



2026 | CAPITOL INFORMATION & EDUCATION DAYS



Truth and Health: Protecting Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities in California



The Tobacco Industry targets Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) in their communities.

- ▶ Tobacco companies seek partnerships with local AANHPI 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 AANHPI communities.⁽¹⁾
- ▶ The Tobacco Industry consistently targets AANHPI communities, which is considered to be profitable 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 strategically targets AANHPI youth by promoting flavored products that appeal to young people. Among current users in one study, flavor use was widespread—37 of 56 users reported a flavor preference. Of those, more than half (54%) preferred fruit-flavored ENDS, including lychee, taro, mango, passion fruit, pomegranate, and melon.⁽³⁾

Tobacco disproportionately impacts our AANHPI communities.

- ▶ Three leading causes of death among AANHPI adults are all tobacco-related. Within AANHPI populations, factors such as cultural diversity, language differences, and varying smoking patterns across subgroups contribute to unique tobacco-related health burdens. Additionally, targeted marketing by the Tobacco Industry has contributed to higher rates of smoking within these communities.^(1,4,5)
- ▶ Aggregated data is problematic for AANHPI communities because it combines many large and diverse populations into a single category, masking important disparities among specific subgroups. In California, reports show that 7.1% of Asian adults currently use tobacco products (2022-2023) however it's important to note that tobacco use can vary significantly within Asian subgroups due to factors like cultural norms, socioeconomic status, and targeted advertising. Aggregated data hides the true extent of tobacco use and leaves the communities most impacted by commercial tobacco overlooked.^(6,7)

- Aggregated data shows 39.3% of AANHPI 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 NHPI smokers preferring menthol cigarettes.⁽⁸⁾

Among Asian Americans

- Differences in cigarette smoking are seen among diverse Asian population groups. For instance, during 2010–2013, 7.6% of Chinese American adults smoked cigarettes, compared to 20% of Korean American adults.⁽⁵⁾
- Tobacco-related cancer and cardiovascular disease are top causes of death among Asian American individuals. In 2023, of the total deaths for non-Hispanic Asian Americans, heart disease and cerebrovascular disease attributed to 27.6% of total deaths and the Asian population had the highest burden of mortality from cancer of any group, accounting for 23.4% of all deaths.^(9,10)

Among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders

- For NHPI young adults, another community study indicated that 52% of NHPI young adults regularly smoke and 20% have nicotine dependence. Unfortunately, NHPIs appear less likely to quit smoking than other racial groups and report lower motivation to quit, and lower knowledge and use of cessation methods/products.⁽¹¹⁾
- More than half of NHPI adults reported current use of flavored tobacco products.⁽¹²⁾
- 57.7% of NHPI *young* adults reported current use of flavored tobacco products.⁽¹²⁾
- 17.8% of NHPI middle and high school students reported using tobacco products. This is much higher than other groups of young people.⁽⁵⁾
- Over two-thirds (67%) of NHPI adults reported being exposed to tobacco secondhand smoke or secondhand vape.⁽¹²⁾

REFERENCES

- (1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Unfair and Unjust Practices and Conditions Harm Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander People and Drive Health Disparities. Tobacco – Health Equity, 15 May 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-health-equity/collection/anhpi-unfair-and-unjust.html>.
- (2) Muggli ME, Pollay RW, Lew R, et al Targeting of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders by the tobacco industry: results from the Minnesota Tobacco Document Depository Tobacco Control 2002;11:201-209.
- (3) Maglalang, Dale Dagar et al. “Associations with E-cigarette use among Asian American and Pacific Islander young adults in California.” Preventive medicine reports vol. 4 29-32. 17 May. 2016, doi:10.1016/j.pmedr.2016.05.011
- (4) Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Tobacco’s Impact on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Apr. 2022, <https://assets.tobaccofreekids.org/factsheets/0422.pdf>.
- (5) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander People Experience a Health Burden From Commercial Tobacco. Tobacco – Health Equity, 17 Oct. 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-health-equity/collection/anhpi-health-burden.html>. [cdc.gov]
- (6) American Lung Association. “Tobacco Use in Racial and Ethnic Populations.” www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/impact-of-tobacco-use/tobacco-use-racial-and-ethnic. Accessed 18 Apr. 2022.
- (7) California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Prevention Program. California Tobacco Facts and Figures 2025. California Department of Public Health, Aug. 2025.
- (8) Mukherjee A, Wackowski OA, Lee YO, Delnevo CD. Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander tobacco use patterns. Am J Health Behav. 2014 May;38(3):362-9. doi: 10.5993/AJHB.38.3.5. PMID: 24636032; PMCID: PMC5173306.
- (9) National Center for Biotechnology Information. *Asian Americans and Tobacco Use*. NCBI Bookshelf, National Library of Medicine, n.d., <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK618297/>.
- (10) The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (US) Office on Smoking and Health. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US); 2014.
- (11) Subica, Andrew M., Katlyn An, and Scott K. Okamoto. “Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Substance Use and Disparities: Review of Current Evidence and Recommendations for the Field.” *Current Addiction Reports*, vol. 11, 2024, pp. 501–510, Springer Nature, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-024-00544-4>.
- (12) Tan, S. California NHPI adult health behaviors and attitudes on tobacco use. 2022. Los Angeles, Calif.: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.