

# FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Oregon Department of Human Services  
Public Health Division  
Tobacco Prevention and Education Program

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oregon's Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP) is nationally recognized for its success. Since 1996, the number of 8th graders that smoke has fallen 59 percent. In addition, smokeless tobacco use has declined 46 percent among 11th grade males. Oregon's Indoor Clean Air Act protects 95 percent of workers from secondhand smoke, and 86 percent of Oregonians report complete smoking bans in their home. Because of the reduction in tobacco use from 1996 to 2003 in Oregon, there were 2,700 fewer infants born to mothers who used tobacco, and today we have 133,000 fewer smokers in the state than we did in 1996.

As impressive as these statistics are, closer inspection reveals that the burden of tobacco is not shared equally across all communities. Declining tobacco use and expanded tobacco use surveillance efforts exposed disparities among distinct populations.

Identifying and eliminating tobacco disparities is a priority for TPEP. TPEP provides funding to mobilize communities and systems to eliminate disparities. TPEP supports research and evaluation to develop evidenced-based and culturally appropriate practices and data-gathering methods. TPEP is also committed to culturally appropriate strategies, programs and materials.

## Background

In 2004 and 2005, TPEP contracted with Grove Insight, an opinion research and communication strategy firm, to hold 28 focus groups representing 14 distinct demographic groups - **bar workers, community college students, Vietnamese Americans, people with asthma, Latinos(as), blue collar workers, white coastal residents, white rural residents, white urban residents, low income women, gays and lesbians, American Indians, Korean Americans, and African Americans.** There were two groups (one women, one men) for each distinct population. Grove Insight recruited participants for the focus groups among nonsmokers who were known to have been involved in civic participation around a particular issue in the past two years. TPEP specifically chose to conduct focus groups with nonsmokers because qualitative data about nonsmokers is limited while abundant qualitative data exists about smokers' attitudes, knowledge and beliefs. The focus groups were held in various locations across the state to include urban, rural, coastal, and Indian

Country areas. Grove Insight developed moderator guides specific to each priority population. Ju Young Stevens of Aspex moderated the Korean American groups. Mai Tran of Multicultural Solutions moderated the Vietnamese American groups. Enrique Castillo of Castillo & Associates moderated the Latino(a) groups.

Each group delivered an abundance of information for utilization by tobacco prevention programs for education and advocacy in their community. The matrix included in this report shows common threads discovered among focus group participants. In addition, individual pages describing findings for each target community are included. Moderator guides are also available from TPEP upon request.

## Note

Findings from focus group data are not representative of the population as a whole. Focus groups include only a small number of people who are recruited to participate in informal discussions based on some commonalities. Information from focus groups is useful for developing a deeper understanding of a program or service, to explore new ideas from the perspective of a group of key informants and to provide a forum for issues that arise that have not been considered.

We hope the information presented in this report is useful to community programs in their planning efforts for reducing tobacco related disparities.

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# BAR WORKERS

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Low motivation to change environment
- General feeling of powerlessness
- Belief that current work situation is temporary...“Eventually, I will get out!”
- Very aware of how their health is negatively affected after exposure to secondhand smoke at work.

*“You see these older women in bars that have worked there forever...smoke it's killing them...their skin, their health...It's a concern and that's why I'm trying to get out of it.”*

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Sensitive to “rights” of smokers

## MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Toxic content of cigarettes
- Rates of disease among service workers
- Ill effects from exposure to secondhand smoke

## WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Vote or sign petition for smokefree bars and taverns
- Advocate for smokefree nights
- Write letters to legislators
- Talk with bar owner to decrease tobacco smoke in environment
- Contact Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- Visit tobacco prevention websites to find out what else they can do
- Educate family and friends

## ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Those that portray children and people like themselves

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Rallies and demonstrations
- T-shirts

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

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## **SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:**

- Males support allowing smoking in bars and clubs; most females strongly support banning smoking in these establishments
- Men seemed inclined to protect the “aura of vice” as well as protect the “smoker’s right;” women contend the “right to breathe clean air” supercedes any claim to rights of smokers
- Both supported the idea of their school divesting from tobacco companies, but were concerned about tuition increases

*“If the majority of people get together and they boycott it, and they can do that. But those students also have to realize that if this school is bringing in less money, and that might mean cuts in other things, which might affect people going to school here.”*

## **SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:**

- Sensitive to the “culture” of smoking in bars and clubs and the “rights” of smokers

## **MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:**

- Right to breathe clean air
- Toxic content of cigarettes
- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke

## **WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:**

- Advocate for smokefree student housing
- Urge schools to divest from tobacco
- Advocate for smokefree nights in bars
- Encourage newspapers to stop accepting tobacco ads
- Talk to loved ones and friends
- Post educational materials around campus

## **ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:**

- Those that portray children
- Those that talk about toxic chemicals in cigarettes

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:**

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Advertisements in buses, light rail, and movie theaters

# VIETNAMESE AMERICANS

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Not surprised about the rates of smoking in their community
- Believe high smoking rate is due to peer pressure, cultural tradition and because their government of origin is “ok” with smoking
- Believe that individuals have the “right to smoke” but should be educated on the harmful effects of smoking
- Believe advertisements that make smokers look like “bad” people is ineffective, because it puts smokers on the defensive

*“I think it comes down to peer pressure. If one guy goes out with four other guys and they’re all smoking, they’re going to say, ‘How come you are not smoking? Are you chicken?’ If the guy wants to be friends with the other four guys, then he’ll start smoking.”*

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Believe smokers have the “right” to smoke and it’s their decision to quit

## MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- The vulnerability of children and the elderly to secondhand smoke
- Right to breathe clean air
- High rates of smoking in their community

## WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Write letters to legislators
- Refuse, as a community, tobacco sponsorships at events
- Educate friends and family of the dangers of secondhand smoke
- Make individual homes smokefree and post a sign indicating so for visiting family and visitors

## ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Those that portray children and families

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Make printed materials available at temples, churches, schools, hospitals and clinics
- Outreach at community events

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# PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA

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## **SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:**

- Have very strong feelings about exposure to secondhand smoke
- Are not very interested in tobacco activism
- Have learned to adapt their lives to avoid secondhand smoke as they have with other triggers

*"It is serious. It is hard to describe, because you know people you hear about them in the news dying and stuff, and then when you have that serious of an asthma attack they put you in ICU, and you are worried, because your oxygenation is down to 70 percent."*

## **SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:**

- Acknowledge smokers are a threat to their health

## **MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:**

- The right to breathe clean air

## **WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:**

- Write letters to legislators
- Spread the word about making bars and taverns smokefree
- Educate family and friends
- Make their home smokefree

## **ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:**

- Those that portray children, service workers, and people with asthma
- Those that talk about the toxic substances in cigarettes

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:**

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Educate parent groups like the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

# LATINOS(AS)

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Believe in the right to breathe clean air
- Aware that smoking is a problem in their community, especially among young people
- Believe young people are smoking because of boredom, peer pressure and lack of parental involvement

*"I worry about children smoking because they have so much information and they still fall into that. I remember that none of that was taught when I went to school. I tell my children they should not smoke and they say, mom they tell us that in school. There are many children who are doing that anyway. They want to experiment on their own."*

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Adults have a "right" to smoke

## MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Right to breathe clean air
- Disease and death linked to secondhand smoke and smoking

## WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Prohibit sponsorship of events by tobacco companies
- Encourage community centers and churches to be smokefree
- Make their homes smokefree
- Support prevention education for youth
- Educate family and friends

## ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Death rates due to secondhand smoke and smoking
- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Toxic chemicals in cigarettes

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Community newsletters

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# BLUE COLLAR WORKERS

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## **SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:**

- Believe that smokers should have a place to smoke
- Empathize with service workers' exposure to secondhand smoke

## **SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:**

- Sensitive to giving smokers a place to smoke
- In response to information about tobacco companies using children to harvest tobacco, they said child labor is an unfortunate but standard practice of corporate America

*"It's just a matter again of it being a common piece of education that people know what they're buying, where the line is because so much stuff that we buy here comes from child labor. That is a given and people don't know it."*

## **MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:**

- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Chemical content of cigarettes
- Vulnerability of low-income people to secondhand smoke

## **WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:**

- Sign petition for smokefree public places
- Advocate for smokefree union halls
- Educate family, friends and neighbors
- Support prevention programs at schools

## **ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:**

- Those that portray children and people like themselves exposed to secondhand smoke

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:**

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Print ads on public transportation, in restrooms, at concerts, welfare offices and on health insurance statements

# WHITE COASTAL RESIDENTS

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF

- Smoking is not as urgent a concern in their community as methamphetamine
- Support smokefree public places

*"...if you were to ban smoking in all of the public places... smokers would actually go to chewing, because they would be able to get their nicotine at that point."*

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Smokers should be accommodated in some capacity
- Concerned that smokers may start chewing if all public places are smokefree

## MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Deaths from tobacco use
- Health care costs due to tobacco use
- Tobacco industry targeting specific populations (especially the ad where a tobacco industry person says, "Smoking is for the stupid!")

## WHAT DID THEY EXPRESS WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Lobby legislators
- Write letters to the editor
- Educate friends and family
- Make their homes smokefree
- Support tobacco prevention education in schools

## ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Those that show the vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Rates of lung cancer due to secondhand smoke

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Through hospitals, schools and workplaces

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# WHITE RURAL RESIDENTS

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## **SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:**

- Apathetic about getting active in tobacco prevention activities
- Lack information on how they could get involved
- Support smokefree workplaces
- Uncomfortable with the pervasiveness of tobacco ads at rodeo events

*"I also feel that rodeos are intended to be more of a family kind of entertainment...they have their advertising and stuff out there...that should really be done away with!"*

## **MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:**

- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Pervasiveness of tobacco ads at rodeo events

## **WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:**

- Ban tobacco sponsorship at rodeo events
- Contact legislators and news editors
- Spread the word about bars and establishments that support smokefree workplaces
- Make their homes smokefree
- Educate loved ones and children

## **ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:**

- Those that portray the effects of secondhand smoke on children
- Graphic images that show young people spitting smokeless tobacco and oral health effects

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:**

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Printed materials in schools

# WHITE URBAN RESIDENTS

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Cynical about possibility of reduction of exposure to secondhand smoke
- Satisfied with the progress of the tobacco prevention program
- Believe there are more important issues on which to focus
- Are not motivated to participate in tobacco prevention efforts

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Service industry workers deserve protection from secondhand smoke

## MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Vulnerability of children and service industry workers to secondhand smoke
- Secondhand smoke and disease
- Health care costs related to tobacco use
- Lethal effects of tobacco
- Right to breathe clean air

## WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Vote for a smoking ban in public places
- Make their home smokefree
- Recommend smokefree establishments to others
- Post tobacco education information at their workplace

## ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Those that portray children and service workers exposed to secondhand smoke

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Advertise on buses, in bathrooms, community centers, hospitals and schools

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# LOW INCOME WOMEN

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#### SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Passionate about causes other than tobacco, and already volunteering
- Support smoking bans in public places
- Feel strongly about tobacco prevention targeting young people

#### SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Service workers deserve the same protection to secondhand smoke as other workers

#### MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Right to breathe clean air
- Toxicity of secondhand smoke
- The targeting of women by the tobacco industry

#### WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Support a public places smoking ban
- Ask landlord to make apartments smokefree
- Continue to do what they've been doing – keeping their homes smokefree and educating loved ones
- Encourage loved ones to quit

#### ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Those that portray children and people like themselves affected by secondhand smoke

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Canvassing campaign
- Word of mouth

# GAYS/LESBIANS

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Smoking is a “fixture” of their bar culture
- Emotional stress, insecurity and low self-esteem contributes to smoking
- Rebellion and peer pressure also play a role in smoking

*“Smoking ties in with alcoholism. It ties in with AIDS, because if you’re sick, you shouldn’t be smoking. It ties in with a lot of things. It ties in with discrimination because people discriminate against smokers...”*

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Sensitive about the “rights” of smokers
- Outraged with tobacco companies for their donations to conservative and anti-gay causes

## MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Statistics on service workers and increased incidence of lung cancer
- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Fact that tobacco kills more people than hate crimes

## WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Support smokefree nights in bars
- Outreach at community events
- Talk with their friends who smoke

## ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Both gays and lesbians enjoyed vibrantly colored posters that include diverse youth, and youth empowerment messages

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Door-to-door campaign to businesses owned or frequented by the lesbian and gay community
- Booths at parades, AIDS and breast cancer walks
- Ads in bathroom stalls and health clubs
- Encourage bar owners to sponsor smokefree nights or go smokefree altogether
- Use promotional items such as beverage coasters, magnets, and posters

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### For more information, contact:

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# AMERICAN INDIANS

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#### SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Clear about the difference between commercial use of tobacco and ceremonial use of tobacco, a sacrosanct ritual
- Don't worry too much about tobacco use in Indian Country
- Feel troubled and degraded by the tobacco companies' depiction of Indian women in their ads
- Feel uneasy about tobacco prevention efforts that appear too confrontational

*"I know that there's no way I'm going to walk in with a petition and a t-shirt and a hat to the Cave after 5 p.m. and go 'I'm pushing for no smoking on all tribal grounds' and expect to get signatures and maybe not get my ass kicked"*

#### SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- Respect the "rights" of smokers

#### MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Tobacco companies' depiction of Indian women in the advertising campaigns
- "American Spirit" brand is distorting the true nature of ceremonial tobacco use
- Tribal members are especially bothered by cigarette smoke at the casino

#### WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Sign a petition to limit tobacco use at powwows and tribal grounds
- Educate family

#### ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- The message, "Tobacco: Use it in a Sacred Way."
- Pamphlets geared toward American Indians
- Lists of things to do other than smoke
- Family-oriented messages about protecting one's loved ones from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Circulate petitions to limit smoking at powwows
- Plan a smokefree day
- Educate tribal elders and members of the tribal council
- Do not use bumper stickers

# KOREAN AMERICANS

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Feel pressure to succeed
- Worried about attempts by tobacco companies to make smoking attractive to Asian American women, but feel such targeting is typical for the business world
- Young people feel disconnected from their parents
- Don't like to be preached at when it comes to health issues (such as tobacco)
- Care about what their parents say

*"My parents work 70-80 hours a week, making money for banks, basically, and they have no clue what I was doing. As long as I get straight As..."*

## SENTIMENTS ABOUT OTHERS:

- People have the right to arrive at their own conclusion about their own smoking
- Tobacco sales are critical for Korean store owners to stay in business

## MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- Vulnerability of children to secondhand smoke
- Death and disease from the effects of secondhand smoke
- Increases in smoking among Asian American youth

*"My parents never talked about cigarettes, sex... anything like that!"*  
*"Korean Americans want less lecturing from the anti-tobacco front and more visual evidence about the impact of smoking."*

## ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Tobacco prevention advertising shown was not compelling because the quality of the images was poor and the content was uninteresting

*"The kids in the picture... they are kind of immigrants so I don't know"*  
*"Too many words."*  
*"It is so out there, it is not personally personal. It is like you are seeing it from afar."*

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Get Korean church leaders, doctors and celebrities involved
- Partner with Asian Health and Service Center, Korean Society of Oregon, Korean Student Association
- Involve people who have lost a loved one to tobacco use

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# AFRICAN AMERICANS

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#### SENTIMENTS ABOUT SELF:

- Burdened by racism and discrimination
- Stressed by joblessness and the difficulty in supporting one's family

#### MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE THEM TO GET INVOLVED IN TOBACCO PREVENTION ADVOCACY:

- High rates of smoking among African Americans
- Incidence and mortality rates for African American men and lung cancer
- Effects of secondhand smoke
- Money spent by their community members on tobacco could send approximately 2000 students to college for a year

#### WHAT THEY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DO:

- Warn loved ones about health hazards of smoking
- Talk with friends and family about effects of secondhand smoke on children

#### ATTENTION GRABBING MESSAGES AND IMAGES:

- Use of traditional African colors
- Use of Kwanza themes
- Messages and images related to nicotine addiction and slavery

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT:

- Radio
- TV
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Raise the cigarette tax
- Outreach at African American events
- Recruit local African American leaders and celebrities to carry the anti-tobacco message

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