



# UP CLOSE WITH TOBACCO AND AFRICAN AMERICANS



In Wisconsin, about 7%, or 390,000 people, are African American. The majority of the state's African American population resides in the City of Milwaukee, making up nearly 39% of its residents. The tobacco industry has spent billions to integrate itself into African American community by contributing money to minority higher education institutions, civic and community organizations, and scholarship programs, among many other tactics.

## TOBACCO IS AN UNEQUAL KILLER.



Decades of aggressive tobacco company targeting and retail saturation have directly contributed to the **three leading causes of death** among African Americans—heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Each year, **45,000** African Americans die from smoking related diseases. In from 2001–2005, cancer caused 22% of Wisconsin African American deaths, heart disease 21%, and stroke 6%.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, Wisconsin Department of Health Services*



Certain factors heavily contribute to tobacco-related health inequities for African Americans, including higher tobacco **retailer density** in African American neighborhoods, **targeted marketing** by the tobacco industry, higher rates of **menthol** cigarette use, product **discounts**, higher rates of **exposure** to secondhand smoke, and **less access** to medical care.

*Sources: Wisconsin Retailer Assessment Project (WRAP), Truth Initiative, CDC, National Institutes of Health*



**Menthol** is a peppermint-flavored **numbing agent** tobacco companies add to reduce the harshness of cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco products. This makes it **easier for youth and inexperienced smokers to start and harder to quit**. Menthol smokers are less likely than non-menthol smokers to quit smoking.

There are higher levels of **menthol marketing** and more **retail space** saved for menthol products in predominately **African American neighborhoods**. Nearly **90%** of African Americans smokers in Wisconsin use menthol products. **Seven out of 10** African American middle and high school students who use tobacco use menthol products.

*Sources: Truth Initiative, TobWis.org, WRAP, National African American Tobacco Prevention Network (NAATPN)*



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**Free quit services are available for all Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, and SeniorCare members in Wisconsin by contacting a provider or calling the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.**



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Studies have shown that there are up to **10 times** the tobacco marketing in Black neighborhoods than other neighborhoods. **Menthol cigarettes, little cigars and cigarillos** are the most heavily marketed and sold products in communities of color. Little cigars and cigarillos are sold in a variety of **youth-friendly flavors** like grape, fruit punch, and mint.

*Sources: American Journal of Public Health, CDC, Truth Initiative, WRAP, NAATPN*



**No Menthol Sunday** is an annual national observance day led by the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network (NAATPN) that has brought together **faith and public health leaders** in an effort to improve health outcomes for African Americans by educating congregants and community members about tobacco, vaping and the role of flavors like menthol on health.

*Sources: NAATPN*



Although awareness of issues important changing the disparate tobacco-related outcomes of African Americans, such as racial profiling, the impact of point-of-sale marketing, and tobacco retailer density has increased, there is still a significant need to implement programs and policies that are culturally relevant and reflective of the needs of the community on the statewide level.



The tobacco policy movement has failed to address the root causes of disparate tobacco use, most significantly by not including menthol in the flavor ban legislation. The lack of these protections puts African Americans are more likely to die from smoking-related diseases even though African American smokers start at an older age and smoke fewer cigarettes. The African American smoking prevalence in Wisconsin (26%) is nearly double that of the U.S. as a whole (16%).

*Sources: 2018 WI Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, CDC*



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