

Eliminating Tobacco Use

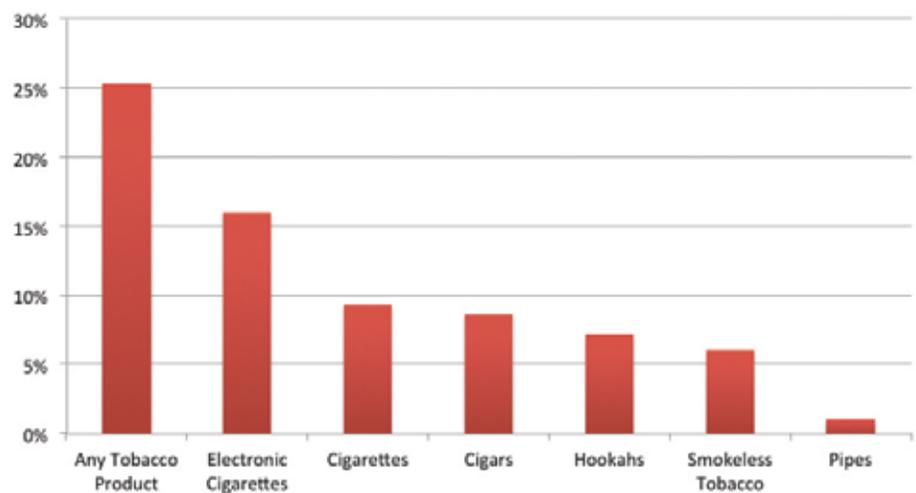
Tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable diseases, disability and death in the United States, killing more people each year than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders and suicides combined.⁶⁴¹ It is responsible for one in five deaths and nearly one-third of cancer deaths in the country.⁶⁴²

Approximately 40 million adults — roughly one in six — are current smokers.⁶⁴³ High school cigarette smoking rates are at historic lows, at around 9 percent, but overall rates of teens using any form of tobacco remain around 25 percent.⁶⁴⁴ In addition, there has been a dramatic rise in the use of e-cigarettes — around 16 percent of high school students now report using e-cigarettes, up from 1.5 percent in 2011.^{645, 646, 647}

Tobacco-related health problems cost the country approximately \$170 billion per year, including \$39.6 billion by Medicaid and \$45 billion by Medicare, and another \$151 billion in lost productivity.⁶⁴⁸

- Nearly 90 percent of adult smokers began smoking as teenagers.⁶⁴⁹ At current rates, 5.6 million children alive today will die from smoking-related illnesses.⁶⁵⁰
- Nearly one-third (31.8 percent) of teens do not perceive smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day as risky.⁶⁵¹
- Each year, more than 41,000 deaths result from secondhand smoke exposure.⁶⁵² Annual healthcare expenditure on secondhand smoke exposure alone is over \$6 billion.⁶⁵³

High School Students Reporting Using Tobacco Products at Least 1 Day During the Past 30 Days, United States 2015



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016⁶⁴⁰

- Each one percentage point decline in adult and youth smoking rates in the country results in 2.4 million fewer adult smokers, over \$1.3 billion in savings from heart attack and stroke reductions over 5 years, and \$393.2 million in savings from reductions in smoking-affected births over 5 years.⁶⁵⁴
- Adults with mental health or other substance use disorders smoke cigarettes more than adults without these disorders; approximately 25 percent of U.S. adults have some form of mental health or substance use disorder, and these adults consume almost 40 percent of all cigarettes smoked by adults.⁶⁵⁵
- Smoking among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in the United States is much higher than among heterosexual/straight adults. Nearly 1 in 4 lesbian, gay or bisexual adults smokes cigarettes compared with roughly 1 in 6 heterosexual/straight adults.⁶⁵⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Support increases in taxes on tobacco products.** Tobacco tax increases are effective ways to reduce smoking rates among adults and prevent children from beginning smoking, while also providing revenue to fund tobacco control programs. Nationally, every 10 percent increase in the price of cigarettes results in a 4 percent reduction in overall consumption and reduces smoking among young adults by 3.5 percent and among youth by 6 to 7 percent.⁶⁵⁷
- **Support raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21.** Roughly half (47 percent) of adult smokers become daily smokers before the age of 18; however, four out of five adult smokers become daily smokers before the age of 21.⁶⁵⁸ A 2015 study from the National Academy of Medicine shows that raising the tobacco sale age would significantly reduce smoking initiation among youth, resulting in reductions in smoking-related deaths.⁶⁵⁹ Currently, two states (California and Hawaii) and 200 localities have raised the tobacco sale age to 21.⁶⁶⁰
- **Expand comprehensive smoke-free laws to all 50 states.** Currently 25 states, Washington, DC, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enacted smoke-free laws that include all workplaces, including restaurants and bars. Five more states have smoke-free laws that include restaurants and bars, but not all other workplaces. To eliminate secondhand smoke in all workplaces and public places, comprehensive smoke-free laws should be adopted in the remaining states.
- **Sustain investments in tobacco prevention and cessation programs.** Federal, state and local funding for preventing tobacco use and tobacco cessation should be preserved, including protecting the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which enables communities around the country to invest in proven strategies to improve health, including those targeted at the reduction of tobacco use. These funds should also support continuation and expansion of Tips from Former Smokers, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's highly effective media campaign to reduce tobacco use.
- **Expand access to and use of evidence-based tobacco cessation services.** Use of FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and counseling are effective ways for tobacco users to increase their ability to quit successfully. Expanding coverage of tobacco cessation services in Medicaid and increasing awareness of this coverage among enrollees and providers would help reduce tobacco use in a high-risk population. Ensuring that private health insurers cover evidence-based tobacco cessation services would also help more tobacco users to quit.
- **Make public and subsidized housing smoke-free.** Banning smoking in subsidized or public housing is a key strategy for reducing children's exposure to secondhand smoke. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and a set of partners issued a guidance and toolkits for public housing and multi-unit family housing owners, managers and residents for ways to establish and implement smoke-free policies and practices and has proposed rulemaking to make public housing smoke-free.⁶⁶¹ CDC estimates nearly \$497 billion could be saved each year if smoking was universally banned in subsidized and public housing.⁶⁶²
- **Effectively regulate tobacco products.** In 2009, Congress gave FDA the authority to regulate the manufacturing, marketing and sale of tobacco products in order to protect public health and protect youth from tobacco-caused disease and premature death. FDA, for example, can require changes in tobacco products to make them less addictive, less appealing to youth and less harmful; review new products to ensure they are not detrimental to public health; and improve public awareness of health risks such as by implementing graphic warning labels and preventing manufacturers from making misleading health claims.
- **E-cigarettes should be regulated by FDA and included in smoke-free laws.** FDA finalized a rule in August 2016 to extend its regulatory authority to all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. This authority should not be infringed, as it gives FDA the opportunity to evaluate the safety of e-cigarettes by reviewing ingredients, product design, health risks and appeal to youth and non-tobacco users.⁶⁶³ Studies have shown that e-cigarettes emit probable carcinogens, and not simply water vapor. As a result, e-cigarettes should be included in state and local smoke free laws in order to protect the public's health.

Endnotes

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