

The Changing Face of Tobacco Control

Fact Sheet ~ Prepared by The Praxis Project ~ August 2003

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INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet contains data and information directly quoted from leading national tobacco control organizations and primary research sources. It is intended to present the differences and similarities shared by the new face of tobacco control present in communities of color* and how to take this opportunity to invest adequate resources directly into these communities to organize, build capacity and infrastructure, and advocate for policy change at the local level.

THE FACTS

- Tobacco use varies within and among racial/ethnic groups. Among adults, Native American and Alaska Natives have the highest prevalence of tobacco use; African American and Southeast Asian men also have a high prevalence of smoking. Asian American and Hispanic women have the lowest prevalence.
- The smoking rate for Asian Americans increases seven-fold from middle school (4.4 %) to high school (33.1%), the highest increase for any ethnic group.
- Each year, approximately 45,000 African Americans die from a preventable smoking-related disease. If current trends continue, an estimated 1.6 million African Americans who are now under the age of 18 years will become regular smokers. About 500,000 of those smokers will die of a smoking-related disease.
- While information in the published literature is limited, it appears that smoking rates are higher among adolescent and adult lesbians, gays, and bisexuals than in the general population. Estimated smoking rates for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals ranged from 38% to 59% among youth and from 11% to 50% among adults. National smoking rates during comparable periods ranged from 28% to 35% for adolescents and were approximately 28% for adults.
- Smoking among Latino men and women decreased from 30.1 percent (1978-1980) to 18.9 percent (1994-1995). However, these trends do not reflect long-term smoking prevalence rates for Latinos as a whole, nor are they broken down by both ethnicity and gender. Hence, the current picture of tobacco use among Latinos remains vague and perhaps misleading.
- Native American and Alaska Native lands are sovereign nations and are not subject to state laws prohibiting the sale and promotion of tobacco products to minors. As a result, Native American and Alaska Native young people have access to tobacco products at a very young age.
- Research shows an association between cigarette smoking and acculturation among Asian American and Pacific Islander adults from Southeast Asia. Those who had a higher English-language proficiency and those living in the United States longer were less likely to be smokers.

* Refers to African Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Latinos, Native American/Alaska Natives and other non-white racial/ethnic groups.

- In all racial/ethnic groups except African Americans, men are more likely than women to use smokeless tobacco.
- Tobacco products are advertised and promoted disproportionately to racial/ethnic minority communities. Examples of target promotions include the introduction of a cigarette product with the brand name "Rio" and an earlier cigarette product named "Dorado," which was advertised and marketed to the Latino community.

TAKE ACTION

- Community groups are often trained in service provision, education or public health. They need new and different skills to enact policy changes—media advocacy, community organizing, and legislative advocacy.
- Support and enforce restrictions/laws on clean indoor air policies, cigarette marketing, sales to minors, and disproportionate advertisement to minority communities.
- It is imperative that communities of color directly benefit from the tobacco settlement payments. While state and local groups nationwide are competing for a share of the settlement funds, organizations of color are being left out of the allocation process.
- Ensure that tobacco research is conducted in a culturally sensitive and language-appropriate manner. Train non-minority researchers in culturally-sensitive and language-appropriate research methodologies.
- Steps should be taken to ensure representation of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals in tobacco-use surveillance and to collect data in order to understand the apparent high smoking rates in these groups.



Sources:

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