



Office on Women's Health

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Surgeon General's Report on Women and Smoking **Asian or Pacific Islander Women and Smoking**

Smoking Prevalence Among Asian or Pacific Islander Women

- In 1998, smoking prevalence was highest among American Indian or Alaska Native women (34.5 percent), intermediate among white women (23.5 percent) and black women (21.9 percent), and lowest among Hispanic (13.8 percent) and Asian or Pacific Islander women (11.2 percent).
- Among Asian American or Pacific Islander women, the prevalence of smoking decreased from 1979 through 1992, but then doubled from 1995 through 1998.
- Estimates from national surveys indicate that the prevalence of smoking among Asian or Pacific Islander women is lower than that among women in other racial and ethnic groups. However, state and local surveys show that smoking prevalence varies dramatically among ethnic subgroups.
 - In a California survey, the prevalence among Asian women was highest among women of Japanese ancestry (14.9 percent) or Korean ancestry (13.6 percent) and lowest among women of Chinese ancestry (4.7 percent).
 - In a survey of women enrolled in a prepaid health plan in California, 18.6 percent of Japanese American women and 7.3 percent of Chinese American women were current smokers.
 - Aggregate data from California studies in 1990 and 1991 showed that the prevalence of smoking among Asian or Pacific Islander women aged 18 through 24 years was 22.9 percent among Japanese women, 19.9 percent among Korean women, 5.8 percent among Chinese women, and 4 percent among Filipino women.

Smoking Prevalence Among Asian or Pacific Islander Girls

- In 1990-1994, the smoking prevalence among Asian or Pacific Islander high school senior girls was 13.8 percent.
- Behind Native American and white girls, Asian girls reported the third highest prevalence of smoking intensity (one-half pack or more per day) among current smokers (4.5 percent).

Smoking and Pregnancy

- Smoking during pregnancy is particularly uncommon among Asian or Pacific Islander women born outside the United States. In 1993, 12 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander mothers born in the United States were smokers, but only 3 percent of those born elsewhere were smokers.



- The pregnancy smoking prevalence during 1989-1998 decreased in all racial and ethnic groups. Published data from the natality statistics reported that among Asian or Pacific Islander women, prevalence was highest among pregnant Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian woman and lower among pregnant Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, and other Asians or Pacific Islanders.

Smoking Cessation Interventions

- Because of the small sample sizes of Asians or Pacific Islanders who have participated in epidemiologic surveys and smoking cessation programs, little information has been available on cessation rates and associated factors. No studies of smoking cessation interventions among Asian or Pacific Islander women have been reported.

International Tobacco Use among Asian or Pacific Islander Women

- Relatively little is known about recent trends in smoking prevalence among young women in Asian countries, where cigarette marketing targeted to women has increased markedly.
- The rise of smoking among women and children in Asian countries has coincided with aggressive Western-style advertising. Preliminary evidence suggests a pattern of association similar to that seen in the United States and emphasizes the enormous potential of advertising to change social norms.
- In central, south, and Southeast Asia, smokeless tobacco use includes nass, naswar, khaini, mishri, gudakhu, and betelquied. The prevalence of smokeless tobacco is relatively high among women in some developing countries, where its use is considered more socially acceptable for women than smoking.

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