



For Immediate Release

Contact:

Mike Sheldon
ClearWay Minnesota
(952) 767-1425

Scott Smith
Minnesota Department of Health
(651) 201-5806

Research: Minnesota's Smoking Rate Falls to 14.4 Percent

Majority of Minnesotans who quit smoking say cigarette tax helped them

Minneapolis, January 22, 2015 – Findings from the latest Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS) show that Minnesota is continuing to make progress in reducing tobacco use. Minnesota's adult smoking rate has declined to 14.4 percent, the lowest rate ever recorded in the state and a significant decrease from 2010, the last time the rate was measured.

Conducted by ClearWay MinnesotaSM and the Minnesota Department of Health, the MATS research project is the most thorough and accurate source of information about tobacco use among Minnesotans age 18 and older. For the new survey, more than 9,000 Minnesotans were interviewed by telephone in 2014.

"We know that many factors, including tobacco price increases, smoke-free policies, cessation programs and media, combine to reduce smoking prevalence over time," said Dr. Raymond Boyle, Director of Research Programs for ClearWay Minnesota. "The new MATS data suggest that Minnesota's long-term investment in addressing tobacco use is paying off."

The new research also found evidence that recent policy changes helped smokers to quit. Smokers reported that a statewide tobacco price increase in 2013 influenced their smoking behaviors, including making quit attempts, successfully quitting and cutting down on smoking. Among smokers who quit in the past year, majorities said that the price increase helped them to make quit attempts (62.8 percent) and to stay smoke-free (62.7 percent).

According to the MATS study, approximately 580,000 adult Minnesotans continue to smoke. Smoking rates are highest among Minnesotans who have completed fewer years of education and have lower incomes than nonsmokers. Minnesotans with less than a high-school education have the highest smoking rate, at 28.6 percent. Men smoke at higher rates than women (16.5 compared to 12.4 percent).

-more-

Other key findings from MATS 2014 include:

- **Young adults no longer have the highest smoking rate.** The smoking rate for young adults (ages 18-24) dropped significantly, from 21.8 to 15.3 percent. This age group had been found to have the highest smoking rate in all four previous MATS studies. Minnesota's highest smoking rate by age is now among adults aged 25-44 years old (18.7 percent).
- **Menthol cigarettes are used by a quarter of all smokers.** Women smokers use menthol cigarettes at 29.2 percent, while young adults have the highest menthol use rate of any age group at 31.6 percent.
- **The use of e-cigarettes increased.** The percent of Minnesota adults using e-cigarettes at least once in the past 30 days in 2014 was 5.9 percent. This is a significant increase since 2010, when 0.7 percent of Minnesotans reported using them in the past 30 days. Two thirds (65.8 percent) of Minnesotans who used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days are current smokers, while 22.5 percent are former smokers and 11.7 percent have never smoked cigarettes.
- **More Minnesotans are making their homes smoke-free.** The percentage of Minnesotans with smoke-free home rules has increased to 89.3 percent (from 83.2 percent in 2007, when the Freedom to Breathe Act took effect). Even 61.4 percent of smokers have smoke-free home rules.

Released approximately every four years, the Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey provides comprehensive information about smoking rates and tobacco-related behaviors, attitudes and beliefs in the adult Minnesota population, and serves as a tool for measuring the progress of Minnesota's tobacco prevention efforts. Previous surveys were conducted in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2010.

"Minnesota has made great strides in reducing tobacco use through important health policies, but we can't become complacent," said Dr. Ed Ehlinger, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Health. "The tobacco industry is constantly evolving, and we need to keep up our work to prevent young Minnesotans from becoming addicted to new and novel flavored products."

Dr. Ehlinger also noted the latest MATS data reflected similar trends from the recent youth tobacco survey released by the Minnesota Department of Health. "The reductions we are seeing in youth and adult cigarette use demonstrates what we already know – that evidence-based strategies, such as price increases on tobacco, work."

The full report and a fact sheet are available at www.mnadulttobaccosurvey.org.

ClearWay MinnesotaSM is an independent, non-profit organization that improves the health of Minnesotans by reducing the harm caused by tobacco. ClearWay Minnesota serves Minnesota through its grant-making program, through QUITPLAN[®] Services and through statewide outreach activities. It is funded with 3 percent of the state's 1998 tobacco settlement.

The Minnesota Department of Health is the lead public health agency in Minnesota. Its mission is to protect, maintain and improve the health of all Minnesotans. The department operates programs in the areas of disease prevention and control, health promotion, family and community health, environmental health, health care policy, emergency planning and preparedness and regulation of health care providers and facilities. The department works with local public health departments across the state to accomplish its mission.