

# **Smoking Among African Americans in Wisconsin**

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**TOBACCO SURVEILLANCE  
& EVALUATION PROGRAM**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
PAUL P. CARBONE  
COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

## Acknowledgements

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## Executive Summary

During 2007-2008, the UW Tobacco Surveillance and Evaluation Program developed the Minority Health and Tobacco Survey–African Americans. A sample of African Americans in Wisconsin was surveyed to examine tobacco use among this population. The purpose of this report is to review the prevalence of current cigarette use among African Americans in Wisconsin with regards to gender, age, educational attainment, employment status, household income, and marital status. Key findings are:

- Overall, 24% of the respondents reported being current smokers, 17% were former smokers, and 59% were never smokers.
- Females were more likely to be current smokers (27%) than males (22%).
- Respondents 45-59 years of age were most likely to be current smokers (45%), followed by 30-44 year olds (21%) and 18-29 year olds (17%). Persons aged 60 years and greater were least likely to be current smokers (10%).
- Individuals with a high school diploma or GED were more likely to be current smokers (31%) than those with less than a high school degree (24%), and those with some college (23%). Respondents with a college degree were least likely to be current smokers (11%).
- Unemployed respondents were most likely to be current smokers (35%), compared to employed respondents (24%) and those not in the labor market (20%).
- Individuals were more likely to be current smokers, commensurate with lower levels of household income. Those earning less than \$20,000 were most likely to be current smokers (36%), followed by those earning \$20,000-\$34,999 (26%), \$35,000-\$49,999 (21%), and \$50,000 or more (16%).
- Divorced and separated respondents were most likely to be current smokers (45%), compared to single (23%), and married (14%) respondents.

In sum, nearly one-fourth of the Wisconsin African Americans that responded to this survey reported being current smokers in 2007-2008. By comparison, 20% of the total Wisconsin population reported being current smokers in 2007 (data not shown). Perhaps more importantly, social and economic disparities in smoking behavior exist within the African American population of Wisconsin. These are important factors to keep in mind when developing smoking prevention and cessation strategies aimed at helping African Americans.

## Introduction

Historical national trends show that the prevalence of African American cigarette smoking has decreased over time, from 37.3% in 1965 to 26.5% in 1995.<sup>1</sup> This decreasing trend continued through 1999-2001, though at a very slow pace, with 25.7% of African Americans reporting current smoking.<sup>2</sup> However, more recent data from 2002-2005 showed that, overall, 27.6% of African Americans were smokers.<sup>3</sup> These data suggest the trend in the prevalence of smoking among African Americans may no longer be declining. In addition, the more recent trend is similar to that observed for other racial groups, such as Hispanics and Whites during that time. In 1999-2001, 23.1% of Hispanics and 27.4% of Whites were current smokers, compared to 23.9% and 27.4%, respectively, in 2002-2005.<sup>2,3</sup>

Nationally, African Americans and Whites reported similar smoking prevalences during 2002-2005, as noted above. However, in reviewing Wisconsin-specific data, a disparity in the prevalence of smoking was observed between African American and the overall Wisconsin population. Data from 2001-2005 showed that the 5-year average prevalence of smoking among African Americans was 29%, while 22% of the overall Wisconsin population were smokers.<sup>4</sup> This disparity was further evident when reviewing data from a 2003 survey that revealed 35% of African American males were smokers, compared to 21% of white males.<sup>5</sup>

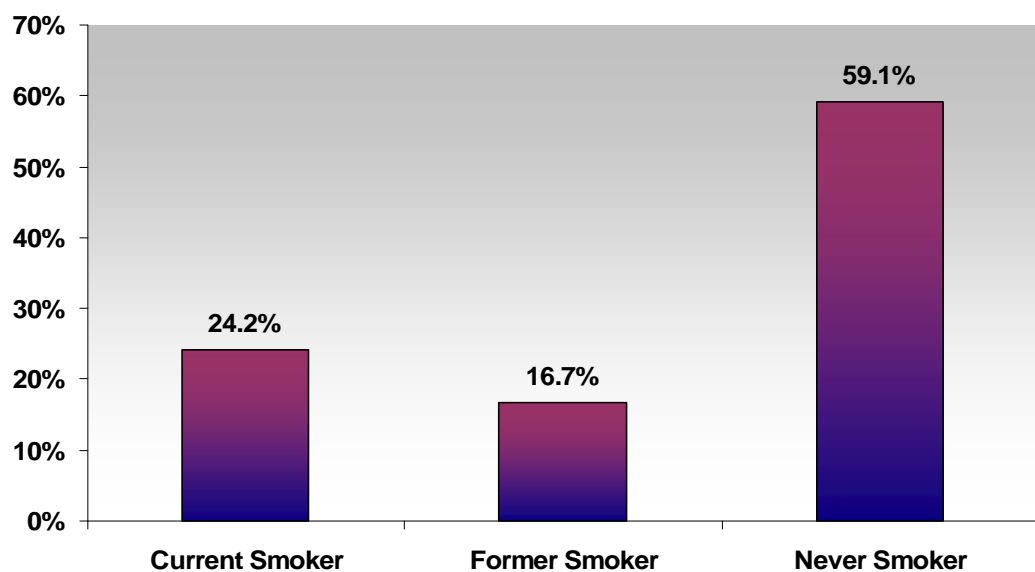
During 2007-2008, a sample of African Americans in Wisconsin was surveyed, using the Minority Health and Tobacco Survey—African Americans. The purpose of this report is to review the prevalence of current cigarette use *among* Wisconsin African Americans with regards to gender, age, educational attainment, employment status, household income, and marital status.

## Results

**Figure 1**  
Smoking Status  
Among African  
Americans,  
Wisconsin, 2008

The percentage of respondents that report being current smokers, former smokers, or never smokers is portrayed in Figure 1. A majority of respondents reported they were never smokers

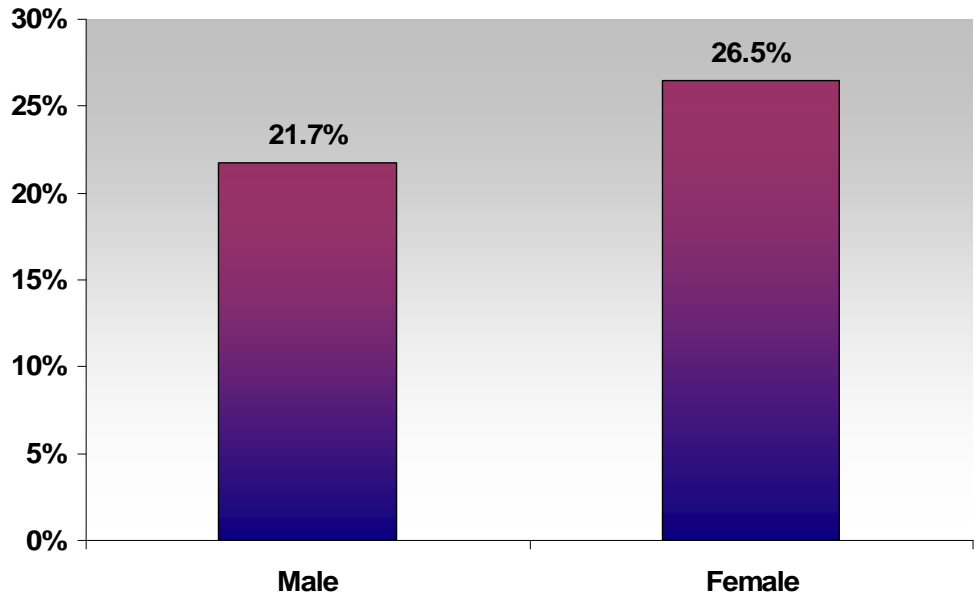
(59.1%), whereas 24.2% reported they were current smokers, and 16.7% reported being former smokers.



**Figure 2**

**Prevalence of Current Smoking Among African Americans, by Sex, Wisconsin, 2008**

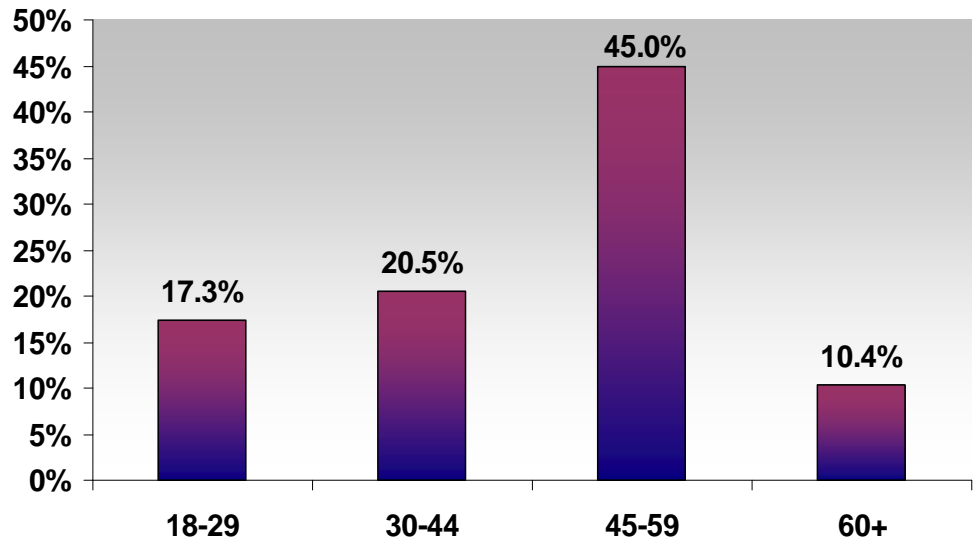
Figure 2 compares the percentage of respondents reporting being current smokers, by sex. Females were more likely to report being current smokers (26.5%) than males (21.7%).



**Figure 3**

**Prevalence of Current Smoking Among African Americans, by Age, Wisconsin, 2008**

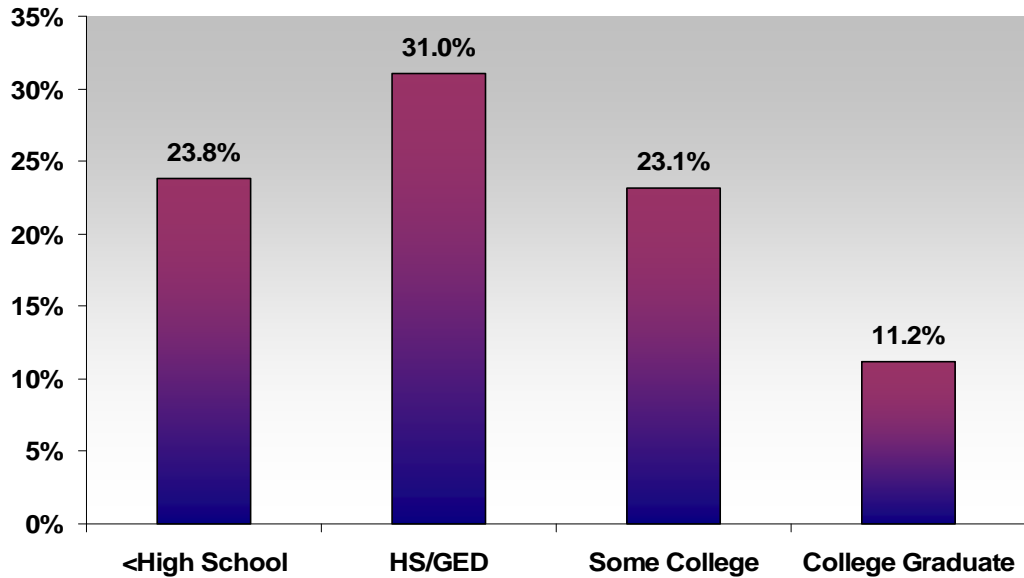
Respondents 45-59 years old were most likely to report being current smokers (45.0%), followed by 30-44 year olds (20.5%) and 18-29 year olds (17.3%). Those 60 years of age and older were least likely to be current smokers (10.4%) (Figure 3).



**Figure 4**  
Prevalence of  
Current Smoking  
Among African  
Americans, by  
Education,  
Wisconsin, 2008

Figure 4 displays the percentage of respondents reporting being current smokers, by educational attainment.

Individuals with a high school diploma or GED were more likely to be current smokers (31.0%) than those with less than a high school degree (23.8%), and those with some college (23.1%).

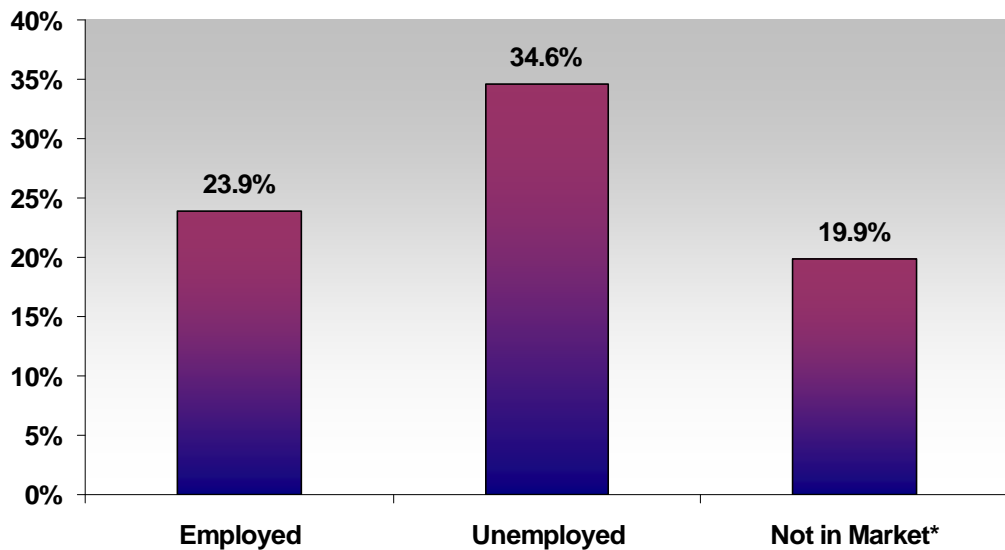


Respondents with a college degree were least likely to be current smokers (11.2%).

**Figure 5**  
Prevalence of  
Current Smoking  
Among African  
Americans, by  
Employment  
Status,  
Wisconsin, 2008

The percentage of respondents that reported being current smokers, by employment status, is shown in Figure 5.

Unemployed respondents were most likely to be current smokers (34.6%), while 23.9% of employed respondents and 19.9% of

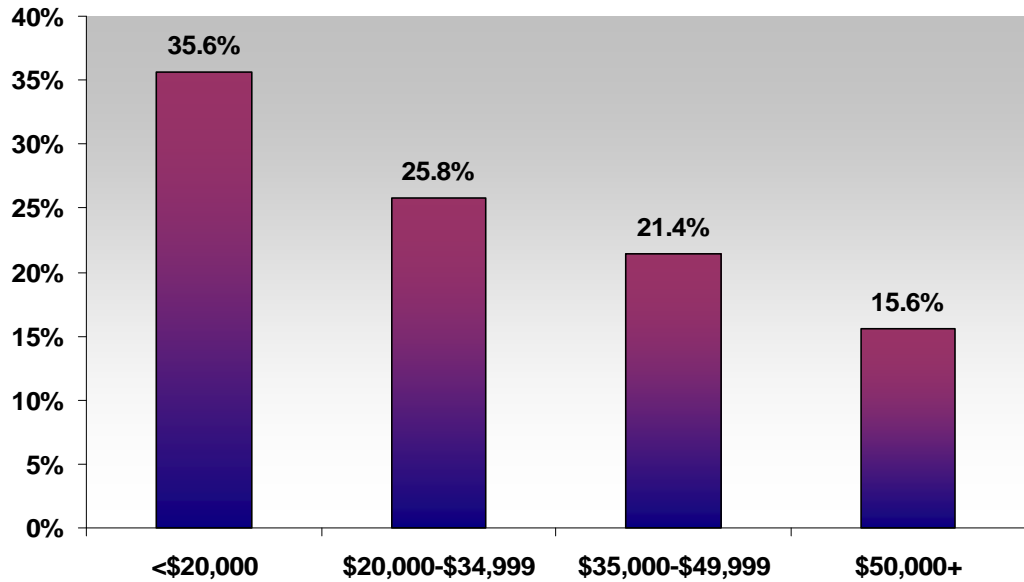


\* Student, retired, homemaker, unable to work

respondents not in the labor market reported being current smokers.

**Figure 6**  
Prevalence of Current Smoking Among African Americans, by Household Income, Wisconsin, 2008

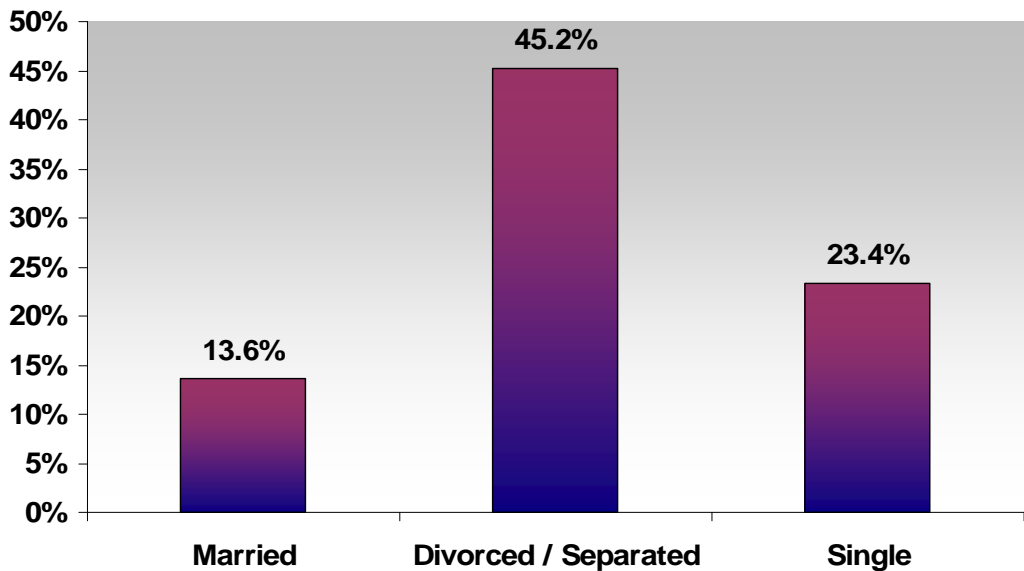
Individuals were more likely to be current smokers, commensurate with lower levels of household income, as revealed in Figure 6. Those earning less than \$20,000 were most likely to be current smokers (35.6%), compared to those earning \$20,000-



\$34,999 (25.8%), \$35,000-\$49,999 (21.4%), and \$50,000 or more (15.6%).

**Figure 7**  
Prevalence of Current Smoking Among African Americans, by Marital Status, Wisconsin, 2008

Figure 7 illustrates the percentage of respondents that reported being current smokers, by marital status. Divorced and separated respondents were most likely to be current smokers (45.2%), while married respondents were least likely to be smokers (13.6%). 23% of those that reported being single were current smokers.



(Note: Due to small sample sizes, widowed and cohabitating respondents were not included.)

## Discussion

Approximately one out of four African Americans in Wisconsin reported being current smokers in 2007-2008, while 17% reported being former smokers and 59% reported being never smokers. Examination of the prevalence of smoking by select sociodemographic factors revealed that females, 45-54 year olds, those with a high school diploma or GED, unemployed persons, individuals with a household income of less than \$20,000 per year, and those who were divorced or separated, were most likely to be current smokers.

Although a majority of the respondents reported being never smokers, approximately one-fourth of the African Americans in this Wisconsin study reported being current smokers. By comparison, in 2007, 20% of the overall Wisconsin population reported being current smokers.<sup>6</sup> Thus, racial/ethnic disparities do exist. However, the purpose of the current study is to examine the relevance of social and demographic factors on smoking behavior *within* Wisconsin's African American population. Accordingly, interventions that focus on African Americans may be better targeted to meet the needs of this group.

## Limitations

Data in this report came from the Wisconsin's Minority Health and Tobacco Survey–African Americans, which is a landline telephone survey. To the extent that any particular subgroup of the population does not have a landline telephone, estimates may not be representative of the entire Wisconsin African American population. Generalizability of estimates may also be affected by the characteristics of people who are willing to complete the telephone survey, as well as the small sample sizes used in this study. In addition, population density issues related to African Americans in Wisconsin affect the extent to which a comprehensive state-wide survey can be conducted (see Technical Notes). Due to these limitations, data from this report should not be extrapolated to create population based tobacco use estimates for African Americans.

## Technical Notes

All data in this report are from the Wisconsin Minority Health and Tobacco Survey–African Americans, which was developed by the University of Wisconsin Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center, Tobacco Surveillance and Evaluation Program. Data collection began in October 2007, and was completed in April 2008. The survey was conducted in Wisconsin via a landline telephone interview of non-institutionalized African American adults, aged 18 years or older. Interviews were completed with 640 individuals. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS statistical software.<sup>7</sup> Data were weighted to be representative of the sampling frame from which respondents were selected. Due to the high density of African Americans in Milwaukee County, a majority of the sample (97%) resided in Milwaukee County (95% resided in the city of Milwaukee). Respondents were considered current smokers if they reported they had ever smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and they smoked on some days or every day at the time of interview.

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