

Assessing Quitline Reach in the U.S.: A National Comparison of Demographic and Tobacco Use Characteristics

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Introduction

Numerous studies have shown that quitlines are an effective method to deliver behavioral support for tobacco cessation^{1,2}, and can potentially increase access to cessation services for hard-to-reach smokers such as those from underserved populations and/or racial/ethnic minority groups. Nevertheless, to date, the population reach of quitlines has been very low.³

The North American Quitline Consortium (NAQC) conducts an annual survey of all 63 publicly-funded quitlines in the U.S. and Canada collecting data on services provided, budgets, funding sources, promotion and utilization of quitlines. All 53 U.S. quitlines responded to the 2009 annual survey conducted September 2009 –February 2010 and reported aggregate data on demographics and tobacco use characteristics of quitline callers for each quitline's fiscal year 2009 (July 1-June 30 for 85% of U.S. quitlines).

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a state-based system of health surveys established in 1984 by the CDC. More than 350,000 persons are interviewed by telephone each year. Information on health risk behaviors, preventive health practices, and health care access primarily related to chronic disease and injury are collected.⁴

The objective of this study was to compare demographics and tobacco use characteristics of quitline callers to current cigarette smokers from a nationally representative sample within the BRFSS, and to assess the national quitline treatment reach in the U.S.

Methods

- Secondary analysis was performed using data from the 2009 NAQC Annual Survey and the 2009 BRFSS.
- Reach was calculated and stratified by race and ethnicity.
- Descriptive statistics were generated to describe demographics, tobacco use characteristics, and utilization of quitline services across the U.S.
- Chi square test was used to assess differences between those seeking quitline services and the national population of smokers.

Results

- Overall reach of U.S. quitlines was 1.16%.
- Stratified by race and ethnicity, reach ranged from 0.85% for Asians to 1.96% for those who reported a race of 'other'.
- Current smokers who used quitline services and those who responded to the BRFSS reported a mean age of 42 years.
- Current smokers accessing quitline services were more likely to be female (57.4% vs. 46.0%, $p < 0.001$).
- Racial composition and education levels of quitline callers were similar to that reported among all tobacco users.
- Quitline callers were significantly more likely to report "smoking every day" (97.9% vs. 71.1%, $p < 0.001$).

Results

Table 1. Characteristics of quitline callers and the general population of smokers in the U.S.

	NAQC (%)	BRFSS (%)
Sex		
Male	250,301 (42.61)	22,629,884 (54.05)
Female	337,081 (57.31)	19,234,823 (45.95)
Race/Ethnicity		
White	420,813 (73.50)	32,548,615 (70.47)
Black/African American	61,940 (10.82)	5,090,341 (11.02)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	13,493 (2.36)	1,216,935 (2.63)
Asian American/Pacific Islander	8,778 (1.53)	1,034,325 (2.24)
Hispanic	40,923 (7.15)	4,939,884 (10.70)
Other	26,589 (4.64)	1,357,078 (2.94)
Education		
<grade 9	18,072 (3.29)	1,586,066 (3.80)
Grade 9-11, no degree	74,795 (13.63)	5,323,551 (12.74)
GED/HS degree	206,994 (37.73)	1,5859,514 (37.97)
Some college or university	162,794 (29.67)	1,2035,358 (28.81)
College or university degree	85,987 (15.67)	6,965,890 (16.68)
Tobacco Use		
Cigarette use everyday	339,077 (97.92)	29,690,451 (70.92)
Cigarette use some days/occasionally	7,212 (2.08)	12,174,257 (29.08)

Figure 1. Reach of U.S. quitlines

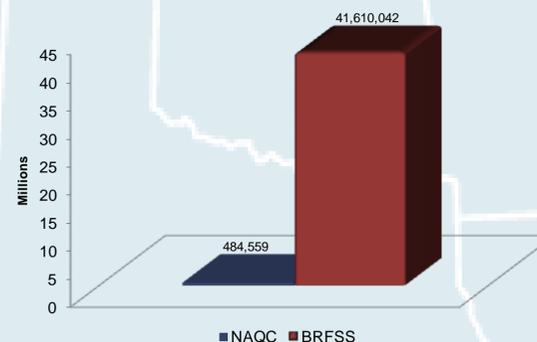
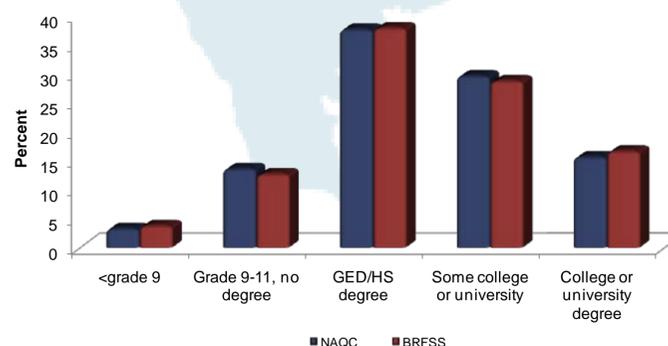
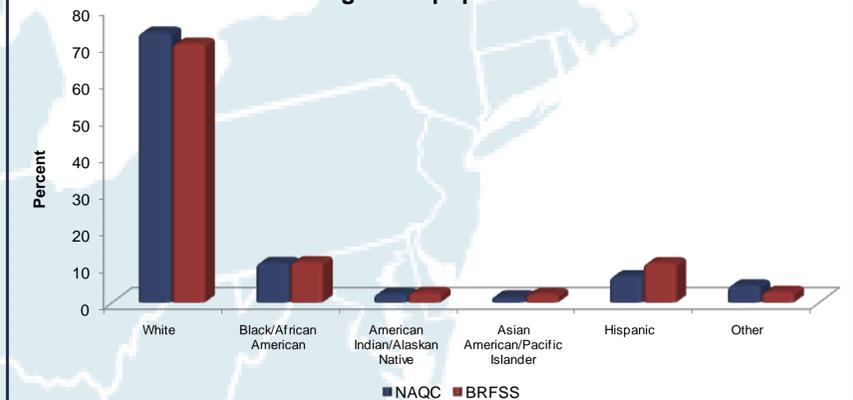


Figure 2. Educational differences among quitline callers and general population of smokers



Results

Figure 3. Racial and ethnic differences among quitline callers and general population of smokers



Limitations

Within the 2009 NAQC Annual Survey, quitline utilization data were not reported for five states, and therefore these states were excluded from the study.

Conclusions

Reach of quitlines nationally and for all sub-populations remains well below the target of 6% set by the CDC. These data provide the first national picture of the population of quitline callers, and can be used to target promotions to increase the reach of quitlines.

References

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