

TOBACCO

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Facts

Changes to Survey Sampling Methods

Where does North Dakota get its data about tobacco use?

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control uses data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to determine adult tobacco usage rates in North Dakota. The BRFSS is conducted annually by the NDDoH, with guidance and technical assistance provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Has the BRFSS method of collection changed?

Yes, beginning in 2011, the BRFSS method of collecting data has changed. There are two major changes:

- (1) The survey now includes data from landline and cell phone numbers.
- (2) A new method of weighting the data called “raking” has been implemented.

Why were these changes made?

More and more telephone users are switching from regular landlines to cell phones, and many people now live in cell phone-only households. A change was necessary in order to get survey responses from those who only use cell phones.

It has become increasingly difficult to get people to respond to surveys. The new method of weighting the data (raking) allows for more demographic variables to be taken into account, reduces the potential for bias and increases the accuracy of the sample.

How do these changes affect the tobacco-use data?

Cell phone-only users tend to be younger and have other demographic differences from landline users. Tobacco use is also more prevalent in this younger age group. Those people were being missed when data was collected in previous years so previous BRFSS surveys may have not accurately reflected the number of adult tobacco users in North Dakota.

Can I still compare data from past BRFSS surveys to the new surveys?

No. It is not appropriate to compare previous year estimates with current estimates because of the changes in survey methodology.

Given the new methodology, all states experienced an increase in the estimated percentage of adults who currently smoke between 2010 and 2011. North Dakota’s estimated smoking rate for 2011 was 22 percent (which includes cell phone respondents), while the 2010 estimated smoking rate was 17.4 percent (which did not include cell phone respondents).

To allow for accurate comparisons, the NDDoH Tobacco Prevention and Control Program will no longer compare current data to data from years prior to 2011. A new trend line will be developed that will move forward from 2011.



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