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Commercial Tobacco's Impact: Costly for the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities



The Tobacco Industry targets Asian Americans (AAs), Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (NH/PIs) in their communities.

- Tobacco companies seek partnerships with local AA trade organizations, retailers, and community festivals (e.g., Lunar New Year). These partnerships take unfair advantage of community gatherings as a means to have direct access to AA, NH/PI communities.¹
- The tobacco industry consistently targets AA, NH/PIs and considered the communities to be a “potential gold mine” due to already high rates of smoking in Asia and the Pacific. These high rates are directly influenced by highly concentrated populations in certain geographic regions, and the high proportion of retailers.²
- The tobacco industry targets Asian American and Pacific Islander youth through e-cigarettes and Puff Bars® flavors like lychee, milk tea, matcha, taro, guava and passion fruit.³

Tobacco disproportionately impacts our AA & NH/PI communities.

- Tobacco use is still the number one cause of preventable death for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. Factors such as cultural perceptions of smoking, language barriers to services, and targeted marketing have contributed to high rates of smoking within these communities. It's time to eliminate the unfair health burden tobacco places on AA, NH/PIs.⁴
- Aggregated data is problematic for AA & NH/PI communities because it lumps our large and diverse communities into one, masking disparities among specific subpopulations. In CA, it is reported that 8.1% of Asians are current smokers, but that figure masks higher smoking rates in AA & NH/PI communities.⁵ When data on AA & NH/PI smoking rates is left aggregated without question, we also leave behind AA & NH/PI communities that have been impacted much greater than what the aggregated data show.

- Aggregated data shows 39.3% of AA and NH/PI cigarette smokers preferred menthol cigarettes; however, when the data is broken by subgroup, the rates are much higher with 45% of Filipino smokers and 46% of NH/PI smokers preferring menthol cigarettes.⁷

Among Asian Americans

- In certain Asian American (AA) populations, cigarette smoking prevalence is much higher than the rest of California. For example, the smoking rate of Korean males is 26.6% and 23.7% for Vietnamese males, compared to the smoking rate of California males overall at 16.2%.⁶
- Tobacco-related cancer and cardiovascular disease are the top two causes of death among AA individuals. Of the total deaths, 35% are attributed to stroke and heart disease and 27% to cancer.⁷

Among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders

- A majority (54.6%) of NH/PI adults reported current use of flavored tobacco products.⁸
- 57.7% of NH/PI young adults reported current use of flavored tobacco products.⁸
- About 3 in 5 (59.3%) NH/PI young adults reported being a current smoker.⁸
- Over two-thirds (67%) of NH/PI adults reported being exposed to tobacco secondhand smoke or secondhand vape.⁸
- Between 2005 and 2010, the leading cause of death for NH/PIs was heart disease (34%) followed by cancer (24%), which are tobacco-related diseases.¹

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