

# US immigration is associated with rise in smoking among Latinos and Asians

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Immigration to the U.S. may result in increased smoking in Latino and Asian women, according to new research from sociologists at Rice University, Duke University and the University of Southern California.

The study, "Gender, Acculturation and Smoking Behavior Among U.S. Asian and Latino Immigrants," examines [smoking prevalence](#) and frequency among Asian and Latino U.S. immigrants. The research focuses on how gender differences in smoking behavior are shaped by aspects of acculturation and the original decision to migrate. The study was published in the April issue of the journal *Social Science & Medicine* and is available online.

"We know that after migrants come to the U.S., their health behavior and health status change the longer they live in the United States," said Bridget Gorman, chair and professor of sociology at Rice and the study's lead author. "Our study examined how time spent in the U.S., along with other aspects reflective of acculturation to the U.S., relates to smoking behavior among Asian and Latino migrants."

The study found that smoking prevalence among Asian immigrant men was more than four times that of Asian immigrant women (30.4 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively); among Latino immigrants, men's smoking prevalence was more than twice that of women's (29.5 percent and 12.6 percent, respectively). For smoking frequency, Asian men on average smoked 2.5 more cigarettes per day than Asian women, compared with 1.5 more cigarettes per day that Latino men smoked than Latino women.

In addition, their analyses also showed that smoking increases with duration of U.S. residence among Asian immigrants (both prevalence and frequency) and among Latino immigrants (frequency only). However, the study also found that independent of time spent in the U.S., "immigrants who form strong connections to the U.S. through English-language proficiency and citizenship acquisition benefit in terms of reduced smoking." Gorman said this may be because the stresses associated with adapting to the U.S. have declined; but since both English-language proficiency and citizenship are associated with higher socio-economic standing, this might also indicate that smoking is lower among the most economically well-off migrants.

Gorman also noted that although there "tends to be an uptick in unhealthy behaviors like smoking after migration, patterns differ across ethnic groups and between men and women. In particular, women's smoking behavior tends to increase more after migration to the U.S. than men." Gorman said the uptick in smoking among women may be due to differences in smoking stigma that exist for women in Latin America

and especially Asia. She said that the smoking stigma for [women](#) is significantly less in the U.S., so when gender differences in smoking between the native and foreign-born are compared, gender gaps tend to be much larger among migrant populations living in the U.S.

The current study found that accounting for gender differences in aspects of acculturation (including time spent in the U.S., citizenship status and English-language proficiency) explained [gender differences](#) in [smoking](#) frequency for both Asian and Latino migrants.

The study used a sample of 3,249 Asian and Latino migrant adults aged 18 and older. The study examined how [smoking behavior](#) relates to age at migration, citizenship status and length of time in the U.S., how frequently they visit their home country and how proficient they are in their native language and in English.

The study was co-authored by Joseph Lariscy, a postdoctoral fellow at Duke University, and Charisma Kaushik, a graduate student at the University of Southern California. It was funded by Rice University and is available online at [www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ... ii/S0277953614000999](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0277953614000999).

Provided by Rice University

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