



For Immediate Release

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Research: Smoking Declines Stall in Minnesota

Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey finds little change in smoking rate from 2014

Minneapolis, January 15, 2019 – Findings from the latest Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS) show that Minnesota’s progress in reducing smoking has stalled. The state’s adult smoking rate has declined to 13.8 percent, down from 14.4 percent in 2014. The decrease was not statistically significant and is the smallest decline seen since the MATS study began in 1999.

Conducted by ClearWay MinnesotaSM and the Minnesota Department of Health, MATS surveyed Minnesota residents about smoking, e-cigarette and other tobacco use, and secondhand smoke exposure.

“Minnesota has long been a leader in tobacco prevention and cessation, but we are seeing that progress stalling,” said lead researcher Ann St. Claire, Associate Director of Evaluation and Survey Research for ClearWay Minnesota. “Research shows that policies like price increases and clean indoor air laws help drive down smoking rates, and we’ve seen the impact of those policies in past MATS reports. Today, we must continue using proven approaches to reduce the smoking rate, such as additional price increases and raising the tobacco age to 21.”

E-cigarette use rises among young adults, Minnesotans with no smoking history

MATS found dramatic shifts in who was using e-cigarettes. The rate of e-cigarette use among all adults remained unchanged from 2014 (6 percent in 2018 vs. 5.9 percent in 2014). However, while the rate of cigarette smoking among young adults aged 18-24 fell significantly, from 15.3 percent to 8.5 percent, e-cigarette use in this age group nearly doubled, from 12.8 percent to 21.9 percent, reflecting trends also seen in 2017’s Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey.

Disturbingly, the study also found a sharp increase in e-cigarette use among people who have no prior history of smoking. Forty-four percent of e-cigarette users in 2018 said they had never smoked cigarettes – a significant increase from 2014 (11.7 percent).

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“Over the past 20 years, Minnesota made great strides in reducing tobacco use,” said Minnesota Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm. “But in the face of new challenges from the tobacco industry, like e-cigarettes, the future of tobacco use in our state is once again uncertain. We must do everything we can to prevent our young people from starting tobacco use, including e-cigarettes, and we must provide current smokers free and easy help to quit.”

Smokers struggling to quit

Another factor that contributed to the stalled progress was fewer Minnesotans quitting smoking. Fewer smokers made quit attempts, and fewer successfully quit.

“We know that easy access to help like counseling and medications can double a smoker’s chance of quitting for good,” said ClearWay Minnesota Vice President Paula Keller. “Minnesota tobacco users currently have free quitting help available to them through QUITPLAN Services, but more can be done to encourage them to take advantage of that help. We also need to ensure there is dedicated funding for ongoing services to help people quit once QUITPLAN Services closes its doors early next year.”

Other findings from MATS 2018 include:

- ***Approximately 574,000 adult Minnesotans continue to smoke.*** Smoking rates are highest among Minnesotans who have completed fewer years of education and have lower incomes than nonsmokers. Minnesotans with less than a high school education have the highest smoking rate at 33.4 percent.
- ***Fewer smokers are making quit attempts.*** Fewer than half of all smokers, 45.7 percent, reported making a quit attempt in the past 12 months, down from 53.4 percent in 2014.
- ***Menthol cigarettes are used by more than a quarter (27.5 percent) of all smokers.*** Women smokers use menthol cigarettes at a rate of 33.8 percent, while those with less than a high school education have the highest menthol use rate of all education groups at 37.2 percent.
- ***Flavored e-cigarettes attract young adults.*** Nearly all young adult e-cigarette users (96.7 percent) report their usual brand of e-cigarettes is flavored.
- ***Minnesotans value smoke-free air.*** The percentage of Minnesotans with smoke-free home rules has increased to 92 percent (from 89.3 percent in 2014). Even 66.3 percent of smokers have smoke-free home rules.

Released approximately every four years, MATS provides comprehensive information about smoking rates and tobacco-related behaviors, attitudes and beliefs in the adult Minnesota population, and serves as a tool for measuring the progress of Minnesota’s tobacco prevention efforts. Previous surveys were conducted in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2010 and 2014.

The full report and a fact sheet are available at ClearWay Minnesota’s [Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey](#) webpage.

ClearWay MinnesotaSM is an independent, non-profit organization that improves the health of Minnesotans by reducing the harm caused by tobacco. ClearWay Minnesota serves Minnesota through its grant-making program, through QUITPLAN[®] Services and through statewide outreach activities. It is funded with 3 percent of the state's 1998 tobacco settlement.

The Minnesota Department of Health is the lead public health agency in Minnesota. Its mission is to protect, maintain and improve the health of all Minnesotans. The department operates programs in the areas of disease prevention and control, health promotion, family and community health, environmental health, health care policy, emergency planning and preparedness and regulation of health care providers and facilities. The department works with local public health departments across the state to accomplish its mission.