

## **Eliminating the sale of menthol cigarettes will prevent over 700 premature deaths in the City of Buffalo**

Although overall smoking prevalence has decreased, menthol cigarette prevalence has remained constant among specific communities in Buffalo, including people who smoke and identify as Black or African American.[1] Added menthol flavor in cigarettes is associated with progression to regular cigarette smoking in youth and young adults and greater dependence in youth, and menthol makes it harder for adults who smoke cigarettes to quit.[2] Cigarette companies have aggressively marketed menthol-flavored tobacco products to communities of racial and ethnic minorities.[3] This marketing contributes to people who identify as Black and smoke cigarettes being more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than other population groups; 86% of people who are Black and smoke cigarettes in New York smoke a menthol cigarette brand.[4] Women, young people, racial and ethnic minority groups, LGBTQ+ people, people with a low income, and people who experience mental health conditions also are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than other population groups.

Black men have high rates of developing and dying from lung cancer,[5] most of which is caused by menthol cigarettes. Studies show that policies that prevent the sale of menthol cigarettes have boosted quit rates and are saving lives.[6] These policies work by preventing young people from starting to smoke and helping adults to stop smoking cigarettes. Many other cities, states, and countries have already eliminated the sale of menthol cigarettes. This report uses the findings from policy evaluations in these places where the sale of menthol has been eliminated to predict what benefits would be gained by such a policy in Buffalo, New York.

### Methods

We first examined the estimated impact of a national menthol cigarette ban and statewide lung cancer statistics by race. Next, we applied these results to the population demographics of the City of Buffalo to estimate the cancer burden caused by menthol cigarettes, as well as the estimated benefit of a menthol cigarette ban in the City of Buffalo.

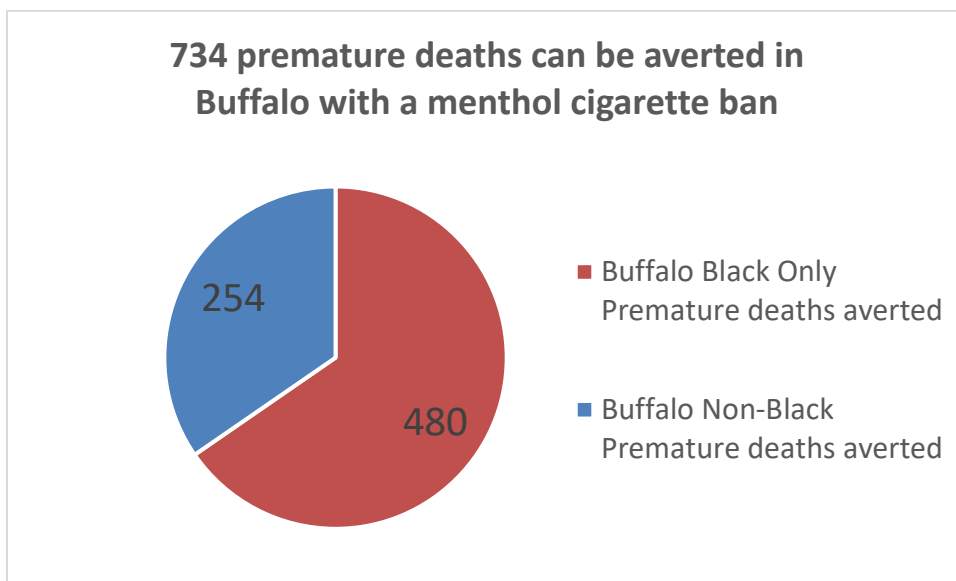
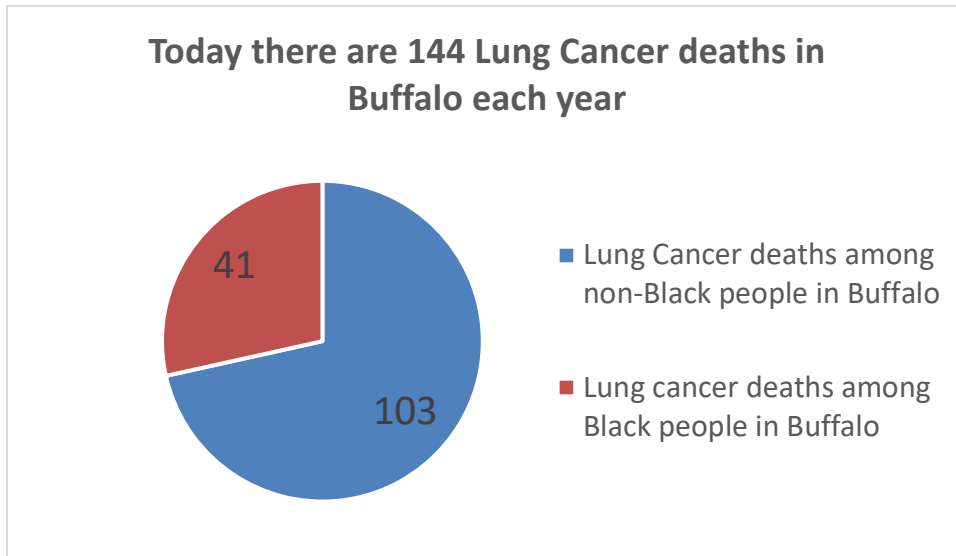
Several data sources were used for this analysis. First, we used the New York State (NYS) Cancer Registry published rates and average absolute number of deaths due to lung and bronchus cancer by five-year periods for Erie County, overall and by race.[7] According to the Registry, there were an estimated 59 lung cancer deaths among Black people in Erie County during the most recent five-year time period. Then we examined data from the U.S. Census Bureau to obtain the number of people by race for the City of Buffalo, Erie County, and the United States.[8-10] We used estimates published by other recent research on the impact of menthol cigarette bans. Levy et. al.[11] estimated that 633,000 premature deaths would be prevented under a menthol cigarette ban, almost one third of which would be among Blacks. Chung-Hall et. al.[6] also demonstrated that banning menthol flavoring in cigarettes is associated with higher rates of quit attempts and quit success among people who smoke menthol cigarettes compared to people who do not smoke menthol cigarettes. Finally, these data sources were combined to scale and estimate the number of lung cancer cases and impact of a menthol cigarette ban in the City of Buffalo.

### Findings and Conclusion

This analysis shows that there are 144 deaths from lung cancer in Buffalo per year, including 41 deaths from lung cancer among Black people who live in the City of Buffalo per year. In other words, 1 Black person from Buffalo almost every week is lost to cigarette smoking, and for most of them it was a menthol cigarette, a product designed to promote addiction and target marketed to them, that first got them hooked.

We also estimate that a City of Buffalo ban on menthol cigarettes will prevent an estimated 734 premature deaths, including 480 premature deaths among people who are Black.

Eliminating the sale of menthol cigarettes works. It keeps kids from starting smoking, helps adults quit, and saves lives, especially in communities of color.



Source: This report was supported and produced by the Department of Health Behavior at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. If you have questions about the findings presented here, please contact Dr. Andrew Hyland, Chair, Department of Health Behavior, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, Buffalo, NY 14263, [Andrew.Hyland@RoswellPark.org](mailto:Andrew.Hyland@RoswellPark.org).

## References

1. Seaman EL, et al. Menthol cigarette smoking trends among United States Adults, 2003-2019. *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention*. 2022 Oct 4; 21(10):1959-1965.
2. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Scientific Review of the Effects of Menthol in Cigarettes on Tobacco Addiction: 1980-2021. 2022.
3. Watkins SL, et al. Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among Young Adults by Race and Ethnicity: Evidence From the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health Study. *J Adolesc Health*. 2022 Aug;71(2):226-232. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2022.02.013. Epub 2022 May 9. PMID: 35550331; PMCID: PMC9854272.
4. New York State Department of Health. 2023 Press Releases. New York State Department of Health Warns About Tobacco Industry's Tactics of Using Menthol Flavoring to Target and Addict Black & LGBTQIA+ Communities and Kids. Accessed 1/3/24 from [https://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2023/2023-03-07\\_menthol\\_flavoring.htm#:~:text=For%20more%20than%2060%20years,Hispanic%20smokers%20smoke%20menthol%20cigarettes](https://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2023/2023-03-07_menthol_flavoring.htm#:~:text=For%20more%20than%2060%20years,Hispanic%20smokers%20smoke%20menthol%20cigarettes).
5. U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool, based on 2022 submission data (1999-2020): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz>, released in November 2023.
6. Chung-Hall J, et al. Evaluating the impact of menthol cigarette bans on cessation and smoking behaviours in Canada: longitudinal findings from the Canadian arm of the 2016-2018 ITC Four Country Smoking and Vaping Surveys. *Tob Control*. 2022 Jul;31(4):556-563. doi: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2020-056259. Epub 2021 Apr 5. PMID: 33820856; PMCID: PMC8490485.
7. New York State Cancer Registry. NYS Cancer Registry and Cancer Statistics. <https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/cancer/registry/>. Accessed 2/9/2024.
8. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (PEP), updated annually. Population and Housing Unit Estimates. Accessed 12/21/23 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045222#PST045222>.
9. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (PEP), updated annually. Population and Housing Unit Estimates, Buffalo. Accessed 12/21/23 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/buffalocitynewyork/PST045222>.
10. U.S. Census Bureau. B01001 SEX BY AGE, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office. Web. 7 December 2023. <http://www.census.gov/>. Accessed 12/21/23 from [https://www.newyork-demographics.com/counties\\_by\\_population](https://www.newyork-demographics.com/counties_by_population).
11. Levy DT, et al. Modeling the future effects of a menthol ban on smoking prevalence and smoking-attributable deaths in the United States. *Am J Public Health*. 2011 Jul;101(7):1236-40. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300179. Epub 2011 May 12. PMID: 21566034; PMCID: PMC3110235.