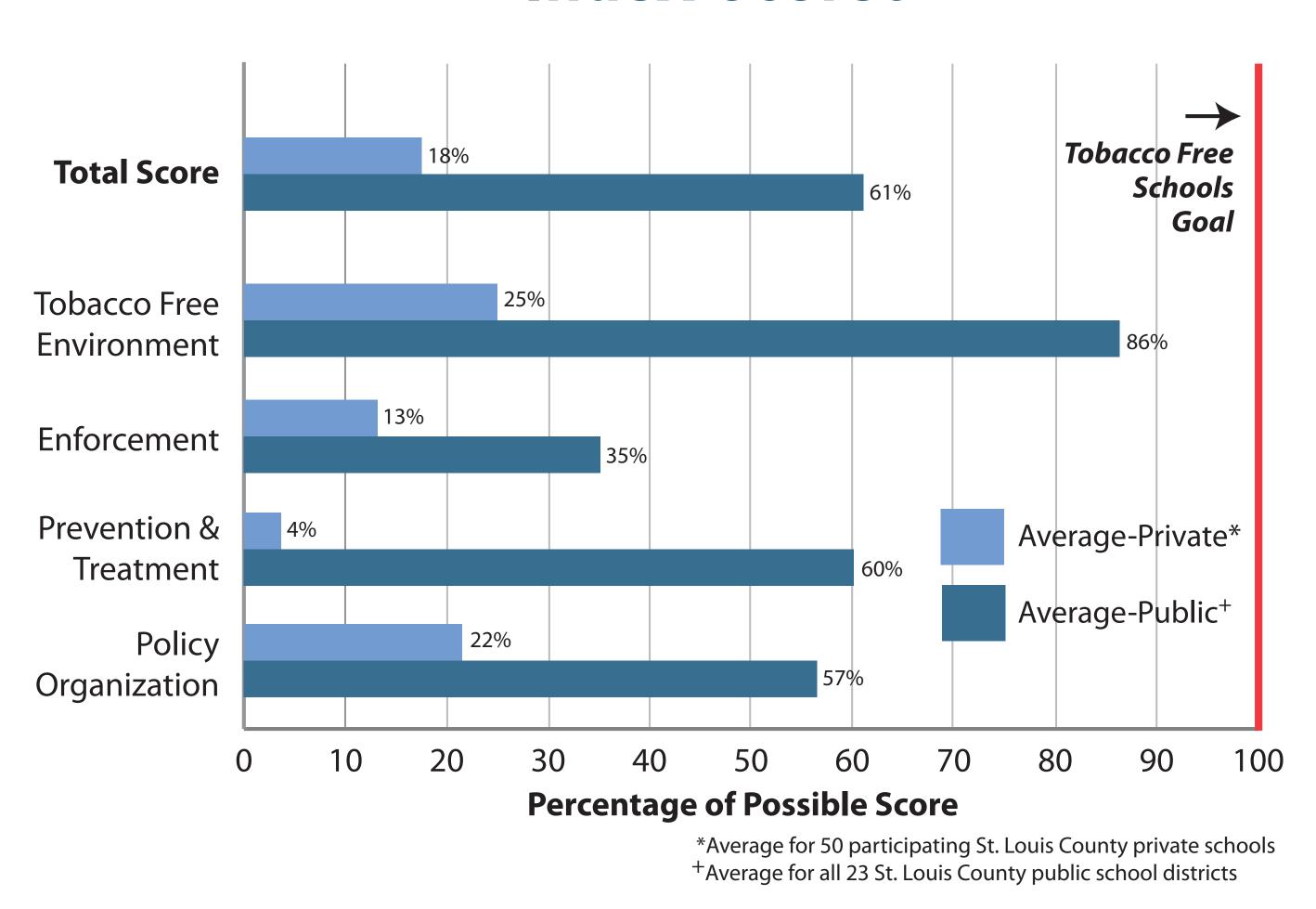
#### Public and Private Schools

- Public schools scored higher than private schools in total and across all domains.
- Public and private schools both scored highest in the Tobacco-Free Environment domain. Public schools scored lowest in the Enforcement domain and private schools scored lowest in the Prevention & Treatment Services domain.

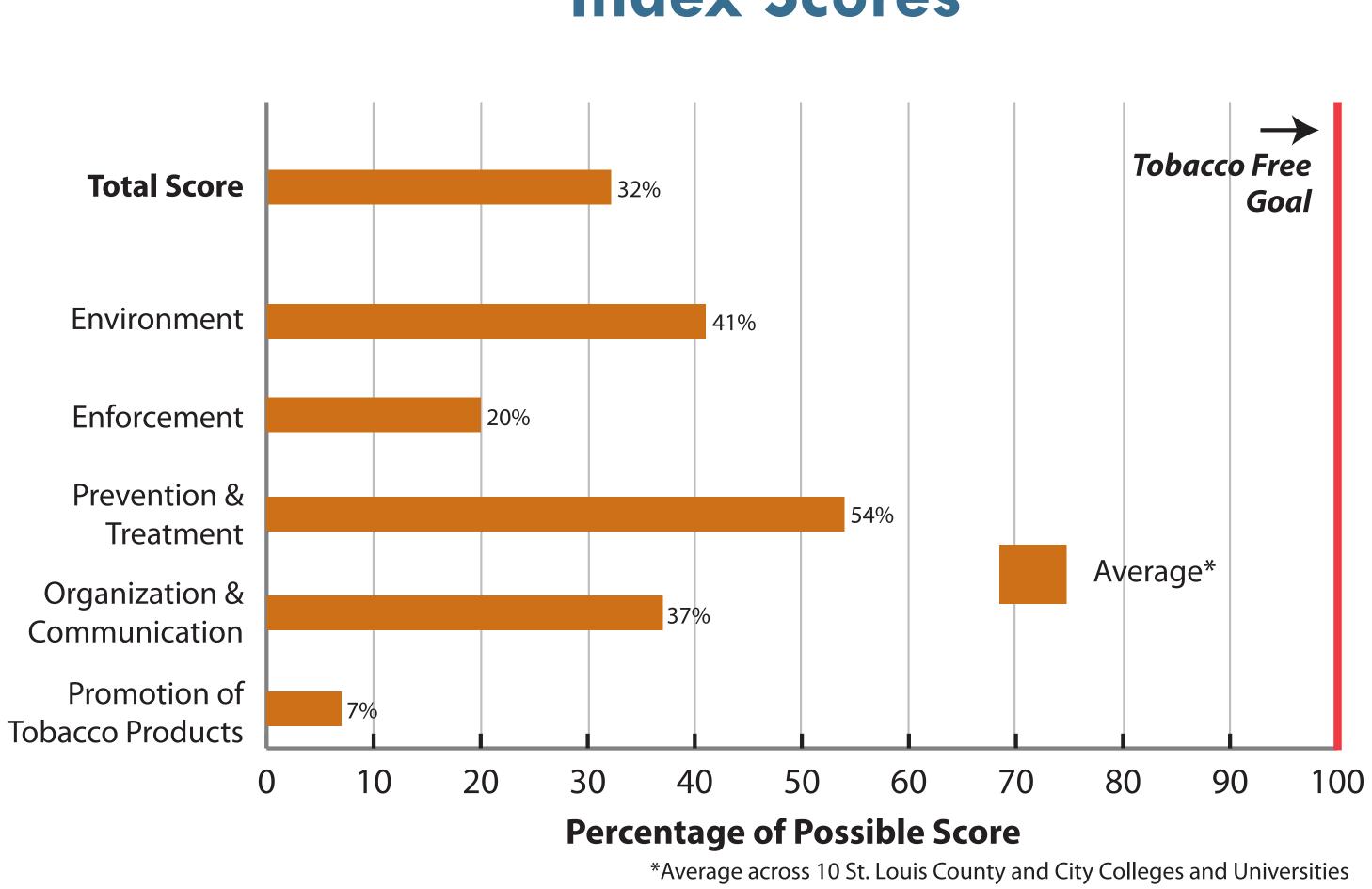
#### Higher Education Institutions

Institutions scored highest in the Environment and Prevention & Treatment Services domains. They scored the lowest in the Promotion of Tobacco Products domain, with only one school addressing this issue in its policies.

# Public and Private K-12 School Index Scores



# Higher Education Institution Index Scores



# CONCLUSIONS

On average, public schools, private schools, and institutions of higher education scored low on their respective indices for school tobacco policies, although scores varied across school types and domains. Addressing the gaps in these policies is a main objective of St. Louis County's CPPW initiative. Efforts to strengthen current policies can help address the burden of secondhand smoke exposure and tobacco use in educational settings.

## For more information, contact:

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