Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and increases the risk for many types of cancer, heart attack, stroke, COPD, and other diseases. Disparities among adult and youth tobacco use rates and related smoking-caused death rates continue to persist between different racial/ethnic groups across the nation. Among Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs), the three leading causes of death are all tobacco-related.

**Tobacco Use Among Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders**

- Asian Americans have the lowest smoking rate (5.4%) of all major American racial/ethnic groups.
  - Smoking among Asian American men is notably higher than smoking among Asian American women (13.5% vs. 5.0%).
  - AANHPI communities are diverse, including well over fifty ethnic and language groups of people. Survey data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) 2010-2013 show that cigarette smoking varies considerably by country of origin and nativity. For example, cigarette smoking prevalence is higher among Filipinos (12.6%) than Chinese (7.6%) or Asian Indian (67.6%), with the highest rates among Vietnamese (16.3%) and Korean (20.0%).
  - According to 2018 NSDUH data, 47% of Asian American smokers use menthol cigarettes, compared to 29% of White smokers.
  - Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are the second most frequently reported tobacco product among adults. In 2021, 2.9% of Asian American adults reported using e-cigarettes.
  - E-cigarettes are the most popular tobacco product among Asian American high school students. In 2021, 5.5% were current e-cigarette users. Less than 1 percent (0.6%) of Asian American high school students were current smokers.
  - E-cigarette use among NHPI high school students is the highest of all racial/ethnic groups at 24.7 percent. NHPI high schoolers also smoke cigarettes at a higher rate than other racial/ethnic groups (6.9%).
  - The large majority of Asian American smokers are interested in quitting smoking. 70% of Asian adult current cigarette smokers want to quit smoking cigarettes, and 69% report that they tried to quit during the past year. According to the 2021 NHIS, 70.1% of Asian American adults who ever smoked cigarettes reported having quit. However, compared to White smokers, Asian American smokers are less likely to receive quitting advice from health care providers and less likely to use evidence-based treatments to help them quit.
Health Burden of Tobacco Among Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

- Cancer is the leading cause of death among Asian Americans and the second-leading cause among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPIs). More than 19,000 Asian American/Pacific Islanders are diagnosed with a tobacco-related cancer each year and more than 9,000 die from a tobacco-related cancer each year.

- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among AANHPIs. It is estimated that among AANHPIs, approximately 6000 will be diagnosed with lung cancer each year and 4,000 will die from lung cancer each year. Among both men and women, Samoans and Native Hawaiians have the highest rates of lung cancer, while Asian Indians and Pakistanis have the lowest.

- Cardiovascular disease is the second leading cause of death among Asian Americans and the leading cause among NHPIs. For both groups, stroke is the third leading cause of death. Tobacco use is an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease and stroke.

- Cigarette smoking is a cause of diabetes. In 2019, NHPI adults were about twice as likely (2.19 times) as Non-Hispanic White adults to die from diabetes.

The Tobacco Industry Targets Asian Americans Using a Variety of Marketing and Promotion Strategies

- Tobacco companies found promise in marketing to Asian Americans because of high population growth, high smoking rates in their countries of origin, increasing consumer power and a high brand loyalty to American products.

- Targeted marketing to AANHPI communities throughout the years have included:
  - Sponsorships of East Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander community festivals;
  - Heavy presence of billboard and in-store advertising in predominantly urban Asian American communities; and
  - Financial contributions to community organizations and Asian American business associations.

- In 1999, Philip Morris targeted Black, Hispanic, and Asian American women with their Virginia Slims "Find Your Voice" campaign.

- In 2004, R.J. Reynolds launched their new Camel brand, Kauai Kolada, appropriating the image of a hula dancer to promote their pineapple- and coconut-flavored cigarettes.

References:


Tobacco’s Impact on AANHPI Communities