

Data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) are released in printed reports and on the NCHS website at [www.cdc.gov/nchs](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs).

For more information on NHANES, visit the NHANES website at [www.cdc.gov/nhanes](http://www.cdc.gov/nhanes).

For any questions regarding NCHS or NHANES, contact:

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For specific questions about how NCHS protects the information you provide, contact:

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**NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS**



# How the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Keeps Your Information

**CONFIDENTIAL**



**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
National Center for Health Statistics

# Protecting the public's privacy ... no idle pledge

## **NCHS and NHANES**

### **Our promise**

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) carried out the first National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) in 1960. Today, more than 50 years later, the promise to protect the privacy of everyone remains our top priority. We believe this record is an important reason why so many people are willing to take part in the survey.

### **There's safety in numbers, especially our numbers!**

#### **The law...**

We take your privacy very seriously. The information you give us will be used for statistical research only. This means that your information will be combined with other people's information in a way that protects everyone's identity. As required by federal law, only those NCHS employees, our contractors, and our specially designated agents who must use your personal information for a specific reason can see it. Otherwise, your data will only be shared after all information that could identify you and/or your family has been removed.

Strict laws prevent us from releasing information that could identify you or your family to anyone else without your consent.

A number of federal laws require that all information we collect be kept confidential: Section 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 242m), the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA, Title 5 of Public Law 107-347), and the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a). Every NCHS employee, contractor, research partner, and agent has taken an oath to keep your information private. If he or she willfully discloses ANY identifiable information, he/she could get a jail term of up to five years, a fine of up to \$250,000, or both.

In addition, NCHS complies with the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015. This law requires the federal government to protect federal computer networks by using computer security programs to identify cybersecurity risks like hacking, internet attacks, and other security weaknesses. The Act allows software programs to scan information that is sent, stored on, or processed through government networks in order to protect the networks. If any cybersecurity risk is detected, the information system may be reviewed for specific threats by computer network experts working for the government (or contractors or agents who have governmental authority to do so). Only information directly related to government network security is monitored. The Act requires any personal information that identifies you or your family to be removed from suspicious files before they are shared.

#### **The pledge...**

Anyone working on NHANES must sign a pledge. This makes them subject to punishment by Federal laws, including the Privacy Act, the Public Health Service Act, and others.

#### **The penalties...**

People who break these laws can be fined up to \$250,000, lose their job, or go to jail.

#### **Other ways we protect your privacy**

Those working for NCHS must also follow special rules for handling private information. These rules are meant to ensure that the privacy of the people taking part in NHANES is fully respected.

- Anything that could reveal who you are is removed. This includes, but is not limited to, your or your families' names, addresses, phone numbers, and places of work.
- Data are not released if they are for a geographical location so small that the numbers might identify someone.
- Computers are password protected and data are encrypted for added security.

**NCHS and NHANES will not release your private data without your consent!**