



The Rundown

A BLOG OF NEWS AND INSIGHT

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1 in 5 American Adults Still Smoke, CDC Report Shows

BY: LEA WINERMAN

After decades of decline, the smoking rate in the United States has plateaued over the past five years. About one in five American adults is a smoker, according to a **study** released Tuesday by the Centers for Disease Control. That percentage has remained virtually unchanged since 2005.

Another **study** also released Tuesday in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report found that despite an increasing number of laws that restrict smoking in public places, about 40 percent of nonsmoking adults and 54 percent of children still show evidence of tobacco exposure through secondhand smoke.

Virtually all children who live with smokers -- 98 percent -- have some exposure to the toxic chemicals.

"We hope that this report is a wakeup call for the continuing threat that tobacco use poses," CDC Director Thomas Frieden told reporters.

The research parsed out many of the ways in which smoking rates vary widely by state, and by factors such as education level and gender:

- **Men are much more likely to smoke than women** are -- 24 percent as compared to 18 percent.
- Twenty-six percent of people who have **less than a high-school education** smoke, as compared to 25 percent of high school graduates, 11 percent of college graduates and six percent of people with a graduate degree.
- Thirty-one percent of people who **live below the poverty level** smoke, while only 20 percent of those who earn above the poverty level do so.

Looking at the numbers geographically, **more people smoke in the Midwest and Southeastern states**; fewer do so in the Northeast and



Western states. Utah and California have the lowest percentage of smokers, at 10 and 13 percent respectively; West Virginia and Kentucky have the highest percentage, at 26 percent.

In a statement to reporters, Frieden attributed the stall in smoking's decline to increased efforts by tobacco companies to sell their products, along with a lag in some states' smoking cessation efforts.

Frieden said that the industry has developed new ways to target cigarettes to young smokers, has deceived smokers by suggesting that "light" cigarettes are less harmful than others, and has sold some cigarettes at deep discounts as "loss leaders" to encourage people to keep smoking.

Frieden also said that more money should be spent on smoking cessation programs. He said that states take in about \$25 billion in excise taxes on cigarettes, but only spend about \$700 million of that on anti-smoking programs.

"While government efforts are often standing still or even moving backwards, the tobacco industry is not standing still," he said.

Gary Giovino, a community health researcher at the University at Buffalo, said he agreed with Frieden's analysis.

He added that some researchers also believe that a "hardening" of the smoker population might also be contributing to the stalled decline: The "low-hanging fruit" of people who could quit more easily have already done so, and so the smokers who are left are those who say they can't or won't quit. Giovino says that he hasn't seen evidence of that hypothesis in his own population studies, but that some researchers who look at people who enter smoking-cessation programs have suggested it.

Meanwhile, the decline in smoking among U.S. teens **has also stalled**. According to research released last month by the CDC, teen smoking has not decreased by a statistically significant amount since 2006.

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If they want to kill themselves, great- there's too many people on this earth anyway! Keep hiking the costs up!

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Tinacelano 1 week ago

This probably means that people will smoke even though it is bad for them. It is likely that it will fail to eradicate smoking. I am sorry to say. It is a part of human nature maybe that we have to live with.

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