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Commercial Tobacco's Impact: Costly for California's LGBTQ Communities

Nearly 40,000 Californians are Killed by the Tobacco Industry's Practices. Cigarette smoking among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer + (LGBTQ+) individuals in the U.S. is higher than among straight and cisgender individuals due to the social stress of living in a society that can be hostile to LGBTQ+ people. The increase of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and policies may be contributing to the high risk of tobacco use among LGBTQ+ people. In addition, many within the LGBTQ+ Community have experienced trauma with health care professionals, reducing the likelihood of seeking medial support.¹ The tobacco industry exploits the marginalization of LGBTQ+ people through predatory marketing and creates a consumer base addicted to its products. It is time to take a stand against the deadly products that place an unfair health burden on the LGBTQ+ community.

Tobacco products impact the health of our LGBTQ community.

- Cigarette smoking prevalence of the California's LGBTQ+ population is 18.5%, compared to 13.0% for non-LGBTQ+ adults.²
- Bisexual women are up to 3.5 times more likely to smoke, try their first cigarette at a younger age and have higher nicotine dependence than heterosexual women.³
- The limited data on smoking rates for transgender individuals shows that transgender adults use tobacco products at higher rates than cisgender adults.⁴
- Various studies and population-based surveys over the past decade suggest that gay and bisexual men smoke at higher rates than men and are less likely to have successfully quit tobacco use. This puts gay and bisexual men at high risk for smoking-related illness.
- Lesbian and bisexual youth are 9.7 times more likely to smoke cigarettes regularly, compared to their heterosexual peers.
- LGBTQ+ individuals are less likely to have health insurance than heterosexual individuals, which may negatively affect health as well as access to cessation treatments, including counseling and medication.⁵



- Gay men have high rates of HPV infection which, when coupled with tobacco use, increases their risk for anal cancer and other cancers.⁶
- Smoking is especially dangerous for people living with HIV, as it raises your chances for getting heart disease, cancer, serious lung diseases and infections such as pneumonia, and other illnesses.⁷
- Among women, secondhand smoke exposure is more common among non-smoking lesbian women than among non-smoking heterosexual women.⁸
- Tobacco use poses particular risks to people who are medically transitioning. Tobacco use, in combination with hormones such as estrogen and testosterone, greatly increases the risk of heart attack and smoking prior to surgery or during recovery can increase the risk of complications.

- People living with HIV who use tobacco while on antiretroviral therapy had mortality rates 6 to 13 times higher from lung cancer than from AIDS-related causes.⁹
- Transgender adults who have experienced structural discrimination smoke tobacco at significantly higher rates than cisgender adults.¹⁰
- Black youth who are Lesbian or Gay and Asian- Pacific Islander youth who are Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual are both at higher risks of smoking tobacco compared to their straight and cisgender Black or API counterparts.¹¹
- Transgender youth of color vape at higher rates than their cisgender white youth counterparts.¹²

The Tobacco Industry has targeted the LGBTQ population for over a quarter century.

- High rates of tobacco use within the LGBTQ+ community are due in part to the aggressive marketing by tobacco companies that sponsor events, bar promotions, giveaways, and advertisements.⁵
- Tobacco companies use LGBTQ+ imagery and symbols in advertising to LGBTQ+ communities.

- Same-sex couples, drag queens, themes of freedom and love, rainbow colors, and colorful flavors are used by the Tobacco industry in advertisements and products to target LGBTQ+ communities.
- By capitalizing on LGBTQ+ social issues, such as marriage equality and visibility in media/advertisement, tobacco companies are co-opting positive LGBTQ+ messaging in their campaigns to sell tobacco.
- Big Tobacco has targeted the LGBTQ+ community since at least 1991, advertising at Pride and other LGBTQ+ community events, and contributing to both national and local LGBTQ+ and HIV/AIDS Organizations.¹³
- Internal memos reveal that tobacco companies sought gay voters' support as early as 1983, when they wished to repeal workplace smoking bans in San Francisco.
- An internal Philip Morris memo from 1985 reveals grudging admiration at how views of gays and lesbians as customers were changing.¹⁴
- Tobacco companies are motivated by their profit margins. The LGBTQ+ community spends an estimated \$7.9 billion on tobacco each year.¹⁵

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