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LGBT PEOPLE AND SMOKE-FREE AIR FACTSHEET

LGBT communities are among the populations most severely impacted by tobacco use.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

American Cancer Society
American Lung Association
American Legacy Foundation
Americans for Nonsmokers Rights
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
Chase-Brexton Health Services
CLASH
Fenway Community Health
Gay and Lesbian Medical Association
Howard Brown Health Center
LA Gay and Lesbian Center
Legacy Community Health Services
LGBT Community Center of New York
Mautner Project
National Association of LGBT
Community Centers
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Youth Advocacy Coalition
North American Quitline Consortium
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Tobacco Control Network
Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium
Whitman Walker Clinic

- **LGBT people smoke at rates 40 to up to 200% higher than the general population. (i)**
- **The latest research indicates a wide range of smoking prevalence for LGB* adults, ranging from 25 - 44% among the different subgroups. (ii, iii iv, v)**
- **The current smoking prevalence among lesbian women is 1.7 to 2.4 times higher than the smoking prevalence among women in the general population. (iii, iv, v)**
- **This is one of the highest smoking rates even of all the disproportionately affected sub-populations.**
- **Smoking rates among LGB youth are estimated to be considerably higher (38% to 59%) than those among adolescents in general (28% to 35%). (vi)**

Even outdoors, secondhand smoke has a negative health impact.

- **In 2005 the California Air Resources Board (ARB) determined that secondhand smoke is a “toxic air contaminant”: an outdoor air pollutant presenting a potential hazard to human health. (vii)**
- **Nicotine concentrations in several different environments, such as outside office buildings, schools, businesses, and amusement parks are comparable to those found in some smokers’ homes. (vii)**
- **A Stanford University study noted that secondhand smoke exposure levels near an active smoker, even outdoors, could significantly impact nearby persons. (viii)**
- **During periods of active smoking, outdoor tobacco smoke (OTS)**

levels measured in outdoor cafes and restaurant/bar patios near smokers rival indoor tobacco smoke concentrations. (viii)

- A study of smoking on bar patios in Toronto, Canada found workers are not adequately protected from secondhand smoke if smoking is allowed on the patios. (ix)
- Across the US and Puerto Rico, parks and beaches have been legislated smoke-free. Over 1000 cities and a handful of states have outdoor smoking policies in places ranging from bus stops to playgrounds to business entrances with more laws passing annually. (x)

The Surgeon General has declared: "The debate is over!"

- The scientific evidence indicates that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Short exposures to secondhand smoke can cause adverse cardio-vascular effects, potentially increasing the risk of a heart attack. Even brief exposure can result in upper airway changes in healthy persons and can lead to more frequent and more asthma attacks in children who already have asthma. (xi)
- Tobacco is the number one cause of mortality in this country. (xii)
- Secondhand smoke is the third leading preventable cause of death in the US. (xi)

Secondhand smoke may have added impact in the LGBT communities.

- Emphasis on bars and restaurants as social opportunities for LGBT people create added exposure to secondhand smoke (i).
- There is evidence that these laws may help reduce smoking among youths by making tobacco use socially unacceptable, this is especially needed to counter the alarmingly high rates of LGBT youth smoking (xiii, xiv).

LGBT people want smoke free air!

Citations

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