

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

TOBACCO CONTROL SECTION

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TOBACCO USE AMONG ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER POPULATIONS

Tobacco Use

- California-specific facts regarding tobacco use among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders:
 - Significant gender differences in smoking behavior exist among Asian American and Pacific Islanders. Asian American and Pacific Islander men smoke at a greater rate than women, 17.7 percent to 6.8 percent respectively in 2002. This compares to 19.4 percent and 15.2 percent for non-Hispanic white men and women.¹
 - Among Asian sub-populations in California in 2002, persons of Korean descent had the highest smoking prevalence rate (19.8 percent), followed by persons of Japanese (14.6 percent), Filipino (12.6 percent), and Chinese (8.8 percent) descent.¹
 - During the years 1994-2000 adult smoking prevalence rates for Asian American and Pacific Islander did not differ significantly from the rates for Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the rest of the United States. However, smoking prevalence rates for Hispanic/Latinos and non-Hispanic whites in California were significantly lower than in the rest of the United States during this period.²
 - In 2001, Asian American and Pacific Islander high school youth had the second lowest smoking prevalence at 13.6 percent. In comparison, the smoking prevalence among non-Hispanic white, Hispanic/Latino, and African American high school youth was 19.9, 14.0, and 8.2 percent, respectively.³
 - The majority of Asian American and Pacific Islanders and African Americans initiate smoking as young adults, with almost half of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who were ever regular smokers starting between the ages of 18 and 21.⁴
 - According to a 2002 survey, 94.3 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander households with children and adolescents in the home had a total ban on smoking in the home.¹
 - In 2002, the smoking rate during pregnancy was higher if a woman was born in the U.S. than if she was born in another country. Overall, the Asian American and Pacific Islander smoking during pregnancy rate is approximately 6 percent.⁵
 - Women, especially Chinese, Filipino and Korean women, who speak English at home, are significantly more likely to smoke cigarettes than are those who speak their native languages at home. This trend was not observed among men. Language spoken in the home partly reflects the extent of acculturation.⁶
- In the United States, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in 6th through 9th grade have smoking prevalence rates that are lower than the other racial/ethnic groups. However, the smoking prevalence quickly rises such that by 12th grade, the smoking prevalence of Asian American youth is second only to non-Hispanic whites.⁷

Health Consequences of Tobacco Use

- From 1988 through 1999, age-adjusted bronchus and lung cancer incidence declined by nearly 16 percent among Asian and Pacific Islanders in California, from 45.5 to 38.4 cases per 100,000 population.⁸ In addition, Asian and Pacific Islanders overall had the second lowest age-adjusted bronchus and lung cancer incidence rate of any ethnic group in California, reflecting lower smoking prevalence rates in this population.⁸
- Asian American and Pacific Islander age-adjusted bronchus and lung cancer incidence rates in California in 1999 were 54.9 and 25.4 per 100,000 for men and women, respectively. This is less than the rate of non-Hispanic white men and women (75.1 and 54.6, respectively).⁸
- Lung and bronchus cancer incidence varies among Asian and Pacific Islander subgroups in California.
 - During 1996-1999 (combined), Filipino American men had the highest average annual age-adjusted lung and bronchus cancer incidence rate (68.5 per 100,000 population), followed by Southeast Asian (61.2), Korean (58.9), Japanese (45.9), Chinese (45.4), Pacific Islander (43.1), and South Asian (18.1) men.⁹
 - The pattern of lung and bronchus cancer incidence, however, is different among women during this same time period. Japanese American women had the highest average annual age-adjusted lung and bronchus cancer incidence rates (26.9 per 100,000 population), followed by Chinese (26.4), Pacific Islander (26.3), Southeast Asian (26.0), Korean (20.1), Filipino (19.8), and South Asian (9.8) women.⁹
- From 1988 to 1992 in the United States, age-adjusted lung cancer death rates for men (per 100,000 population) were 88.9 for Hawaiians, 40.1 for Chinese, 32.4 for Japanese and 29.8 for Filipinos, in comparison to 72.6 for non-Hispanic white men in the United States. For women during this same time period in the United States, the lung cancer death rates were 44.1 for Hawaiians, 18.5 for Chinese, 12.9 for Japanese and 10.0 for Filipinos in contrast to 31.9 for non-Hispanic white women.¹⁰

Population Characteristics

- The combined Asian population comprises nearly 11 percent of California's population which equals approximately 3.7 million people.¹¹ In the United States, there are more than 10.2 million Asians, which represent nearly 4 percent of the total United States population.¹⁰
- California has 3.5 times the number of Asian American and Pacific Islanders than are in New York, which has the second highest number of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the United States.¹¹
- In 2000, there were 116,961 Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders in California. More than half of the United States' Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander population resides in California.¹²

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