



New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Brief

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and several US Territories. The New York Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is administered by the New York State Department of Health to provide statewide and regional information on behaviors, risk factors, and use of preventive health services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death.

Cigarette Smoking

New York State Adults, 2023

Introduction

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States.¹ In New York, smoking and secondhand smoke exposure kill over 30,000 people each year.² Although most adults who smoke cigarettes want to quit, the highly addictive nicotine in tobacco can make it hard to quit. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causes multiple diseases, including cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, respiratory disease, and diminishes overall health status.¹ An estimated 30% of all cancer deaths are related to cigarette smoking, and 80 to 90% of all lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking.^{1,3} Secondhand smoke exposure increases the risk of respiratory infections, ear infections, more frequent and severe asthma, and sudden infant death syndrome. Smoking costs the United States over \$240 billion in healthcare spending annually.⁴ In New York, \$9.7 billion is spent a year on preventable smoking-related healthcare expenditures.⁵

Health Equity

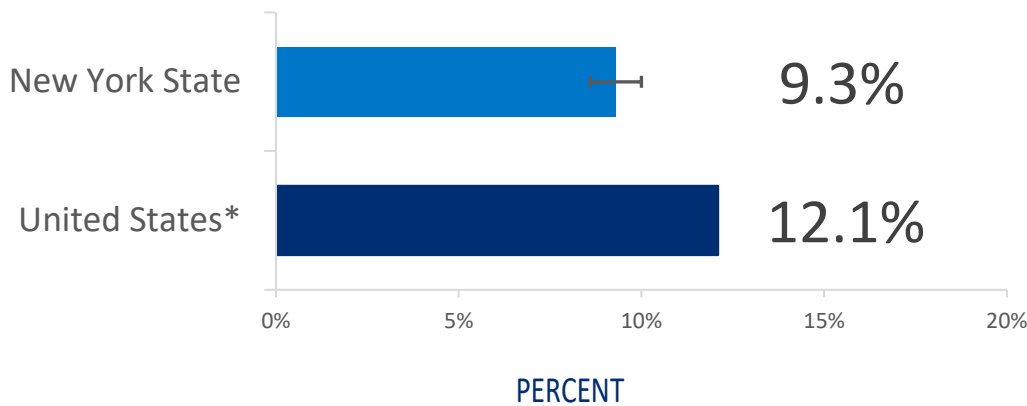
Communities who have been disproportionately targeted with advertising and marketing by the tobacco industry include people who are African American and other racial and ethnic minorities; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ+); people living with mental illness and substance use disorders; and people who live in lower-income communities. This specific type of industry targeting has contributed to inequities in exposure to tobacco-related marketing, in patterns of tobacco use, and in tobacco-related health outcomes.⁶ The New York State Department of Health is committed to reducing the burden of commercial tobacco and addressing tobacco-related health disparities through evidence-based, policy-driven, and cost-effective approaches to decrease tobacco initiation by youth, motivate people who smoke to quit, and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.



Key Findings

- Approximately 1.4 million New Yorkers are current cigarette smokers (Table 1). The prevalence of cigarette smoking among New York State adults in 2023 was 9.3%, marking the first time this rate has dropped below 10% (Figure 1).
- Smoking rates remained highest among adults with less than a high school education (19.1%); those with an annual household income of less than \$25,000 (16.6%); those without health insurance (15.3%); adults enrolled in Medicaid (15.2%); adults living with disability (14.4%) and those who report experiencing frequent mental distress (14.2%) (Figure 2, Table 1).
- In 2023, for the first time since surveillance on cigarette smoking began, smoking rates were higher among women (10.9%) compared to men (7.8%). Also, the disparity in cigarette smoking between adults who do and do not identify as LGBTQ+ narrowed with both groups reporting a rate of 9.5% (Table 1).⁷
- Smoking rates varied by race and ethnicity: lowest rates were among adults in the Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic category (4.6%) and highest rates were among adults in the All-other race groups combined, non-Hispanic category (17.1%) (Table 1).

Figure 1. Prevalence of Current Smoking Among Adults in New York State and the United States, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023



*Median percent; includes data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Figure 2. Trends in the Prevalence of Current Smoking among All Adults and in Groups with the Highest Smoking Rates in New York State, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2020-2023

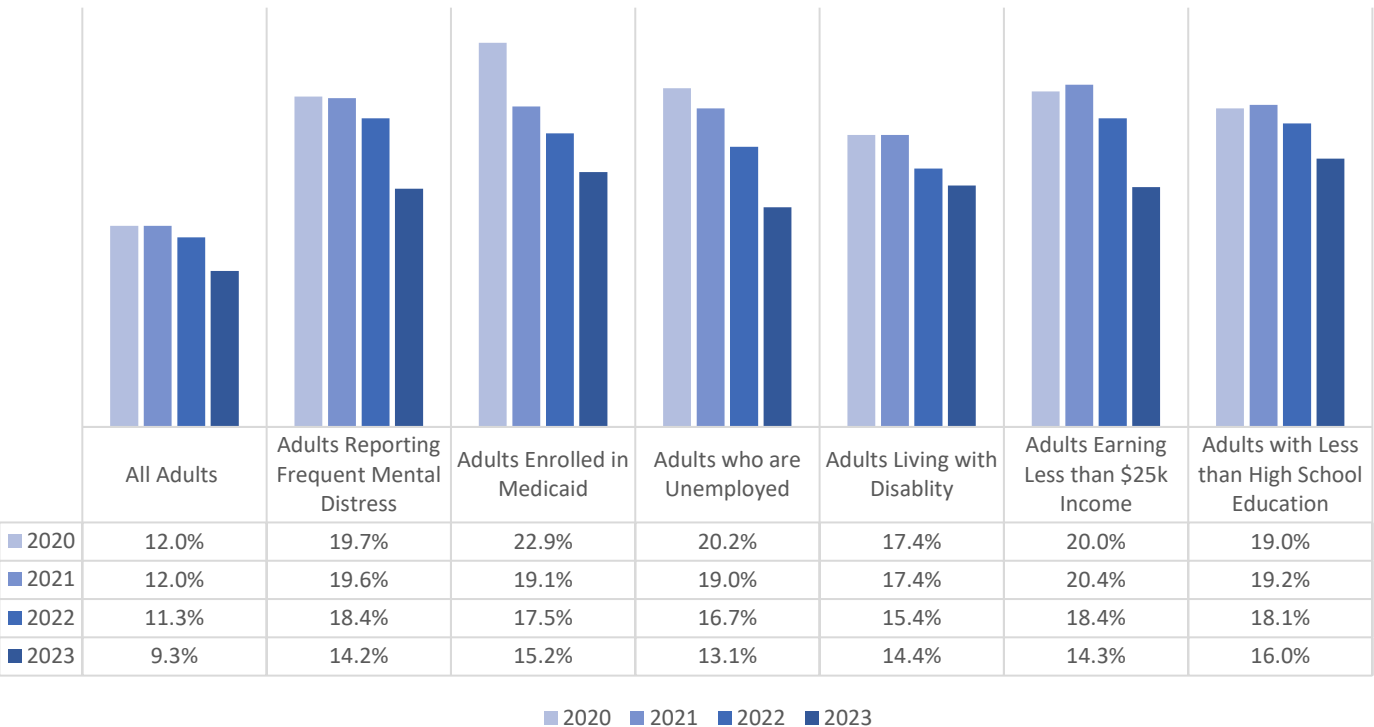


Table I. Prevalence of Current Cigarette Smoking by Population Groups in New York State, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023

	Percent ^a	95% Confidence Interval	Estimated Weighted Number of Adults
New York State	9.3	[8.6, 10.0]	1,356,000
Region			
New York State excluding New York City (Rest of State)	10.0	[9.1,10.9]	836,000
New York City	8.4	[7.4,9.4]	520,000
Sex ^b			
Male	7.8	[7.0,8.7]	596,000
Female	10.9	[9.9,11.9]	760,000
Race/Ethnicity			
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	4.6	[2.9,6.3]	67,000
Black, non-Hispanic	11.0	[9.0,13.1]	210,000
Hispanic	9.2	[7.6,10.9]	255,000
Multiracial, non-Hispanic	11.7	[7.2,16.3]	33,000
White, non-Hispanic	9.6	[8.7,10.5]	723,000
All other race groups combined, non-Hispanic ^c	17.1	[9.8, 24.3]	46,000
Age			
18-24 Years Old	3.4	[2.2,4.7]	60,000
25-34 Years Old	9.3	[7.7,10.9]	236,000
35-44 Years Old	12.8	[10.9,14.7]	293,000
45-54 Years Old	11.0	[9.3,12.7]	215,000
55-64 Years Old	12.7	[10.9,14.5]	297,000
65+ Years Old	7.1	[6.7,9.4]	241,000
Educational Attainment			
Less than High School	19.1	[16.0,22.1]	336,000
High School or GED	11.7	[10.2,13.2]	425,000
Some College	10.1	[8.9,11.3]	383,000
College Graduate	3.9	[3.4,4.4]	206,000
Annual Household Income			
Less than \$25,000	16.6	[14.3,18.9]	342,000
\$25,000 to \$34,999	12.8	[10.4,15.2]	168,000
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.2	[10.6,15.9]	165,000
\$50,000 to \$74,999	10.3	[8.1,12.5]	166,000
More than \$75,000	6.0	[5.2,6.9]	320,000
Employment Status			
Employed/Self-Employed	8.8	[8.0,9.6]	722,000
Unemployed	13.1	[10.1,16.1]	111,000
Not in Labor Force	9.4	[8.2,10.6]	487,000
Health Insurance Type			
Private	6.5	[5.7,7.3]	498,000
Medicare	9.3	[7.6,11.1]	284,000
Medicaid	15.2	[13.1,17.4]	326,000
No Insurance	15.3	[11.7,18.9]	201,000
Other	11.6	[9.4,13.9]	139,000
Frequent Mental Distress ^d			
Yes	14.2	[12.2,16.3]	384,000
No	8.5	[7.8,9.2]	1,143,000
Disability Status ^e			
Yes	14.4	[12.8,16.0]	588,000
No	7.5	[6.8,8.2]	938,000
Identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Other Sexual Orientation OR Transgender			
Yes	9.5	[7.4,11.5]	130,000
No	9.5	[8.7,10.2]	1,061,000

^a Percentages are weighted to population characteristics.

^b Based on the respondent's sex at birth. If sex at birth is missing, then the respondent's sex is based on gender identity at time of the interview.

^c Includes individuals who identify as American Indian, Alaskan Native, or other race categories and are not of Hispanic origin.

^d Frequent mental distress is defined as yes if respondents report problems with stress, depression, or emotions on at least 14 of the previous 30 days.

^e Disability status is defined as yes if respondents report having at least one type of disability (cognitive, independent living, self-care, mobility, vision, or hearing).



References

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Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Questions



Current Smoker

- Have you smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your entire life?
- Do you now smoke cigarettes every day, some days, or not at all?

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System defines “current smoker” as an adult over the age of 18 who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smokes on at least some days.



Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health

Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research

Bureau of Tobacco Control



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