

Smoking rate among US adults drops to 15 percent

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

The number of cigarette smokers in the United States has dropped to about 15 percent of the population, its lowest in decades, US health authorities said Tuesday.

About 36.7 million adults are current smokers, said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"The prevalence of current cigarette smoking among US adults declined from 24.7 percent in 1997 to 15.2 percent in January-March 2015," said a report by the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

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Smoking continues to be more common among men (17.4 percent) than women (13.0 percent), the report found.

Smoking is most common among African Americans (18.1 percent), followed by whites (17.1 percent) and Hispanics (10.4 percent).

The figures will be updated once the entire year's data is available.

According to the US surgeon general, smoking is known to cause "a host of cancers and other illnesses and is still the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, killing 480,000 people each year."

Smokers made up 42 percent of the US population in 1965, but that has dropped steadily over the years, according to the CDC, noting that the latest figures include civilians only, and not those who are in prisons or other institutions.

More information: CDC report: www.cdc.gov/nchs

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