

Tobacco Use, Mental Health, and Substance Use Disorders



Tobacco Prevention
and Cessation

May 2025

Tobacco dependence treatment is often left out of mental health treatment plans, even though people with mental health disorders are among the heaviest users of tobacco in the U.S. The tobacco industry has historically preyed on individuals with mental health or substance use challenges with targeted marketing campaigns. As a result, commercial tobacco use prevalence remains significantly higher among individuals with behavioral health conditions and substance use disorders than those without these conditions.

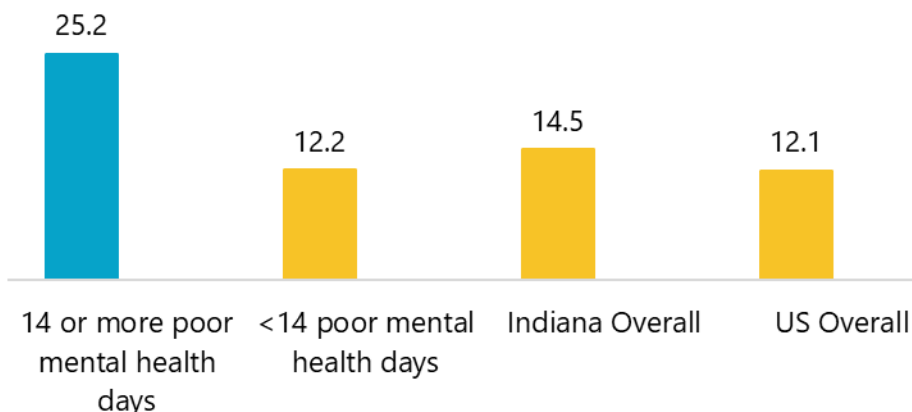
Mental Health and Tobacco Use

- Nearly 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. (23.1%) and in Indiana (24.4%) have a behavioral health condition.
- In both Indiana and the United States, adults with behavioral health conditions use commercial tobacco at higher rates than adults without behavioral health conditions.

Mental Health and Current Smoking among Indiana Adults

In addition to the higher prevalence of current cigarette smoking among adults with a diagnosable behavioral health condition. Indiana adults who reported frequent poor mental health (at least 14 poor mental health days in the past 30 days) have a higher smoking prevalence (25.2%) than adults who did not report frequent poor mental health days (12.2%).

Current Smoking Among Adults Experiencing Poor Mental Health and Overall, BRFSS 2023



Fast Facts

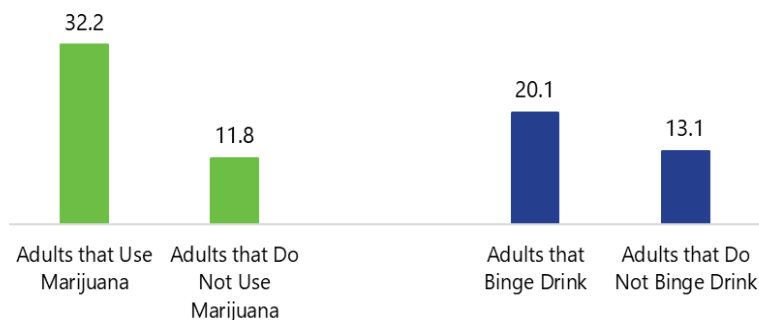
- In the past, the tobacco industry specifically marketed cigarettes to people with schizophrenia and worked to ensure psychiatric hospitals did not have tobacco-free grounds policies.
- Due to decades of targeted marketing by the tobacco industry, tobacco use is positively correlated with higher incidence and severity of mental health challenges.
- About 1 in 4 of Hoosier adults with frequent poor mental health (25.2%) reported currently smoking in 2023.
- Individuals who experienced trauma are nearly twice as likely to smoke than those who have not experienced trauma.
- Tobacco dependence treatment is associated with a decrease in depression, anxiety, and stress and can improve quality of life.

For people who use tobacco and are interested in quitting, [Quit Now Indiana](#) (1-800-QUIT-NOW) is available to provide free, evidence-based support, advice and resources including a custom program for those with behavioral health conditions.

Tobacco Use and Other Substance Use

Adults who use other substances, like marijuana, smoke cigarettes at higher rates than those who do not use other substances. Among those using marijuana, nearly 1 in 3 (32.2%) also currently smoke, compared to only 11.8% of those that do not use marijuana. Those that binge drink* also reported significantly higher rates of smoking compared to those who do not binge drink. (20.1% vs 13.1%).

Cigarette Smoking Among Adults Using Marijuana or Alcohol, BRFSS 2023



*Binge Drinking refers to a man drinking 5 or more alcoholic drinks or a woman drinking 4 or more alcoholic drinks on a single occasion.

Treatment for Tobacco Dependence for People with Behavioral Health Conditions

Research shows that persons with behavioral health conditions want to stop using tobacco and often successfully recover from tobacco addiction, in spite of a myth perpetuated by the tobacco industry that tobacco recovery would be too stressful because persons with behavioral health conditions use nicotine to self-medicate.

To treat tobacco addiction among individuals with behavioral health conditions, providers and facilities can:

- Use the 5A's model: Ask about patients' tobacco use, advise them to quit, assess willingness to quit, assist them with accessing effective tobacco treatment, and arrange for follow up
- Integrate tobacco treatment into overall mental health and substance use treatment strategies
- Refer patients to an evidence-based tobacco treatment resource for extra support, such as the [Quit Now Indiana](#) (1-800-QUIT-NOW) which offers a tailored program for those with behavioral health conditions, including: Bi-Polar Disorder, Depression, Drug or Alcohol Use Disorder (SUD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder, PTSD, Schizophrenia or ADHD
- Implement tobacco-free campus policies in treatment facilities
- Stop practices that encourage tobacco use, such as allowing smoking as a reward

ReThink Tobacco Indiana is a [partner](#) of Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation who can assist behavioral health providers in treating clients' tobacco use. Visit [ReThinkTobaccoIndiana.org](#) to learn more.

Resources for Ending Dependence on Commercial Tobacco

Treating tobacco dependence use can greatly improve the health and quality of life of people with behavioral health conditions. People who use tobacco should contact a health care provider for assistance and call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit [QuitNowIndiana.com](#) for free, evidence-based support, including specific resources for those with behavioral health conditions.

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