The Diverse Racial Ethnic Groups and Nations (DREGAN) participatory research and action project aims to reduce the harm caused by tobacco use in Minnesota’s Latino and other ethnic and minority communities. Since 2002, the DREGAN collaboration has involved Minnesota’s Latino communities, as represented by Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross), and ClearWay Minnesota. Blue Cross and ClearWay Minnesota jointly fund the project.

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REFERENCES

Tobacco Use in Minnesota: A Participatory Research and Action Project

Executive Summary

September 2008

C1394 (10/08)

This report is also available in Spanish. You will find it and other DREGAN reports on www.bluecrossmn.com/preventionminnesota. Enter DREGAN in the search window.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
SEPTEMBER 2008
**PREVALENCE OF TOBACCO USE**

For men it’s OK. Smoking is something normal... It’s not something bad.

—Mexican woman in her 30s, in the U.S. for 2 years

“This [smoking] is totally unacceptable in the traditional community in Puerto Rico.”

—Puerto Rican man in his 40s, in the U.S. for 14 years

As the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, smoking poses a serious threat to the health of Minnesota’s growing Latino population. The overall prevalence of current smoking is 13 percent among Latino adults surveyed in Minnesota. This translates to about 15,000 adult Latinos in Minnesota who are exposed to the harms of tobacco use. This reduces to about 17,000 adult Latinos in Minnesota. This translates to about 17,000 adult Latinos in Minnesota who are exposed to the harms of tobacco use.

As in most immigrant communities, the prevalence of smoking differs greatly between men and women. Twenty-two percent of Latino men smoke, which is comparable to the prevalence of smoking among men in the Minnesota general population. Twenty-one percent are observed among all Latino men surveyed in Minnesota. This translates to about 17,000 adult Latinos in Minnesota who are exposed to the harms of tobacco use.

In Minnesota’s Latino communities we are informed about the health risks inherent in smoking. Nearly all Latino smokers (99%) are aware that smoking causes lung cancer. Similarly, nearly all Latinos know how smoking causes heart disease (93%), but smokers less often report this knowledge (87%).

On an equally encouraging note, most Latinos see the benefits to smoking. Less than one-third of non-smokers—including former and never smokers—affirm any positive aspect of smoking. Current smokers generally followed the same pattern, with few major exceptions. Nearly three in five (57%) thought smoking relieves stress and anxiety, and more than four in ten (42%) thought it provides pleasure.

The community leaders also stated that some Latino immigrants smoke to cope with the stresses of immigration, discrimination, and economic hardship. Tobacco-control efforts should emphasize the dangers of smoking relieves stress and anxiety, and more than four in ten (42%) thought it provides pleasure.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:**

- Programs to support quitting should emphasize mental health benefits.
- Prevention efforts should reach out to girls and women to assure rates do not increase.
- Messages should talk into account the cultural norms against tobacco use that exist for Latino women.

**KNOWLEDGE OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THE HARMES OF TOBACCO USE**

“More than anything, I believe it’s because of pressure and stress, that people did not have that stress in their countries would not smoke.”

—Port Rican woman in her 30s, in the U.S. for 20 years

Minnesota’s Latino communities face additional barriers to quitting the step creasing smoking and other tobacco-related behavior that have been scientifically shown to help in quitting. At least one child under 18

In interviews, community leaders noted the perception within Latino communities of children that only willpower works to quit, and the reluctance to seek help.

### Smoking Relieves Stress

-作品 from smoking and the risk of relapse is high. Nearly 74% of surveyed Latino smokers strongly agree that quitting smoking is the only way they would be able to quit smoking is through their own willpower. Only 42% percent reported feeling too cumbunctive about quitting for help.

In interviews, community leaders noted the perception within Latino communities that only willpower works to quit, and the reluctance to seek help.

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**REDUCING EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE**

“In this century, I do see a lot of respect toward homes, families, children, by not smoking in front of them.”

—Mexican woman in her 40s, in the U.S. for 4 years

About half (53%) of the members of Minnesota’s Latino communities reported exposure to secondhand smoke in their homes at some point in the past year. At the time of the survey, Minneapolis and St. Paul, along with a handful of other communities, had passed ordinances restricting smoking in all indoor worksites, including bars and restaurants. It is encouraging that after the completion of this survey, the Minnesota legislature passed the Freedom to Breathe Act, extending these protections to the entire state.

Nearly all Latinos (91%) — percent report that they do not allow smoking in their homes. This was especially true for 17% of Latino members reporting smoking in their homes. This was especially true for 17% of Latino members reporting smoking in their homes.

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- Prevention efforts should reach out to girls and women to assure rates do not increase.
- Messages should talk into account the cultural norms against tobacco use that exist for Latino women.

**QUITT NG SMOKEING**

“Most of the Latino people that I know... usually will try to quit by just quitting ‘cold turkey’... which doesn’t usually work.”

—Nicaraguan woman in her 40s, in the U.S. for 20 years

“Culturally, we are taught to leave our problems in the family. So, it’s a bit embarrassing for many people. It’s something that they don’t... ask people they don’t know for help... because then [people] would realize that your family has a problem, be it alcohol or smoking.”

—Colombian woman in her 40s, born in the U.S.

Most current smokers in Minnesota’s Latino communities try to quit. Among this group, three-fourths (74%) reported that they had quit smoking for a day or more within the 12 months before the survey. However, quitting is difficult because smoking is addictive and the risk of relapse is high. Nearly 74% of surveyed Latino smokers strongly agree that quitting smoking is the only way they would be able to quit smoking is through their own willpower. Only 42% percent reported feeling too cumbunctive about quitting for help.

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In interviews, community leaders noted the perception within Latino communities that only willpower works to quit, and the reluctance to seek help.

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- Prevention efforts should reach out to girls and women to assure rates do not increase.
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—Colombian woman in her 40s, born in the U.S.
**PREVALENCE OF TOBACCO USE**

**Knowledge of and Attitudes Toward the Harms of Tobacco Use**

As in most immigrant communities, the prevalence of smoking differs greatly between men and women. Nearly 42% of Latino men smoke, which is comparable to the prevalence of smoking among men in the Minnesota general population (43%) as observed in the 2003 Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey. Yet only 4% of Latino women report current smoking, a much lower rate than among English-speaking Latinos.

Most current smokers in Minnesota’s Latino communities face additional barriers to seeking the stop-smoking medications and behavioral counseling that have been scientifically shown to help in quitting. A large majority (78%) of surveyed Latino smokers strongly agreed that they would be able to quit smoking in through their own willpower. Only 41 percent reported feeling very comfortable asking for help to stop smoking.

**QUITTING SMOKING**

**Reducing Exposure to Secondhand Smoke**

Most of the Latino people that I know... usually will try to quit by just quitting ‘cold turkey’ … which doesn’t usually work.”

Women smoke less than men in all Latino communities, young adults ages 18 to 24 and Spanish-speaking Latinos.

**Recommendations for Action:**

- Programs to support quitting should emphasize behavioral counseling.
- Prevention efforts should reach out to girls and women to assure rates do not increase.
- Messaging should take into account the cultural norms against tobacco use that exist for Latino women.

“Most current smokers in Minnesota’s Latino communities try to quit. Among this group, about half (46%) reported that they had quit smoking for a day or more within the 12 months before the survey. However, quitting is difficult because smoking is addictive and the loss of nicotine is high. Nearly a quarter (22%) reported having quit for a day or more in the past week. However, many Latino women – who smoke 30 percent of all smokers – both identify themselves as smokers. This presents a fundamental barrier to quitting, because these smokers may not think messages about quitting are targeted at them. "More than anything, I believe it’s because of pressure and stress, that people didn’t have that stress in their countries would not smoke."}

“Most current smokers in Minnesota’s Latino communities were informed about the health risks inherent in smoking. Nearly all Latinos surveyed (97%) — also aware that smoking causes lung cancer. Similarly, nearly all Latinos know how smoking causes heart disease (93%), but smokers less often report knowledge (76%).

On an equally encouraging note, most Latinos see health benefits from quitting. Less than one-third of nonsmokers — including former and never-smokers — affirmed any perceived aspect of smoking. Current smokers generally followed the same pattern, with two main exceptions. Nearly three in five (57%) thought smoking relieves stress and anxiety, and more than four in ten (42%) thought it provides pleasure.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:**

- Efforts to support quitting should recognize that smokers may associate some benefits with smoking, includingproviding pleasure and relieving stress.

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As in most immigrant communities, the prevalence of smoking differs greatly between men and women. Twenty percent of Latino men smoke, which is comparable to smoking rates among men in the United States, whereas only two percent of Latino women smoke, a much lower rate than among women in the general population (21%) as observed in the 2003 Minnesota Tobacco Survey. This translates to more than 16,000 Latinos in Minnesota who are exposed to the harms of tobacco use. As the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, tobacco poses a serious threat to the health of Minnesota’s growing Latino population. The overall prevalence of current smoking is 13 percent among Latino adults surveyed in Minnesota. This translates to more than 16,000 Latinos in Minnesota who are exposed to the harms of tobacco use.

In addition, survey results indicate that within Minnesota’s Latino communities, young adults ages 18 to 24 and English-speaking Latinos are more likely to smoke than older adults and Spanish-speaking Latinos.

“Most of the Latino people that I know . . . usually will try to quit by just quitting ‘cold turkey’ . . . which doesn’t usually work.” —Puerto Rican man in his 30s, in the U.S. for 14 years

In the traditional community in Puerto Rico.”

About 15% of the members of Minnesota’s Latino communities reported exposure to secondhand smoke in their homes, a rate similar to that of another location in the survey. At the time of the survey, Minneapolis and St. Paul, along with a handful of other communities, had passed ordinances restricting smoking in all indoor workplaces, including bars and restaurants. It is encouraging that after the completion of this survey, the Minnesota legislature passed the Freedom to Breathe Act, extending these protections to the entire state. Nearly all Latinos — 91 percent — reported that they do not allow smoking in their homes. This was expected for the 19 percent of Latinos reporting secondhand smoke exposure in their homes, at work, in a car, or at another location in the past week. Furthermore, the Minnesota legislature passed the Freedom to Breathe Act, extending these protections to the entire state.

About 11% of the members of Minnesota’s Latino communities reported exposure to secondhand smoke in their homes, a rate similar to that of another location in the survey. At the time of the survey, Minneapolis and St. Paul, along with a handful of other communities, had passed ordinances restricting smoking in all indoor workplaces, including bars and restaurants. It is encouraging that after the completion of this survey, the Minnesota legislature passed the Freedom to Breathe Act, extending these protections to the entire state.

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