

Tobacco Use Trends

- Tobacco use is strongly associated with low socioeconomic status (SES).¹
- The prevalence of current smoking is greatest among adults with working class jobs, low educational levels, low income, and those who are unemployed.²

Income and Employment

- In 2009, 31% of adults below the federal poverty level smoked, compared with 19% of those at or above the poverty level.^{2†}
 - Thirty-two percent of men below the poverty level were smokers compared with 22% of men at or above poverty level.
 - Twenty-six percent of women below the poverty line were smokers compared with 17% of women at or above poverty level.
- In 2009, there were nearly 17 million poor or near poor current smokers aged 18 or over in the United States.^{3†}
- More unemployed adults smoke (42%) than adults working full or part time (26% and 24%, respectively).⁴
- From 2006-2008, among full-time workers, those with food preparation and serving jobs smoked at the highest rates (45%) followed by workers in construction and extraction (43%). Those with the lowest smoking rates were in the education, training, and library professions (12.3%) and in life, physical, and social science occupations (15.4%).⁵
- Seventeen percent (17%) of adults under 65 with private health insurance coverage smoke, compared to 35% of Medicaid recipients and 34% of the uninsured.³
- In 2000, 25% of pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid smoked compared to approximately 12% of pregnant women in the general population.⁶
 - As of October 1, 2010, The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) requires all Medicaid programs to cover tobacco-dependence treatments with no cost sharing for pregnant women.⁷

[†]Federal poverty status is based on family income and family size using the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for the previous calendar year. "Poor" persons are defined as below the poverty threshold. "Near poor" persons have incomes of 100% to less than 200% of the poverty threshold. "Not poor" persons have incomes that are 200% of the poverty threshold or greater.

Education

- Smoking rates also vary by education level. Among adults age 25 and older, those with a General Education Development (GED) diploma have the highest prevalence of current smoking (49%), followed by adults with 9 to 11 years of education (34%). In comparison, adults with an undergraduate degree (11%) or graduate degree (6%) have the lowest rates of smoking.²
- Lower educational attainment is also associated with significantly higher rates of smoking during pregnancy. Nearly 25% of women with 9-11 years of education smoke while pregnant compared with 1.4% of those with 16 or more years of education.⁸

Impact of Socio-Economic Status

Secondhand Smoke Exposure

- The percentage of nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke is higher among those below the poverty level (60.5%) compared to those at or above the poverty level (36.9%).⁹
- Women who work in blue-collar jobs and adult women who have not completed a high school education are less likely to have smoke-free homes compared to women who work in white-collar jobs and those who have a college education, respectively.¹⁰
- One study found that as poverty increased, the prevalence of home smoking bans among African American and white women decreased. The same relationship was found for complete workplace smoking bans.¹¹

Health Consequences of Smoking

- Adults with higher incomes are more likely to have health insurance than adults below the federal poverty level.¹²⁺ People without health insurance are less likely to receive regular and preventative health care services than those with health insurance.¹³
- Lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) mortality is associated with low socioeconomic status.^{14, 15} Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer and COPD.¹⁶
 - o Among men between the ages of 25-64, lung cancer mortality was 56% higher for those from the lowest SES areas than for those in the highest SES areas.¹⁴
 - o Another national study found that the risk of dying from COPD was almost 2.5 times more likely for those with a family income of less than \$10,000 compared to individuals with a family income above \$60,000.¹⁵



- In one study, low socioeconomic status was associated with poor prognosis of survival for patients with stage I nonsmall cell lung cancer independent of surgery, race, and marital status.^{17, 18}
- Similarly, research also has found that was no difference in the risk of dying from lung cancer among various racial and ethnic groups after controlling for treatment type and socioeconomic factors including annual family income, poverty status, and years of education.¹⁸

Smoking Cessation

- Smokers below the poverty level are less likely to successfully quit smoking compared to smokers at or above poverty level, although they attempt to quit at the same rate.^{19, 20}
- Women who quit smoking during pregnancy but relapse after delivery are more likely to have less than 12 years of education, have an annual income under \$15,000, have insurance coverage through Medicaid, and be enrolled in WIC during pregnancy compared with women who did not start smoking again after delivery.²¹
- Lower income smokers are more likely than higher income smokers to reduce their tobacco use or quit smoking in response to price increases on cigarettes.²²
- The cost of cessation services may be a barrier to successful cessation for lower income people.^{23, 24}
 - o In 2009, only 38 state Medicaid programs offer coverage for at least one form of tobacco-dependence treatment (i.e., medication or counseling) for all members.²⁴
 - o Only five states offer coverage for all recommended pharmacotherapies (medications to aid in quitting, such as the nicotine patch) and individual/group counseling for all members.²⁴
 - o Thirty-four programs covered the nicotine patch and 33 programs covered bupropin or Zyban for all enrollees.(24) Both the nicotine patch and bupropin have been shown to almost double the likelihood of long term (greater than 5 months) abstinence.²⁵
- Adults with higher levels of education also quit smoking at higher rates. The lowest quit rates (percentage of adults who once smoked cigarettes but have abstained for the past 12 months) are among adults who have less than a high school education (2.2%) compared to college graduates (7.3%).²⁶

SOURCES

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