TOBACCO HAS HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF BLACK AMERICANS

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death among Black Americans, claiming 45,000 Black lives every year.[1]

Black Americans die from smoking-caused diseases at far higher rates than other Americans despite starting to smoke at a later age, smoking fewer cigarettes per day, and being more likely to make a quit attempt.[2]

Tobacco use is a major contributor to three of the leading causes of death among Black Americans – heart disease, cancer and stroke.[3] The higher rates of some tobacco-caused diseases among Black Americans result, in part, from their greater use of menthol cigarettes, which are associated with reduced cessation.[4]

- Black Americans have the highest incidence and death rates and shortest survival of any other racial or ethnic group for most cancers. Smoking is responsible for one-third of all cancer deaths.[5] Each year, more than 72,000 Black Americans are diagnosed with a tobacco-related cancer and more than 39,000 die from a tobacco-related cancer.[6]

- Smoking is responsible for 87% of lung cancer deaths.[7] Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the Black community. It was estimated that in 2019, 25,390 Black Americans would be diagnosed with lung cancer and 16,550 Black Americans would die from it.[8]

- About a third (32%) of heart disease deaths are caused by tobacco use.[9] Black Americans are 20% more likely to die from heart disease than Whites.[10] Black Americans are 50% more likely to have a stroke and 40% more likely to die from a stroke than Whites.[11]

- Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death among Black Americans. Black Americans are twice as likely as Whites to die from diabetes. The risk of developing diabetes is 30–40% higher for cigarette smokers than nonsmokers.[12]

- Smoking also increases the incidence of COPD and infant mortality among Black Americans.[13]

- Smoking has been identified as a risk factor for severe illness from COVID-19 and is a major cause of underlying conditions like heart disease and diabetes that disproportionately impact Black Americans and make them more vulnerable to this pandemic.[14]

In addition, Black Americans are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke than any other racial or ethnic group. In fact, nearly half (48%) of Black Americans are still exposed to this preventable health hazard.[15] Among Black youth (ages 3-11), two-thirds (66.2%) are exposed to secondhand smoke, compared to 38.1% of white kids of the same age.[16] Exposure to secondhand smoke is known to cause sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), respiratory infections, ear infections and more severe asthma attacks in children, as well as heart disease, stroke and lung cancer in adults.[17]

MENTHOL PREFERENCE AMONG CIGARETTE SMOKERS (AGES 12+)

Bar chart showing menthol preference percentages:
- Overall: 39.93%
- White: 29.35%
- Asian: 46.76%
- Hispanic: 49.97%
- **Black: 84.62%**

Source: Delnevo, et al. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research,* 2020 (data from 2018 National Survey on Drug Use & Health)
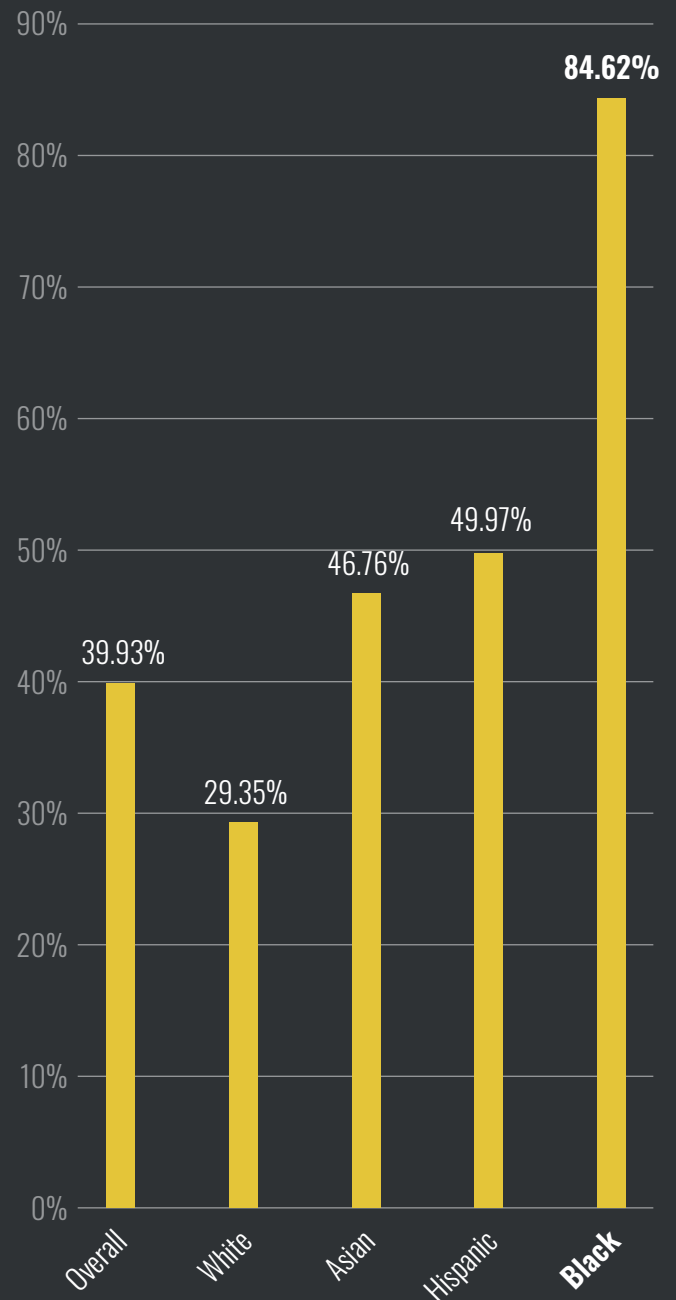
MENTHOL CIGARETTES ARE MAJOR REASON WHY BLACK AMERICANS SUFFER DISPROPORTIONATELY FROM TOBACCO USE

Thanks to decades of pervasive, targeted marketing of menthol cigarettes, the tobacco industry has succeeded in addicting generations of Black Americans to menthol cigarettes. Today, 85% of all Black smokers smoke menthol cigarettes. But menthol cigarettes aren't just like other cigarettes.

In 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a report finding that menthol cigarettes lead to increased smoking initiation among youth and young adults, greater addiction, and decreased success in quitting smoking.[18]

stir the senses

MENTHOL MAKES IT EASIER FOR YOUTH TO START SMOKING

The tobacco companies know that almost all new tobacco users begin their addiction as kids, but they also know that to novice smokers, tobacco can be harsh and unappealing. Menthol is a chemical compound that cools and numbs the throat, masking the harshness of tobacco smoke and making it easier for beginners – primarily kids – to experiment with cigarettes and ultimately become addicted.[19] About half of all high school smokers use menthol cigarettes.[20] According to FDA's Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC):*

• Menthol cigarettes increase the number of children who experiment with cigarettes and the number of children who become regular smokers, increasing overall youth smoking.

• Young people who initiate using menthol cigarettes are more likely to become addicted and become long-term daily smokers.

MENTHOL INCREASES ADDICTION AND MAKES IT HARDER FOR SMOKERS TO QUIT

Black adults smoke at nearly the same rate as Whites (14.9% vs. 15.5%, respectively).[21] However, while most Black smokers want to quit smoking and are more likely to try to quit, they are less likely to succeed.[22] The difficulty that Black Americans experience in quitting smoking – and consequently their higher rates of tobacco-related disease and death – are due, in part, to their greater use of menthol

cigarettes. Both TPSAC's and the FDA's scientific analyses of the impact of menthol cigarettes concluded that menthol cigarettes are associated with increased nicotine dependence and reduced success in smoking cessation.[23] Because menthol cigarettes are more addictive and harder to quit, the health damage that smoking inflicts on Black Americans is magnified.

More than 70% of current Black American smokers want to quit, and more than 60% made a quit attempt in the previous year.[24] However, Black Americans are less likely than White smokers to successfully quit smoking.[25] Among smokers who made a quit attempt in the past year, only 4.9% of Black Americans remained abstinent after 6 months, compared to 7.1% of Whites.[26]
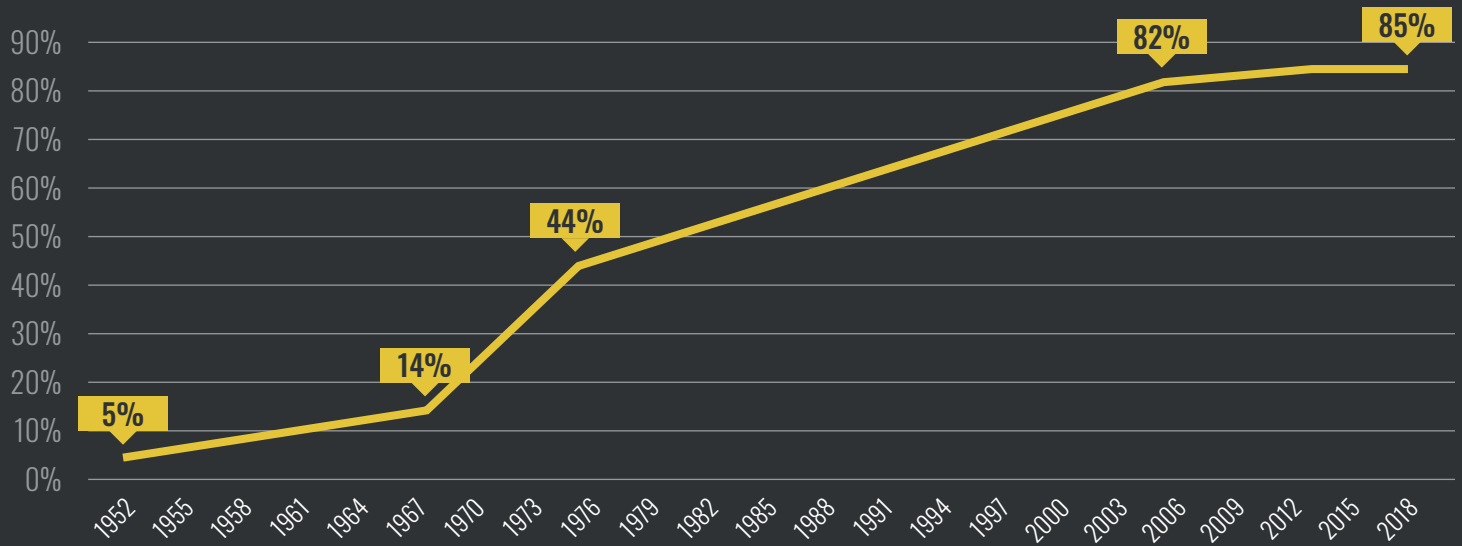
Lower cessation among Black Americans is also related to barriers Black Americans face in accessing tobacco cessation treatment. For example, compared to Whites, Black Americans are less likely to receive advice to quit from a health professional and are less likely to use proven cessation medication treatments.[27]

In its 2011 report, TPSAC estimated that from 2010 to 2020, 460,000 Black Americans would start smoking and 4,700 Black Americans would die because of menthol cigarettes. TPSAC ultimately concluded that, **"Removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health in the United States."**[28]

A decade later, there is even more scientific evidence demonstrating the public health toll of menthol cigarettes, particularly on the Black community. Due to the lower likelihood of smoking cessation among Black American menthol smokers, the 2020 Surgeon General Report on Smoking Cessation concluded that, "Use of menthol cigarettes has been shown to contribute to tobacco cessation-related disparities in the United States."[29] A recent national study found that among daily smokers, Black menthol smokers had 53% lower odds of quitting compared to Black non-menthol smokers.[30]

---

* TPSAC is a group of scientific experts charged with advising the Commissioner of Food and Drugs on safety, dependence, and health issues relating to tobacco. See https://www.fda.gov/advisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/tobaccoproductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/default.htm for more details.

MENTHOL PREFERENCE AMONG BLACK SMOKERS

Chart: Menthol preference among Black smokers, 1952–2018. Values shown: 5% (1952), 14% (1967), 44% (1976), 82% (2006), 85% (2018).

Y-axis: 0% to 90%. X-axis years from 1952 to 2018 in three-year increments.

Sources: Gardiner, PS, "The African Americanization of menthol cigarette use in the United States," Nicotine & Tobacco Research, February 2004; Roper, B.W. (1953). A Study of People's Cigarette Smoking Habits and Attitudes Volume I. Philip Morris, Bates No. 2022239249; MSA, Inc. (1978) The Growth of Menthols, 1933 -1977; Brown & Williamson, Bates No. 670586709-785; National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2004-2018.

THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY TARGETS BLACK AMERICANS

Tobacco's devastating impact on Black Americans is no accident, but rather the direct result of decades of targeted marketing by the tobacco industry, dating back to at least the 1950s. For more than 60 years, the tobacco industry has ruthlessly targeted the Black community, especially youth, with marketing for menthol cigarettes, profiting enormously while destroying Black lives and health.

Brown & Williamson first began targeting Black Americans with Kool cigarettes after a 1953 survey showed that 5% of Black Americans preferred Kool compared to 2% of White Americans. Brown & Williamson seized the opportunity to capitalize upon this small preference margin, recognizing the marketing advantage of appealing to a newly urbanized and more concentrated population. When other tobacco companies realized Kool's growth stemmed from targeting Black Americans, they began competing for this market share with targeted marketing for Kool, Newport, Salem and Benson & Hedges. Newport's aggressive marketing successfully doubled its share of the menthol market between 1981 and 1987, and in 1993 it became – and has remained – the market leader in sales of menthol cigarettes.

The tobacco industry has targeted Black Americans through sponsorship of community and music events, magazine advertising and retail promotions. The industry often appropriates Black culture and music to sell these deadly and addictive products. Today, menthol cigarettes continue to be heavily advertised, widely available and priced cheaper in Black communities, making them especially appealing to price-sensitive youth.

The tobacco industry's predatory marketing has worked all too well. In the 1950s, before these marketing efforts, less than 10% of Black smokers used menthol cigarettes. Once these sophisticated and slick marketing campaigns started appearing across Black media and neighborhoods, use of menthol cigarettes skyrocketed in the Black community. Black smokers continue to smoke menthol cigarettes disproportionately.

Today, 85% of all Black smokers smoke menthol cigarettes as a direct result of the tobacco industry's predatory marketing.

"

Menthols in general do better among the very young, and among very young blacks, almost the entire market is accounted for by Kool, Salem and Newport."

— **Roper Organization report for Philip Morris**
"A Study of Smoking Habits Among Young Smokers." July 1974

HERE ARE EXAMPLES OF THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY'S DEADLY TARGETING OF BLACK AMERICANS.

Magazine Advertising

The establishment of popular magazines like Ebony and Jet provided marketing venues that had not previously existed for reaching Black consumers. Since the 1960s and continuing into the 21st century, the tobacco industry has strategically placed advertising for menthol cigarettes in magazines with high Black readership. These advertisements feature Black models and use themes that have been effective industry strategies over the decades, including associating smoking with a popular lifestyle. From 1998 to 2002, Ebony was 9.8 times more likely than People to contain ads for menthol cigarettes.[31] Expenditures for magazine advertising of mentholated cigarettes increased from 13% of total ad expenditures in 1998 to 76% in 2006.[32]

Always looking to expand their market and find "replacement smokers", Philip Morris introduced Virginia Slims, the first woman-specific brand, in 1968, signaling that women were also a major target of the tobacco industry. Ads for Virginia Slims depicted women, including many Black women, as independent, sophisticated and successful.
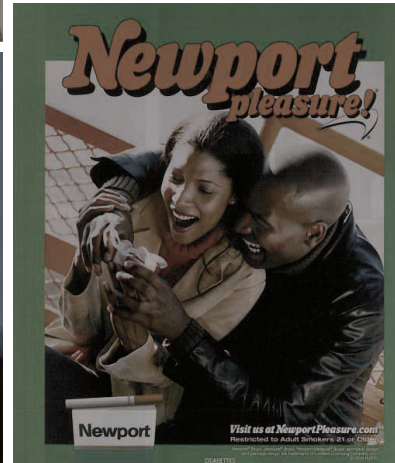
Sampling and Mobile Van Programs

The tobacco companies considered free sampling to be an important strategy for attracting new customers, employing mobile van programs across the country to reach Black Americans. Lorillard introduced the Newport Pleasure Van program in 1979 in New York, expanding to cities across the United States to distribute free samples and coupons. Kool and Salem subsequently mimicked this effective strategy, reaching Black Americans in cities across the country.[33]

Music and Event Sponsorship

The tobacco companies recognized the value of associating their brand with popular community events, particularly focused around music. Industry-sponsored events included Brown & Williamson's Kool Jazz Festival, R.J. Reynolds Salem Summer Street Scenes festivals, and Philip Morris' Club Benson & Hedges promotional bar nights, targeting clubs frequented by Black Americans.[34] R.J. Reynolds estimated that they reached at least half of Black Americans in Memphis, Detroit, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C through their Salem Summer Street Scenes festivals.[35]

1965 Kool ad ,1985 Benson & Hedges ad, 2004 Camel ad, 2016 Newport ad

Salem van in Houston, TX (1991)

TARGETED SAMPLING

A total of 1.9MM samples will be distributed to targeted smokers in 1933. Sample distribution will be targeted to:

- Housing projects, clubs, community organizations and events where Kool's Black young adult target congregate.
- Music events and targeted neighborhoods where Kool target congregates and where the sampling venue provides image reinforcement of the campaign.
- Demographically targeted neighborhoods where competitors (e.g., Newport) have made significant inroads into the Kool business. Sampling vans will be used in the above areas in selected major markets.

1984 Kool Magazine Ad

Extend reach and frequency of music association to gain credibility through Black media press coverage of Kool music events.

— **Kool Market Development Program**
Brown & Williamson Records

1990 Newport Billboard in Houston, TX

2004 Kool Mixx Special Edition pack

2013 Exterior retail advertising for Camel
Durham, NC

2013 Exterior retail advertising for Newport
Charlotte, NC

Billboard Advertising

Prior to the Master Settlement Agreement's ban on cigarette billboard advertising, this strategy was widely employed by the tobacco industry. Research from several cities across the country found that low income and African American neighborhoods had significantly more cigarette billboard ads compared to White neighborhoods.[36]

Branding and Packaging

While these strategies were ultimately short-lived, the tobacco industry also targeted Black Americans through targeted branding and packaging designs featuring culturally appropriated images. In 2004, Brown & Williamson started an ad campaign for their Kool brand cigarettes clearly aimed at Black youth. The Kool Mixx campaign featured images of young Black rappers, DJs and dancers on cigarette packs and in advertising. The campaign also included radio giveaways with cigarette purchases and a hip hop DJ competition in major cities. Attorneys General from several states promptly filed motions against Brown & Williamson for advertising to youth in violation of the Master Settlement Agreement.[37] Simultaneously, Brown & Williamson promoted a new line of cigarette flavors like Caribbean Chill, Mocha Taboo, and Midnight Berry using images of Black Americans and themes attractive to Black youth. These cigarettes were promoted through dance clubs and hip-hop music venues. In a similar vein, in the 1980s and 1990s, Uptown and "X" brand (emulating Malcolm X) cigarettes were also introduced, with the explicit aim of targeting the Black community, although these brand quickly failed due to community backlash.[38]

Point-of-Sale Targeting

The tobacco companies developed specific strategies and specially designed product displays to adapt their point-of-sale marketing to smaller retailers that were more common in cities through programs like Brown & Williamson's Kool Inner City Family Program, with the explicit goal, "to reach the core of Kool's franchise (young, black, relatively low income and education)."[39]

Strategies to target stores in Black neighborhoods continue today. A wealth of research indicates that Black neighborhoods have a disproportionate number of tobacco retailers, pervasive tobacco marketing, and in particular, more marketing of menthol products.[40] Nationally, stores in neighborhoods with the highest proportion of Black Americans have more than double the odds of advertising price promotions for tobacco products, compared to stores in neighborhoods with the lowest proportion of Black Americans.[41] Newport cigarettes (the most popular menthol brand) are significantly less expensive in neighborhoods with higher proportions of Black Americans, making them even more appealing to price sensitive youth.[42]