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## 25% of Americans Are Exposed to Secondhand Smoke – and These Groups Are Affected the Most



About one in four non-smokers are exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke, according to a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ([https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6748a3.htm?s\\_cid=mm6748a3\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6748a3.htm?s_cid=mm6748a3_w)). This finding was obtained from an analysis of data collected during 2013-2014 as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

The 25 percent number is a dramatic improvement from 1988, when 87.5 percent of non-smokers were exposed to second-hand smoke — but it's nearly identical to what exposure rates were during 2011-2012. It seems, say CDC experts, that “progress has stalled in recent years.” ^

The authors of the report also note that there are significant disparities in terms of who is being exposed to secondhand smoke: Children, African-Americans, those without a high school degree, and people who rent (versus own) their home are disproportionately impacted.

According to the report, about 50 percent of African-American non-smokers are exposed to secondhand smoke, as are 38 percent of American children (age 3-11) of any ethnic background.

While secondhand smoke isn't as dangerous as smoking cigarettes directly, it contains more than 7,000 chemicals. Studies have linked secondhand smoke to sudden infant death syndrome, higher rates of ear infections and asthma in kids, and an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer in adult non-smokers.

The major drop-off in secondhand smoke exposure from the 1980s comes largely thanks to fewer people smoking, increased awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke (and smoking in general), and “the adoption of comprehensive smoke-free laws prohibiting smoking in workplaces and public places in many states and localities,” according to the CDC.

How to move past the current plateau? “These findings underscore the importance of continued measures to enhance smoke-free policy coverage, including educating parents and caregivers about the benefits of voluntarily prohibiting smoking in their homes and vehicles. These steps can reduce secondhand smoke exposure across all population groups, particularly those with the greatest exposure prevalence.”

You can learn more about the dangers of secondhand smoke [here](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/health_effects/index.htm) (https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\_statistics/fact\_sheets/secondhand\_smoke/health\_effects/index.htm).

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