

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 Natives living in the Southwest region. 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

- Almost half (46%) of Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† currently smoke cigarettes, which is similar to other regions of the state.
- This translates into about 8,700 Alaska Native adult smokers in the Southwest region.
- 42% of Alaska Native adults statewide smoke cigarettes.

Current Smokeless Tobacco Use

- More than one in ten (15%) Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† currently use smokeless tobacco, which is greater than in other regions of the state.
- This translates into about 3,000 adult smokeless tobacco users in the Southwest region.
- 11% of Alaska Native adults statewide use smokeless tobacco.
- About 6% of Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† use Iqmik, a form of homemade smokeless tobacco used only among Alaska Natives; about 3% use Iqmik statewide.

Youth Tobacco Use

Youth data for specific regions were not available – information presented here is from statewide estimates.

Current Cigarette Smoking

- About 44% of Alaska Native high school students statewide currently smoke cigarettes.
- This translates into about 3,400 youth smokers statewide.

Current Smokeless Tobacco Use

- About 24% of Alaska Native high school students statewide currently use smokeless tobacco.
- This translates into about 1,900 youth smokeless tobacco users statewide.

Tobacco Use During Pregnancy

Cigarette Smoking

- About one in five (20%) Alaska Native women in the Southwest region smoke cigarettes during the last three months of pregnancy, which is similar to other regions of the state.
- This translates into about 140 babies per year born to mothers who smoke in the region.
- 28% of Alaska Native women statewide smoke cigarettes during the last three months of pregnancy.

Smokeless Tobacco Use

- Almost half (47%) of Alaska Native women in the Southwest region use smokeless tobacco during their pregnancy, which is greater than for other regions of the state.
- This translates into 320 babies per year born to mothers who use tobacco in the region.
- 18% of Alaska Native women statewide use smokeless tobacco during pregnancy.

Preventing Tobacco Use

- Almost all (83%) Alaska Native high school students statewide have smoked at least one cigarette in their lives; one-third (34%) say that they smoked a whole cigarette before the age of 13.
- Almost half (44%) of Alaska Native high school student smokers use cigarettes on school property and the majority (70%) of smokeless tobacco users use smokeless tobacco on school property.

Quitting Tobacco Use

- More than half (64%) of Alaska Native adult smokers in the Southwest region† say that they tried to quit during the past year.
- About one in three (36%) Alaska Native women in the Southwest region who smoke before pregnancy are able to quit by their last three months of pregnancy – but more than half of them (53%) relapse and are smoking again after their babies are born.
- The clear majority (71%) of Alaska Native women in the Southwest region who smoke after pregnancy say that they want to quit.
- About half (51%) of Alaska Native adult smokers in the Southwest region† know about the state’s toll-free tobacco Quitline: 888-842-QUIT (7848).

Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Smoking Exposure at Home - Adults

- More than one in ten (14%) Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.
- This translates into about 2,500 adults exposed in the Southwest region.
- About 16% of Alaska Native adults statewide are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

Smoking Exposure Indoors - Youth

- About half (49%) of Alaska Native high school students statewide report being exposed to secondhand smoke indoors at least weekly.
- This translates into about 3,800 youth statewide who are exposed to secondhand smoke indoors.

Knowledge and Opinions about Tobacco Control

- About 80% of Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† believe it is very important to keep stores from selling tobacco to teens; about 90% agree that tobacco use by adults should be banned on school grounds.
- About 49% of Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† believe that there is little benefit to quitting after smoking for 20 years – which is not true.
- About 73% of Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† believe that secondhand smoke is “very harmful”; 46% specifically know that exposure to secondhand smoke causes sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and 74% know that it causes heart disease.
- About 83% of Alaska Native adults in the Southwest region† support banning smoking in all indoor work areas.

More Information about Planning for Tobacco Control

This fact sheet includes regional 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, 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.
 REGIONAL ESTIMATES: DUE TO SMALL NUMBERS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS FOR SOME QUESTIONS, AND DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS USED BY BRFSS AND PRAMS SURVEYS, NOTED REGIONAL ESTIMATES INCLUDE DATA FROM OTHER REGIONS AS FOLLOWS -- †SOUTHWEST, NORTHERN AND INTERIOR REGIONS COMBINED.

