

WHAT STATE SURVEYS TELL US ABOUT TOBACCO USE AMONG ALASKA NATIVES: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM PLANNING

This fact sheet highlights findings related to tobacco use among Alaska Native women. This information is intended to help people who are working to improve the health of Alaska Natives. The information can be used for planning effective programs and educating communities and their leaders about preventing youth from ever starting to use tobacco, helping current users to quit, and decreasing secondhand smoke exposure.

Adult Tobacco Use

Current Cigarette Smoking

- More than one in three (39%) Alaska Native women currently smoke cigarettes.
- This translates into about 14,500 women smokers.
- Alaska Native men are more likely to smoke cigarettes than women.

Current Smokeless Tobacco Use

- Just less than one in ten (7%) Alaska Native women currently use smokeless tobacco.
- This translates into about 2,500 women smokeless tobacco users.
- Alaska Native men are more likely to use smokeless tobacco than women.
- About 3% of Alaska Native women use Iqmik, a form of homemade smokeless tobacco used only among Alaska Natives; use is similar among men.

Youth Tobacco Use

Current Cigarette Smoking

- About half (49%) of Alaska Native high school girls currently smoke cigarettes.
- This translates into about 2,000 girl smokers statewide.

Current Smokeless Tobacco Use

- About one in five (18%) Alaska Native high school girls currently use smokeless tobacco.
- This translates into about 730 girl smokeless tobacco users statewide.
- Smokeless tobacco use among Alaska Native high school girls has increased significantly in recent years – despite declines seen among Alaska Native boys, and non-Native boys and girls.

Tobacco Use During Pregnancy

Cigarette Smoking

- About one in three (28%) Alaska Native women smoke cigarettes during the last three months of pregnancy.
- This translates into about 670 babies per year born to mothers that smoke.

Smokeless Tobacco Use

- About one in five (18%) Alaska Native women use smokeless tobacco during their pregnancy.
- This translates into about 430 babies per year born to mothers who use smokeless tobacco.

Preventing Tobacco Use

- Almost all (84%) Alaska Native high school girls statewide have smoked at least one cigarette in their lives; one-third (33%) say that they smoked a whole cigarette before the age of 13.
- Among all Alaska Native high school girls, one in four (23%) smoke cigarettes on school property and more than one in ten (14%) use smokeless tobacco on school property.

Quitting Tobacco Use

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Alaska Native women smokers say that they tried to quit during the past year.
- About one in three (37%) Alaska Native women who smoke before pregnancy are able to quit by their last three months of pregnancy – but about half of them (53%) relapse and are smoking again after their babies are born.
- The clear majority (71%) of Alaska Native women who smoke after pregnancy say that they want to quit.
- Almost half (47%) of Alaska Native women smokers know about the state’s toll-free tobacco Quitline: 888-842-QUIT (7848).

Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Smoking Exposure at Home - Adults

- About one in five (17%) Alaska Native women are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.
- This translates into about 5,900 women exposed.

Smoking Exposure Indoors - Youth

- About half (52%) of Alaska Native high school girls report being exposed to secondhand smoke indoors at least weekly.
- This translates into about 2,100 high school girls who are exposed to secondhand smoke indoors statewide.

Knowledge and Opinions about Tobacco Control

- About 88% of Alaska Native women believe it is very important to keep stores from selling tobacco to teens; about 89% agree that tobacco use by adults should be banned on school grounds.
- About 41% of Alaska Native women believe that there is little benefit to quitting after smoking for 20 years – which is not true.
- About 80% of Alaska Native women believe that secondhand smoke is “very harmful” – significantly greater than the 64% among men; 51% of women specifically know that exposure to secondhand smoke causes sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and 69% know that it causes heart disease.
- About 86% of Alaska Native women support banning smoking in all indoor work areas – this is stronger than the 69% support among men.

More Information about Planning for Tobacco Control

This fact sheet includes highlights from the report *What State Surveys Tell Us about Tobacco Use among Alaska Natives: Implications for Program Planning*. The full report contains information about the health burden of tobacco use among Alaska Natives, trends in tobacco use among Alaska Natives in comparison to non-Native Alaskans, and additional detail about tobacco use indicators such as knowledge of harm, quitting, and opinions about tobacco control programs. Findings in the report are translated into recommendations for program planning.

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

DATA SOURCES: ADULT TOBACCO USE – ALASKA BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (BRFSS), 2004-05 COMBINED; YOUTH TOBACCO USE – 2003 ALASKA YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS); SMOKING DURING PREGNANCY – ALASKA PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT MONITORING SYSTEM (PRAMS), 2000-03 COMBINED.

