



## WISDOM Data Source Descriptions

### **Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)**

In 1984, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) initiated the state-based Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)—a cross-sectional telephone survey that state health departments conduct monthly over landline telephones and cellular telephones with a standardized questionnaire and technical and methodologic assistance from CDC. BRFSS is used to collect prevalence data among adult U.S. residents regarding their risk behaviors and preventive health practices that can affect their health status. Respondent data are forwarded to CDC to be aggregated for each state, returned with standard tabulations, and published at year's end by each state. BRFSS now collects data in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and three U.S. territories. BRFSS completes more than 400,000 adult interviews each year, making it the largest continuously conducted health survey system in the world.

#### **Methodology:**

The BRFSS Data User Guide is intended to provide a brief overview of BRFSS to data users [http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/data\\_documentation/pdf/userguidejune2013.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/data_documentation/pdf/userguidejune2013.pdf). Specific information regarding data quality, response and/or cooperation rates, or calling outcome can be found in the Summary Data Quality Report produced each year in conjunction with the annual data release. Data users needing more information about comparability across years should refer to the annual Comparability of Data document, particularly before using the data to conduct trend analyses.

From the 1980s to 2010, CDC has used a statistical method called post stratification to weight BRFSS survey data to known proportions of age, race and ethnicity, sex, geographic region within a population. In 2011 the BRFSS moved to a new weighting methodology known as iterative proportional fitting or raking. Raking has several advantages over post stratification. First, it allows the introduction of more demographic variables—such as education level, marital status, and home ownership—into the statistical weighting process than would have been possible with post stratification. This advantage reduces the potential for bias and increases the representativeness of estimates. Second, raking allows for the incorporation of a now-crucial variable—telephone ownership (landline and/or cellular telephone)—into the BRFSS weighting methodology. Beginning with the 2011 dataset, raking succeeded post stratification as the BRFSS statistical weighting method. As noted in the previous paragraph, age, sex, categories of ethnicity, geographic regions within states, marital status, education level, home ownership and type of phone ownership are currently used to weight BRFSS data.

#### **References:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>