

Running the Numbers

Current Topics in Health Statistics

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Reporting of Health Care Access Through a Statewide Telephone Survey

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a statewide random telephone survey of adults in North Carolina (ages 18 and older). During the period 1997-2000, approximately 8,600 adults were interviewed through the BRFSS, for an average of 2,150 interviews per year. In 2001, the BRFSS was expanded to more than 6,000 interviews per year.

Several measures of the BRFSS relate to limitations on health care access: (1) a report of no health insurance or lapses in health insurance coverage in the past 12 months (universal Medicare coverage for the elderly limits this measure to those aged 64 years and younger); (2) an affirmative response to the question "Was there a time in the last 12 months when you needed to see a doctor but could not because of the cost?"; and (3) a report of no routine medical check-up in the past year, regardless of health insurance coverage.

The following results for the period 1997-2000 are weighted to be representative of the entire adult population of NC.

	No continuous health insurance (ages 18-64)	Could not see a doctor because of cost	Did not have a checkup in last year
Total	20.9%	12.2%	25.8%
Sex			
Male	21.1%	9.6%	34.2%
Female	20.8%	14.6%	18.1%
Race			
White	19.5%	11.0%	26.9%
Minority	25.6%	16.4%	22.1%
Age			
18-39	27.1%	14.0%	31.0%
40-64	14.5%	12.8%	25.7%
65+	—	6.4%	13.2%
Education			
high school or less	28.0%	15.8%	26.7%
some college +	14.6%	8.5%	24.9%
Household income			
Less than \$25,000	38.8%	22.3%	26.4%
\$25,000-\$49,999	17.0%	9.6%	26.8%
\$50,000+	7.7%	3.9%	25.9%

These results show that, in general, there is a higher self-reporting of limited access to health care among people of a minority race, younger people, and people with lower education and lower income. Other results indicate that after controlling for differences in education and income, there is not a significant association of minority race with limited health care access. Also, persons with high medical and behavioral risks (according to the BRFSS survey) generally have more limited access to health care.

The full report on which these findings are based is titled "Do Persons with High Medical and Behavioral Risks Have Limited Access to Health Care?" To access this report, go to www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/pubs.

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From the State Center for Health Statistics
www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS
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