



FAQ's for Health Units about RRFSS

■ ■ ■ What is RRFSS?

A partnership of Ontario public health units collects ongoing health related survey data called the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS). The RRFSS survey is conducted by Institute for Social Research (ISR) at York University, the largest university-based survey research centre in Canada <http://www.isr.yorku.ca/>

■ ■ ■ What are the survey questions?

Health units, as of 2016, ask 6 'core' socio-demographic survey questions and can choose from an 'Inventory' of over 300 groups of questions (modules) on a wide variety of topics for their own customized survey: <http://www.rffss.ca/index.php?pid=24> Survey questions include topics such as smoking, immunization, obesity and chronic diseases. RRFSS is also used to collect information on emerging issues such as Ebola Awareness, Pandemic Influenza, and the impact of the built environment on health. In addition, health units have the flexibility to change the questions they wish to ask during the year and may develop new survey questions they would like to ask

■ ■ ■ Why do health units need this survey data?

RRFSS provides Health Units with timely, useful information to help to monitor local public health trends, plan local public health programs and services and provide evidence for the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) and Protocols requirements that public health units are mandated to report on. For example, the Halton Region Health Department used RRFSS to gather baseline data on the public's perception about the social determinants of health <http://www.halton.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=120856>

■ ■ ■ Why do we need RRFSS data when we have CCHS data?

RRFSS provides health units with much more community specific data than larger geographic surveys, such as the CCHS. Health units collecting RRFSS data have been able to increase their ability to tailor programs to better meet the needs of their local communities. For example, the Sudbury & District Health Unit has collected data for their rural district office areas and the Durham Region Health Department has been able to present 7 RRFSS indicators related to health behaviours and risk factors for their 50 neighbourhoods www.durham.ca/neighbourhoods

■ ■ ■ How 'timely' is the data?

ISR collects the survey data using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system on behalf of each RRFSS participating Health Unit. This data is collected in 3 'cycles' of four months each year and health units receive their survey data within 2 months of the data being collected

■ ■ ■ What does the survey cost?

Survey costs vary depending on the needs of the health unit, sample size and survey length and can also be customized based on a specific health unit's budget. For example, a survey of 15 minutes (approximately 75 questions) can be completed among 1,200 adults for less than \$50,000

■ ■ ■ What is RRFSS doing to combat declining telephone survey response rates?

The average response rate for RRFSS over the last 5 years (2010-2014) has been 50% (compared to 45% BRFSS in 2012). However, as with other telephone surveys declining response rates are an issue. RRFSS is providing new additional options to collect data and as of 2016 RRFSS web surveys and RRFSS cell phone sample will be available

■ ■ ■ What are the other benefits of joining RRFSS?

Membership packages can include data analysis done by ISR at a very minimal cost to health units. In addition, because RRFSS is built on collaboration, benefits include analysis support, RRFSS listserv (supported by APHEO <http://www.apheo.ca/>) and a RRFSS Analysis and Module Working Group consisting of epidemiologists and data analysts from RRFSS member health units

■ ■ ■ Who do I contact for more information about joining RRFSS?

If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact Lynne Russell, the RRFSS Coordinator, lynne.russell@halton.ca or Phone: (905) 825-6000 Ext 7581