Redesigning the National Health Interview Survey Questionnaire

Marcie Cynamon
Director
Stephen Blumberg
Associate Director for Science
Division of Health Interview Statistics
National Center for Health Statistics
Getting acquainted

• History
• Uses
• Content
• Format
• Redesign goals
• Gathering Input
History

• Established by the 1956 National Health Survey Act, Public Law 652, 84th Congress
• Authorized as the National Health Survey
• First fielded in July 1957 and continuously ever since
• Collect and disseminate data on the health status and health care access of the U.S. non-institutionalized population
• Last redesign was in 1997
Uses of the data

• Annual report to Congress
• Address specific issues of ongoing and emergent public health concern
• Provide estimates for monitoring (Health United States, Healthy People program)
  • 69 Healthy People 2020 Objectives
  • 71 Healthy People 2010 Objectives
  • Dashboards and indicators
• Research
• Policy and program evaluation
• Benchmark
NHIS format

• In-person household interview survey
• With some telephone follow-up
• Interviews performed by trained U. S. Census Bureau interviewers
• Computer-assisted personal interviewing
• Household/family respondent, sample adult, sample child
• Core (annual) and supplements (periodic, one-time)
NHIS core domains

• Health status
  • Conditions, injuries, activity limitations

• Health care services
  • Access to care, utilization, health care coverage

• Health behaviors
  • Risk and preventive factors

• Sociodemographic characteristics
Core module

• Household composition*
• Family questions*
• Recontact information*
• Adult section^  
• Child section^  

* asked of a household member  
^ person-specific
Supplements

• One time, annual, or periodic
• Sponsor driven and funded
• One question or many
• Currently take 35-45 minutes
• Examples of recent topics
  • Complementary and alternative medicine
  • Voice, speech, language, and balance
  • Cancer prevention and control
  • Food security
  • Health information technology
  • Impact of chronic pain
Redesign goals

• Shorten the questionnaire
• Improve the flow
• Make more current
• Synch content with other HHS surveys
• Eliminate repetition
• Avoid rare event content
• Streamline for faster release (less coding)
• Improve response rates
• Include biomeasures
Length of Completed Interviews (in minutes), by Quarter:

NHIS, 2006, Q1 -- 2015, Q1
NHIS Unconditional Response Rates

- Family module
- Sample Child module
- Sample Adult module
Redesign timeline

• 2014 – 2015: Stakeholder engagement, outreach
• 2015 – 2016: Qualitative and quantitative assessment of new or revised questions
• Summer 2016 – Spring 2017: OMB review and public comment
• Late Spring 2017: Revised questionnaire programmed
• January 2018: Revised questionnaire fielded
Gathering input

• Public comment
  • Federal register notice
  • NCHS website
• Contacting stakeholders
• Reviewing other survey content
• Work groups
What we need to know

• How are NHIS data currently being used?
• What is considered to be the most critical content on the survey?
• What content is assumed will always be there (or should always be there) regardless of how short the questionnaire gets?
• What periodicity is acceptable for other content?
• What are we doing or collecting that is not useful?
• What limitations have been encountered when using NHIS data?
• How could NHIS data be more useful?
Contact us

healthsurveys@cdc.gov

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/nchs_listservs.htm