

California Vietnamese Adult Tobacco Use Survey: Executive Summary

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Introduction

Vietnamese American males have been described as a high-risk population for consuming tobacco,¹ the leading preventable cause of morbidity and mortality. California is home to 40 percent of the United States' Vietnamese population.² Vietnamese men had one of the highest cigarette smoking prevalence rates (31.6 percent) among six Asian American subgroups in the United States, second only to Korean men.³ Vietnamese women had one of the lowest smoking rates (1.1 percent). Similar to the Vietnamese subpopulation, the smoking prevalence in the general California population is statistically higher in men but lower in women (16.5 percent for men, 10.6 percent for women).⁴

The overall goal of the California Vietnamese Adult Tobacco Use Survey (CVATUS) was to assess tobacco use by adult Vietnamese Californians at the population level, to expand existing epidemiological knowledge of tobacco related behaviors, and to understand whether strategies currently being employed by the California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) are culturally appropriate in effectively reaching this population. Survey findings may also be important in identifying tobacco control strategies that can be tested in Vietnamese populations outside of California. CVATUS presents an opportunity to examine how the Vietnamese in California have responded to statewide tobacco control measures in place since 1988.

Methods

CVATUS used computer-assisted telephone interviewing methodology to gather information from 1,101 Vietnamese men and 1,078 Vietnamese women in California (cooperation rate: 63.5 percent) between November 2007 and May 2008. A surname list of the 55 most common Vietnamese surnames was used to create a sampling frame of residential telephone landlines. To be eligible for the full interview, respondents had to self-identify as Vietnamese or Chinese Vietnamese, speak Vietnamese or English, and be at least 18 years of age. For survey recruitment and outreach, mass media was used to pre-notify persons living in California's major media markets.

The questionnaire included items on cigarette smoking history and current consumption, cessation behavior, other tobacco use, and media messages regarding smoking, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about smoking and secondhand smoke (SHS). The survey was based on previous tobacco use surveys conducted by CTCP, and provided respondents the option of being interviewed in Vietnamese or English. Multivariate regression analyses were conducted using SAS and data weighted to the distribution of California Vietnamese residents according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Results

Tobacco Use Prevalence for Vietnamese American Men and Women

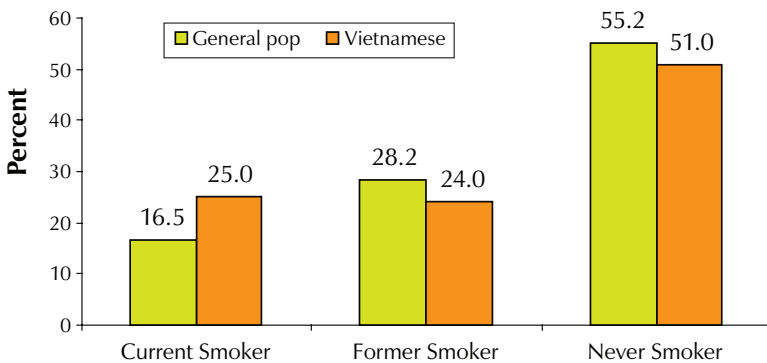
Among men, 25 percent were current cigarette smokers, 24 percent were former smokers, and 51 percent were never smokers (Figure 1). The current smoking prevalence for Vietnamese men (25 percent) was higher than that for California's men belonging to the White subgroup (17.2 percent) and for men in the Asian/Pacific Islander subgroup (14.9 percent).⁵

Among women, less than one percent were current smokers, fewer than two percent were former smokers, and 97 percent were never smokers (Figure 2). The current smoking prevalence observed among Vietnamese women was much lower than the current smoking prevalence of California's women in the White subgroup (13.8 percent) and for women in the Asian/Pacific Islander subgroup (5.3 percent).⁵ Due to the low prevalence of Vietnamese female current and former smokers, data analysis was limited to Vietnamese males.

Current Smoking Behavior for Vietnamese American Men

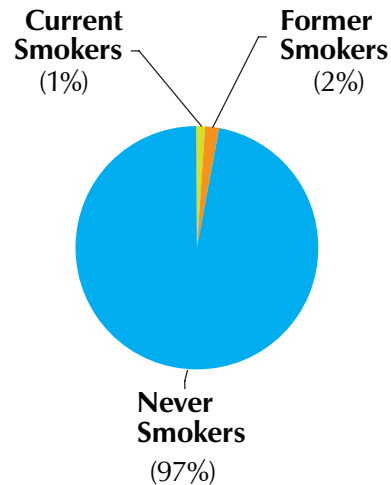
Among Vietnamese male current smokers, 24.3 percent were intermittent smokers, 30.1 percent were light smokers (fewer than 10 cigarettes daily), 31.7 percent were moderate daily smokers (10 to 19 cigarettes daily), and 14 percent were heavy daily smokers (at least 20 cigarettes daily). Among Vietnamese males, most current smokers (82 percent) reported smoking daily. On average, daily

Figure 1. Smoking Status of California Vietnamese Men, 2008



Source: The California Adult Tobacco Survey, 2008. Prepared by California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program, November, 2009.

Figure 2. Smoking Status of California Vietnamese Women, 2008



smokers smoked 10.3 ± 0.6 cigarettes per day. Intermittent smokers smoked an average of 2.9 ± 0.2 cigarettes on the day(s) when they smoked. Of those reporting smoking intermittently, most (24.3 percent) had smoked fewer than seven days in the past month.

Current smokers were asked about the types and brands of cigarettes they currently smoked. It appeared that at least one in three male current smokers reported smoking both “regular” and “light” cigarettes. Over a third (39.2 percent) smoked filtered cigarettes. Menthol cigarettes were smoked by 6.4 percent of male current smokers.

Among all male current smokers, 71.6 percent smoked their first whole cigarette prior to the age of 18. The mean age of regular smoking was 20.9 ± 0.2 years, with 62.8 percent starting to smoke regularly prior to the age of 20. Heavy smokers began smoking regularly at significantly younger ages than both intermittent and light smokers.

Demographics and Smoking Status of Vietnamese American Men

To further understand demographic characteristics in relation to smoking behavior, two multivariate logistic regression models were used. The first model examined factors associated with current smoking in contrast to never smoking; the second model examined factors associated with former smoking in contrast with current smoking. Table 1 and Figure 3 describe demographic characteristics of men by smoking status.

Table 1. California Vietnamese Men Demographics by Smoking Status, 2008

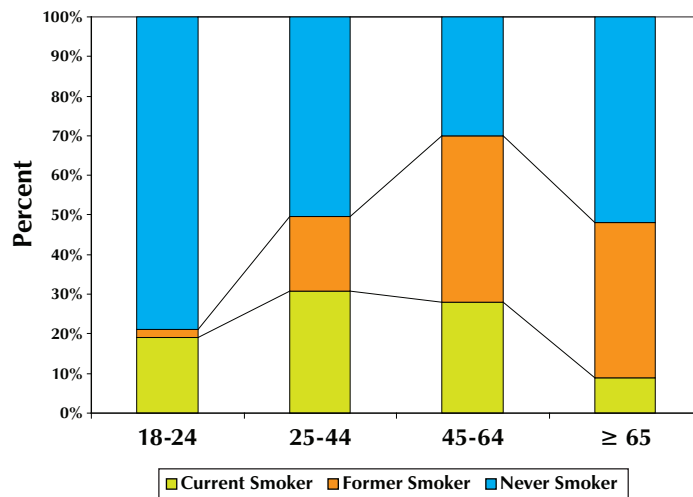
Demographics	Current Smokers	Former Smokers	Never Smokers
	(n=251) row %	(n=368) row %	(n=482) row %
Marital Status			
Married, partner	29.1	31.9	39.0
Widowed, separated, divorced	19.7	19.4	60.9
Single	19.2	9.5	71.3
Education			
<High School	33.6	28.7	37.7
High School	36.7	26.8	36.5
Some College	23.8	18.4	57.7
College Graduate	14.8	24.7	60.5
Employment Status			
Employed	29.8	25.8	44.4
Unemployed	18.6	20.7	60.7

The odds of being a smoker were higher for current smokers, who were 45 to 64 years of age, than for those who were over 65 years of age (OR = 2.3; 95 percent CI: 1.1 - 4.9), employed (OR = 2.4; 95 percent CI: 1.2 - 4.7), uninsured (OR = 4.3; 95 percent CI: 2.0 - 9.1), and who had children in the household (OR = 2.3; 95 percent CI: 1.4 - 3.8). Having more education appeared to be a protective factor against smoking. Respondents with less than a high school education had three times greater odds (OR = 3.0; 95 percent CI: 1.6 - 5.8) of currently smoking compared to those who had graduated from college. Similarly, those who graduated from high school had five times greater odds (OR = 5.4; 95 percent CI: 2.9 - 10.1) of currently smoking than those who had graduated from college. Importantly, measures of acculturation utilized in the survey including the language used in the interview (Vietnamese or English), country of birth (United States or Vietnam), and years since immigration to the United States were not significantly associated with current smoking in the first multivariate model.

In the second multivariate model, when compared with former smokers, current smokers tended to be younger. Fewer respondents tended to smoke (Figure 3). Those 18 to 24 years of age (OR = 45.0; 95 percent CI: 5.6 - 358.2), those 25 to 44 years of age (OR = 5.1; 95 percent CI: 2.3 - 11.4), and those 45

to 64 years of age (OR = 2.1; 95 percent CI: 1.1 - 4.2) had greater odds of being current smokers than those 65 years of age or older. When compared with former smokers, current smokers were more likely to be high school graduates (OR = 1.9; 95 percent CI: 1.1 - 3.5) as compared to college graduates. Current smokers were also more likely to lack health insurance (OR = 3.4; 95 percent CI: 1.8 - 6.3). Marital status, employment, having children in the household, language used in the interview, country of birth, and years since immigration to the United States were not associated with current smoking in the second multivariate model.

Figure 3. California Vietnamese Male Smoking Prevalence by Age Group, 2008



Smoking Trigger Situations among Current and Former Smokers

To attempt to understand triggers and situations related to smoking, the situations in which male current smokers reported smoking were analyzed by smoking intensity and language preference. Four smoking situations were examined: social situations with friends, working or studying, driving, and being at coffee shops, restaurants, or bars.

All smoking situations were reported by one-third to nearly three-quarters of all male current smokers. Over 70 percent of male current smokers reported smoking in social situations with friends. Half reported smoking while driving and in public locations, including coffee shops, restaurants, or bars; heavier smokers reported such behavior more frequently than lighter smokers. Interestingly, since smoking is prohibited from all indoor facilities in California, this likely reflects smoking outdoors at these facilities or reduced impact of indoor smoking restriction policies currently in place on the smoking behaviors for nearly half of current smokers. Current smokers who preferred to be surveyed in English reported similar smoking situations as those who preferred Vietnamese.

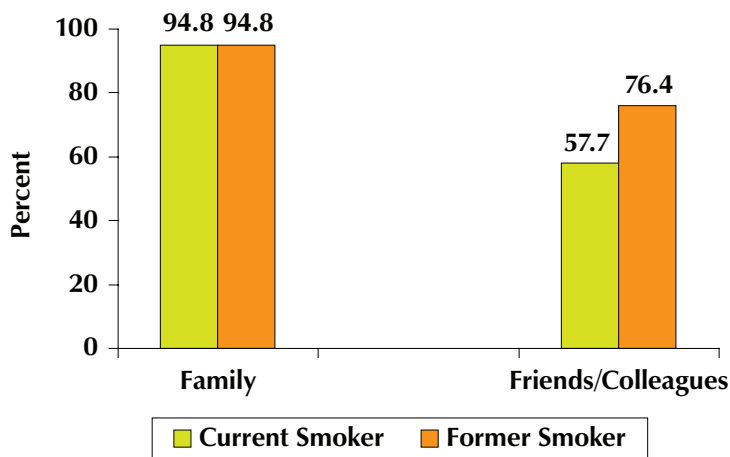
About one in three current or former male smokers had traveled to Vietnam, where there is a very high male smoking prevalence. A majority of current smokers (70.2 percent) and former smokers (57 percent) described no change in their smoking following travel. About one in five current smokers (19.9 percent) smoked more or had restarted after traveling to Vietnam, and about one in ten (10.9 percent) former smokers had increased smoking. On the other hand, after returning to the United States from Vietnam, former smokers were more likely to report quitting smoking (27.1 percent) than current smokers (2.2 percent).

Quitting Behaviors of Current and Former Smokers

This section provides an overview of smoking cessation behavior for former and current male smokers. Most smokers who wanted to quit (99.4 percent) believed that smoking harmed their health. There was no difference in quit attempts by knowledge of the risks of active or passive smoking.

Although more family members than friends/colleagues preferred smokers to quit (Figure 4) findings suggested that quit efforts and plans to quit among current smokers were more related to the preferences of their friends and colleagues than to their family members. Almost all (94.8 percent) current and former smokers reported that their families preferred that they did not smoke, and there was no difference in this attitude by smoking intensity. More former smokers (76.4 percent) than current smokers (57.7 percent) reported that their friends and colleagues preferred that they not smoke.

Figure 4. Preferences of Family and Friends/Colleagues about Quitting Behavior of Current and Former California Vietnamese Smokers, 2008



However it is not possible to conclude from this cross-sectional survey whether this finding may be due to former smokers changing their network of friends as a result of quitting.

There was a significant difference between current smokers who tried to quit in the last year who had friends and family who preferred them to quit (68.6 percent) compared to those who tried to quit in the last year but had friends and family who did not prefer them to quit (50.3 percent). Similarly, there was a significant difference between current smokers who planned to quit in the next 30 days who had friends and family who preferred them to quit (38.1 percent) compared to current smokers who planned to quit in the next 30 days but had friends and family who did not prefer them to quit (22.0 percent). More current smokers who self-identified as Vietnamese (60 percent) than those who self-identified as Chinese-Vietnamese (32.3 percent) stated that their friends and colleagues preferred that they refrain from smoking.

There were significant differences among current smokers on all of the measured quit status variables related to addiction. Most smokers who tried to quit in the past year (88.9 percent) believed they were addicted to cigarettes compared with 73.5 percent of those who did not try to quit in the past year. More smokers who wanted to quit (83.1 percent) than those who did not want to quit (53.7 percent) stated that they were addicted to cigarettes. Overall, 91.1 percent of those planning to quit within the next 30 days believed they were addicted to cigarettes compared with 60.5 percent of those not planning to quit in the next 30 days.

About one-fifth of all men who currently smoke had never made a quit attempt. Of those who had made a recent quit attempt, most stopped smoking all at once (78 percent), rather than by gradually reducing cigarette consumption (22 percent). While all recent quitters reported seeing one or more health professionals in the past year, only one-third reported that any health professional provided advice to stop smoking during that period, and very few reported being offered a medication or a referral to quit by a health professional. However, half reported trying to quit when a health professional advised them to quit.

Fewer than three percent of respondents had ever called the California Smokers' Helpline (Helpline) to help a family member quit smoking. The most frequent method of assistance utilized by quitters was nicotine medication, but was used by only 13.8 percent of former smokers. Assistance reported by fewer than five percent of former smokers included individual counseling, self-help materials, the Helpline, and smoking cessation medications. Less than one percent of former smokers reported using group counseling, herbal medicine, or acupuncture. Most long-term quitters had health insurance and had seen a Vietnamese doctor. Current smokers with health insurance more often reported health professionals providing them with assistance quitting in the past year than current smokers without health insurance.

When asked if there was a possible situation in which they might restart smoking, the majority of former smokers reported that there was no such situation (72.9 percent). The leading reason for resuming smoking among current smokers who tried to quit in the past year was a stressful situation, reported by one-third of these respondents. The next leading reasons for relapsing

among smokers included a social situation, followed by the aroma of cigarette smoke, and irritability due to smoking withdrawal. Other reasons for relapsing were reported by fewer than five percent of male current smokers.

About two-thirds (63.2 percent) of male current smokers indicated that they would like to quit with 12 percent contemplating or planning to quit in the next six months, and over one-third intending to do so in the next thirty days. Two-thirds (67 percent) had tried to quit for more than one day in the past year. Current smokers who wanted to quit tended to be younger (less than 45 years of age), married, high school graduates, above the poverty line, Vietnamese natives, residents of the United States for over fifteen years, fluent in Vietnamese, and have health insurance.

Price, Taxes, and Purchasing Behavior of Current Smokers

This section describes the purchasing behaviors of current smokers in terms of amount usually paid for cigarettes, use of coupons or special discount promotional offers, and usual locations where cigarettes are purchased.

About one-third (35 percent) of current smokers indicated that the amount they smoked would be influenced by the price of cigarettes. Respondents were asked if they had used discount offers, including coupons, “buy one, get one free,” or other special promotions on their last cigarette purchase. Among all current smokers, about one in ten had used some form of cigarette discount offer.

Change in price did appear to influence the location of cigarette purchase for about one quarter (27.6 percent) of current smokers. About half (55.5 percent) of current smokers indicated that the usual place they purchased cigarettes was at convenience stores, donut shops, or gas stations. About one in five smokers usually purchased their cigarettes from liquor or drug stores. Nearly half (49.3 percent) of male current smokers did not purchase cigarettes in cartons. The median price per carton paid by those who bought cigarettes in cartons was \$34.50.

Secondhand Smoke Exposure of Vietnamese Americans

Household Smoking Behavior

About 15 percent of all male respondents and 26 percent of all female respondents reported someone else living in the household who smoked cigarettes. There were differences by gender regarding smoking rules at home. Among all men, 6.1 percent reported that smoking was allowed inside the home and 7.9 percent reported that someone had ever smoked inside the home. Among all women, 3.9 percent reported that smoking was allowed inside the home, and 8.9 percent reported that someone had ever smoked inside the home. In households with children, 4.3 percent of all Vietnamese respondents said that smoking was permitted inside the home and 8.6 percent of respondents said that someone had ever smoked inside the home.

More current (24.8 percent) and former (22.9 percent) male smokers reported that they themselves set an in-home no-smoking rule, compared to 15.8 percent of never smokers. Interestingly, fewer women reported that they (21.4 percent) or their spouse/partner (4.7 percent) set an in-home no smoking rule.

Smoking Outside of the Household

While 94.9 percent of respondents who worked indoors reported that their building had been designated “smoke-free,” about 50.8 percent had witnessed smoking in their work area during the previous two weeks. Among respondents who were currently enrolled in a course on a college campus, 23.2 percent reported indoor smoke exposure, and 62.8 percent outdoor smoke exposure during the previous two weeks.

Almost all respondents (97.8 percent) preferred to eat in smoke-free restaurants. Among men, slightly fewer current smokers (94.2 percent) preferred to eat in smoke free restaurants compared to former smokers (99.4 percent) and never smokers (97.6 percent). About one-third of men visited a bar, tavern, or nightclub during the previous year. Among these respondents, 59.6 percent of current smokers and 73.6 percent of former smokers observed indoor tobacco smoke at the bar, tavern, or nightclub.

Pro-Tobacco and Anti-Smoking Messages in the Media among Vietnamese Americans

Pro-Tobacco Advertising

Approximately one out of nine male and female respondents reported seeing pro-tobacco advertisements (ads) within the last month. Compared with men who did not see pro-tobacco ads in the last month, men who saw pro-tobacco ads in the last month were more likely to be single and to have greater fluency in English. Compared with women who did not see pro-tobacco ads in the last month, women who saw pro-tobacco ads within the last month tended to be younger, single, United States natives or residents of the United States for more than 15 years, more fluent in English than Vietnamese, and were less likely to be Buddhist, Catholic, or Protestant.

Almost a third of all respondents believed that pro-tobacco advertising encourages young people to smoke. There was no difference by gender. Regarding brand recall, the most recent tobacco ad seen was “Marlboro” (22.4 percent), followed by “Camel” (5.1 percent), and “555” (1.9 percent) cigarettes; however, 69.7 percent did not recall a specific brand. Most respondents believed that the ban on cigarette advertising should be extended to all print and electronic media, as well as cultural and sports events. There was no difference by smoking status. About three-fourths of respondents also believed the tobacco industry should not be permitted to offer products in exchange for coupons on cigarette packs.

Only 7.7 percent of respondents stated that they would ever use a tobacco industry promotional item, only 2.4 percent reported that they had obtained such a promotional item, and only 1.8 percent had obtained a free tobacco sample, within the last year. Men reported that they had most recently obtained a tobacco industry promotional item in the mail (85.3 percent) or as a handout at a fair, festival, or bar (8.9 percent). There was no significant difference among men by smoking status in the receipt of tobacco promotional items or free tobacco samples.

Anti-Tobacco Advertising

Half (49.7 percent) of the respondents reported seeing anti-tobacco ads within the past month. Compared with men who did not see anti-tobacco ads in the last month, men who saw anti-tobacco ads within the last month were older, were born in the United States, and did not have children living at home. Among men who reported exposure to anti-tobacco ads, 65.4 percent reported exposure on television (TV), 29.8 percent on radio, 11 percent in newspapers, 6.6 percent on billboards, 2 percent in magazines, 1.9 percent in stores, and 7 percent elsewhere. Current smokers reported that exposure to pro-tobacco ads or anti tobacco ads had made no difference in their prior efforts at quitting, in their wanting to quit, or in their planning to quit. Compared with women who had not seen anti-tobacco ads in the last month, women who saw anti-tobacco ads within the last month were younger, were more highly educated, did not have children in the household, self-identified as Vietnamese rather than Chinese Vietnamese, and were more likely to choose Protestantism or “another” religion rather than Buddhism or Catholicism.

A larger number of English speakers than Vietnamese speakers saw TV ads, while more Vietnamese speakers than English speakers heard radio ads. However, there were only a small number of English-speaking respondents who had been exposed to anti-tobacco ads ($n = 66$ percent). Current smokers (41.4 percent) were more likely to have heard ads on the radio than former smokers (36.9 percent) or never smokers (23.4 percent). There was a difference in the language of anti-tobacco ads seen or heard by male respondents by smoking status. Never smokers were most likely to have seen ads in English, former smokers in Vietnamese, and current smokers in both languages. However, there was no difference in the language of anti-tobacco ads seen or heard by current smokers according to their quit behavior and intention.

Tobacco-Related Attitudes and Knowledge among Vietnamese Americans

Approximately one-quarter of all respondents believed that the risks of lung cancer and heart disease were the same for a nonsmoker and a person who smoked fewer than five cigarettes a day. Nearly one-third believed that tobacco was not as addictive as heroin or cocaine. Nearly all respondents believed that SHS causes lung cancer (96.4 percent), heart disease (94.8 percent), and illness in babies and children (98.6 percent), but men who currently smoke were less likely to know these facts.

Attitudes towards Regulation of Tobacco

Most respondents (93.4 percent) believed that a license was required for store owners to sell cigarettes. Most also agreed that minors caught buying cigarettes should be fined, and approved of the law prohibiting smoking in bars, taverns, and nightclubs. They believed that the tobacco industry should be forced to put stronger warnings about the potential harmful effects of their products. They believed that tobacco products should be regulated as a drug by a government agency such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Tobacco-Related Attitudes and Knowledge among Current Smokers

Most Vietnamese male current smokers (98.3 percent) believed that smoking harmed their health. All smokers who planned to quit or tried to quit within the past year believed that smoking harmed their health. There were no statistically significant differences among current smokers who stated that smoking was harming their health and those who did not, by employment status, poverty level, and years since immigration to the United States, English language proficiency, or children in their household.

Nearly one in three men stated they would try a new type of cigarette promoted by the tobacco industry as being “safer.” One in three current smokers believed that “light” cigarettes were safer than “regular” cigarettes. One in five current smokers believed that tobacco was not as addictive as heroin or cocaine. There was a significant difference in knowledge regarding the harmful effects of smoking fewer than five cigarettes each day between those male current smokers who had no desire to quit compared to those who had a desire to quit within the next six months.

Summary and Recommendations

While more Vietnamese American men smoke cigarettes than California men in the general population, fewer Vietnamese American women smoke than California women in the general population. Vietnamese men tend to be lighter smokers, but men who smoke tend to smoke daily (82 percent). Most current and former smokers (62.8 percent) began to smoke regularly prior to reaching 20 years of age.

Measures of acculturation used in this survey including language of interview, country of birth, and years since immigration to the United States were determined not to be significantly associated with current smoking status.

Many current smokers reported smoking while driving and in public locations, including coffee shops, restaurants, or bars. For nearly half of current smokers this is probably a reflection of smoking outdoors at these facilities or reduced impact of California indoor smoking restriction policies currently in place. SHS exposure enforcement is needed especially in public places (bars, taverns, nightclubs, coffee shops, and restaurants).

In summary, there is room for improving knowledge of smoking risks (e.g., harm in “light” smoking). Many Vietnamese (including current smokers) understand that smoking and SHS is harmful, possibly due to California’s success in changing social norms. In support of this, more respondents reported seeing anti-tobacco ads than pro tobacco ads in the past month.

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