

SECONDHAND SMOKE EXPOSURE AND NON-NATIVE ALASKANS OF LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM PLANNING

This fact sheet highlights findings related to tobacco use among non-Native Alaskans who are socially or economically disadvantaged, meaning people with less money or fewer resources than average, or those with “low socio-economic status” (SES). This information is intended to help people who are working to improve the health of all Alaskans, especially those who face the dual burden of tobacco use and poverty. The information can be used for planning effective programs and educating communities and their leaders about preventing youth from ever starting to smoke, helping current users to quit, and decreasing secondhand smoke exposure. Disadvantaged people often have fewer resources for support, and therefore are important to think about specifically when planning programs.

For this study, we focused on 2004-2006 Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey respondents ages 25-64, living at 185% of poverty level or lower, based on household income and household size, as well as those who report having less than a high school education. We focused on non-Native Alaskans because a comprehensive report and fact sheets about Alaska Natives and tobacco use are already available online at <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/tobacco/>. Twenty-one percent of non-Native Alaskans were considered low SES using our definition.

Adult Tobacco Use and Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Current Cigarette Smoking

- Over one third (37%) of non-Native Alaskans of low SES smoke.
- The odds of being a current smoker are more than double among low SES persons compared to higher SES persons (OR 2.1, 95% CI: 1.8 - 2.6)—*after* adjusting for age, gender, marital status, employment status, children in the household, urban/rural and regional factors.

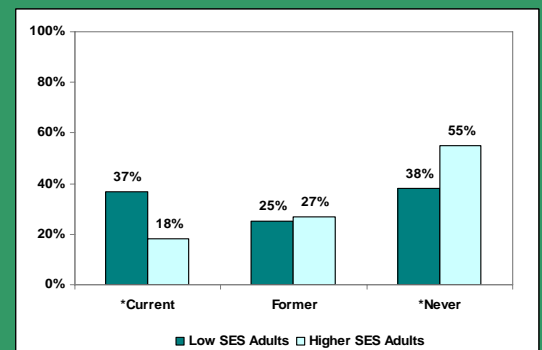
Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

- Secondhand smoke exposure is associated with increased risk of tobacco-related illness for adults and children.
- Persons of low SES are more likely than persons of higher SES to be exposed to smoke in the home (22% vs. 11%), in their vehicles (37% vs. 20%), and at their indoor workplaces (34% vs. 21%).
- Even among non-smokers, persons of low SES are at higher risk for smoke exposure at home, in their cars, and at work..
- Persons of low SES are less likely than those of higher SES to work in smoke-free workplaces (79% vs. 88%) and to have smoke-free rules for their homes and vehicles.
- Four out of five low SES persons have rules about no smoking in their homes, but only 2 out of 3 have these rules for their vehicles.

Knowledge of Harm from Secondhand Smoke

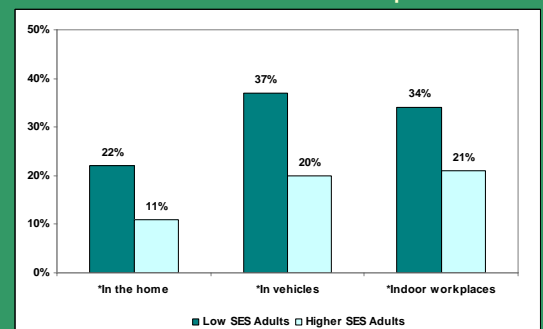
- According to the Surgeon General, nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke increase their risk of heart disease by 25-30% and lung cancer by 20-30%.
- Most people, whether of low or higher SES, are aware that breathing smoke from other people’s cigarettes causes disease; 92% of persons of low SES know that secondhand smoke causes respiratory problems in children, and 82% know that it causes lung cancer.
- Fewer adults report knowledge that secondhand smoke can also cause heart disease (65%) and sudden infant death syndrome (36%).

Current Adult Cigarette Smoking



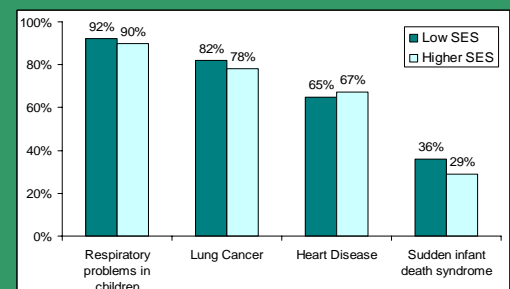
Source: Alaska BRFSS 2004-2006

Secondhand Smoke Exposure



Source: Alaska BRFSS 2004-2006

Knowledge that Secondhand Smoke causes disease:



Source: Alaska BRFSS 2004

* indicates significant difference (p < 0.05)

Who Among Non-Native Low SES Alaskans is Most Affected?

Current Cigarette Use

- Smoking prevalence is highest among men, those who are unable to work or are unemployed, those without children in the home, unmarried people, and those who are divorced or separated.
- Smoking prevalence is high across all age groups and regions in Alaska.

Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

- Smoke exposure at home is highest for those who are unemployed, unable to work, those without children, and those who are divorced or separated.
- One out of six people with children in their household report smoke exposure in the home.
- Smoke exposure in personal vehicles is highest for those who are unemployed, unmarried people, those who are divorced or separated, and those who are unable to work.
- Although nearly 4 in 5 employed persons have smoke-free clean indoor air policies at work, 1 in 3 reported recent smoke exposure somewhere at work.
- Smoke exposure at work is highest for unmarried workers and men.
- More than 1 in 4 non-smoking workers reported being exposed to smoke at their indoor workplace.

Addressing Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Support for Clean Indoor Air Policies

- Support for smoke-free policies is strong among all Alaskans; 4 out of 5 low SES non-Native Alaskans agree that people should be protected from smoke from other people's cigarettes, and even among low SES smokers, almost 3 out of 4 agree that people should be protected from secondhand smoke.
- Most low SES smokers report that they would still go to restaurants (87%) and bars (66%) as much or more often if those establishments were completely smoke-free, and support for smoke-free restaurants and bars is even higher among former smokers and non-smokers.

Strategies for Reducing Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

- Tobacco prevention and education campaigns should include a focus on changing social norms so that smoking and secondhand smoke exposure becomes less accepted among all Alaskans, especially low SES populations.
- Comprehensive clean indoor air policies are one method of encouraging norm change, and there is general support among people of low SES and those of higher SES for protecting all people from harm from smoke.
- Messages to promote clean indoor air laws or policies should focus on the rights of all workers to have smoke-free environments.
- Tobacco prevention and control public awareness campaigns should be tailored to people of low SES, using appropriate actors and models and relevant channels of communication.
- There may be a need to further educate persons of low SES as well as other groups of Alaskans about specific health risks associated with secondhand smoke exposure. Secondhand smoke elimination strategies should focus on indoor exposure at work and at home, but also on exposure in vehicles.

More Information about Planning for Tobacco Control

This fact sheet includes highlights from the report *Smoking Behavior and Beliefs Among Non-Native Alaskans of Low Socio-Economic Status: Implications for Program Planning*. This report contains information about smoking prevalence, exposure, quitting, and tobacco-related knowledge and opinions among low SES non-Native Alaskans. Findings in the report are translated into recommendations for program planning.

A full copy of the report and additional fact sheets are available online from the Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program: www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/tobacco

