

# Tobacco Use Among California's Diverse Populations

People of color and low-income communities in California consistently face higher rates of morbidity and mortality than non-Hispanic Whites. The diseases and injuries that affect the population as a whole affect these groups more frequently and severely. The Tobacco Industry heavily targets these populations with retail store advertising, sponsorship and print media. They also heavily target the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, which has a much higher smoking rate than the population as a whole.

The Tobacco Control Section of the CA Department of Health Services has designated 4 ethnic groups, low Socio-economic Status (low SES) and the LGBT communities as Priority Populations for Tobacco Prevention Efforts because of these health disparities. Below is a brief summary of the demographics of these Priority Populations.

## African Americans

- Represent 9% (or 93,749) of the population in Contra Costa County.<sup>i</sup>
- In 2005, AA adults had a smoking prevalence rate of 19.3 %, which is higher than non-Hispanic White, H/L, and API populations.<sup>ii</sup>
- African Americans have the highest lung cancer incidence and mortality rates in California -18 % higher than non-Hispanic Whites and almost twice the rate among Asian/Pacific Islanders and HL men.<sup>ii</sup>
- Nearly 75% of African Americans use menthol tobacco products compared with about 25% of whites.<sup>iii</sup>
- Possible factors in the high prevalence rate include the fact that the tobacco industry buys the support of the community through extensive sponsorship of cultural, educational and entertainment events, as well as intense marketing in the African American community and ethnic media.<sup>iv</sup>

## American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN)

- Represents <1% (or 4,091) of the population in Contra Costa County.<sup>i</sup>
- American Indian/Alaska Natives suffer disproportionately from many health conditions and have the highest adult smoking rate of any ethnic group (36.4%).<sup>ii</sup>
- In 2005, AI/AN women had the highest rate of smoking during pregnancy (17.8%) compared to non-Hispanic White (13.9%) and non-Hispanic Black (8.5%) women.<sup>ii</sup>

## Asian and Pacific Islanders (API):

- Represent 13% (or 134,389) of the population in Contra Costa County.<sup>i</sup>
- Significant gender differences in smoking behavior exist among Asian American and Pacific Islanders. API men smoked at a greater rate than women in 2005 (14.9% versus 5.3%).<sup>ii</sup>
- Among Asian sub-populations in California, Korean males and Vietnamese males (35.9% and 31.6%, respectively) had higher cigarette smoking prevalence compared with males in other Asian American sub-populations and in Californian men in general from the same survey.<sup>ii</sup>

- Although the overall smoking rate for Asian women is low, their rates increase as they become more acculturated.<sup>ii</sup>
- Tobacco-related cancer and cardiovascular disease are the top two causes of death among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. For AAPI individuals, approximately 35% of total deaths are attributed to stroke and heart diseases, and approximately 26% of total deaths are attributed to cancer.<sup>iv</sup>
- Tobacco companies are developing specific promotion strategies to target the Asian population. Asian smokers are a key market since smoking prevalence in most Asian countries is considerably higher than in the United States.<sup>ii</sup>

### Hispanics/Latinos:

- Represent 22% (or 220,862) of the population in Contra Costa County.<sup>i</sup>
- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among Hispanics. Deaths from lung cancer are 2.3 times higher for Hispanic men as they are for Hispanic women.<sup>ii</sup>
- Adult smoking prevalence among California's H/L population was 11.5 % in 2005, with men smoking at over 2 times the rate of women. Smoking among H/L adult males was 16.0 %, while HL adult women smoked at a rate of 7.2 %.<sup>ii</sup>
- In 2008, Hispanic high school students in California had the second highest smoking prevalence among all high school students (13.9%), just behind Caucasian high school students (17.6%).<sup>iv</sup>
- The tobacco industry is making a concerted effort to target the Hispanic/Latino community. The tobacco industry has contributed to primary and secondary schools, funded universities and colleges, and supported scholarship programs targeting Hispanics and Latinos. Tobacco companies have also placed advertising in community publications and sponsored Hispanic cultural events.<sup>ii</sup>

### Low Socio Economic Status (SES):

- Education data and poverty data (Contra Costa County, 2000):
  - 12% (80,1297) of Contra Costa residents (ages 25 & older) do not have a high school diploma<sup>v</sup>
  - 20% (138,856) of Contra Costa residents (ages 25 & older) have a high school diploma only (including GED recipients).<sup>v</sup>
  - 20.5% (or 204,586) of the population in Contra Costa County lives below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.<sup>v</sup>
- Smoking prevalence for the low SES population in California was 18.6 % in 2008—over three times higher than that of the high SES population. Also, smoking prevalence for the low SES population has declined slower than that of the high SES population over time.<sup>ii</sup>
- Smoking prevalence in low SES whites is 29.9 % in California, which is almost two times higher than that of the general population.<sup>ii</sup>
- Smoking prevalence in low SES men is about two times higher than in low SES women.<sup>ii</sup>
- 25.8 % of low SES adults in California were exposed to SHS in the workplace in 2005, which is almost five times higher than the high SES population.<sup>ii</sup>
- Women in low-income families were three times more likely to smoke during pregnancy, compared to women in higher-income families.

Socioeconomic status is the single greatest predictor of smoking behavior and cuts across all race and ethnic groups.

### **LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender):**

- It is estimated that there are more than one million LGBT adults living in California, with 58.5% being female and 41.5% being male.
- According to 2003 LGBT statewide survey, smoking prevalence in the LGBT population (30.4%) was almost double that of the general population (16.2%).<sup>ii</sup>
- 43.4% of California's LGBT young adults between the ages of 18-24 smoke, as compared to 18.2% of their general population peers.<sup>iv</sup>
- Smoking prevalence for women in the LGBT community is almost triple that of women in the general population.<sup>iv</sup>
- A majority of LGBT adults prefer smoke-free environments.<sup>ii</sup>
- Nearly all adult LGBT smokers (98%) say they believe smoking increases their risk for getting lung cancer and heart disease, compared to 88% of all adult smokers who believe smoking raises lung cancer risk and 84% who believe the risk of heart disease increases.<sup>ii</sup>
- Fewer LGBT smokers try to quit (75%, compared to 80% of all adult smokers).<sup>ii</sup>
- Tobacco industry advertising has openly targeted gays and lesbians since 1992, when Philip Morris began running ads in Genre magazine.<sup>iv</sup>
- Failure to include the LGBT community in tobacco control efforts in the past has hampered success in reducing the rates of tobacco use in this community.

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<sup>i</sup> Ethnic Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder, 2005-2007 American Community Survey.

<sup>ii</sup> California Tobacco Control Program Local Tobacco Control Interventions  
Request for Applications 10-100

<sup>iii</sup> Surgeon General Report

[http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/sgr/1998/highlights/african\\_americans/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/1998/highlights/african_americans/index.htm)

<sup>iv</sup> [http://www.center4tobaccopolicy.org/\\_files/\\_files/Diverse%20Populations%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.center4tobaccopolicy.org/_files/_files/Diverse%20Populations%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder, 2005-2007 American Community Survey

Summary File 3. Note: Due to the high cost of living in Contra Costa County, we have calculated poverty to include all county residents who reported a gross income less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.