



# Raising Our Voices for Health Justice for Our African American Communities

*Health justice means bringing communities to the table, so everyone's voices are heard and people from all walks of life achieve the health and wellness they deserve.*

## **African Americans are disproportionately affected by tobacco:**

- African Americans are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke than any other racial group.<sup>2</sup>
- Despite smoking fewer cigarettes, African American tobacco users are more likely to die from smoking-related illness than white tobacco users.<sup>3</sup>
- In California, 20.7% of African American adults smoke cigarettes compared to 12.4% of California adults overall.<sup>6</sup>
- Over 85% of African American cigarette smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, which are more addictive and more difficult to quit than non- menthol cigarettes.<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- A study by the CDC showed that African Americans who live in multi-unit housing are significantly more likely to experience unwanted secondhand smoke than non-African American multi-unit housing residents.<sup>7</sup>
- 72.8% of African Americans who smoke reported an interest in quitting, higher than any other population.<sup>7,8</sup>
- Research shows that African American young adults ages 18 - 24 are vulnerable to tobacco use and addiction<sup>16</sup>
- Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in both African American men and women, but it kills more African Americans than any other type of cancer.<sup>16</sup>
- In 2019, it is estimated that 25,390 African Americans will be diagnosed with lung cancer and 16,550 African Americans will die from it.<sup>17</sup>
- The relative five-year survival rate for lung cancer is lower among African Americans than among whites (16% compared to 19%).<sup>18</sup>

## **The tobacco industry has targeted African Americans for over half a century:**

- The tobacco industry has a long history of predatory targeting of African Americans with menthol and other flavored tobacco products, which are deadlier and more addictive than non-flavored products.
- Communities with a greater proportion of African Americans have a greater density of tobacco retailers and see more tobacco advertising than other neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup>

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- For each 10% increase in the proportion of African American students in California, the odds of a Newport promotion were 50% higher, and the cost of Newport was 12 cents lower.<sup>10</sup>

### **COVID-19 and tobacco are a deadly combination:**

- Research shows that smoking is most likely associated with people getting sicker from COVID- 19. <sup>11, 14</sup>
- Smoking weakens the immune system and the body’s ability to fight infections such as COVID-19. <sup>12</sup>
- People who smoke or vape and contract the COVID-19 virus are at increased risk of developing more severe symptoms. <sup>12,14</sup>
- Smoking, vaping or using a hookah can spread COVID-19 as users are repeatedly putting their hands to their mouths and faces, often in a social setting. <sup>13</sup>

### **While we’re fighting a deadly pandemic, there is a teen vaping epidemic in this state:**

- Vaping devices are the most commonly used tobacco product in California.
- More than 80% of high-school students who consume tobacco use a vaping device.
- Of the California teens who consume tobacco products, including vape products, 86.4% report using a flavored tobacco product.

### **Among young adults, use of hookah tobacco is an emerging health-risk behavior:**

- Among diverse races/ethnicities, the rates of hookah tobacco use increased most for Non-Hispanic Blacks/African Americans.<sup>15</sup>
- 21% of former cigarette smokers use hookah tobacco.<sup>15</sup>

### **SOURCES**

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<sup>6</sup> California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program. *California Tobacco Facts and Figures 2018*.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General*. 1998.

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