

### ASTHMA PREVALENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA

#### WHAT IS ASTHMA?

Asthma is a chronic disease of the lungs characterized by wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing at night or early in the morning. The cause of asthma is unclear, but several triggers such as pollen, animal dander, mold, cockroaches, dust mites, tobacco smoke, physical activity, certain foods and medication have been associated with asthma. Asthma has no cure, but it can be effectively managed to reduce the severity of symptoms.

The two asthma prevalence measures in use by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are the self-reported lifetime and current asthma. Lifetime asthma is defined as an affirmative response to the question “Have you ever been told by a doctor (nurse or other health professional) that you have asthma?” Current asthma is defined as an affirmative response to the preceding question followed by an affirmative response to the subsequent question “Do you still have asthma?”

#### ADULT ASTHMA PREVALENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA, 2013 (AGES 18 AND OLDER)

##### LIFETIME ASTHMA PREVALENCE:

The lifetime asthma prevalence in Pennsylvania was 14.2 percent. This represents an estimated 1,428,654 adults with lifetime asthma.

Adult self-reported lifetime asthma prevalence rates increased from 12.9 percent in 2011 to 14.2 percent in 2013.

Adult females had a higher lifetime asthma prevalence rate (16.6 percent) compared to adult males (11.7 percent).

Approximately one in nine adult males and one in six adult females had lifetime asthma.

Disparities in asthma prevalence exist among races and ethnicities. White non-Hispanics and other non-Hispanics typically had lower lifetime prevalence rates compared to black non-Hispanic, multiracial and Hispanic respondents.

Black non-Hispanics had higher lifetime asthma prevalence (19.0 percent) compared to white non-Hispanics (13.2 percent).

Adults in age-group 18-24 had the highest adult lifetime prevalence rate of 18.8 percent, while adults age 65 years and older had the lowest adult lifetime prevalence of 10.3 percent.

High school non-graduates had the highest adult lifetime asthma prevalence of 17.3 percent compared to 12.4 percent in college graduates.

Lifetime asthma prevalence was highest among respondents with incomes less than \$15,000 (23.2 percent) and lowest among respondents with incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999 (11.5 percent).

The prevalence of lifetime asthma was higher in respondents diagnosed with diabetes (19.0 percent) than in those without a diabetes diagnosis (14.0 percent).

Lifetime asthma prevalence was highest among current adult smokers (17.0 percent) compared to former smokers (13.0 percent) and individuals that never smoked (14.0 percent).

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## **CURRENT ASTHMA PREVALENCE:**

The current asthma prevalence was 9.6 percent. This represents an estimated 955,374 adults with current asthma.

Adult females had a higher current asthma prevalence rate (12.6 percent) compared to adult males (6.3 percent).

Approximately one in sixteen adult males and one in eight adult females had current asthma.

Black non-Hispanics had higher current asthma prevalence (13.0 percent) compared to white non-Hispanics (8.8 percent).

Adults in age-group 18-24 and 45-54 had the highest adult current prevalence rate of 11.0 percent, while adults age 65 years and older had the lowest adult current prevalence of 7.2 percent.

High school non-graduates had the highest adult current asthma prevalence of 13.1 percent compared to 7.0 percent in college graduates.

Current asthma prevalence was highest among respondents with incomes less than \$15,000 (18.6 percent) and lowest among respondents with incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,900 and incomes greater than \$75,000 (7.2 percent).

The prevalence of current asthma was higher in respondents diagnosed with diabetes (14.0 percent) than those without a diabetes diagnosis (9.0 percent).

Current asthma prevalence was highest among current adult smokers (12.0 percent) compared to former smokers (9.0 percent) and individuals that never smoked (9.0 percent).

## **CHILD ASTHMA PREVALENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA, 2013 (AGES 0-17)**

### **LIFETIME ASTHMA PREVALENCE:**

The lifetime asthma prevalence was 14.4 percent. This represents an estimated 382,146 children with lifetime asthma.

The lifetime asthma prevalence was higher in boys (18.2 percent) compared to girls (10.6 percent).

Black non-Hispanic children had the highest lifetime asthma prevalence (29.2 percent) compared to white non-Hispanic children (11.2 percent) and Hispanics (19.5 percent).

Children ages 0-4 had the lowest lifetime asthma prevalence of 6.8 percent. Children ages 10-14 had the highest lifetime asthma prevalence of 18.8 percent.

### **CURRENT ASTHMA PREVALENCE:**

The current asthma prevalence was 10.2 percent. This represents an estimated 269,423 children with current asthma.

The current asthma prevalence was higher in boys (12.6 percent) compared to girls (7.8 percent).

Black non-Hispanic children had the highest current asthma prevalence (24.1 percent) compared to white non-Hispanic children (7.1 percent) and Hispanics (14.9 percent).

Children ages 0-4 had the lowest current asthma prevalence of 5.6 percent. Children ages 10-14 had the highest current asthma prevalence of 13.2 percent.

Data source: Pennsylvania Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

For more information regarding this information, please contact the Asthma Control Program, Pennsylvania Department of Health

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