



For Immediate Release:

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LA County Smokers Fall Below One Million for the First Time Disparities in smoking rates highlight need for focused prevention efforts

LOS ANGELES – In honor of the 37th Annual Great American Smokeout, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health released a new report showing the number of adult smokers in LA County fell below one million for the first time since the Los Angeles County Health Survey was initiated in 1997. The report, *Adult Smoking on the Decline, But Disparities Remain*, highlights the smoking prevalence in 2011 among adults in LA County. Overall, 13.1 percent of adults (18 years and older) were current smokers in 2011, down from 14.3 percent in 2002 and 2007.

“While it is encouraging to see the decline in smoking among adults over the past several years, tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in LA County,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “In addition, exposure to secondhand smoke is an important cause of illness among non-smokers, contributing to asthma and other respiratory diseases, heart disease, and sudden infant death syndrome.”

In LA County, cigarette smoking is directly linked to one out of every seven deaths each year, or nearly 8,600 deaths annually. In addition, smoking is estimated to cost LA County \$4.3 billion in medical care and lost productivity costs each year. The report also shows stark disparities in smoking rates, with higher smoking rates among African Americans; those living in or near poverty; the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered populations; those with mental health or substance use conditions. In addition, the smoking prevalence varies greatly across age groups, with a disproportionately high rate of smoking among 25 to 29 year olds.

“The good news is that we have proven interventions to deter young people from starting to smoke and services to assist those who do smoke to quit, including nicotine replacement therapy, other medications, and counseling support. The marked disparities we see in smoking prevalence highlights the need for focused interventions in communities with the highest rates of smoking,” said Dr. Fielding.

Additional key finding from the report include:

- The smoking rate was higher among men (16.4 percent) than women (10 percent).
- The smoking rate was highest among African American men and women (19.5 percent and 15.6 percent).
- The Antelope Valley Service Planning Area (SPA) had the highest smoking rate at 15.6 percent, with the lowest smoking rate in the West SPA at 9.7 percent.
- The smoking rate was high among methamphetamine, cocaine or ecstasy users (59.8 percent), heavy drinkers (38.4 percent), those less than 300 percent below the FPL and homeless in the past five years (31.2 percent), and those suffering from anxiety (28.3 percent) or depression (22.1 percent).



- The smoking rate was low among 18 to 24 year olds (9.7 percent), but peaked among 25 to 29 year olds (20.3 percent).

LA County offers resources to residents who are currently addicted to tobacco, have already quit, or want to help a friend or relative kick this deadly addiction as well. Residents can visit LAQuits.com for information and resources about quitting smoking, or call the California Smokers' Helpline, 1-800-NO-BUTTS. The Helpline offers free and confidential telephone counseling that has proven to double a smoker's chances of successfully quitting than if the smoker tried to do it alone.

Right now, LA County residents can receive free nicotine patches when calling the Helpline to seek support in quitting. The Helpline also assists those trying to quit chewing tobacco and has experts to help teens quit. Additional information and smoking cessation tips can be found on the LA Quits website, www.laquits.com, [Facebook page](#), and [Twitter @LAQuits](#).

For a full copy of the report, *Adult Smoking on the Decline, But Disparities Remain*, visit: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ha>. For more information on quit smoking resources and smoke-free policy recommendations, visit the Department of Public Health's Tobacco Control website at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/tob/index.htm>.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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