

Survey Findings

Following the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill, an ongoing public health concern was the mental and behavioral health of those living along the Gulf Coast. As part of the response to the spill, CDC, in collaboration with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), conducted a telephone survey to assess the mental and behavioral health of Gulf Coast residents affected by the disaster.

Highlights of GSPS Findings

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Gulf States Population Survey (GSPS) was a 12-month (December 2010 to December 2011) telephone survey of adult residents in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The survey was conducted to provide information about the mental and behavioral health status of the population in coastal areas most directly affected by the April, 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The GSPS collected survey data from a random sample of households, with the majority of the interviews conducted in the 25 coastal counties or parishes that were most directly affected by the spill. The survey was available in English and Spanish. Adults 18 years or older were asked to take part in the survey, and only one adult per household was interviewed.

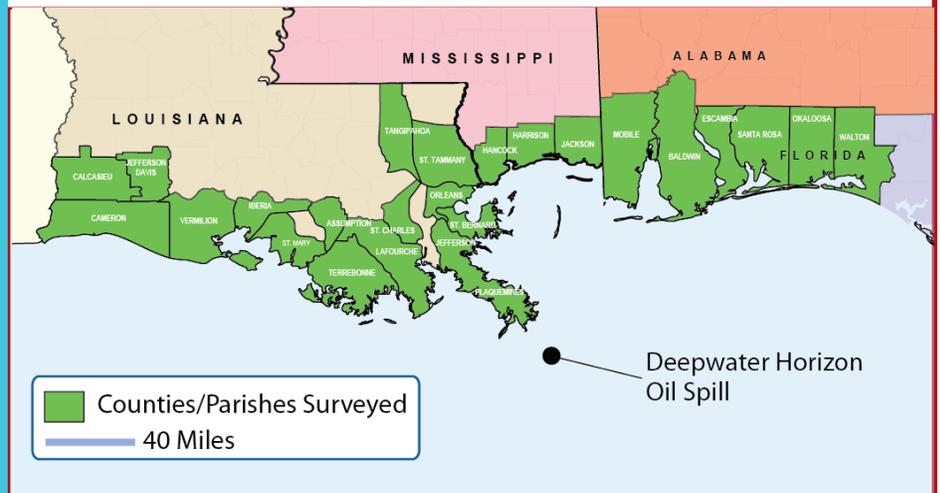


Figure 1. Counties/parishes included in the GSPS.

Mental and Behavioral Health

Overall, the survey results indicate the following:

- 16 percent of the coastal population suffered moderate to severe depression in the 2 weeks before the interview;
- 15 percent suffered moderate to severe anxiety in the 2 weeks before the interview;
- 5 percent of coastal residents reported suicidal ideation in the past year;
- 3 percent reported physical abuse by an intimate partner;
- 10 percent reported emotional abuse;
- 11 percent reported fair/poor mental health;
- 6 percent reported dissatisfaction with life; and
- 9 percent reported rarely/never receiving emotional support.



The GSPS included questions on a range of health topics including life satisfaction and emotional support, quality of life, chronic medical conditions, depression and anxiety, access to health care, and economic and financial conditions. The survey collected approximately 38,000 interviews by its end on December, 2011.

All GSPS results are available in a joint report called "Behavioral Health in the Gulf Coast Region Following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill," published with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (online): <http://www.samhsa.gov/data>.

Additional information about the GSPS is available online: <http://www.cdc.gov/osels/phsipo/dbs/gsp.html>

Additional informational about the BRFSS is available online: <http://www.cdc.gov/BRFSS/>

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746 to get help and support for any distress that you or someone you care about may be feeling related to any disaster. Spanish-speakers: **Text "Hablanos" to 66746.**

Risk Behaviors

With respect to risk behaviors among residents of coastal counties/parishes, the survey indicates the following:

- 18 percent reported everyday smoking;
- 15 percent reported binge drinking;
- 6 percent reported heavy drinking;
- 3 percent reported having increased use of prescription medication without their physicians' advice; and
- 27 percent did not exercise regularly.

General Health and Unhealthy Days

- 16 percent of coastal residents reported fair/poor general health; and
- 20 percent reported fair/poor physical health.

When asked about unhealthy days within the preceding 30 days, the survey indicates the following:

- 15 percent of coastal residents indicated that they had experienced 14 or more physically unhealthy days; and
- 9 percent reported that physical health problems had limited their activities for 14 or more days within the preceding 30 days.

Economic and Environmental Factors

Coastal/noncoastal factors noted in the survey about persons in contact with oil from the spill, participation in clean-up activities, decreased household income, and loss of jobs due to the spill are as follows:

- 14 percent of coastal residents reported having direct contact with the oil spill;
- 8 percent reported participating in spill related cleanup activities;
- 24 percent reported their household income had decreased due to the spill; and
- 11 percent reported losing their job due to the spill.

Comparing GSPS with CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Data

CDC compared results from selected measures from the GSPS with results of the BRFSS conducted in those regions from 2004 to 2010 and found the following:

- Fair/poor general health was less common than what was measured in these coastal counties/parishes by BRFSS 2004 to 2010;
- Physically and mentally unhealthy days were similar to previous BRFSS estimates; and
- Everyday smoking and binge drinking rates taken from the 2004 – 2010 BRFSS and the GSPS, indicated no discernible differences.

Summary

Results of the GSPS indicate that people living in the coastal counties/parishes were more likely than those living in noncoastal counties/parishes to report decreased income or lost jobs because of the oil spill. However, when comparing coastal and noncoastal counties in the region, the GSPS did not indicate substantial differences in chronic physical or mental health conditions or health behaviors. In addition, BRFSS data collected in the 25 coastal counties/parishes between 2004 and 2010 were, for the most part, not substantially different from BRFSS data collected in the year following the spill.