

2008 BRFSS Medicaid Data Summary

Selected Results from the North Carolina Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) for Medicaid Recipients Compared to All North Carolina Adult Survey Respondents: January through December 2008 Surveys

In the 2008 BRFSS survey, for those respondents who reported that they did have health insurance coverage, the following question was asked: “What is your primary health insurance plan? This is the plan which pays the medical bills first or pays most of the medical bills.” If the adult respondent chose “Medicaid or Carolina ACCESS or Health Choice” then they are counted as “Medicaid” for purposes of this report. BRFSS results for Medicaid recipients are compared to the results for all North Carolina adult BRFSS respondents.

Out of a total of 15,835 BRFSS respondents during January-December 2008, 457 or 3.7 percent indicated that Medicaid was their primary health insurance plan. The figure of 3.7 percent is a weighted percentage, designed to represent the entire population of North Carolina, and thus cannot be calculated directly from the numbers of survey respondents in the table. This percentage is substantially lower than the percentage of the total population of the state who are Medicaid recipients, due to several factors: 1) the BRFSS survey is conducted only for persons age 18 and older, while the majority of Medicaid recipients in North Carolina are under the age of 18 or in institutions and are therefore not surveyed; 2) a higher proportion of Medicaid recipients do not have telephones, or may have cell phones only which were not sampled in the 2008 survey; and 3) low-income persons with phones may be more likely than others not to respond to the survey for various reasons.

The 457 Medicaid BRFSS respondents for 2008 is a small number on which to calculate percentages and other statistics, so the data in the attached report should be interpreted with caution. (Note that when the confidence intervals for a specific indicator, such as doctor-diagnosed diabetes, overlap for the Medicaid and statewide BRFSS population, this usually indicates that the respective rates are not statistically significantly different.)

The following bullets indicate some of the highlights of the associated tables as well as some comparisons of results found in the 2007 BRFSS Medicaid Data Table.

- The proportion of Medicaid respondents who were classified as obese (based on self-reported height and weight) was 45.3 percent, compared to 29.5 percent for all BRFSS respondents. Also, among Medicaid respondents, the 2008 obesity rate was 10 percentage points higher than the corresponding rate for 2007 (see [2007 BRFSS Medicaid Data Table](#)); this change was close to being statistically significant, $P=0.051$. For all BRFSS respondents, there was little change in the obesity rate from 2007 to 2008.

- The rate of everyday smoking for Medicaid respondents (33.1%) was more than twice the rate for all BRFSS respondents (15.5%). Similarly, the percentage who reported never smoking was significantly lower among Medicaid respondents (44.4%) compared to the total BRFSS population (54.3%). The 2008 percentage of all smokers (daily or occasional) was 42.0 percent for Medicaid respondents compared to 20.9 percent for the total BRFSS population.
- About one-third (32.7%) of Medicaid respondents reported **no** leisure time activity in the past 30 days; however, in 2007, this estimate was approximately 42 percent, suggesting some improvement in more exercise or leisure time activities in 2008 (though this change was not statistically significant).
- Regarding health status, 40.1 percent of Medicaid respondents reported being in fair or poor health, compared 17.5 percent for all BRFSS respondents. The report of 8 or more days of poor physical health (33.9%) and the report of 8 or more days of poor mental health (29.3%) was also substantially higher for Medicaid respondents, compared to the statewide population. However, among Medicaid respondents, the rate of 8+ days of poor mental health in 2008 (29.3%) was substantially lower than the rate of 37.9 percent in 2007 (though this change was not statistically significant).
- With respect to chronic disease, the rate of ever having asthma was about twice as high in the Medicaid group (22.9%), as compared to the statewide group of BRFSS respondents. The rate of diabetes was about one-fifth higher among Medicaid respondents (11.1% vs. 9.3% for the general population). More than half (56.4%) of Medicaid respondents reported having a disability of some kind, compared to about 32 percent of all BRFSS respondents.
- In terms of the use of preventive care, 33.4 percent of Medicaid respondents versus 40.4 percent of the total population had flu shot in the past 12 months. This difference may be due largely to the fact that the Medicaid population is significantly younger (perhaps perceiving less need for the flu shot) than the statewide population. The rate of having a blood test in the past three years for diabetes (which was asked only of non-diabetics) was nearly the same (60+%) for both Medicaid and all BRFSS respondents. For adults age 50 and older, 54.5 percent of Medicaid respondents reported ever having a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy exam, compared to 66.6 percent for the total BRFSS population -- the difference between these rates was statistically significant ($P=0.043$).