

Michigan's Multicultural Minority Populations

Michigan's ethnic populations are an emerging majority. Following is some general demographic and tobacco information:

African American

Based on 1990 census figures, there are at least 1.5 million African American residents in Michigan. 95% of the population lives in 11 Michigan counties: Berrien, Calhoun, Genesee, Ingham, Kalamazoo, Kent, Muskegon, Oakland, Saginaw, Washtenaw and Wayne. African Americans have a long history with tobacco dating back to the 1700s when slaves worked on tobacco plantations. During the 1940's, tobacco companies were among the first corporations to begin advertising in the African American press. In Michigan, about 23.6% of African American adults smoke and 18.7% of African American high school students smoke.

Arab Americans

There are at least 350,000 Arab-Americans living in the Detroit Metro area with the largest population density in Wayne, Macomb and Oakland Counties. The major groups by country of origin are Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi, Palestinian, Yemeni and Egyptian. Approximately 38.9% of Arab adults in Michigan smoke. 40.6% of adult males and 38.2% of adult females smoke. Youth smoking (at least one cigarette per day) is estimated at 23%. In addition to cigarettes, smoking through a water pipe is a popular and socially acceptable practice, particularly among females.

Asian Americans

The term Asian American refers to people living in the U.S. whose ancestors were native inhabitants of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the India subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. The term includes at least 32 distinct nationalities with racial/ethnic subgroups and nearly 500 languages and dialects. It is estimated that in Michigan about 88% of Asians and Pacific Islanders reside in Oakland, Wayne, Washtenaw, Macomb, Ingham, Kent, Kalamazoo, Genesee, Ottawa, Berrien, Saginaw and Calhoun Counties. A 1998 Surgeon General's report indicates the Asian/PI smoking rate was 16.9%. A 1998 National Asian Women's Health Organization reports the Asian/PI rate as 29.4%. National trends demonstrate much higher rates.

Hispanic (Chicano/Latino) Americans

The Hispanic population in Michigan is largely Chicano (Mexican American) and Latino (20 distinct countries around the world). According to the 2000 census projections, Chicanos/Latinos will soon be the second largest segment in the U.S., and the U.S. will be the fourth largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world. In Michigan, Latino/Chicanos are concentrated in the urban areas: Detroit, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint, Saginaw, Adrian and Holland. Smoking rates among Hispanic adults is about 25%, and appears to be rising.

Native Americans

Based on 1990 Census data, Michigan has the tenth largest Native American population in the U.S. and the largest east of the Mississippi. There are eleven federally recognized tribes in the state with a total enrollment in 1995 of 65,464. Tribal members may live on, near or far away from the reservation in both rural and urban settings. Michigan is home to many Native Americans who belong to tribes in other states. "Seema", or tobacco, is one of the four major sacred plants, representing the Eastern direction. It is used in the offering of prayer to the Creator, acting as a medium for communications. It is either offered to the fire, so smoke can lift the prayers to the Creator or it is set on the ground in a clean place at the base of a tree, or on the water. Elders say to hold it in the left hand which is closest to the heart. Unfortunately, tobacco is often abused in the form of cigarettes. 42% of Michigan Native Americans smoke cigarettes. About 20% of young Native Americans begin smoking in their early teens.