



NYS BRFSS 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 BRFSS is administered by the New York State (NYS) Department of Health (DOH) 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, 2021



Introduction

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States (US).¹ In New York (NY), smoking and secondhand smoke kills over 22,000 people each year.² Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causes multiple diseases, including cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and 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 US over \$240 billion in healthcare spending annually.^{4,5} In NY, \$9.7 billion a year is spent on preventable smoking-related healthcare expenditures.² It is well established that most people who smoke want to quit smoking.

Health Equity

People from racial and ethnic minority groups, the LGBTQIA+ community[§], people living with mental illness and substance use disorders, and those living in lower-income communities have been disproportionately targeted with advertising and marketing by the tobacco industry, which has contributed to stark inequities in tobacco related exposure, tobacco use, and tobacco related health outcomes.⁶ The New York State Department of Health is committed to reducing the burden of 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.

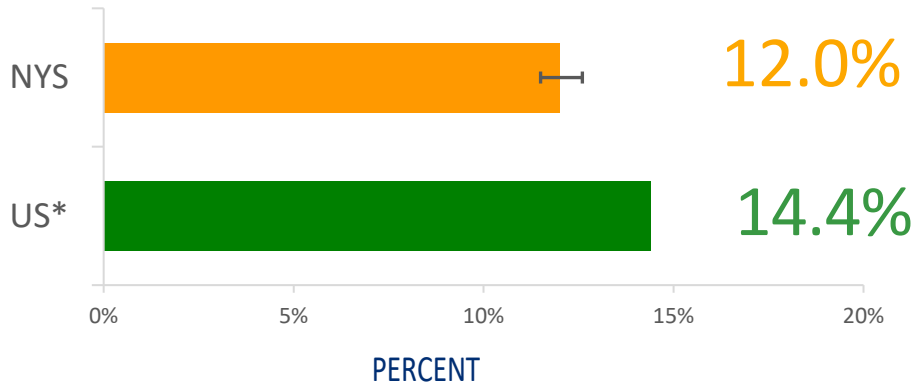
Key Findings

- > The prevalence of cigarette smoking among NYS adults in 2021 was 12.0% (Figure 1).
- > Statewide, smoking rates remained highest among adults with an annual household income of less than \$25,000 (20.4%) and adults reporting frequent mental distress (19.6%) (Figure 2, Table 1).
- > Higher smoking rates also existed among adults with less than a high school education (19.2%); adults enrolled in Medicaid (19.1); adults who were unemployed (20.2%); and adults living with disability (17.4%) (Figure 2, Table 1).
- > The smoking rate among young adults (18-24 years of age) remained low but increased from 5.5% to 6.2% between 2020 and 2021 (Table 1).

[§]LGBTQIA+ is an acronym used to describe the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual community. In NYS we recognize the term LGBTQIA+ as the most inclusive way to acknowledge and respect the diversity of bodies, genders, and relationships.



Figure 1. Prevalence of Current Smoking Among Adults in NYS and US, BRFSS 2021



*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 NYS, BRFSS 2018-2021

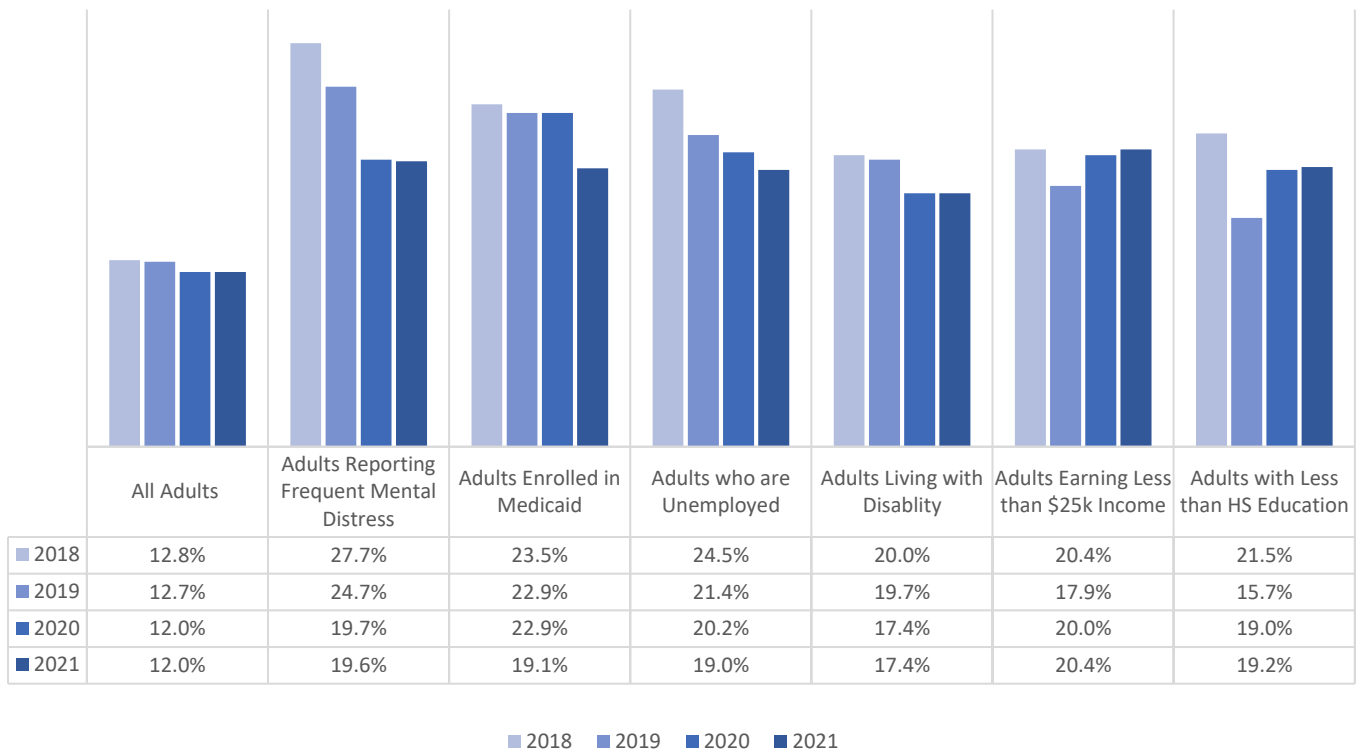


Table 1. Prevalence of Current Cigarette Smoking by Population Groups in NYS, BRFSS 2021

	Percent ^a	95% CI ^b	Estimated Weighted Number of People
New York State	12.0	[11.5,12.6]	1,800,000
Region			
NYS excluding New York City (Rest of State)	13.2	[12.5,13.9]	1,110,000
New York City	10.5	[9.5,11.4]	644,000
Sex			
Male	14.2	[13.3,15.1]	1,000,000
Female	10.1	[9.4,10.8]	800,000
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	12.9	[12.2,13.7]	1,047,000
Black, non-Hispanic	11.4	[9.8,13.0]	221,000
Hispanic	11.2	[9.8,12.6]	282,000
All other race groups combined ^c	9.7	[7.8-11.7]	155,000
Age			
18-24 Years Old	6.2	[4.6,7.8]	101,000
25-34 Years Old	13.6	[11.9,15.3]	350,000
35-44 Years Old	16.3	[14.6,17.9]	365,000
45-54 Years Old	13.8	[12.3,15.3]	287,000
55-64 Years Old	14.7	[13.3,16.2]	356,000
65+ Years Old	8.3	[7.4,9.2]	269,000
Educational Attainment			
Less than High School	19.2	[17.0,21.4]	354,000
High School or GED	16.3	[15.0,17.7]	608,000
Some College	12.9	[11.8,14.1]	495,000
College Graduate	5.7	[5.1,6.3]	288,000
Annual Household Income			
Less than \$25,000	20.4	[18.5,22.3]	407,000
\$25,000 to \$34,999	16.0	[14.1,17.8]	224,000
\$35,000 to \$49,999	14.5	[12.4,16.6]	199,000
\$50,000 to \$74,999	12.8	[11.2,14.5]	211,000
More than \$75,000	7.7	[6.8,8.7]	354,000
Employment Status			
Employed/Self-Employed	11.4	[10.6,12.2]	901,000
Unemployed	19.0	[16.5,21.4]	239,000
Not in Labor Force	11.3	[10.4,12.2]	578,000
Health Insurance Type			
Private	9.2	[8.5,10.0]	605,000
Medicare	11.8	[10.6,13.0]	341,000
Medicaid	19.1	[17.2,21.1]	363,000
No Insurance	16.7	[13.8,19.6]	134,000
Other	15.3	[13.1,17.5]	71,000
Frequent Mental Distress ^d			
Yes	19.6	[17.8,21.4]	376,000
No	10.7	[10.1,11.3]	1,317,000
Disability Status ^e			
Yes	17.4	[16.2,18.7]	663,000
No	10.1	[9.4,10.7]	1,067,000
Identifies as LGBTQ ^f			
Yes	13.1	[11.0,15.1]	155,000
No	12.4	[11.7,13.0]	1,435,000

^a Percentages are weighted to population characteristics.

^b Confidence Interval.

^c Includes individuals who identify as American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Multiracial, or other race.

^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).

^f Identifies as LGBTQ is defined as yes if respondents identified as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual orientation OR transgender.



References

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Suggested Citation

Fajobi, O. Hunter, L. Peluso, C. BRFSS Brief: Cigarette Smoking, New York State Adults, 2021. No. 2023-05. Albany, NY: New York State Department of Health, Division of Chronic Disease Prevention, Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research, June 2023.



BRFSS 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?

BRFSS 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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