The BRFSS data dictionary (questionnaire by year) can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/questionnaires/index.htm> [external link]

**Type of Data**

Specialty/ Survey Risk Factor Database

**Years Available**

1984-2020

**Short Description**

The BRFSS is the most advanced system of health-related telephone surveys in the US, covering all 50 contiguous states as well as the District of Columbia and three U.S. territories, and the largest continuously conducted health survey system in the world (with more than 400,000 interviews each year). The database contains information collected at the state level about U.S. residents regarding their health-related risk behaviors, chronic health conditions and use of preventive services.

**Strengths**

* Relatively easy to use
* Good for annual estimates at both the state and national levels
* Very good for study related to access to health care (Several questionnaires included four questions about health insurance, regular care provider and last health checkup. Prevalence data by state can be sorted by race, gender, age, income, or education)
* Estimates obtained from BRFSS were similar to estimates from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) according to some publications. They also noted some significant differences for certain specific outcomes. Details on the data quality, validity and reliability can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/publications/data_qvr.htm> [external link]

**Limitations**

* Due to the nature of the BRFSS, a cross-sectional self-report survey, it is subject to recall bias and social desirability bias
* Data post 2011 (change in design) or 2014 (use of cell phone for surveys) may not be comparable to the earlier years
* Not all questions were asked every year and in every state. The questions asked during the survey are categorized in three groups (components):
* A standardized core questionnaire: some core questions are asked every year (fixed core), others are asked every other year (rotating core) and at most four emerging core questions for high-priority topics such as vaccine shortage and influenza-like illness.
* Optional modules: states can choose to use those questions according to need
* State-added questions (these questions address states’ specific interest)

Information on which optional modules were used by states can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/questionnaires/index.htm> [external link]