



Office on Women's Health

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Surgeon General's Report on Women and Smoking **Hispanic Women and Smoking**

Smoking Prevalence Among Hispanic Women

- In 1998, smoking prevalence was lowest among Hispanic women (13.8 percent) and Asian or Pacific Islander women (11.2 percent), intermediate among white women (23.5 percent) and black women (21.9 percent), and highest among American Indian or Alaska Native women (34.5 percent).
- Reports have shown smoking among Hispanics to be positively associated with acculturation.
- Several studies have looked at prevalence of smoking among women over time, which provides an opportunity to examine when persons take up smoking and how smoking diffuses through a population over time.
 - Prevalence was the highest in the 1920-1924 (31 percent) and 1940-1944 (29 percent) birth cohorts.
 - Smoking prevalence was lower among Hispanic women than among white or black women.
 - The patterns of cigarette smoking among women and men became increasingly similar, however, smoking prevalence remained lower among women than men.
- Among Hispanic women, a decline in smoking prevalence was noted from 1979 through 1998. Prevalence was also significantly lower among Hispanic women than among white women or black women during this period.
- The 1995 Stanford Five-City Project found that the difference in smoking prevalence between white women and Hispanic women decreased as education increased and that smoking prevalence was the same among white and Hispanic women who were college graduates.
- Among Hispanic women who smoked, data show that Mexican-American women (18.8 percent) were less likely to be heavy smokers (one-half pack of cigarettes or more per day) than were Puerto Rican American women or Cuban American women (48.6 percent). Heavy smoking among Hispanic women who smoked was highest among "other Hispanics" (17.5 percent) and Cuban Americans (4 percent).
- Among racial and ethnic groups, a significant difference of heavy smoking by gender was observed among white non-Hispanics, black non-Hispanics, and Hispanics.
- Among women who smoked in 1998, white women (14 percent) were more likely to be heavy smokers than were black women (4.5 percent) or Hispanic women (2.1 percent).
- National data on the cigarette brand preferences of Hispanic women are limited, however, data from the 1992-1994 Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey are notable:



- Among Mexican American women who smoked, 30.4 percent used Marlboro cigarettes, 15.7 percent Salem, 13.6 percent Winston, and 9.9 percent Benson & Hedges.
 - Among Puerto Rican American women who smoked, 22 percent used Newport cigarettes, 20.5 percent Marlboro, 17.6 percent Winston, and 8.5 percent Kool.
 - Among Cuban American women who smoked, 18.7 percent used Benson & Hedges cigarettes, 16.2 percent Winston, 15.6 percent Salem, and 15.4 percent Marlboro.
 - Cuban American women (25.7 percent) were more likely than Mexican American women (19 percent) or Puerto Rican American women (9.8 percent) to choose a brand other than one of the top seven brands.
- A 1984-1985 study of current smokers in New Mexico suggested that the gender gap had narrowed considerably for the use of filter-tipped cigarettes: 92.9 percent of white women and 94.6 percent of Hispanic women smoked filter-tipped cigarettes, compared to 90 percent of white men and 87 percent of Hispanic men.

Smoking Prevalence Among Young Hispanic Women

- A substantial decline in smoking prevalence occurred among young Hispanic women from 1978-1980 (29.6 percent) through 1997-1998 (17.0 percent).
- Since 1992-1993, smoking prevalence has been lower among young Hispanic women than among young Hispanic men.

Smoking Prevalence Among Hispanic Girls

- Studies show that among girls aged less than 18 years, Hispanic and black girls are less likely than white girls to have ever tried smoking.
- Hispanic girls are less likely than white girls to be current smokers.
- Survey data for 1990-1994 showed that smoking prevalence among high school senior girls was highest among American Indians or Alaska Natives (39.4 percent) and whites (33.1 percent), intermediate among Hispanics (19.2 percent) and Asian or Pacific Islanders (13.8 percent), and lowest among blacks (8.6 percent).
- From 1985-1989, it was found that the prevalence of current smoking was 24.7 percent among Puerto Rican American and Latin American girls and 18.7 percent among Mexican American girls.
- In 1998, among smokers, black girls (9.7 percent) and Hispanic girls (15.8 percent) were less likely than white girls (34.2 percent) to be heavy smokers (one-half pack of cigarettes or more per day).
- Data from the 1999 school-based Youth Risk Behavior Survey (grades 9-12, girls aged <18 years) show that among current smokers, Hispanic girls were more likely than black girls to be trying to lose weight.

Smoking and Pregnancy

- Studies targeting pregnant Hispanic women have been inconsistent.
 - In the National Pregnancy and Health Survey, conducted from October 1992 through August 1993, 24.4 percent of white women, 19.8 percent of black women, and 5.8 percent of Hispanic women reported smoking during pregnancy.
 - Smoking prevalence during pregnancy differs by age, race and ethnicity. The prevalence declined in all age, racial and ethnic groups from 1989 through 1998. For pregnant Hispanic women, prevalence was highest among Puerto Rican, "other Hispanics," and women of unknown Hispanic status. Prevalence was lower among Cuban, Mexican American, and Central and South American women.
 - Smoking during pregnancy is particularly uncommon among Mexican American women born outside the United States. In 1993, for example, the prevalence of smoking during pregnancy was 6 percent among Mexican mothers born in the United States, and only 2 percent among Mexican mothers born elsewhere.
- The effects of smoking on birth weight appear to be similar among various racial groups in the United States. In one study, lower than average birth weight was reported among infants of Mexican American smokers compared with non-smokers of the same race or ethnicity.

Smoking Cessation

- Little work has been published on smoking cessation among Hispanic women in the United States. In general, Hispanic women want to stop smoking at rates similar to those of non-Hispanic whites, and a higher percentage of Hispanic women (79.3 percent) want to stop smoking compared to Hispanic men (68.3 percent).
- A 1998 study showed that the percentage of smokers who had quit smoking was lower among American Indian or Alaska Native women (37.2 percent) and Hispanic women (43.1 percent) and highest among Asian or Pacific Islander women (62.2 percent).
- Hispanic women who smoked were less likely than white women to report having received advice to quit smoking. This difference occurred despite a comparable number of visits to a physician by Hispanic women and white women.
- Among girls, white females (27.9 percent) were more likely than black (22.5 percent), Hispanic (23.5 percent), or Alaska Native and American Indian (15.7 percent) females to have been counseled by a health care provider on cigarette smoking.

Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS)

- In 1982-1983, the proportion that reported ETS exposure at home ranged from 31 percent (among Puerto Rican women aged 40 through 49 years) to 62 percent (among Mexican American girls and young women aged 12 through 19 years).
- Among both Mexican American and Puerto Rican Americans, adolescents had significantly higher levels of exposure in the home than did older groups.

- In a 1993 California survey, 52 percent of the Hispanic women reported a complete ban on smoking in their homes, and 21 percent a partial ban. Hispanic women and Asian or Pacific Islander women were more likely than white women or black women to have a total ban on smoking in their home

Publication date: 2001