

HSC Statistical Brief No. 4 Update

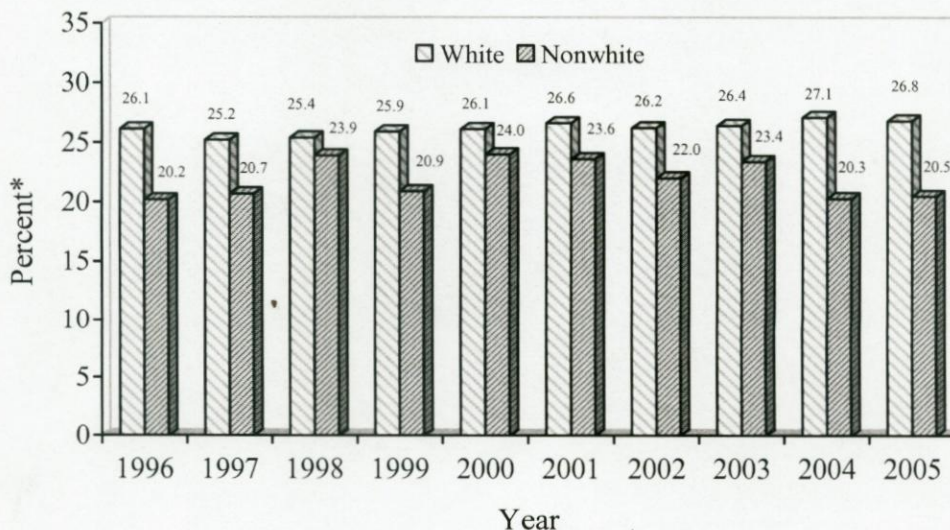
Smoking: Effects on Mothers and Babies in West Virginia

Smoking by women during pregnancy is widely recognized to increase the risks of several adverse health outcomes (1). In fact, the following warning appears on some tobacco products: "SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking by pregnant women may result in fetal injury, premature birth, or low birth weight."

BIRTH CERTIFICATE DATA. Beginning with 1989, the Health Statistics Center of the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health has tracked rates of mothers who smoked during pregnancy. These data have been derived from the West Virginia certificate of live birth, which includes a question regarding the mother's smoking habits during pregnancy. The data have been tabulated for the 10-year period 1996-2005, with tobacco use being related to other items on the birth certificate.

Figure 1

Percent of Mothers Who Smoked During Pregnancy by Race West Virginia Resident Births, 1996-2005



*Excludes unknown smoking status

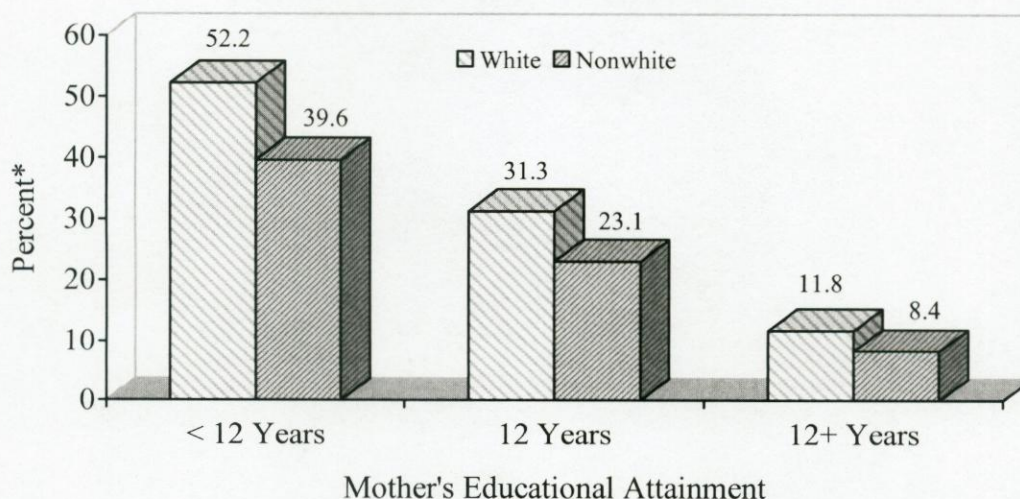
While smoking rates among the general U.S. population has gradually declined during the period, the figure among women giving birth in West Virginia, after a modest decline in the mid 1990's, has increased to a similar rate by 2005 . Among white women who had babies during this ten-year period, 26.1% smoked in 1996, while 26.8% smoked in 2005. Nonwhite mothers showed an increase from 20.2% in 1996 to 20.5% by 2005. It should be pointed out, however, that these are self-reported data, causing the rates to be somewhat lower.

Smoking rates among mothers as reported on the birth certificate are less than those reported by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (a monthly telephone survey conducted by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health) for all women of ages 15-44 in West Virginia. These data show that, in 2001, approximately 38% of all women of childbearing age were smokers in the state. For 1998 in the U.S. as a whole, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that approximately 26% of all women of childbearing age smoked.

Smoking is most common among less educated mothers of all races. The highest smoking rates were among mothers with fewer than 12 years of schooling -- 52.2% of white mothers and 39.6% of nonwhite mothers smoked in 2005. The lowest smoking rates for all races were among women with one or more years of college. White mothers with less than a high school education were much more likely to smoke as were high school graduates (52.2% compared to 31.3%) and were more than four times as likely to smoke than those with some college. Nonwhite mothers with less than a high school education were also more than four times as likely to smoke as those with some college.

Figure 2

**Percent of Mothers Who Smoked During Pregnancy by Education
West Virginia Resident Births, 2005**



*Excludes unknown smoking status