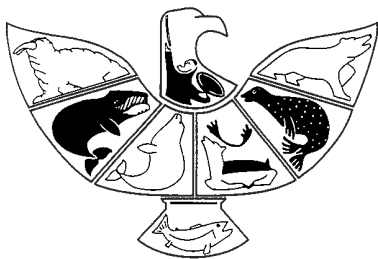


**Tobacco Use in Alaska Natives
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
1998-2000**

**Alaska Native Epidemiology Center
Alaska Native Tobacco Programs
The Alaska Native Health Board
March 2003**



Tobacco Use in Alaska Natives Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 1998-2000

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Tobacco is the single most preventable risk factor for cancer, heart disease, and other chronic disease. Nearly half (43%) of Alaska Native adults are current smokers. Smoking rates show only part of the exposure to tobacco. The use of chewing tobacco, snuff and iqmik is widespread in parts of rural Alaska. 13% of Alaska Native adults use smokeless tobacco.

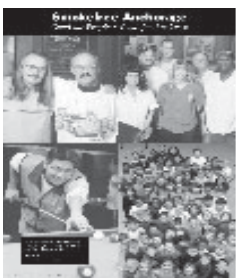
Through the Alaska Native Health Board's (ANHB) work with Alaska Native communities and organizations, a need has identified for specific information on the effects and costs of tobacco and secondhand smoke on Alaska Native communities. The ANHB has three programs that focus on the issue of tobacco. These programs are:



Challenge To Quit (CTQ): This project is a three year research project that is evaluating a unique teen tobacco cessation project. Teens who wish to quit are recruited to participate in "Challenge To Quit" sessions. Teens are offered educational/support sessions for five weeks and an incentive to quit. Sessions are being offered in smaller, rural villages. Data are being kept in order to evaluate the success of the program.



Support Center for Tobacco Programs: The Alaska Native Tobacco Support Center offers individuals, tribes and regional health organizations technical assistance in addressing 1) tobacco cessation among adults and youth; and 2) eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke. The Support Center works with individuals and organizations throughout the state of Alaska to assist them in implementing programs and activities aimed at reducing tobacco addiction and tobacco-caused disease and death.



Trampling Tobacco: This project seeks to achieve a significant reduction in tobacco use and tobacco related disease and death among all Alaskans through development of public policy. The focus of the project is to increase the number of communities in Alaska that have strong local policies that protect the public from exposure to secondhand smoke in enclosed work places and public places; to acquire an adequate share of Alaska's Tobacco Settlement to fund a comprehensive statewide tobacco prevention program and to pass policies for insurance coverage of tobacco cessation counseling and pharmaceutical support.

Summary of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Background

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an ongoing national survey supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The survey includes questions about health status and perceptions, preventive health practices, and risky behaviors that influence the prevalence of chronic disease, injury and preventable infectious diseases. The survey consists of a standardized telephone interview conducted with a computer-assisted script. Approximately 200 adults are interviewed each month in Alaska.

Respondents are adults 18 years and older living in households. Individuals in military barracks, dormitories, nursing homes, and other group living situations are excluded. Apart from that exclusion, each state's sample is designed to be representative of the state population. Respondents are contacted by telephone using a selection process based on area codes and prefixes that are highly likely to be associated with residential listings. Alaska uses an additional sampling procedure to take into account differences in telephone coverage by geographic and economic factors. It is estimated that 92% of the households in the state as a whole have telephones, but the percentage is substantially lower in some geographic areas and among groups of low socioeconomic status.

In Alaska, the annual sample includes 500 respondents per region *as defined by the BRFSS* (see map), for a total of 2,500 respondents per year. Because the population of each BRFSS region varies, sampling 500 persons from each region results in a larger proportion of non-urban residents being contacted. It also results in representative numbers of Alaska Natives being included in the sample. In the 2000 US Census, individuals who identified themselves as Alaska Native only or Alaska Native in combination with one or more other races made up 19% of the population of Alaska (see <http://almis.labor.state.ak.us/?PAGEID=67&SUBID=114>, the State of Alaska census website). In this report, based primarily on the combined years of 1998, 1999 and 2000 of the Alaska BRFSS, Alaska Natives made up 19% of the sample.

Although the proportion of Alaska Natives in the BRFSS sample is similar to the proportion in the state population, the number of Alaska Natives included in the sample is still too small to support detailed statistical analysis on an annual basis. Therefore we have combined three years in the analyses reported here. Both the State of Alaska and the CDC do not report results for analyses in which there are fewer than 50 respondents in a category. We have followed this guideline, thus limiting our ability to do multivariate analysis. Because of the small samples, it is usually not possible to perform analyses looking at the effects of more than one variable at a time for Alaska Natives. For example, we cannot examine the simultaneous effects of sex and region of residence on the prevalence of a characteristic among Alaska Natives.

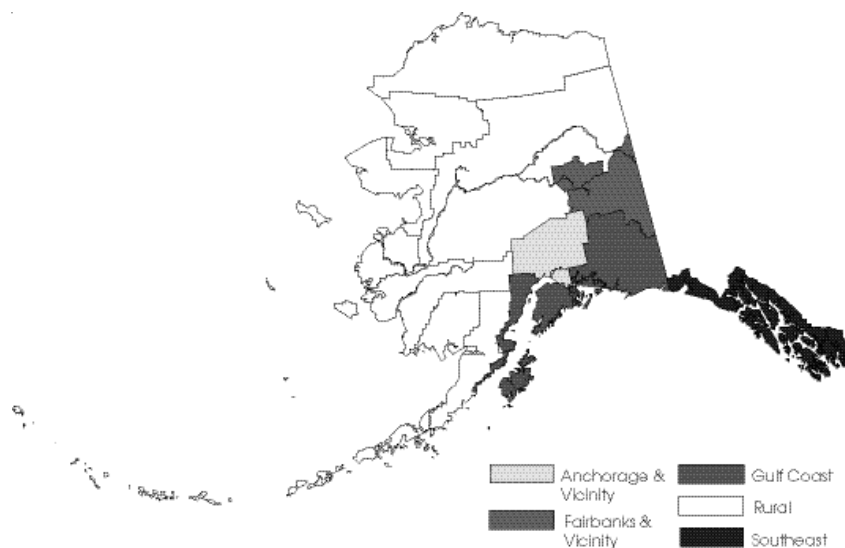
A Comment on the Interpretation of Differences

In some charts, the bars representing the estimated prevalence of characteristics for Alaska Natives and non-Natives, or men and women, or for regions, may look different. However, unless they are described as *statistically significantly different* in the accompanying text, we must assume that the true prevalence is probably not different. This is because the potential error of the estimate may be very large, usually because of small numbers of respondents.

The length of the Confidence Interval (CI) line relative to the height of the bar gives a visual impression of the reliability of the estimate – if the CI line is long, the estimate is less reliable than if the CI line is short. If the 95% CI is more than one third as large as the estimated prevalence, we consider the estimate to be uncertain and we recommend using that estimate with caution. This is indicated by footnotes to the charts. A large CI may be the result of small numbers of people who gave the response tabulated, even though the group as a whole included more than 50 people.

BRFSS Regions in Alaska

The map shows BRFSS regions in Alaska. BRFSS now defines 5 regions, separating Anchorage and Fairbanks. Until 1997, those two regions were combined in the BRFSS. For consistency we present the results for smokeless tobacco using 4 region, combining Anchorage and Fairbanks as Urban. The Rural Alaska region as defined by the BRFSS is very large and diverse and does not correspond closely to Tribal Health Corporation boundaries.

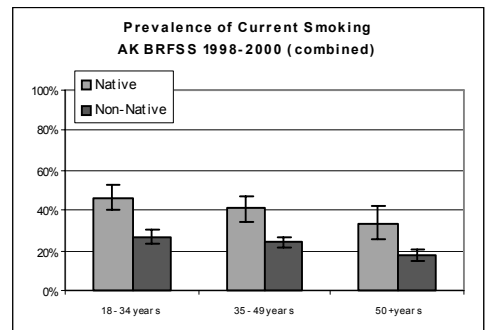
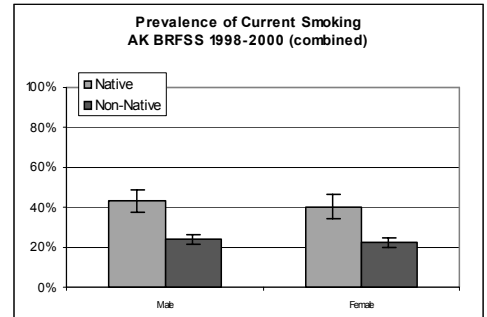


Map of BRFSS Regions in Alaska

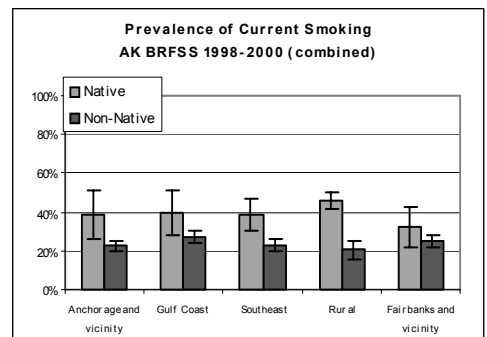
Tobacco Use: Current Smoking

Do you now smoke cigarettes everyday, some days or not at all?

- More than 40% of Alaska Natives were current cigarette smokers, while slightly more than 20% of non-Natives were current smokers; this was statistically significant ($p < .05$).
- There were no statistically significant differences between men and women among Alaska Natives or non-Natives.
- Among Alaska Natives, there were no statistically significant age differences in the proportion of respondents who smoked cigarettes.
- Among non-Natives, statistically significantly fewer respondents age 50 years and older smoked cigarettes than younger respondents ($p < .05$).
- There were no statistically significant regional differences in the prevalence of smoking cigarettes for Alaska Natives or non-Natives.



Note: The CI for Alaska Natives age 50+ years is greater than 1/3 of the estimate.



Note: The CIs for Alaska Natives in Anchor-age, Fairbanks, the Gulf Coast and the Southeast are greater than 1/3 of the estimates.

Smoking over Time

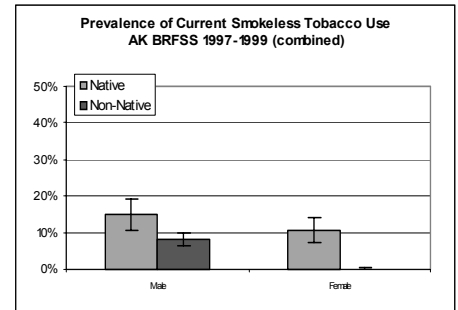
- Over the 10 year period from 1991 to 2000, Natives consistently had a higher prevalence of smoking than Non-Natives. There were no significant changes in the prevalence of smoking during this period for either Natives or Non-Natives.

Tobacco Use: Smokeless Tobacco

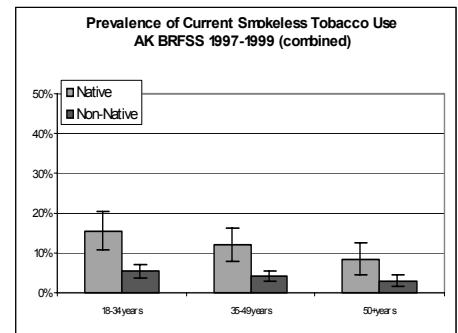
Do you currently use any smokeless tobacco products such as chewing tobacco or snuff?

The smokeless tobacco questions are an optional module that was used in 1997, 1998 and 1999 in Alaska.

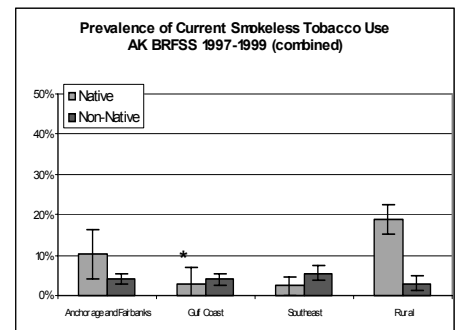
- Among Alaska Natives, 15% of men and 10% of women reported using smokeless tobacco products.
- Smokeless tobacco use was statistically significantly lower among non-Natives than among Alaska Natives ($p < .05$). It was very uncommon among non-Native women.
- There were no statistically significant age trends in the use of smokeless tobacco products.
- Nearly 20% of Alaska Natives living in rural areas reported using smokeless tobacco products, statistically significantly more than in the Gulf Coast or Southeast regions ($p < .05$).
- Other regional differences were not statistically significant.



Note: The CIs for all groups are greater than 1/3 of the estimates.



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Prevalence of Current Smokeless Tobacco Use* by Selected Demographics

Alaska BRFSS 1997-1999 (combined)

	Race		N	Weighted %	95% CI	Non-Native		N	Weighted %	95% CI
	n					n				
Gender	Native	133	1101	13	10.2 - 15.5					
	Non-Native	164	4387	4	3.4 - 5.2					
Gender	Native									
	n	N	Weighted %	95% CI	n	N	Weighted %	95% CI		
Male	69	479	15	10.7 - 19.4	160	2108	8	6.4 - 9.7		
Female	64	622	11	7.5 - 13.9	4	2279	0	0 - 0.4		
Age	18-34	54	367	15	10.7 - 20.2	67	1246	5	3.6 - 7.2	
	35-49	53	404	12	7.8 - 16.2	69	1919	4	2.8 - 5.6	
	50 +	25	318	8	4.5 - 12.3	27	1209	3	1.5 - 4.5	
Region	Anchorage and Fairbanks	11	139	10	4.0 - 16.2	72	1843	4	3.0 - 5.4	
	Gulf Coast	3	103	3	0 - 6.8	35	1072	4	2.6 - 5.5	
	Southeast	5	171	2	0.1 - 4.6	43	1004	5	3.8 - 7.2	
	Rural	114	688	19	15.2 - 22.7	14	468	3	1.2 - 4.8	

*Current smokeless tobacco users are participants who have ever used a smokeless tobacco product during their lifetime and now use a smokeless tobacco product.

Prevalence of Current Smokeless Tobacco Use* by Selected Demographics

Alaska BRFSS 1997-1999 (combined)

	n	N	Weighted %	95% CI
Race				
Native	133	1101	13	10.2 - 15.5
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				Weighted %
				95% CI
				N
				Weighted %
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18-34	54	367	15	10.7 - 20.2
35-49	53	404	12	7.8 - 16.2
50 +	25	318	8	4.5 - 12.3
				n
				Weighted %
				95% CI
				N
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Region				
Anchorage and Fairbanks	11	139	10	4.0 - 16.2
Gulf Coast	3	103	3	0 - 6.8
Southeast	5	171	2	0.1 - 4.6
Rural	114	688	19	15.2 - 22.7
				n
				Weighted %
				95% CI
				N
				Weighted %
				95% CI

*Current smokeless tobacco users are participants who have ever used a smokeless tobacco product during their lifetime and now use a smokeless tobacco product.



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