

Smoking trends among Mexicans, Mexican-Americans

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(Medical Xpress)—Led by UC Davis researchers, the first-ever transnational study of Mexico-U.S. migration and smoking has found that U.S.-born Mexican Americans start smoking at an earlier age but are more likely to quit than their counterparts in Mexico.

Just published in the [American Journal of Public Health](#), the study on migration-related changes in smoking behavior also found that while the likelihood of starting or stopping smoking varies dramatically with migration from Mexico to the U.S., the number of cigarettes that smokers consume each day remains relatively similar. Mexican Americans are more likely to start and to stop smoking than people in Mexico, but on an average day, Mexican Americans who smoke consume only slightly more cigarettes than Mexicans who smoke. In contrast, the amount smoked per day by Mexican-American smokers is about half that smoked per day by non-Hispanic white smokers in the U.S.

Smoking among Mexican Americans remains a significant public health problem, despite the relatively low level of cigarette consumption per day.

"Everyone in the U.S. is smoking much less than in the past," said lead author Elisa Tong, an associate professor in the UC Davis Department of [Internal Medicine](#) who specializes in tobacco-control research. "But even light smoking is a risk factor for cardiovascular and pulmonary disease."

Tong adds, "Although U.S.-born Mexican Americans are smoking more, they're quitting more. Studies of this kind help us understand the cultural and [psychological factors](#) involved in [quitting smoking](#) so that effective public health programs can be developed to encourage even more [smoking cessation](#) in this population."

The research team, led by principal investigator Joshua Breslau, now a researcher at the RAND Corp. in Pittsburgh, Pa., includes researchers from both the U.S. and Mexico.

"We have learned a great deal by studying changes in [physical health](#), mental health and [health behavior](#) associated with migration," said Breslau. "In this study, it was particularly valuable to observe a migrant population in both the originating and receiving countries."

Combining several population-based surveys from both countries, the team examined differences in starting and stopping of smoking and in cigarette consumption among daily smokers across a series of groups with increasing contact with the U.S. The groups included Mexicans with no familial connection to migration at one end of the spectrum through U.S.-born Mexican Americans at the other. The surveys included several thousand participants on both sides of the border as part of a series of epidemiological psychology studies from 2001 to 2003.

Provided by UC Davis

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