

- **What is the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, or BRFSS?**

The BRFSS is a telephone survey of Vermont adult residents. Telephone numbers are randomly generated by a computer and we have no way of knowing whose number we are calling, or if it is a business, residential, or unlisted number.

The BRFSS is an important public health tool for measuring adult health. It does this by reaching out directly to Vermont residents so that we can learn more about areas such as chronic disease prevalence, risk behaviors, demographics, health care access, and preventive behaviors.

The number of respondents can vary from year to year. However, Vermont usually surveys between 6,000 and 7,000 adult Vermont residents annually. In order to make sure the survey is representative of all Vermont adults, both landline and cell phone users are surveyed.

- **Who can participate in the Vermont BRFSS?**

The BRFSS surveys adults 18 and older who reside in Vermont. Adults who live in Vermont for 30 or more days out of the year are considered Vermont residents for the survey. Those who live in an institution, such as a skilled nursing facility, group home or correctional facility are not eligible.

- **What types of information are gathered on the BRFSS?**

The Vermont BRFSS includes questions on chronic disease prevalence (e.g., asthma diagnosis), risk behaviors (e.g., currently smoke), demographics (e.g., gender), health care access (e.g., health insurance), and preventive behaviors (e.g., routine doctor visits). Infectious disease information is not typically collected as part of the BRFSS. Data on infectious diseases is collected and reported by the department's Infectious Disease Section.

- **Do all states participate in the BRFSS?**

Yes, all 50 states, the District of Columbia and several U.S. territories receive funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to complete the BRFSS annually.

- **Who is calling me on the telephone?**

The Health Department contracts with an organization called ICF Macro to complete the calls on our behalf. ICF Macro has call centers with interviewers who are located in other states.

- **My name is on the national do-not-call list. Why are you calling me?**

The national do-not-call list was enacted to control telemarketing companies that sell services and products over the phone. Research calls are not included in the federal regulations that apply to telemarketing calls. The BRFSS Survey is conducted for research and does not fall under current do-not-call list laws. The Health Department is not selling anything and you can choose to not participate, but your answers will help us to evaluate and guide important public health policy and programs. Information about telephone consumer rights can be obtained



Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

Frequently Asked Questions

from the [Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\)](#) or the [Federal Trade Commission \(FTC\)](#). Information is also available from the [Vermont Secretary of State](#).

- **How recent is BRFSS data?**

The BRFSS is collected throughout each month in a given calendar year. At the beginning of the following year, the CDC begins to process the data and typically releases them to states by June. The data is then processed by the Vermont BRFSS team. Results are published in the annual statewide report in the fall, and public use datasets can be requested after that time. To request Vermont BRFSS data, email ahs.vdhBRFSS@vermont.gov.

- **Can we provide town level data using the Vermont BRFSS?**

No - because the survey includes only 6,000 to 7,000 adults each year, there are a limited number of respondents in individual towns. When the sample size, or number of respondents, is small, the estimates are unreliable. For this reason, among others, we are not able to provide data at the town level. Information can be provided at the county, hospital service area, and Health Department District Office levels.

- **Can I request that questions be asked on the Vermont BRFSS?**

Certain questions on the BRFSS are required to be asked by all states. However, states may include a limited number of additional questions. Those wanting to add questions are required to submit a formal request and meet with Vermont's BRFSS team to discuss their proposal. The questionnaire for a given year is developed during the summer of the previous year. If you would like to propose a question for the survey, please contact the BRFSS team at ahs.vdhBRFSS@vermont.gov for more information.

- **Can insurance claims data, such as that from Medicaid, be linked with BRFSS data?**

No, Vermont BRFSS data does not include any personal identifiers such as name, address or social security number. While the randomly generated telephone number is used to contact a household, the number is not stored with the survey answers. We do not know who any of the respondents are, so we cannot link BRFSS survey data with that from insurance company claims.

However, that does not mean that data from the BRFSS cannot be used alongside insurance claims data. Together, the two can be used to tell a more complete story about the health of Vermont adult residents.

- **If I have questions about the survey, who at VDH can I contact?**

Call 800-869-2871 or email ahs.vdhBRFSS@vermont.gov.

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