High rates of smoking in Asian American communities, especially among men, are usually not captured by standard research practices, such as lumping together all Asian subgroups into one category and conducting surveys only in English.

Smoking prevalence is extremely high among Vietnamese American and Korean American men across the U.S. – around 1 in 3 Vietnamese and Korean American men smoke, according to disaggregated data collected in-language for the National Latino and Asian American Study (Chae et al., 2006).

Community-based studies conducted in Asian languages show considerable variation by ethnic subgroup and geographical region, and reveal high smoking prevalence rates among Cambodian (13–58%), Chinese (11–36%), Korean (22–37%), Lao (32%), and Vietnamese (24–41%) men (APPEAL, 2013).

Internal tobacco industry documents from the early 1990s reveal a concerted effort to target Asian American women with advertisements. An industry consultant commented that Asian American women might connect smoking with a sign of gender equality and start “smoking more as they believe they should enjoy the same freedom as men” (Muggli et al., 2002).

Today, higher prevalence of smoking among women in some Asian American subgroups – including Chinese, Filipino, Korean, South Asian and Vietnamese women – is linked to higher levels of acculturation to U.S. norms (An et al., 2008).

Smoking isn’t the only form of tobacco that is dangerous – forms of smokeless tobacco widely used in Southeast Asian and South Asian communities cause cancer too (Glenn et al., 2009).

Researchers estimate that nearly one third of South Asian Americans use smokeless tobacco, such as betel nut combined with tobacco leaves and other flavorings and spices, known as paan or gutka (Glenn et al., 2009).
MENTHOL AND ASIAN AMERICAN YOUTH SMOKING

The tobacco industry targets neighborhoods with higher concentrations of Asian Americans, other communities of color, low income, and youth residents with higher rates of menthol advertising (Widome et al., 2013).

Menthol cigarettes are easier to start smoking and harder to quit than regular cigarettes. Menthol is the only cigarette flavor not banned in the U.S. (Lee and Glantz, 2011).

Smokers in Asian American communities and other communities of color are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than White Americans. 31.2% of Asian American smokers report using a menthol brand, as compared to 23.8% of White American smokers (Caraballo and Asman, 2011).

Over half (51.5-58%) of Asian American youth smokers report smoking a menthol brand – a rate second only to that of African American youth (71.9%) (Caraballo and Asman, 2011).

SECONDHAND SMOKE – DANGEROUS IN ANY AMOUNT

Asian Americans are exposed to secondhand smoke at high rates at work, at home, and at restaurants – even where there are smoke-free policies. Overall, workers in factories, plants, and the service industry have the highest levels of exposure. Pregnant women, children, and elders are the most vulnerable to the toxic chemicals in secondhand smoke (Ma et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2007; Max et al., 2012).

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES FROM TOBACCO

Despite substantial successes in the broader tobacco control movement, tobacco-related disparities between racial and ethnic groups persist, which suggests that Asian Americans are not being reached by mainstream approaches to tobacco control.

APPEAL's strategies for tobacco control include engaging Asian Americans to promote policy change and social norm change around tobacco at the community, legislative, corporate, and mainstream levels in order to eliminate tobacco-related disparities for Asian Americans.

To learn more and find out how you can get involved in the fight against tobacco, please visit www.appealforcommunities.org/appealpromisenetwork and become a member of the APPEAL PROMISE Network.

For full reference information, visit: http://appealforcommunities.org/media/docs/8914_APPEAL_AsianAmerican_factsheet_references.pdf