



LGBT People and Tobacco Fact Sheet

LGBT communities are severely impacted by tobacco use

- Looking at high quality Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) data from five states, LGBT people smoke at rates approximately 35% to 200% higher than non-LGBT people.¹
 - In the largest survey ever of transgender communities, smoking was 50% higher than in the general population.²
 - The smoking disparity also exists among racial/ethnic LGBT communities.³
 - These disparities are found regardless of study design, geographic location, or time, and researchers have identified over 50 separate studies on LGBT smoking.^{1,4-6}
- The tobacco epidemic among LGBT communities results in disease, disability, and death.^{7,8}
 - American Cancer Society estimates that over 30,000 LGBT people die each year of tobacco-related diseases.⁹

Tobacco companies target LGBT populations, compromising work against a major health threat

- Tobacco marketing is pervasive in LGBT publications,^{10,11} and LGBT people may be more receptive to tobacco industry marketing.¹²
- Tobacco companies “support” some LGBT causes as part of marketing campaigns to align corporate image with community values and to reduce bad publicity.¹³⁻¹⁵
 - Tobacco industry funding can compromise anti-tobacco activities by LGBT community organizations by making leaders unwilling to recognize the effects of the tobacco epidemic.¹⁶⁻¹⁸
- An early Tobacco industry document described the plan for increasing sales among San Francisco’s gay and homeless populations; it was labeled “Project SCUM”.¹⁹



Negative health impacts of tobacco continue to be under-estimated

- Up to ½ of people who smoke will die early as a result, losing an average of 10-20 years of their life.²⁰
- Tobacco is the number one cause of mortality in this country.²¹
- In the United States, tobacco kills more people each day than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, firearms, and illegal drugs – combined.²²

Reasons for the disparity

- Emphasis on bars and restaurants as social spaces for LGBT people creates added exposure to secondhand smoke and may contribute to the disparity.^{23,24}
- Recent evidence shows that LGBT people reporting higher levels of discrimination, stress, and victimization are more likely to start smoking.¹
- LGBT youth in safer, more supportive areas are less likely to start smoking.²⁵

LGBT people want clean indoor air

- A national survey by Harris Interactive found that LGBT respondents were the only population group willing to pay extra to go to a bar that was smokefree.²⁶

For more information on any of the facts quoted in this factsheet, please contact Scout at lgbthealthequity@gmail.com. This factsheet was originally prepared by Scout and Donald Hitchcock on 1/10/05, with assistance from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, www.smokefree.net, the American Cancer Society, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. It was updated in 2008 by Scout for the National LGBT Tobacco Control Network, and updated again in August 2011 by Joseph Lee of the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. See more information at www.lgbthealthequity.org. The Factsheet was supported by the Cooperative Agreement Number 5U58DP001516-04 from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Citations for LGBT People and Tobacco Factsheet

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