MMWR Introduction

Lung cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Most deaths from lung cancer are caused by cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke. Large variations in lung cancer, smoking behavior, and tobacco control programs and policies have been observed among states. Effective tobacco control programs reduce smoking prevalence and can lead to decreases in lung cancer.

From 1999 to 2008, decreases in lung cancer incidence were observed among men in 35 states and among women in six states. The lowest rates and most rapid rates of decline in lung cancer were concentrated in the West, correlating with low smoking prevalence and high ratios of former smokers to ever smokers. Further reductions in smoking prevalence are critical to continuing the decline in lung cancer.

MMWR Highlights

Lung Cancer Incidence Among Men

- Lung cancer incidence among men continues to decrease nationwide.
- Since 1999, the lung cancer rate among men has decreased faster in the West than in other regions.
- From 1999—2008, the lung cancer rate among men decreased in 35 of the 44 states surveyed, and was stable in the other 9 states.
- States with the lowest lung cancer rates were clustered in the West, as were about a third of states with the lowest smoking prevalence.

Lung Cancer Incidence Among Women

- Lung cancer rates among women decreased in the West and stabilized in the Midwest, but were still increasing in the Northeast.
- From 1999—2008, the lung cancer rate among women decreased in 6 of the 44 states surveyed, remained stable in 24 states, and increased slightly in 14 states.
- Nearly half of states with higher smoking prevalence and over a third of states with higher lung cancer incidence among women are in the South.