

The prevalence of tobacco use among LGBT populations has not been adequately examined as national and most state surveys on tobacco lack questions about sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>1</sup> Further research is needed to understand the prevalence of tobacco use and the risk factors that influence LGBT smoking behavior, in particular in the transgender community.

## Adults

- Although the latest research indicates a wide range of smoking prevalence among LGB\* adults (24 - 48%), the data consistently points to disparities between LGB groups and the general population.<sup>1-6</sup> Overall, sexual minorities are 1.5 to 2.5 times more likely to smoke cigarettes than their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>7</sup>
- Several factors such as higher levels of social stress, frequent patronage of bars and clubs, higher rates of alcohol and drug use, and direct targeting of LGB consumers by the tobacco industry may be related to higher prevalence rates of tobacco use among LGB groups compared to the general population.<sup>8</sup>
- Although the data is limited to just a handful of state surveys, studies show that bisexuals mostly smoke at higher rates than their heterosexual, gay and lesbian peers with prevalence rates as high as 48%.<sup>4-6, 9</sup>
  - o Bisexual women are up to three and a half times more likely to be smokers than heterosexual women.<sup>7</sup>
  - o Data is slightly more inconsistent among bisexual men. Washington state and Massachusetts show that the prevalence of smoking among bisexual men is almost twice that among heterosexual men, yet, in California both groups smoked at about the same rate.<sup>3,5,6</sup>
- The smoking prevalence among lesbian women is 1.5 to 2.4 times higher than the current smoking rates among heterosexual women or women in the general population.<sup>3-6</sup> In California, the smoking prevalence among WSW (women who have sex with women but do not self-identify as lesbians) is over 3.5 times higher than among women in the general population (44% vs. 12%).<sup>4</sup>
- The average prevalence of smoking among gay men is a little more than 30%, compared to 21% among their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>2, 3, 5, 6</sup>

\* The limited studies available on this population do not include specific information on transgender individuals as a subgroup.

## Youth

- Smoking rates among LGB youth are estimated to be considerably higher (38%- 59%) than those among adolescents in general (28% -35%).<sup>8</sup>
- In a national sample of youth, lesbian and bisexual girls were 9.7 times more likely to smoke cigarettes at least weekly compared to heterosexual girls.<sup>10</sup>
- Adolescent boys and girls with both-sex romantic attractions or relationships are more likely to be smokers than adolescents with opposite-sex attractions or relationships.<sup>11, 12</sup>
- Research suggests that smoking rates are high among LGB youth because of unique stressors that contribute to their risk of substance use such as the stresses of “coming out,” physical and verbal victimization, feelings of alienation, and depression.<sup>8</sup>

## Industry Targeting

- Industry documents show that tobacco companies were aware of high smoking rates among sexual minorities, and marketing plans illustrate the companies’ efforts to exploit the LGB market.<sup>13-15</sup> Analysis of tobacco marketing has demonstrated lesbian and gay youth as an emerging target community.<sup>16</sup>
- Tobacco companies promote specific brands to LGB populations through outdoor advertising, ads in gay-oriented magazines, nightclub and bar promotions, and event sponsorships.<sup>5, 17</sup>
- As one tobacco company document explains, “A large percentage of gays and lesbians are smokers. In order to grow the Benson & Hedges brand, it is imperative to identify new markets with growth potential... Gays and Lesbians are good prospects for the Benson & Hedges brand.”<sup>13</sup>
- In 1995, a tobacco company conducted a marketing plan called “Project SCUM” (Sub Culture Urban Marketing) targeting urban San Francisco populations, including gays.<sup>15</sup>
- Rather than viewing tobacco industry targeting as exploitative, focus group data from 2003-2004 showed that LGBT individuals perceived targeting of their demographic by the tobacco industry as indicative of social acceptance, inclusion, and marketplace equality. The attention of the tobacco industry was seen as validation of LGBT community influence and legitimacy.<sup>18</sup>
- A recent study shows LGB communities, particularly lesbian and bisexual women, are disproportionately impacted by tobacco industry marketing in terms of exposure and receptivity, in comparison to straight men and women.<sup>5</sup>

## Smoking Cessation

- Compared to all adult smokers, more lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender smokers believe smoking increases their risk of diseases such as lung cancer and heart disease. However, some research indicates that fewer LGBT smokers have made quit attempts (75% compared with 80% of all adults).<sup>18</sup>
- Despite lesbian and WSW having the highest smoking prevalence of any LGB subgroup, lesbian periodicals had the fewest cessation ads: only eight appeared over a ten-year period, compared to over 1,000 in periodicals targeted to gay men.<sup>19</sup>
- Despite high rates of smoking among LGBT individuals, only 24% of LGBT community leaders interviewed between 2002 and 2004 named tobacco as a pressing health concern for the LGBT community.<sup>20</sup>

### SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> American Lung Association. Smoking Out a Deadly Threat: Tobacco Use in the LGBT Community. 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Arizona Department of Health Services. Tobacco Use and Interventions Among Arizona Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People. 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Tang H, Greenwood GL, Cowling DW, Lloyd JC, Roeseler AG, Bal DG. Cigarette smoking among lesbians, gays, and bisexuals: how serious a problem? (United States). *Cancer Cause Control* 2004;15(8):797-803.

<sup>4</sup> Gruskin EP, Greenwood, G. L., Matevia, M., Pollack, L. M., Bye, L. L. Disparities in Smoking Between the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Population and the General Population in California. *Am J Pub Health* 2007;97:1496-1502.

<sup>5</sup> Dilley J, Spigner, C., Boysun, M., Dent, C., Pizacani, B. Does Tobacco Industry Marketing Excessively Impact Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Communities? *Tob Control* 2008;17:385-390.

<sup>6</sup> Conron KJ, Mimiaga MJ, Landers SJ. A population-based study of sexual orientation identity and gender differences in adult health. *Am J Public Health*;100(10):1953-60.

<sup>7</sup> Lee JG, Griffin GK, Melvin CL. Tobacco use among sexual minorities in the USA, 1987 to May 2007: a systematic review. *Tob Control* 2009;18(4):275-282.

<sup>8</sup> Ryan H, Wortley PM, Easton A, Pederson L, Greenwood G. Smoking among lesbians, gays, and bisexuals: a review of the literature. *Am J of Prev Med* 2001;21(2):142-149.

<sup>9</sup> VanKim NA, Padilla JL. New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities; 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Austin SB, Ziyadeh N, Fisher LB, Kahn JA, Colditz GA, Frazier AL. Sexual orientation and tobacco use in a cohort study of US adolescent girls and boys. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2004;158(4):317-322.

<sup>11</sup> Udry JR, Chantala K. Risk assessment of adolescents with same-sex relationships. *J Adolesc Health* 2002;31(1):84-92.

<sup>12</sup> Easton A, Jackson, K., Mowery, P., Comeau, D., Sell, R. Adolescent Same-Sex and Both-Sex Romantic Attractions and Relationships: Implications for Smoking. *Am J Pub Health* 2008;98:462-467.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, B. 'CEM's Gay and Lesbian Marketing Efforts.' Legacy Tobacco Documents Library. Phillip Morris. October 9, 1997. Access Date: September 10, 2002. URL: <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/dup28d00>.

<sup>14</sup> Rodriguez, Y. 'B&H Qualitative Research in San Francisco—Final Report.' Legacy Tobacco Documents Library. Philip Morris. February 28, 1994. Access Date: September 10, 2002. URL: <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/xgv19e00>.

<sup>15</sup> RJ Reynolds. Project SCUM. Legacy Tobacco Documents Library. December 12, 1995. Access Date: October 19, 2002. URL: <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/mum76d00>.

<sup>16</sup> Washington HA. Burning Love: big tobacco takes aim at LGBT youths. *Am J Public Health* 2002;92(7):1086-1095.

<sup>17</sup> Stevens P, Carlson LM, Hinman JM. An analysis of tobacco industry marketing to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) populations: strategies for mainstream tobacco control and prevention. *Health Promot Pract* 2004;5(3 Suppl):129S-134S.

<sup>18</sup> Harris Interactive. Gays and Lesbians More Likely to Smoke than Other Adults Despite Risks. May 14, 2001. <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=289>.

<sup>19</sup> Smith EA, Offen N, Malone RE. What makes an ad a cigarette ad? Commercial tobacco imagery in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual press. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2005;59(12):1086-91.

<sup>20</sup> Offen N, Smith EA, Malone RE. Is tobacco a gay issue? Interviews with leaders of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. *Cult Health Sex* 2008;10(2):143-57.