

US adult smoking rate drops to new low: CDC

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But certain groups, such as those below poverty level, are lighting up more.

(HealthDay)—Fewer American adults are smoking cigarettes than ever, health officials said.

In fact, the rate of cigarette smoking has dropped from about 21 percent in 2005 to 18 percent in 2013. That means the number of [cigarette smokers](#) dropped from 45.1 million to 42.1 million, despite the increasing population, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

However, "we still have a long way to go, and if we don't bend the curve down faster, over 5.5 million kids who are alive today will die prematurely from [tobacco](#)-related disease," said Dr. Tim McAfee, director of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health.

Smoking is a major—and modifiable—risk factor for death and disease,

he said.

"Smoking has a major impact on people's lives," McAfee said. "If you're a smoker you're at risk of dying 11 to 12 years earlier than if you are not a smoker," he said.

Although cigarette smoking is at a 50-year low, in some groups the proportion of [smokers](#) is higher than the average, McAfee said.

"Leading the pack, cigarette use is highest among those below the poverty level at almost 30 percent, compared to 17.8 percent in the general population," he said.

Other groups that continue to smoke at higher than average levels are the less educated, American Indians/Alaska Natives, men, people who live in the South or Midwest, people who have a disability, people with [mental health issues](#), those who abuse drugs or alcohol, and people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, McAfee said.

Tobacco companies target some of these groups, he said.

"Particularly among the lesbian/gay/bisexual community and people with substance abuse, there is evidence that, for decades, the tobacco industry has consciously pursued marketing campaigns aimed at these vulnerable populations," he said.

McAfee said effective strategies that reduce smoking include increasing the cost of cigarettes, increasing taxes on cigarettes and passing more smoke-free laws. In addition, education, anti-smoking media campaigns and providing better access to tobacco cessation programs are essential, he said.

The bulk of the burden to cut smoking falls on states, but they spend less

than 2 percent (about \$500 million) of the \$25 billion they get from [tobacco taxes](#) and the tobacco settlement on anti-smoking programs, he said.

The report was published online on Nov. 26 in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Susan Liss, executive director for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said, "It's not surprising that there has not been more recent progress. States have cut and severely underfunded tobacco prevention and cessation programs. In addition, progress at the state level in enacting higher tobacco taxes and smoke-free laws has slowed greatly."

Still, most of the news from the new report was good. According to the data, not only has the number of smokers decreased, but those who smoke, smoke less.

The researchers found that the proportion of those who smoke every day decreased from 81 percent in 2005 to 77 percent in 2013. In addition, the number of smokers who smoke only on some days increased from 19 percent in 2005 to 23 percent in 2013.

The average number of cigarettes smoked each day also decreased from 17 in 2005 to 14 in 2013, the report said.

Moreover, the number of smokers who smoked 20 to 29 cigarettes per day dropped from 35 percent in 2005 to 29 percent in 2013. And, the number who smoked fewer than 10 cigarettes per day increased from 16 percent in 2005 to 23 percent in 2013, the researchers found.

Dr. Norman Edelman, a senior consultant for scientific affairs at the American Lung Association, said it is significant that smokers are smoking less.

"That means that we are not left with hardcore smokers who have to have their pack a day or more," he said. "This suggests that there is still room to decrease the [smoking](#) rates."

More information: For more information on smoking, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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