

4.3. Health Risk Behavior Surveys

4.3.1. Adults at Risk - Adult Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Data, Tennessee Statewide Survey Results, 1994

This CDC adult behavioral risk survey is administered to a random sample of the general population of adults, ages 18-64, living in households in all 50 states. It provides general information about health risks, behaviors and attitudes of those sampled. The survey is designed to provide uniform data to identify chronic disease risks and guide health promotion and disease prevention programs. It is an annual, large-scale, random-digit-dial telephone survey. One adult in each household is randomly selected for interview. HIV-related questions have been incorporated into the survey and make up about one-fifth of the core questions. They include questions regarding attitudes, knowledge, self-perception of risk, and use of HIV testing. The sample size is roughly 2,000 interviews per year per state.

Strengths of the survey are that it is state-based and longitudinal and can be used for state-by-state comparisons and time trend analyses. In addition, local areas may add their own HIV-related modules and questions. Limitations include non-representation of households without telephones, institutionalized and homeless populations; limited time available for HIV-related questions; and lack of inclusion of certain specific HIV questions at present; and lack of access to disaggregated data for analytic epidemiologic studies. As a general population-based survey, the BRFSS does not target those at highest risk for HIV infection, namely, those in prison, the homeless, and injecting drug users.

In Tennessee, 2,430 adult residents participated in the 1994 survey. Data are weighted to adjust for nonresponse bias wherever possible. The HIV/AIDS questions selected for discussion here are reported by age, sex, and race. Data are not available by county or region from this statewide sample, and HIV/AIDS prevalence is not measured. It should be noted that the questions ask about the "AIDS virus," which should be read for accuracy as "HIV virus" throughout.

4.3.1.2. HIV/AIDS Pertinent Questions

(1) "What are your chances of getting the AIDS virus?" (None, Low, Medium, High)

Of the 2,430 adults ages 18-64 surveyed, 10.2% reported that they had either a medium or high risk of contracting the AIDS virus. Slightly higher percentages of males than females (11.2% versus 9.1%, respectively) reported medium-to-high risk. Nearly twice as many blacks as whites reported such perceived risk levels (15.8% versus 9.1%, respectively). Fifteen percent of 18-24 year-olds reported a medium or high risk, while 46.7% of this age-group said they felt at no risk of infection. The 25-34 year-old group was at the second highest perceived risk, at 11.6%, while 49.8% of this age-group claimed no risk of infection.