

2021 Adult Health Survey
Report to the Minnesota Department of Public Health

August 2022

Executive Summary

This report serves as final deliverable for completing a countywide Adult Health Survey in fulfillment of requirements under Minnesota’s Local Public Health Act, National Public Health Accreditation Board standards and measures, and grant duties defined within the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) funding administered by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health (SPRCPH) is a grantee of the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) grant administered through the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). One of the many SHIP grant requirements to ensure that initiatives are community-driven is to conduct an Adult Health Survey with Ramsey County residents. Although the process of disseminating this survey and collecting responses was determined by SPRCPH, MDH had required question guidelines and wording that must be included on the Adult Health Survey.

Many adjustments were made to this project, due in part to the delayed start from initial timeframe (2017-18), with project delays continuing as staff shuffled priorities to fulfill public health responsibilities related to a local emergency response in the fall of 2019, immediately followed by COVID-19 pandemic response in 2020.

Survey responses were collected in two ways: online and in-person with the intention of a targeted convenience sample by over-sampling from zip codes with highest social vulnerability (CDC Framework, SVI Quartile 1). The survey was open online for approximately six weeks while the in-person survey collection took place at community events simultaneously between October and December 2021. The total number of responses for the survey was 1082 with 72% (776) resulting from social media promotion and 18% (199) resulting from in-person engagement.

The goals of this project were to:

- Collect 1,000 responses
- Use process and results to sustain and enhance relationships with community residents and organizations.
- Collect updated health information about Ramsey County residents that supports long-term monitoring of community health conditions and concerns.
- Support best practices for Local Public Health Departments in monitoring community health conditions and using the data collected to steer priority efforts across programs and partnerships.



Methods

The survey consisted of 35 multiple choice questions, and these questions were predetermined by the Minnesota Department of Health. Due to the quick turnaround for data collection, the project team decided not to have this survey translated into other languages. The timeline for data collection was October – December 2021. There were two methods used to collect data: an online survey using the SurveyMonkey platform and physical paper surveys which were distributed by SHIP staff at community outreach events.

The online survey was promoted in three different ways: email to community partners, included in various Ramsey County e-newsletters, handout flyers and a promotional campaign through a contractor, Metre. Community partners that received this email were part of these committees' listserv:

- SHIP Farmers' Market Collaborative
- SHIP Community Garden partners
- Food Resources (mostly food shelves)
- The Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative
- Healthy Aging Community partners
- Hmong Breastfeeding Coalition
- The e-newsletters that promoted this survey are:
 - Environmental Health Volunteers
 - Green Ramsey
 - Health and Wellness Monthly (internal staff newsletter)

On behalf of SPRCPH, the media contractor, Metre, launched a three-week campaign in December which included ads for social media and online cultural community journals. This included Google, Facebook, Instagram, Sahan Journal, Mshale, and Hmong Times. We promoted the survey across all Ramsey County zip codes with heavier promotion in the “zip codes of interest” which have high social vulnerability index (SVI), greater than 90 percent, a composite metric that represents residents with higher needs who are harder to reach through projects like this one. These zip codes include: 55103, 55106, 55107, 55117, 55119, 55130.

The first community outreach event took place on October 14, 21. SHIP staff partnered with Ramsey County's Child and Teen Check-up staff at a transitional home shelter to solicitate survey responses. There was a total of 10 community outreach events and 163 survey responses were collected. The locations included: Rondo Library, Ramsey County COVID-19 vaccination clinics in New Brighton Community Center and Arlington Hills Community Center, Harriet Tubman Center East, YMCA Midway and White Bear Lake. The Rondo Library and New Brighton Community Center were repeated locations.

Other locations that were considered are: Rice Street Library, Roseville Library, Maplewood Library, Ramsey County Public Health Center (555 Cedar), YMCA Eastside. Staff did not table at these sites due to various reasons which included no ongoing community programing to provide ample foot traffic, there were other surveys being conducted, and/or the opportunity for staff to table fell outside of this survey's timeline.

Topics Not Included

Although MDH had required us to include questions that would indicate survey respondents' body mass index (BMI) such as height and weight, we decided not to include BMI in our reporting. According to the Health at Every Size (HAES) movement, the size of one's body is highly correlated with the social and physical determinants of health, genetics and the intersection of various oppressions (racism, homophobia, ableism, etc.) rather than personal choices. We currently have a SHIP initiative titled 'Weight Inclusive Ramsey County' which is driven from HAES and we are working within our organization to help staff reduce weight stigma and better relate to residents they serve through use of language and practices, thus making BMI an outdated health indicator.

The survey also asked respondents questions about their physical activity and how often they move their bodies: how many minutes of moderate and vigorous activity per day and how many days per week. The details of exercise minutes and days was dropped from our reporting, consistent with most recent national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) questionnaire. This report instead reports the Exercise questions using one yes/no indicator, which asks whether the respondent has had any exercise outside of work during the past 30 days.

Additionally, when compared to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey, the Adult Health Survey only focused on SHIP related data: healthy eating, active living and tobacco-free living. This survey does not include many important health topics, modeled in the BRFSS survey, such as:

- Inadequate Sleep
- Chronic Health Conditions: coronary heart disease, stroke, asthma, skin cancer, COPD, depression
- Oral Health
- Disabilities: deaf, blind, difficulty walking, difficulty dressing
- Alcohol Consumption: number of drinks in past 30 days, binge drinking
- Immunization
- Falls (accidents)
- Seat belt use, Drinking and driving
- Cancer Screening: breast, cervical, prostate, colon
- HIV/AIDS

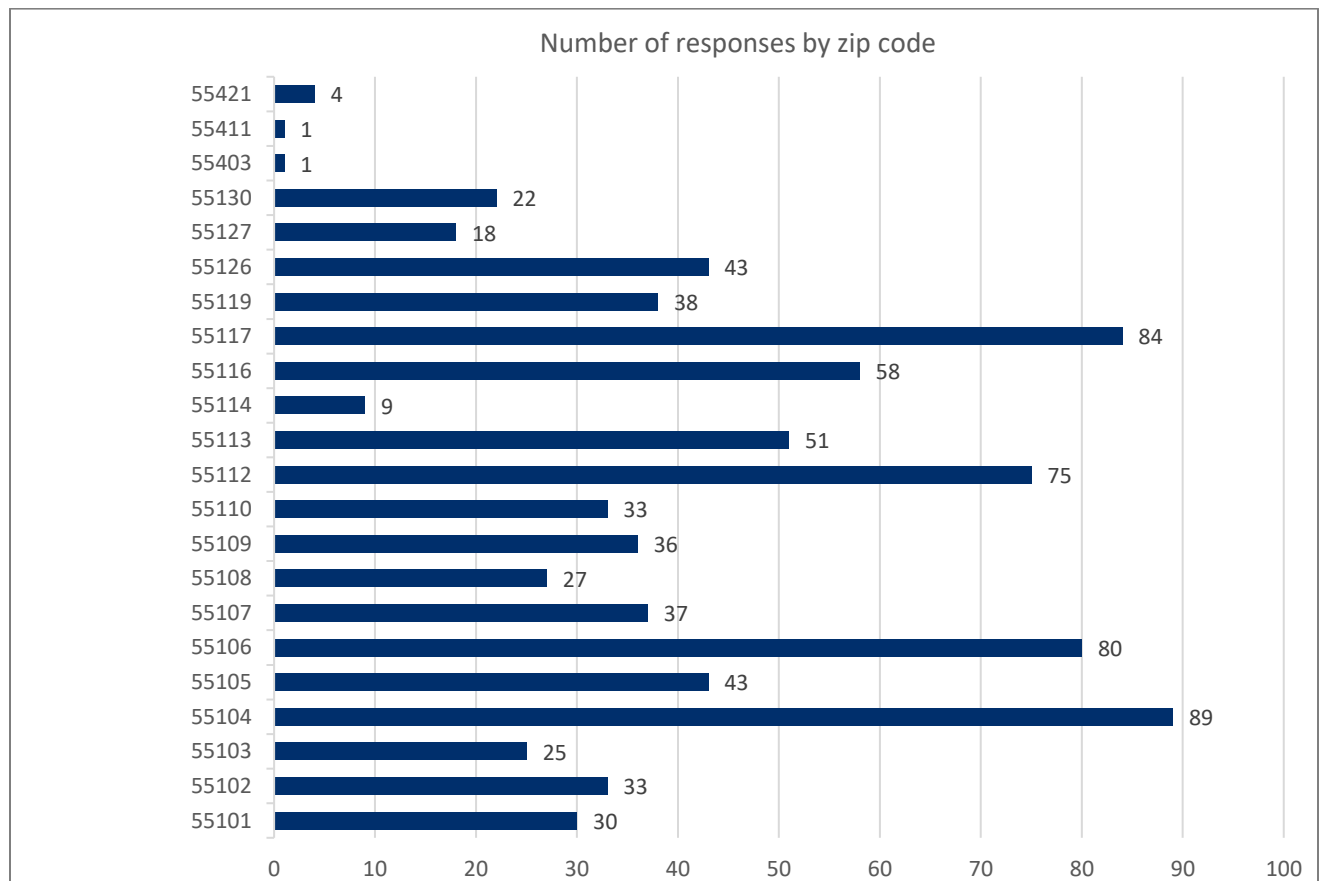
Furthermore, the Adult Health Survey included detailed questions about sugar sweetened beverages consumption, but we decided not to include these questions in our reporting. During the pandemic, the issue of food security rose to be a priority and we felt that questions about beverages had lost significance, compared to overall food security and access topics. Since 2017, there has been a shift in focus on what “health” means; we have moved away from details of food consumption and physical activity to a more wholistic approach which includes social determinants of health and food access. Reporting on this survey project reflects these emerging changes, as will future health survey projects that engage Ramsey County residents.

Findings

Key findings from this survey project are described below. Questions on the 2021 Adult Health Survey are worded consistently with the national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) questionnaire for most questions. Results shown below depict Ramsey County survey responses (2021) to the Minnesota statewide BRFSS results from 2020. Take caution in viewing these comparisons, as the population reached for the local survey was reached through convenience sampling methods and a smaller sample size (n=1000) as compared to the statewide survey, statistically sampled and randomized, and weighted with answers collected through a different method (phone interview). For many reasons, the results do not directly compare; however, the project team found it helpful to provide the statewide BRFSS result for benchmarking purposes.

Zip Codes

We had a good representation from across all Ramsey County zip codes due to Metre’s social media campaigns and in-person tabling events in areas to balance out survey options. The results displayed a good effort to reach focus zip codes; those with high social vulnerability index (SVI), greater than 90 percent (55103, 55106, 55107, 55117, 55119, 55130). For zip codes that are not included in Ramsey County, participants were physically located at RC service location when they took the survey, so the project team decided to include as in-scope to these responses.



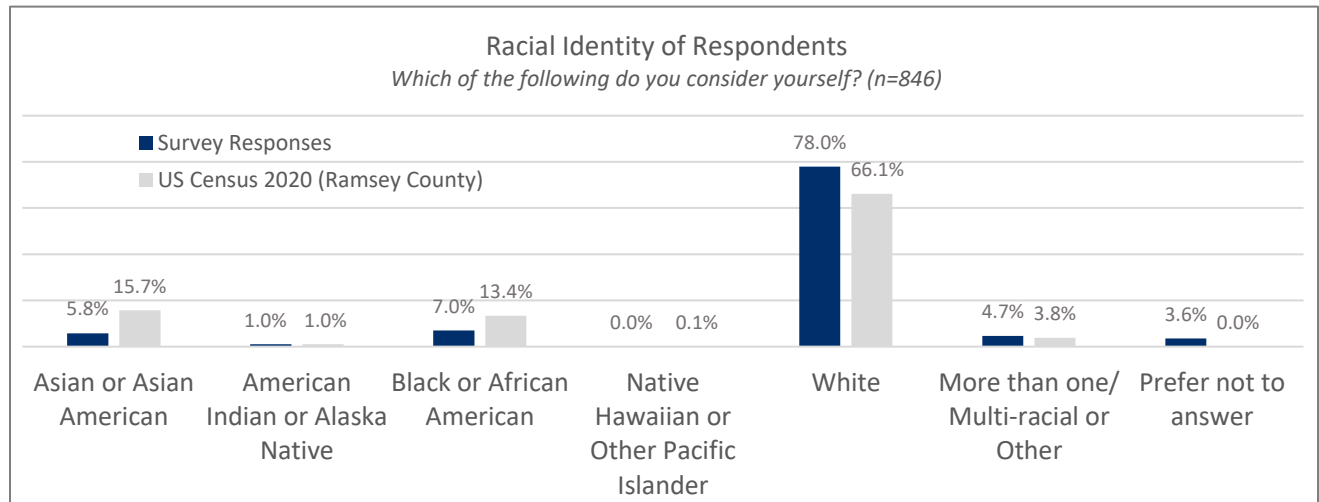
Demographics

More than one thousand Ramsey County residents responded to the survey via online or paper questionnaire. This section describes the demographic traits of those respondents. Personal identifiers were asked at the end of the survey questionnaire, after respondents answered the health and experiences portion. All questions were optional with participants able to select “prefer not to answer” or simply skip the question.

Racial Identity

Among those who responded, racial identity was reported as:

- Asian or Asian American: 5.79% of responses
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.95%
- Black or African American: 6.97%
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 0%
- White: 78.01%
- Multi-racial or Other: 4.73%
- Prefer not to answer: 3.55%

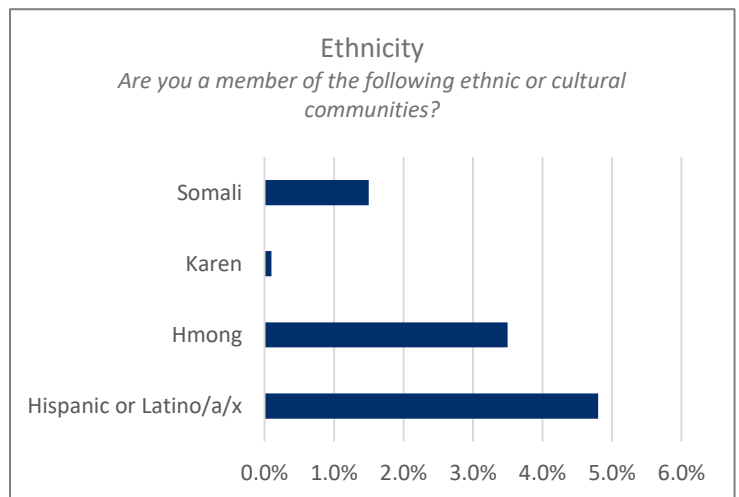


Ethnicity

Between 750 and 800 respondents answered each of the ethnicity – culture questions, answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to each category.

According to their responses:

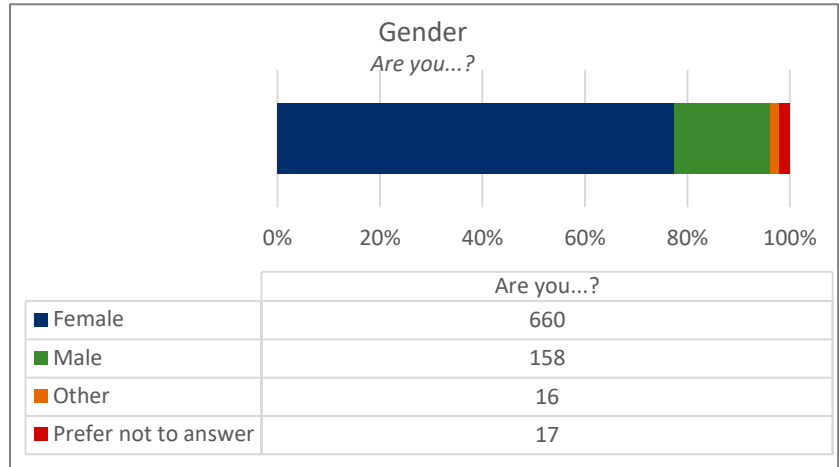
- 39 people identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x (4.8%)
- 28 people identified as Hmong (3.5%)
- 1 person identified as Karen (0.1%)
- 12 people identified as Somali (1.5%)



Gender

Survey respondents identified mostly as female (77%), while 19 percent identified as male and 4 percent selected “Other” or “Prefer not to answer.”

In the follow-up question asking “Do you consider yourself transgender?” 95 percent said No; 2 percent said Yes; and 3 percent said “Prefer not to answer.”



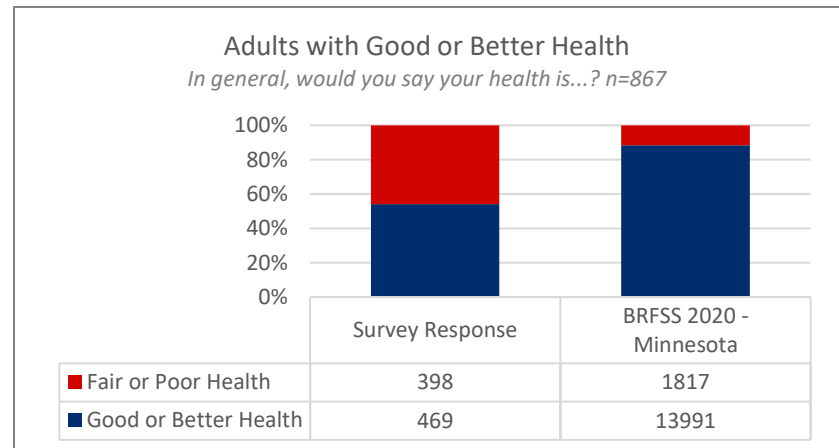
Health Status

This section of the survey asks respondents about their current general health status as well as physical health and mental health “not good” days during the past month.

General Health

In general, would you say your health is...? (n=867)

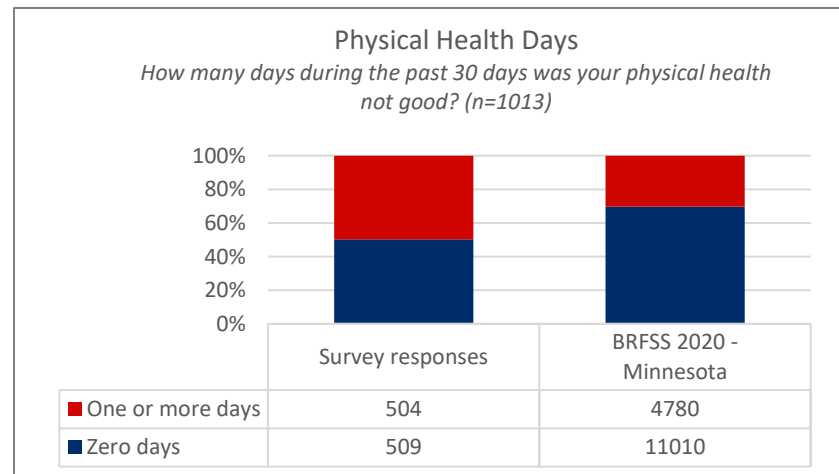
Of the 867 people who answered this question, 46 percent indicate current general health is Fair or Poor, compared to 11.5 percent of Minnesotans on the BRFSS survey, 2020.



Physical Health

Thinking about your physical health, which includes physical health and injury, how many days during the past 30 days was your physical health not good? (n=1013)

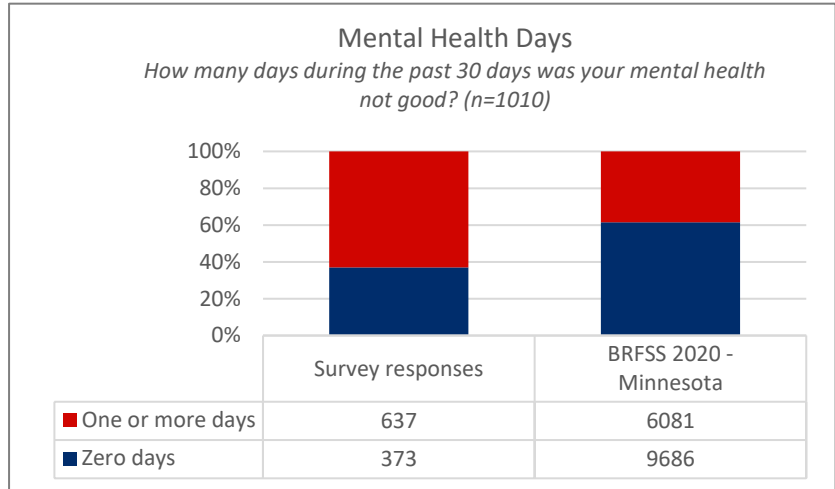
Of the 1013 people who answered this question, 49.8 percent of survey respondents indicate one or more “not good” physical health days during the past month, compared to 30 percent on the 2020 statewide BRFSS survey.



Mental Health

Thinking about your mental health which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good? (n=?)

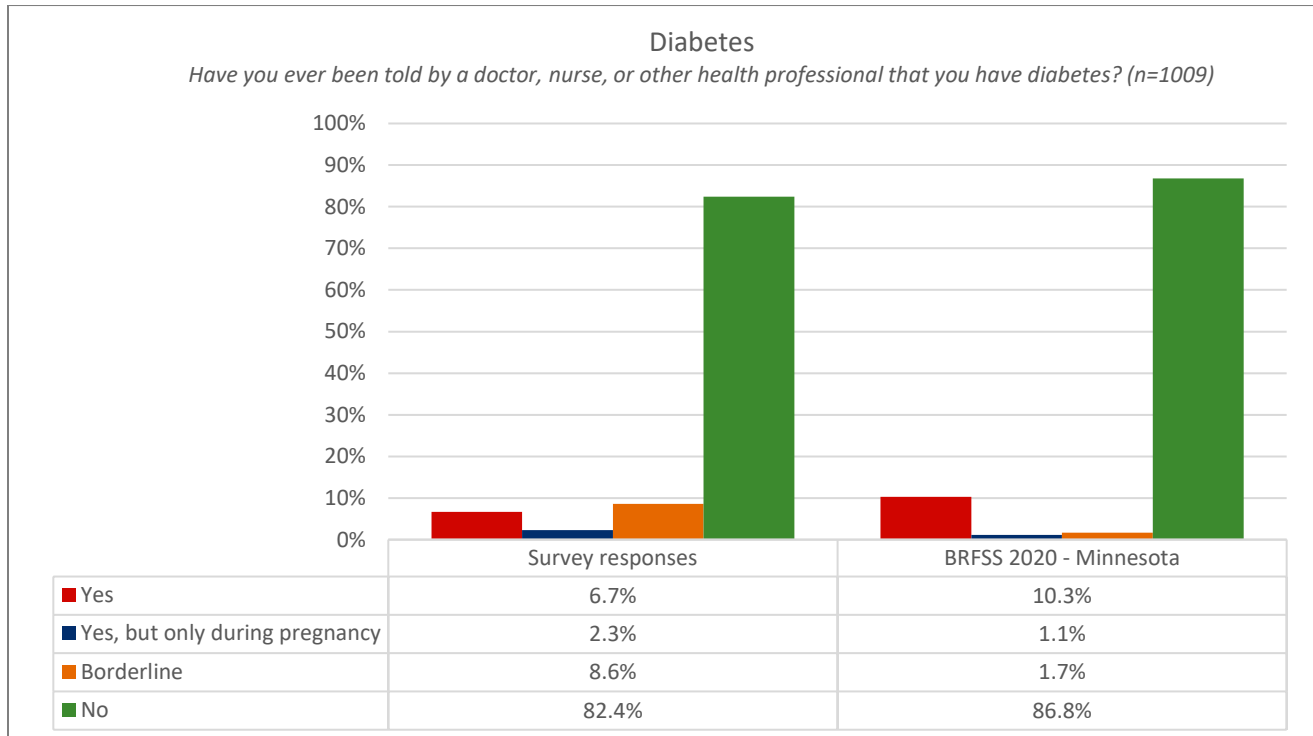
63.1 percent of survey respondents indicate one or more “not good” mental health days during the past month, compared to 38.4 percent on the 2020 statewide BRFSS survey.



Chronic Health Conditions

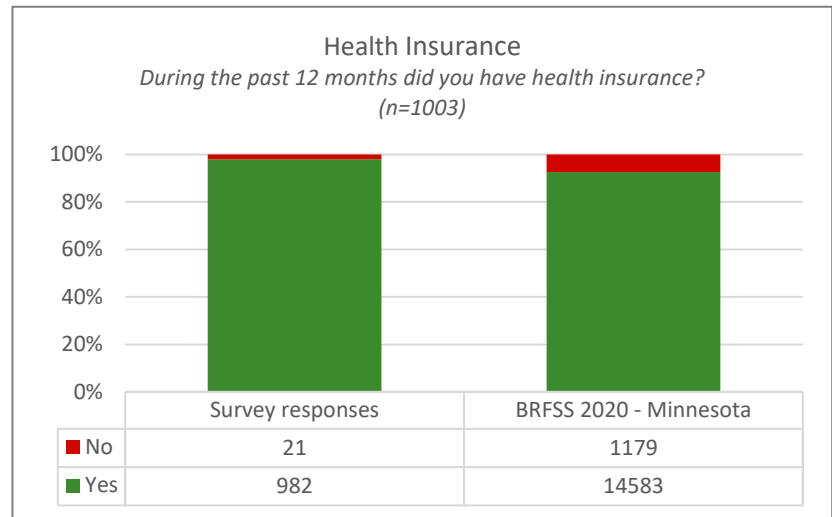
Of 1009 survey responses, 68 people indicated ‘yes’ when asked if they have ever been told they have diabetes (6.7%), compared to 10.3% of Minnesotans on the 2020 BRFSS survey. Of those same respondents, 87 (8.6%) said they had been told they were “borderline” or “pre-diabetic” compared to the lower figure of only 1.7% of Minnesotans responding in 2020.

This section of the questionnaire also asked whether respondents had ever been told they have hypertension or high blood pressure, and 21.6% of respondents (220) said yes with another 9.8% indicating they were borderline. No such question is included on the BRFSS questionnaire, so the survey will be updated to better correlate with BRFSS on the next iteration.



Health Care Access

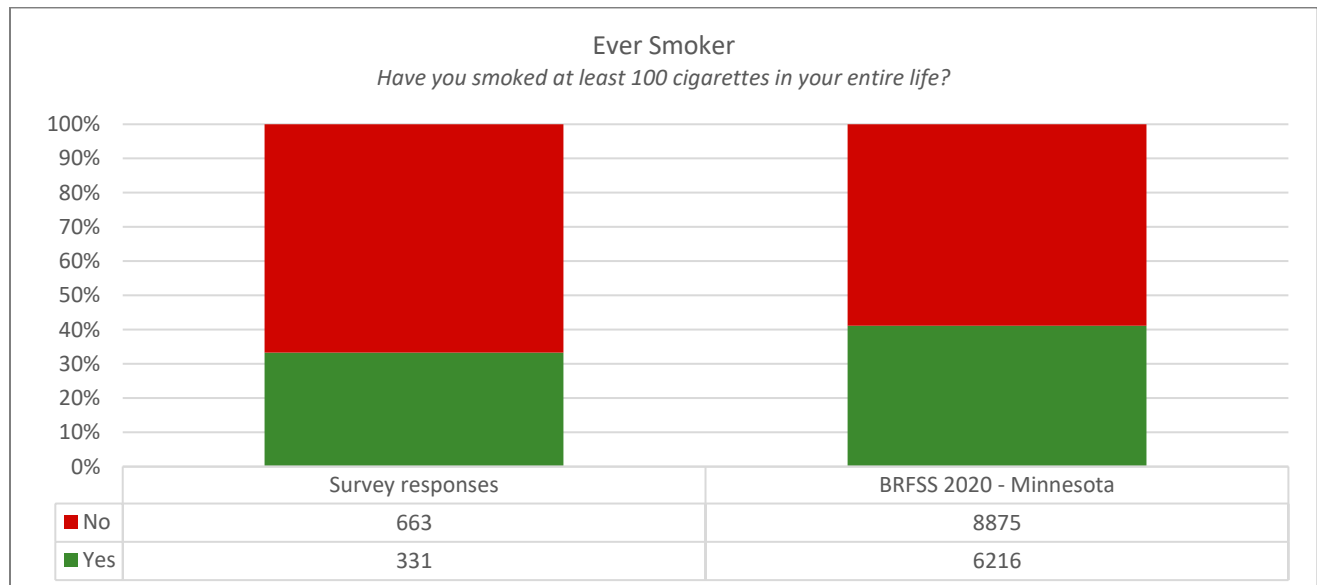
The Ramsey County questionnaire in 2021 asked the insurance coverage slightly differently than the BRFSS questionnaire for all Minnesotans in 2020. We asked local residents, *During the past 12 months, did you have health insurance the entire year, only part of the year, or were you not insured for the entire year?* but the BRFSS survey asks, *Do you have any kind of health care coverage, including health insurance, prepaid plans such as HMOs, or government plans such as Medicare, or Indian Health Service?*

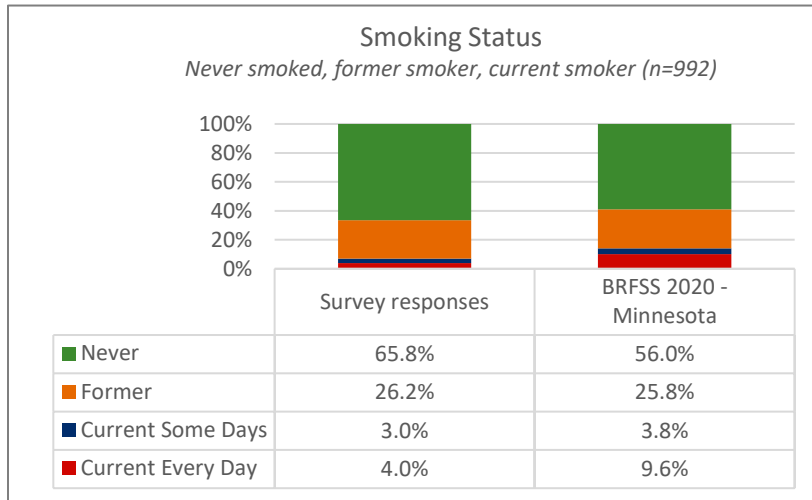


Of 1003 responses, 96.5 percent indicated they had insurance coverage during the past year, all or part of the year. Of the Minnesotans who answered the BRFSS questionnaire in 2020, 92.1 percent said 'yes' they do have any kind of health care coverage (insurance).

Tobacco Use

32.5 percent of respondents, 331 people, indicated they had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their entire lifetime, compared to 41 percent of Minnesotans who answered the 2020 BRFSS questionnaire.

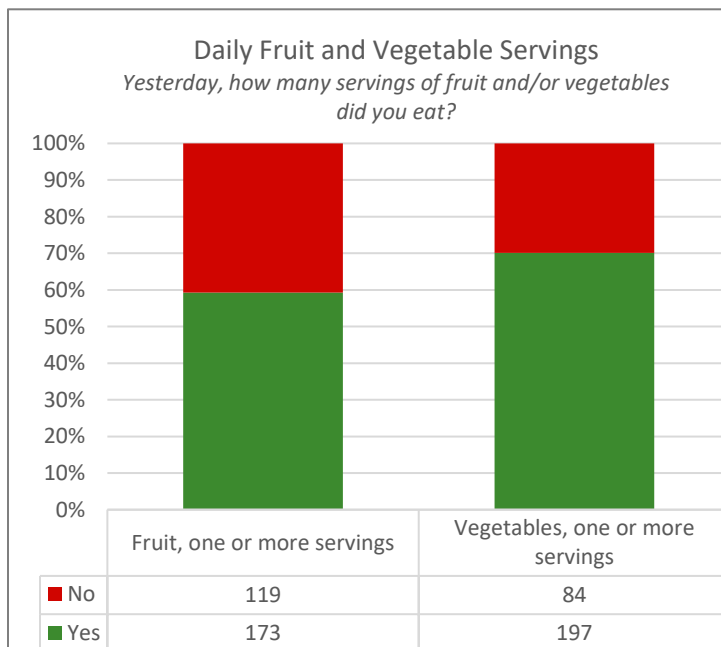
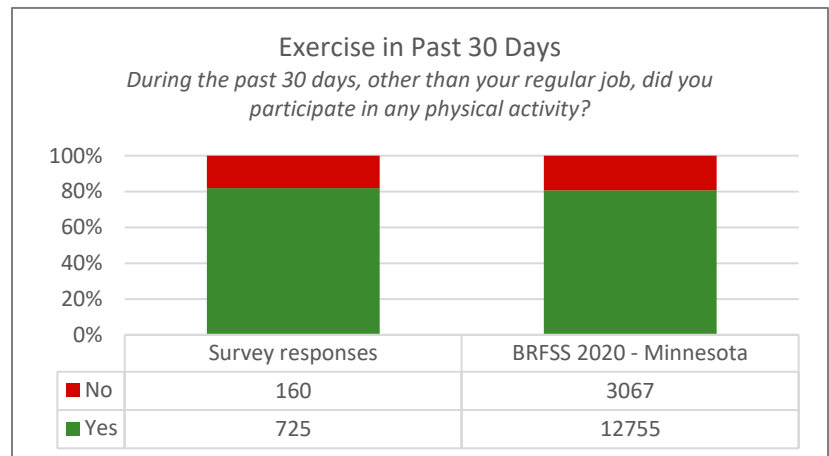




More than 65 percent of survey respondents on the Ramsey County survey indicated they had never smoked tobacco (653), compared to 56 percent on the Minnesota statewide survey in 2020. About 7 percent of survey takers said they currently smoke every day or some days, compared to about 13 percent current smokers on the BRFSS questionnaire in 2020. This most likely indicates reaching a slightly healthier or tobacco-averse audience on the local convenience sample.

Exercise

When asked about exercise (“physical activity”) past 30 days, 81.9 percent (725) of Ramsey County residents who responded to this question answered ‘Yes’ they had participated in physical activity not related to their regular job during the past month (2021), compared to 80.5 percent of Minnesota residents who responded to the BRFSS survey in 2020.



Nutrition

The nutrition section of the Ramsey County adult health survey asks respondents how many servings of fruit, 100 percent fruit juice, or vegetables they ate yesterday. For reporting purposes, answers to this question are used as an indicator where ‘yesterday’ is a proxy for ‘daily.’ Fewer than half of survey takers gave specific answers to these nutrition questions (n=280 to 300), which makes the answers less certain to represent all respondents. Of those who answered, 59 percent reported consuming one or more servings of fruit or 100 percent fruit juice yesterday (173), and 70 percent answered they consumed one or more servings of vegetables yesterday (197).

Conclusion

Limitations

Questions on the 2021 Adult Health Survey are worded consistently with the national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) questionnaire wherever possible. For many reasons, the results do not directly compare; however, the project team found it helpful to provide the statewide BRFSS result for benchmarking purposes.

Comparability

Comparisons are needed for benchmarking purposes, to answer questions like “Is this rate good?” or “How does this compare to...?” However, sampling methods and question format are different between the Ramsey County survey and the BRFSS survey. Similarly, seasonality will affect some of the answers (e.g. Exercise answers are very different in Minnesota, depending on what time of year the questions are answered). Local Ramsey County residents were reached through convenience sampling methods as compared to the BRFSS statewide and national survey, which statistically randomized and weighted with answers collected through a different method (phone interview vs in-person and online convenience sample for this project).

Relevance

Questions asked on this Adult Health Survey only partially link to priority program activities across Public Health programs and collaborative initiatives. Missing topics that will be priority consideration for future projects include: food security, substance use including Opioids, updated tobacco use questions to include vaping and e-cigarette use, expanded mental health questions, expanded chronic conditions and disability status questions.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Through the process of this initiative, we learned that having multiple ways to collect responses, in-person and online, yielded a higher response rate in a short period of time. Having this survey in the field only six weeks still allowed us to reach the target of collecting more than 1000 responses for the project. Also, attending community events that already had a captured audience such as COVID-19 vaccination clinics contributed to a higher in-person response rate. Additionally, there were recurring opportunities to discuss how we can bring together data and program planning, which is something that is ideal for the SHIP grant. If we had planned more than six weeks to collect survey responses, we would have had the survey translated into other languages and that would have helped capture the voices of residents whose primary language is not English.

Based on lessons learned, the project team has identified a few items to address for the next survey cycle, including:

- Utilize collaboration between program planning and data for intentional topic and question selection.
- Continue to improve the sampling methods to reach resident groups that are under-represented in this project, such as individuals who are Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC), cultural groups of Ramsey County such as Hispanic and Latino/a/x, Hmong, Karen, and Somali people, through the use of translated materials or interpretative services and other key engagement strategies.
- Update questionnaire and survey data processing to more closely match BRFSS framework.
- Trouble shoot contract and project deadline issues early to avoid late completion on future iterations.