U.S.-born African American Tobacco Pre-Survey Data Highlights

October 2016
Hennepin & Ramsey Counties

The African American Leadership Forum, in coordination with Hennepin County Public Health, surveyed a convenience sample of 407 African Americans in Hennepin and Ramsey counties from May through July 2016.

This assessment is part of a Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) grant required by the Minnesota Legislature[1] to address African American menthol tobacco use. It is a first step to deepen understanding of African American use patterns and perceptions and attitudes toward menthol tobacco. It will serve as a basis for community engagement and education in the second year of the two-year grant.

Twenty-four percent of the respondents to this survey are current smokers.

U.S.-born African Americans[2] confirm menthol tobacco is a serious threat to their health.
- 84% of surveyed smokers smoke a brand that is menthol.
- 72% of surveyed smokers agreed menthol makes it harder to quit.

Menthol's soothing effect and minty taste makes smoking easier and more attractive, especially for youth.
- Surveyed menthol smokers were attracted to menthol products because they taste and feel different than other types of cigarettes; the top three reasons for using menthol: It's soothing, cooling, and "tastes better" than non-menthol.
- 69% of surveyed smokers agreed menthol's cooling sensation makes it easier for young people to start smoking.

African American community members are targeted by tobacco industry marketing.
- 83% of surveyed smokers get their cigarettes at gas stations or convenience stores – locations commonly visited on a day-to-day basis.
- 61% of respondents agree menthol cigarettes are marketed to African Americans more than other racial groups
- In the past 30 days, one in four of all respondents noticed:
  - Cigarettes at sale prices.
  - Coupons for cigarettes.
  - Advertisements for cigarettes in magazines.
- 57% of surveyed smokers noticed coupons for cigarettes in the past 30 days.
- 28% of surveyed smokers noticed cigarettes promotions in the mail in the past 30 days.

Survey results reinforce the need to educate and raise awareness on the harms of menthol tobacco use.
- 88% of respondents thought tobacco use was a significant health issue in the African American community.
- 57% of surveyed smokers didn't know menthol cigarettes are just as harmful as other cigarettes.
- 44% of surveyed smokers wrongly thought menthol cigarettes are less harmful than other cigarettes.

A majority of African American community members support new laws to reduce tobacco's harm.
- 69% of surveyed smokers supported more laws to reduce the harms of smoking.
- 60% of surveyed smokers said they would quit if menthol was no longer sold in stores.

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[1] Statewide Health Improvement Partnership: Menthol Cigarette Intervention Grant http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/menthol.html
[2] Hereafter referred to as African Americans