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Cigarette Smoking and Exposure to Secondhand Smoke in Southeastern Pennsylvania

The Great American Smokeout, which will be taking place on Thursday, November 19th, encourages smokers to use the date to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking that day. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), by quitting—even for one day—smokers will be taking an important step towards a healthier life and reducing their cancer risk.¹ In the United States, tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death. Yet, some 42 million Americans, nearly one in every five adults,² still smoke cigarettes.

Public Health Management Corporation's Community Health Data Base (CHDB) has tracked tobacco use among adults through the Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Household Health Survey for more than a decade. The Household Health Survey is conducted by telephone and includes 10,000 households in the SEPA region (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties) every two years.

This article highlights data from the 2015 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey to examine tobacco use and exposure by a number of important demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Cigarette Smoking

Approximately 17% of Southeastern Pennsylvania adults 18 years of age or older currently smokes cigarettes every day or some days.

- Philadelphia adults are more likely to smoke (22%) compared with residents of Delaware (16%), Bucks (14%), Montgomery (11%), and Chester (15%) Counties.
- Across the region, men are more likely to smoke than women (19% compared with 15%).
- Cigarette smoking among adults decreases with age; 19% of adults ages 18-34 currently smoke, as do 6% of adults 75 years of age or older.
- Black adults are the most likely to smoke cigarettes (23%) compared with 16% of Latino adults, 16% of White adults and 5% of Asian adults.
- Cigarette smoking decreases as educational attainment increases. Three in ten adults in the region with less than a high school diploma (30%) currently smoke, while 10% of adults with a college degree, and 5% of post-graduates smoke.
- Adults living in poverty more likely to smoke (29%) compared with adults at or above 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (14%).

Smoke Exposure at Home

More than one in ten adults (18+) live in a household where someone in the house smokes cigarettes, cigars or pipes inside the home (12%).

The following bullet points examine non-smokers exposure to secondhand smoke at home.

- Adults in Philadelphia County are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke in their home (15%) compared with adults residing in the other SEPA counties.

¹ <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/greatamericansmokeout/index>

² <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/greatamericansmokeout/index>

- Blacks are more likely to live in a household where someone smokes (17%) in comparison with Latino adults (11%), White adults (10%) and Asian adults (6%).
- Similar to cigarette smoking, those with less than a high school diploma are more likely to be exposed to tobacco smoke at home (18%) compared with those with a college degree (7%).

Cigarette Usage, Smoke Exposure at Home, and Key Health Indicators

- Adults who smoke cigarettes are more likely to be in fair or poor health (28%) than adults who do not smoke (15%). The same applies for adults who are exposed to secondhand smoke by another resident smoking in the home—19% are in fair or poor health compared with 10% of those not exposed.

Conclusion

It is evident that tobacco smoke presents a serious health concern to not only the individuals that are smoking but also, to those exposed to secondhand smoke around them. In Southeastern Pennsylvania region specifically, it is a burden unequally carried by individuals of minority racial/ethnic backgrounds, those with lower educational attainment, and those living in poverty.

For information about cessation resources and support in the Southeastern Pennsylvania region, please visit Health Promotion Council's Southeastern Pennsylvania Tobacco Control Project at <http://www.sepatobaccofree.org/site/index.php>.

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