

Smoking During Pregnancy: Current Trends

Among risky behaviors, smoking during pregnancy ranks high. Maternal smoking has been linked to low-birth-weight infants, intrauterine growth retardation, and an increased infant mortality risk. Many women have gotten the message. During the 1990s, the rate of smoking during pregnancy dropped by nearly one third. As reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 12.3% of all women smoked during their pregnancies in 1999.¹ This favorable trend may be short-lived, however, because smoking rates among pregnant teenagers are rising.

Teenagers now account for the highest rate of smoking during pregnancy (Figure 1). During the first half of the 1990s, the smoking rate declined by one fifth among mothers ages 15 through 19 years (from 20.8% in 1990 to 16.7% in 1994)—but the rate rose again (to almost 18%) during the second half of the decade. The 1999 smoking rate among teenage mothers was highest among non-Hispanic whites (29.6%) and American Indians (22.6%) and lowest among non-Hispanic blacks (6.9%) and Hispanics (4.5%).

The steepest declines in the rate of smoking during pregnancy were seen among women in the 30 to 34 (–45%) and the 25 to 29 (–41%) age-groups. Among racial and ethnic groups, American Indian women have the distinction of having the highest overall rate

of smoking during pregnancy (20% in 1999) and the lowest rate of decline (–11% from 1990 to 1999).

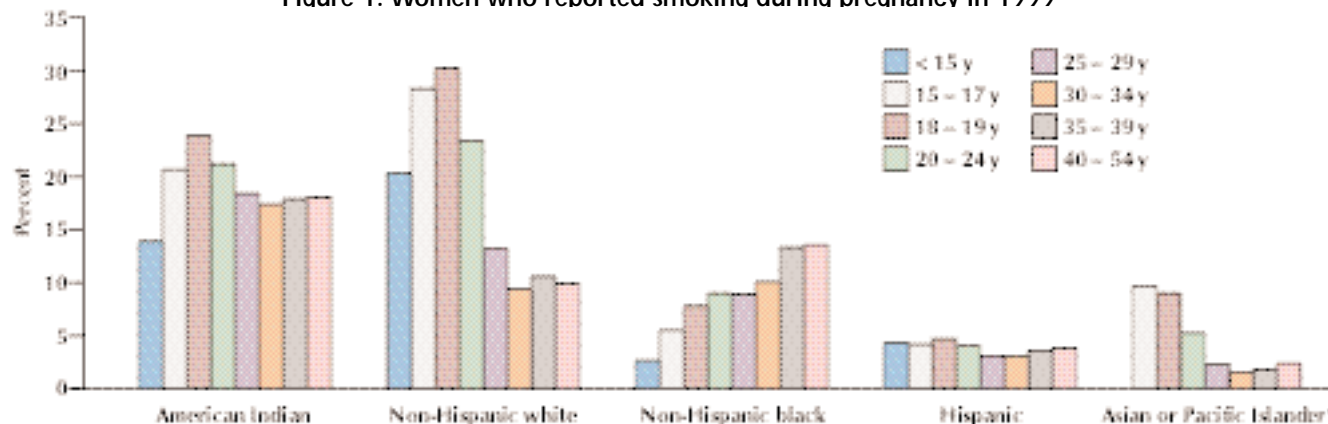
- Women who reported smoking during their pregnancies in 1999 were more likely than nonsmokers to:
- ◆ Have had less than 12 years of education (smoking rates were lowest among women with four or more years of college).
 - ◆ Have a higher order of birth.
 - ◆ Be unmarried.
 - ◆ Have been born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia.
 - ◆ Have had a single birth.
 - ◆ Have had late or no prenatal care.

Geographical differences were also noted. All the states and localities that reported data had decreases in their smoking-during-pregnancy rates for the decade. However, the largest declines were seen in the District of Columbia (–76.7%), Massachusetts (–57.3%), and Arizona (–50.7%). The lowest rates of smoking during pregnancy in 1999 were reported for the District of Columbia (3.8%), New York City (3.8%), Texas (6.9%), Arizona (7.4%), and Hawaii (7.6%).

REFERENCE

1. Mathews TJ. *Smoking During Pregnancy in the 1990s*. National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol 49, No 7. Hyattsville, Md: National Center for Health Statistics; 2001.

Figure 1. Women who reported smoking during pregnancy in 1999



* Fewer than 20 Asian or Pacific Islander women younger than 15 years reported smoking.

From Mathews. National Vital Statistics Reports. 2001.¹