HOUSEHOLD HEALTH SURVEY DATA SPOTLIGHT:
More than half of Southeastern Pennsylvania smokers attempted to stop smoking in the past year

The American Cancer Society is sponsoring the Great American Smokeout® on November 21st. The annual event provides education on the risks of smoking and resources to help smokers quit. In recognition of the Great American Smokeout®, this HOUSEHOLD HEALTH SURVEY DATA SPOTLIGHT describes findings from an analysis of PHMC Household Health Survey (HHS) data that highlight the percentage of adults in the region who attempted to quit smoking in the past year and the quit methods they used.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States.[1] In the Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) region, the percentage of adults (18 and over) who smoke cigarettes decreased from 23% in 2004 to 16% in 2018-2019 (age-adjusted).[2] Still, an estimated 487,000 adults in the region currently smoke.[3]

Since 2004, over half of current smokers in SEPA report that they tried to quit in the past year. This attempted quit rate mirrors national trends, which show that about half of Americans have attempted to quit in the past year.[4]
Tobacco dependence is a chronic disease and often requires multiple attempts to successfully quit. Treatment options, such as counseling (individual, group, telephone) and medications (varenicline/Chantix and Nicotine gum, patch, inhaler and lozenges) have been found to be effective and can significantly increase rates of long-term abstinence.[5] The percentage of current smokers in SEPA who attempted to quit smoking using a recommended method, such as counseling and/or medication, increased from 25% in 2004 to 41% in 2018-2019.
HHS data demonstrate that smoking is still a significant problem, with 16% of adults in the SEPA region reporting that they smoke. Approximately half of smokers have attempted to quit in the past 12 months, and an increasing percentage of those attempting to quit since 2004 use a recommended quit method. Given that recommended quit methods substantially increase quit success, further examination of use of recommended methods by subgroups may inform opportunities for targeted outreach and resource provision.

Are you looking to stop smoking, or do you know someone who would like to quit? The PA Free Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW and pa.quitlogix.org, a program of the PA Department of Health, provides tobacco cessation services including counseling calls and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to all Pennsylvania residents.


[2] In line with Healthy People 2020 methodology, and for purposes of adjusting for different age distributions over time and place, percentages presented in this Data Spotlight are age-adjusted to the Year 2000 U.S. standard based on five age-categories. Age-adjustment enables more accurate comparisons for health indicators impacted by age.

[3] Current smoking was defined according to Health People 2020 measures. To determine smoking status, respondents were asked, “Have you smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your entire life?” Those who answered “yes” were asked, “Do you now smoke cigarettes every day, some days, or not at all?” Current smokers were those who had smoked at least 100 cigarettes during their lifetime and, at the time of the interview, reported smoking every day or some days.”


The Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Household Health Survey (HHS), conducted continuously since 1983 by Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC), is a comprehensive health survey of 7,500 households in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties. The survey collects information from residents about their health status, use of health services, access to care, and many other timely health issues. Findings from the survey are used to better understand how social determinants of health, economic and environmental factors can impact individuals and communities.

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