

**HOLLERAN**

Community Health Research & Strategic Planning

**Somerset County, New  
Jersey**

**Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance  
System (BRFSS) Study**

**Presented by:  
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## **BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY**

The Somerset Medical center in partnership with “Healthier Somerset,” located in Somerset County, New Jersey, requested that Holleran conduct a Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) study among its adult community using the CDC BRFSS tool. The BRFSS is a National initiative, headed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that assesses the health status and risk factors among U.S. citizens.

Healthier Somerset, in coordination with representatives from Holleran, personalized the BRFSS tool to assess the needs of Somerset County. The tool was developed by selecting various core sections and modules from the BRFSS tool and adding individualized questions specific to the Somerset County area. Depending upon respondents’ answers to questions regarding cardiovascular disease, smoking, diabetes, etc., interviews averaged 20 to 30 minutes in length.

A sampling strategy was developed by Holleran and approved by Healthier Somerset. The sampling strategy identified the number of completed surveys needed within each zip code across the county. The final sample (2,059) yields an overall error rate of +/-2.2% at a 95% confidence level. Data collection took place between November 11, 2011 and February 29, 2012.

The calculated response rate for the study is 9.8%, as some areas were oversampled. Holleran is a member of the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO) and follows the guidelines for survey research quality established by the organization. Likewise, Holleran calculates response rates according to the definition established by CASRO as outlined in the document, “On the Definition of Response Rates.” The response rate is equal to the number of completed interviews divided by the number of eligible respondents. The number of eligible respondents is the total number of potential respondents minus wrong numbers, disconnects, ineligible respondents, and an estimate of disqualified respondents among those on the list who were not contacted. For a more detailed description of the determination of response rates, refer to the CASRO article “On the Definition of Response Rates.”

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of the assessment were as follows:

1. To gather statistically valid information on the health status of residents in the primary and secondary service areas of Somerset Medical Center.
2. To develop and finalize sampling strategies relevant to target populations.
3. To accurately represent all populations within the target area.
4. To develop accurate comparisons to the State and National baseline of health and quality of life measures to provide trending information for the future.
5. To provide comparisons to previous years' data to evaluate trending and changes in health status.
6. To interpret the meaning of the data collected so that needs are accurately depicted for area residents.
7. To integrate research findings into community benefit (hospitals), accreditation preparation (public health), and strategic planning activities.
8. To conduct research in a fully confidential manner consistent with the Code of Standards and Ethics promulgated by the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO).

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Areas of strength and opportunity are identified below. It is important to note that a number of questions on the Somerset County survey did not have comparisons to New Jersey and/or National data because of survey modifications. Those specific areas are not included in the below summary. Additionally, some areas can be debated as either a strength or opportunity, those areas may not be listed below as they do not clearly appear to be a strength or opportunity.

### Areas of Strength

The following are areas where Somerset County residents fare better, or healthier, than the State of New Jersey and/or the Nation as a whole.

- ✓ **General health:** The proportion of residents in Somerset County reporting “very good” general health is above the proportions throughout New Jersey and Nationally.
- ✓ **Anxiety and Depression:** When asked how many days have you had little interest or pleasure in doing things, of those who reported poor mental health and/or physical health, a higher proportion of Somerset County residents reported “no days” compared to the Nation.
- ✓ **Days that you felt down, depressed or hopeless:** The proportion of Somerset County residents who reported “no days” was higher compared to the Nation.
- ✓ **Diagnosed with anxiety:** The proportion of Somerset County residents who responded “no” to ever having received a diagnosis for anxiety disorder was higher when compared to the rest of the Nation.
- ✓ **Depressive disorder:** The proportion of Somerset County residents who responded “no” to ever having received a diagnosis for a

depressive disorder was higher when compared to the rest of the Nation.

- ✓ **Health care coverage:** Somerset County residents are more likely than residents throughout the rest of the Nation to have some kind of health care coverage.
- ✓ **Cost interfering with seeing doctor:** Fewer Somerset County residents indicated they were unable to see a doctor in the previous year because of cost compared to the New Jersey and National statistics.
- ✓ **Exercise in previous month:** A higher proportion of Somerset County residents have exercised in the previous month compared to New Jersey and the Nation. The proportion of obese residents, however, is not significantly different from the State and National figures.
- ✓ **Daily smoking habits:** The proportion of Somerset County residents who reported smoking “not at all” was higher than both New Jersey and the Nation.
- ✓ **Alcohol consumption:** When asked about the number of days per week or per month that at least one alcoholic beverage was consumed, a higher proportion of Somerset County residents reported “none” compared to the State and Nation.
- ✓ **Diabetics receiving eye exams:** Residents in Somerset County with diabetes are more likely than diabetics throughout the Nation to have received an eye exam, in which their pupils were dilated, within the past year.
- ✓ **Dental visits in previous year:** Somerset County residents are more likely to have been to the dentist in the previous year compared to adults across the State and the Nation. The same was true for the proportion of adults who have received dental cleanings within the past year.

- ✓ **Flu shots in previous year:** When asked about receiving a flu shot in the previous year, Somerset County residents are more likely to have had a flu shot in the previous year compared to the rest of the Nation and throughout New Jersey.
- ✓ **Mammograms:** Females within Somerset County are more likely to have had a mammogram compared to females throughout New Jersey and the Nation. Additionally, Somerset County females are more likely to have had the mammogram within the past year compared to the Nation.
- ✓ **Clinical breast exams:** Females within Somerset County are more likely to have had a clinical breast exam within the past year compared to females throughout the Nation.
- ✓ **Pap test:** Females within Somerset County are more likely to have had a pap test within the past year compared to the Nation.
- ✓ **Blood stool test:** Compared to the State of New Jersey and the Nation as a whole, Somerset County residents age 50 and over are more likely to have had a blood stool test using a home kit.
- ✓ **Sigmoidoscopy & Colonoscopy:** Compared to the State of New Jersey and the Nation as a whole, Somerset County residents age 50 and over are more likely to have had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.
- ✓ **HIV and high risk situations:** When given a list of high-risk situations for HIV infection the proportion of respondents from Somerset County that said they had partaken in such activities within the past year was much lower than the proportion that said yes within the State of New Jersey.
- ✓ **Reactions to race at work:** A higher proportion of Somerset County residents who are currently employed felt as though they were

treated “the same as other races” at work when compared to the Nation.

### Areas of Opportunity

The following are areas where Somerset County residents fare worse, or less healthy, than the State of New Jersey and/or the Nation as a whole.

- ✓ **Body Mass Index:** Somerset County residents are more likely than residents throughout New Jersey and the Nation to be overweight, according to their Body Mass Index statistics.
- ✓ **Physical health:** Compared to the New Jersey and National statistics, a higher proportion of Somerset County residents reported one to seven days of poor physical health within the past 30 days.
- ✓ **Mental health:** Compared to the New Jersey and National statistics, a higher proportion of Somerset County residents reported one to seven days of poor mental health within the past 30 days.
- ✓ **Physical and Mental health:** When asked, “for how many days during the past 30 days did poor physical or mental health keep you from doing your usual activities?” A higher proportion of Somerset County residents reported one to two days, compared to those of New Jersey. The proportion of those who reported three to seven days was higher than both the State and the Nation.
- ✓ **Adequate rest or sleep:** A higher proportion of Somerset County residents reported not getting enough rest or sleep for one to two days in the previous month, compared to the State and the Nation. The proportion of those who reported not enough sleep for three to seven days was significantly greater than the State but not the Nation.

- ✓ **Alcohol use:** Among those Somerset County residents who consumed alcohol, the proportion of those that had one to two drinks was higher than the State and National proportions.
- ✓ **PSA test:** Males 40 and over within Somerset County are less likely than their male counterparts throughout the State and Nation to have had a PSA test.
- ✓ **Digital Rectal Exam:** Males age 40 and over within Somerset County are less likely than males throughout the State and Nation to have had a digital rectal exam.
- ✓ **Providing care or assistance to others:** A higher proportion of Somerset County residents than the Nation responded “yes” when asked if they had provided care or assistance to a friend or family member within the past 30 days. Of those providing care, a higher proportion was doing so for a non-relative. Care that was being provided was primarily for daily personal activities such as eating and dressing.