



**CALIFORNIA TOBACCO
ENDGAME CENTER FOR
ORGANIZING AND ENGAGEMENT**
A project of the American Heart Association.



Raising our Voices for Health Justice: Reducing the Impact of Tobacco on Californian Women

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.

More women die of lung cancer each year than breast, ovarian, and cervical cancer combined.¹ Due to aggressive targeting by the tobacco industry, women are now just as likely to die from smoking as men.² It's time to take a stand against the products that are destroying women's lives and families.

How women are affected by tobacco:

- More than 200,000 women die each year in the U.S. as a result of smoking-related diseases.²
- Women's risk of dying from smoking-related diseases has tripled over the last 50 years.³
- Overall smoking rates have not declined as quickly for women as for men.⁸
- Lung cancer has been the leading cause of cancer death among women since surpassing breast cancer in 1987.⁴
- Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy are major factors associated with life-threatening risks to mother and child.⁵
- Smoking rates among US women vary by race and ethnicity, income, and education level.⁸ In California, 25.9% of white low-income adult women smoke cigarettes.⁹
- Women who smoke have a 25% greater risk of developing coronary heart disease compared with men who smoke.¹⁰

The tobacco industry has targeted women for nearly a century:

- False claims about "low tar" and "light" cigarettes have been used to mislead female smokers.
- Tobacco companies exploit social pressure faced by women and co-opt imagery of independent women to market their deadly products.
- After the Virginia Slims brand was introduced, the smoking rate among 12-year-old girls increased by 110%.⁶
- The same exploitative marketing techniques used by tobacco companies to portray cigarettes as sexy and empowering are now being used to market e-cigarettes to women.

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How smart tobacco policies can improve women's lives:

- Strong local retail licenses can give communities the resources they need to enforce minimum age to purchase and ensure girls don't get hooked on deadly tobacco products.
- Smokefree multi-unit housing policies can protect expectant mothers and their families from experiencing harmful secondhand smoke in their homes.
- Policies that increase access to smoking cessation programs can help reduce smoking among women of childbearing age.

SOURCES

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