

# BRFSS Brief

Number 2022-22

*The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and conducted in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several US Territories. The New York BRFSS 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.*

## Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

### New York State Adults, 2020

#### Introduction and Key Findings

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a group of diseases that cause airflow blockage, breathing-related problems, and serious long-term disability. In the United States, COPD includes two main conditions: emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Chronic lower respiratory diseases, a group that includes COPD, was the sixth leading cause of death in the US in 2020.<sup>1</sup> More than 15.9 million Americans report ever being diagnosed with COPD.<sup>2</sup> More than half of all adults with low pulmonary function may not be aware they have COPD, therefore the actual number of adults living with COPD may be higher.<sup>3</sup> Tobacco smoke is the primary cause of the development and progression of COPD<sup>4</sup>; exposure to air pollutants in the home and workplace, genetic factors, and respiratory infections are also causes. In addition, the global outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) adds concern. Though evidence is still gathering, available data suggest relatively worse outcomes from COVID-19 in individuals living with COPD compared to those without COPD.<sup>5</sup>

Higher prevalence of COPD has also been reported in women compared to men. In the US, COPD-related hospitalizations and deaths in women now surpass those in men.<sup>6</sup> Several factors are associated with these differences including women being diagnosed later than men, when treatment is less effective, and women having increased vulnerability to the effects of tobacco and other air pollution.<sup>7</sup> The primary means of preventing COPD is to never smoke or to quit smoking tobacco. There is no cure for COPD, but the condition can be managed through quitting smoking, avoiding tobacco and other air pollutants, receiving personalized treatment programs for pulmonary rehabilitation, adhering to medication, and preventing lung infections by getting vaccinated for vaccine-preventable diseases, such as the flu, pneumonia, and COVID-19.

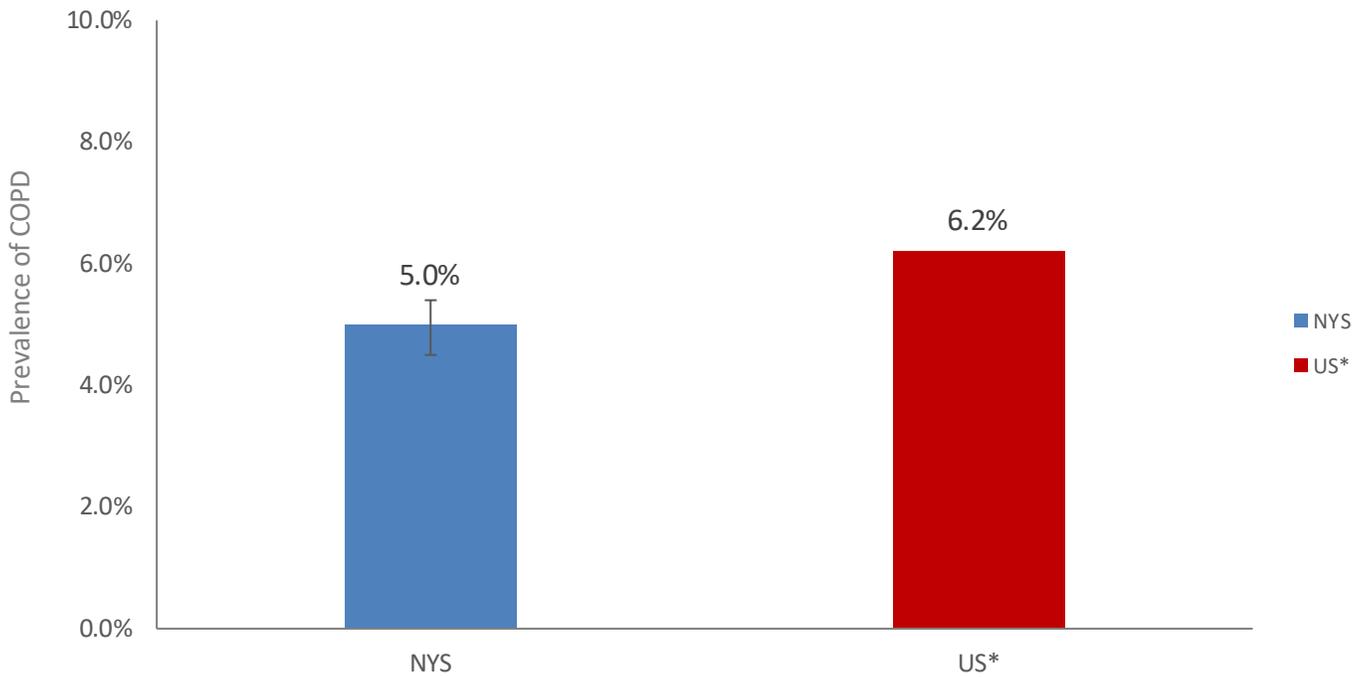
#### Key Findings

In 2020, an estimated 5.0% of adults in New York State (estimated 762,000 adults) report being told by a health professional they have COPD (Figure 1). Rates of COPD are highest among adults who report living with disability (13.4%), current cigarette smokers (13.1%), individuals covered by Medicare (11.5%), adults aged 65 and older (11.3%), adults who are not in the labor force (9.6%), former smokers (9.5%), and those with frequent mental distress (8.9%) (Table 1). Overall, annual statewide prevalence rates of COPD were similar between 2016 and 2020 (Figure 2).

#### BRFSS Questions 2020

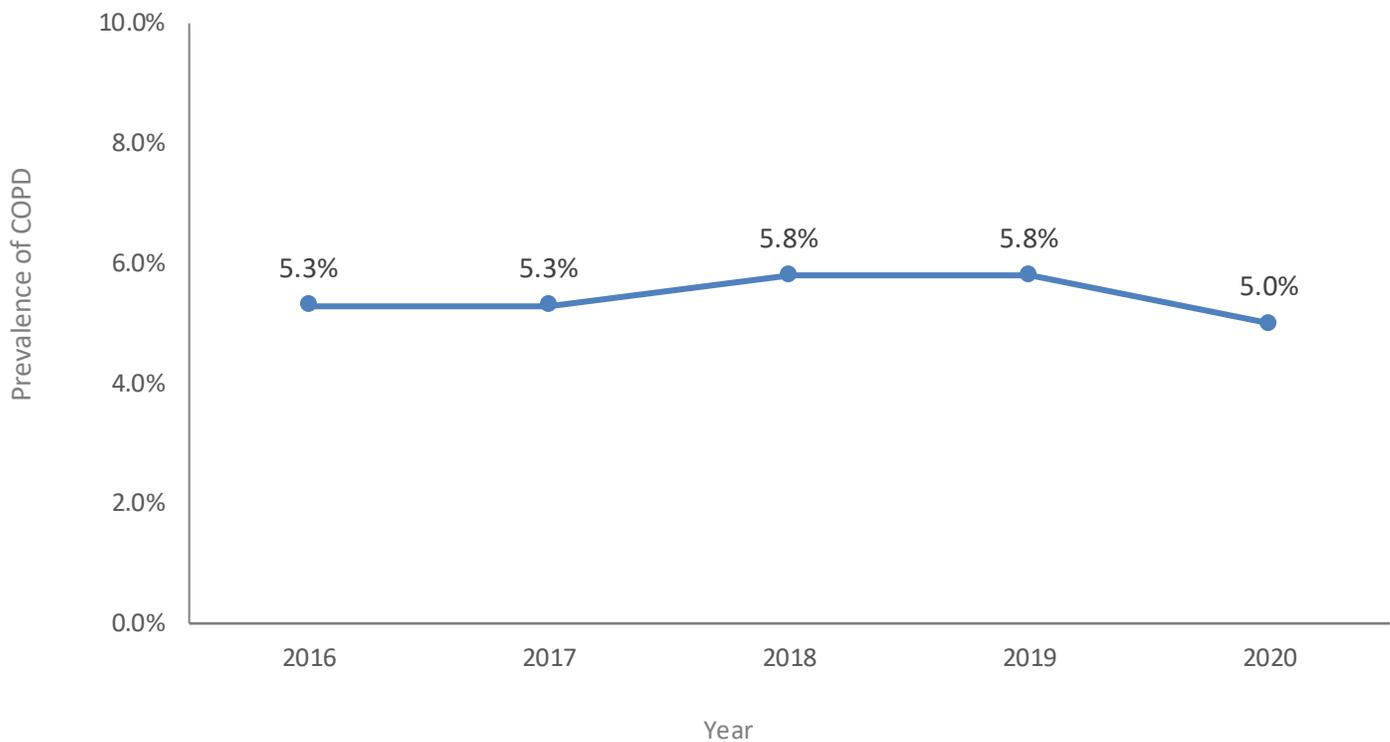
- Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional ever told you that you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or chronic bronchitis?

**Figure 1. Prevalence of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) among Adults in NYS and in the US, BRFSS 2020**



\*U.S. data point is the median value for all states, D.C, and territories. Confidence interval is not used with the median value.

**Figure 2. Prevalence of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) among Adults in NYS, BRFSS 2016 – 2020**



**Table 1. Prevalence of COPD by Demographic Groups in NYS, BRFSS 2020**

	Percent <sup>a</sup>	95% CI <sup>b</sup>	Estimated Population Size <sup>c</sup>
<b>Total New York State</b>	5.0	[4.5-5.4]	762,000
<b>Region</b>			
New York City (NYC)	4.3	[3.5, 5.1]	281,000
Rest of State (NYS excluding NYC)	5.5	[5.0, 6.0]	481,000
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	4.5	[3.8,5.2]	330,000
Female	5.4	[4.8,6.0]	432,000
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>			
White, Non-Hispanic	6.0	[5.4,6.5]	494,000
Black, Non-Hispanic	4.7	[3.3,6.0]	97,000
Other Race or Multiracial, Non-Hispanic	3.0	[1.3,4.7]	50,000
Hispanic	3.5	[2.4,4.5]	97,000
<b>Age</b>			
18 – 24	*	*	*
25 - 34	0.9	[0.5,1.3]	51,000
35 – 44	2.2	[1.4,3.1]	86,000
45 – 54	3.8	[2.8,4.8]	208,000
55 - 64	8.5	[7.2,9.8]	375,000
65+	11.3	[9.8,12.7]	51,000
<b>Education</b>			
Less than High School (H.S.)	7.4	[5.6,9.2]	147,000
H.S. or GED	5.9	[5.0,6.7]	233,000
Some College or Technical School	5.6	[4.7,6.4]	225,000
College Graduate	2.7	[2.3,3.2]	140,000
<b>Annual Household Income</b>			
Less than \$25,000	8.7	[7.4,10.0]	251,000
\$25,000 - 34,999	6.0	[4.2,7.7]	60,000
\$35,000 - 49,999	5.7	[4.2,7.1]	72,000
\$50,000 - 74,999	4.8	[3.5,6.0]	73,000
More than \$75,000	2.6	[2.1,3.2]	124,000
<b>Employment Status</b>			
Employed/Self-Employed	2.3	[2.0,2.7]	188,000
Not in Labor Force	9.6	[8.5,10.7]	505,000
Unemployed	2.9	[1.8,4.0]	45,000
<b>Frequent Mental Distress <sup>d</sup></b>			
Yes	8.9	[7.2,10.6]	167,000
No	4.3	[3.9,4.8]	566,000
<b>Disability Status <sup>e</sup></b>			
Yes	13.4	[11.8,15.0]	435,000
No	2.6	[2.2,2.9]	283,000
<b>Health Care Coverage – Type</b>			
Medicaid	7.3	[5.5,9.2]	146,000
Medicare	11.5	[10.0,13.0]	293,000
No Insurance	3.4	[2.2,4.6]	56,000
Private Insurance	2.9	[2.4,3.3]	206,000
Other	5.9	[3.9,8.0]	43,000
<b>Smoking Status</b>			
Current Smoker	13.1	[11.2,15.0]	220,000
Former Smoker	9.5	[8.2,10.9]	308,000
Never Smoker	2.0	[1.7,2.4]	188,000

a Percentages are weighted to population characteristics. b Confidence Interval. c An estimated population size based on weighted frequencies from BRFSS. 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 (formerly referred to as poor mental health). 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). \* Data unavailable/estimates unstable.

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