

The Howard County Health Assessment Survey

Survey Methodology



Introduction

The Howard County Health Assessment Survey is an effort to capture a representative snapshot of the county's overall health, access to health care services, lifestyle habits, and health knowledge. The survey also helps identify which residents are more likely to have needs that are not currently being met by health care institutions in the county.

Factsheets highlighting some of the interesting findings of the Howard County Health Assessment Survey were produced to help communicate the results of the survey to the public. These factsheets can be found at www.howardcountyhealthsurvey.com.

The factsheets are organized into seven content areas from the survey:

- Access to affordable care
- Chronic disease
- Healthy weight, exercise and nutrition
- Behavioral health
- Tobacco use
- Healthy aging
- Child health

This document is intended to help people using the factsheets for education and policy work to better understand the survey results and methodology.

Methodology

The Howard County Health Assessment Survey was commissioned by the Howard County Health Department, the Horizon Foundation, Howard County General Hospital, and the Columbia Association. OpinionWorks, LLC provided the technical aspects of the survey, including recommendations on the precise wording of questions on the survey, population sampling, and telephone data collection.

Interviews

For the 2016 survey, 2,001 interviews were conducted between April 29 and July 9. Interviews were considered complete if the respondent proceeded through the entire interview, though respondents may have refused to answer individual questions. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Both landline and mobile telephone numbers were included in the sample.

During the interviewing process, a strict random respondent selection protocol was adhered to. Respondent selection within households was randomized, and all households in the County had an equal probability of being sampled. Caregivers were not allowed to answer for others; answers for all study respondents reflected their own characteristics and experience.

Once the interviews were collected, weights were applied at the Census Tract level to bring the sample into close conformity with the demographic distribution of the adult population countywide, according to the most recent data available from the United States Census Bureau.

Selecting and Weighting Respondents

Demographic weights were applied to the sample to ensure that it was as reflective as possible of the County’s population. Weights were applied to the following parameters: gender, age, race and ethnicity, and educational attainment.

A complete survey data file has been supplied by the contractor to the study sponsors, excluding identifying information for the individual respondents in order to protect their personal health information to make possible further analysis of these health data.

For analysis purposes, each interview was geo-coded and placed within one of Howard County’s seven regional planning districts, with the three smallest-population districts combined into one area called “West County.” Accordingly, a total of 2,001 interviews were conducted, as follows:

Regional Planning District	Interviews Conducted	Maximum Sampling Error*
West County	354	± 5.2%
Ellicott City	471	± 4.5%
Columbia	716	± 3.6%
Elkridge	225	± 6.5%
Laurel	235	± 6.4%
Howard County Total	2001	± 2.2%

*Sampling error is calculated at the 95% confidence level. This means that, in 19 out of 20 cases we can be certain that the true results would fall within this range if every adult resident of these areas had been interviewed.

Survey Questions

The study sponsors met regularly during the planning phase to discuss survey content and methodology. Final decisions over survey content were made by the sponsors. Technical aspects of the survey project, including question wording recommendations, population sampling, and telephone data collection were administered by OpinionWorks, LLC.

Many questions on the HCHAS were replicated from the BRFSS so that results can be compared to other areas of Maryland and the nation, and to benefit from prior vetting of those questions. The HCHAS also included customized questions to address the priorities of the project's sponsors, and the local health environment in Howard County. In the end, these telephone interviews averaged 17.4 minutes.

“Answer the Call” Awareness Campaign

Prior to field interviewing, the project's sponsors notified the public about the study to encourage survey participation through a multi-media “answer the call” campaign. OpinionWorks, LLC maintained a dedicated telephone line, named “Howard Health Survey,” which appeared on residents' caller ID readouts as interview calls were made. Residents calling this number heard a descriptive voice mail greeting and were encouraged to leave messages if they wanted more information. This voice mail was monitored daily, and calls were returned by OpinionWorks, LLC staff to residents who had questions about the study.

Additional Details

A detailed report of the results can be requested from the survey sponsors through www.howardcountyhealthsurvey.com.

Acknowledgments

The Howard County Health Assessment Survey is a project of:

Howard County Health Department
www.hchealth.org

The Horizon Foundation
www.thehorizonfoundation.org

Howard County General Hospital
www.hopkinsmedicine.org/howardcountygeneralhospital

The Columbia Association
www.columbiaassociation.com

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www.healthyhowardmd.org

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www.opinionworks.com

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www.simplicitemetrics.com