

BRFSS Brief

Number 1510

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual statewide telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administered by the New York State Department of Health. The BRFSS is designed to provide information on behaviors, risk factors, and utilization of preventive services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death among the noninstitutionalized, civilian population aged 18 years and older.

High Cholesterol

New York State Adults, 2013

Introduction and Key Findings

Elevated blood cholesterol levels are a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Adults with high total cholesterol (≥ 240 mg/dL) are twice as likely to develop coronary heart disease. High cholesterol has no symptoms, so many people don't know that their cholesterol is too high. The National Cholesterol Education Program recommends that all adults have their cholesterol levels checked at least once every five years (more frequently if their cholesterol levels are high or they are at high risk for cardiovascular disease).¹

[Obesity](#), [lack of physical activity](#), and high intake of saturated and trans fats are common modifiable risk factors for developing high cholesterol.

Key Findings

Among adults in New York State (NYS) who have had their cholesterol checked, nearly 40% report being told they had high cholesterol levels. High cholesterol is significantly more prevalent among adults who are obese (46.3%) or overweight (42.1%) than those who are neither overweight nor obese (31.8%). Adults with diabetes have a significantly higher rate (64.9%) of elevated cholesterol compared to adults without diabetes (35.3%).

Eighty-one percent of NYS adults reported that they had had their cholesterol checked within the past five years. Rates for having cholesterol checked within the past five years were significantly higher for whites and African Americans (84.5% and 82%, respectively), adults with annual income \$50,000 and greater (87.1%), and adults with Medicare (92.4%). Adults living with a disability (87.6%) and with diabetes (95.5%) also have significantly higher rates of having cholesterol checked within the past five years.

BRFSS questions

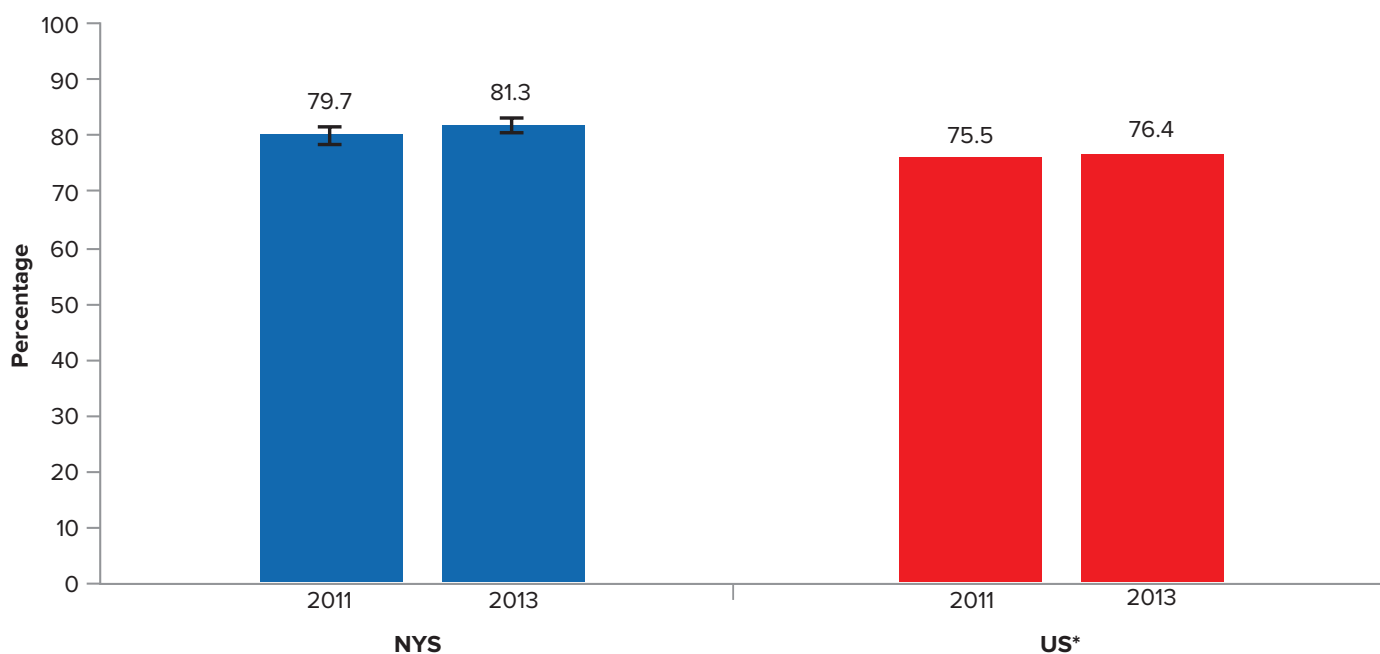
1. Blood cholesterol is a fatty substance found in the blood. Have you ever had your blood cholesterol checked?

[If "yes"]

2. About how long has it been since you last had your blood cholesterol checked?

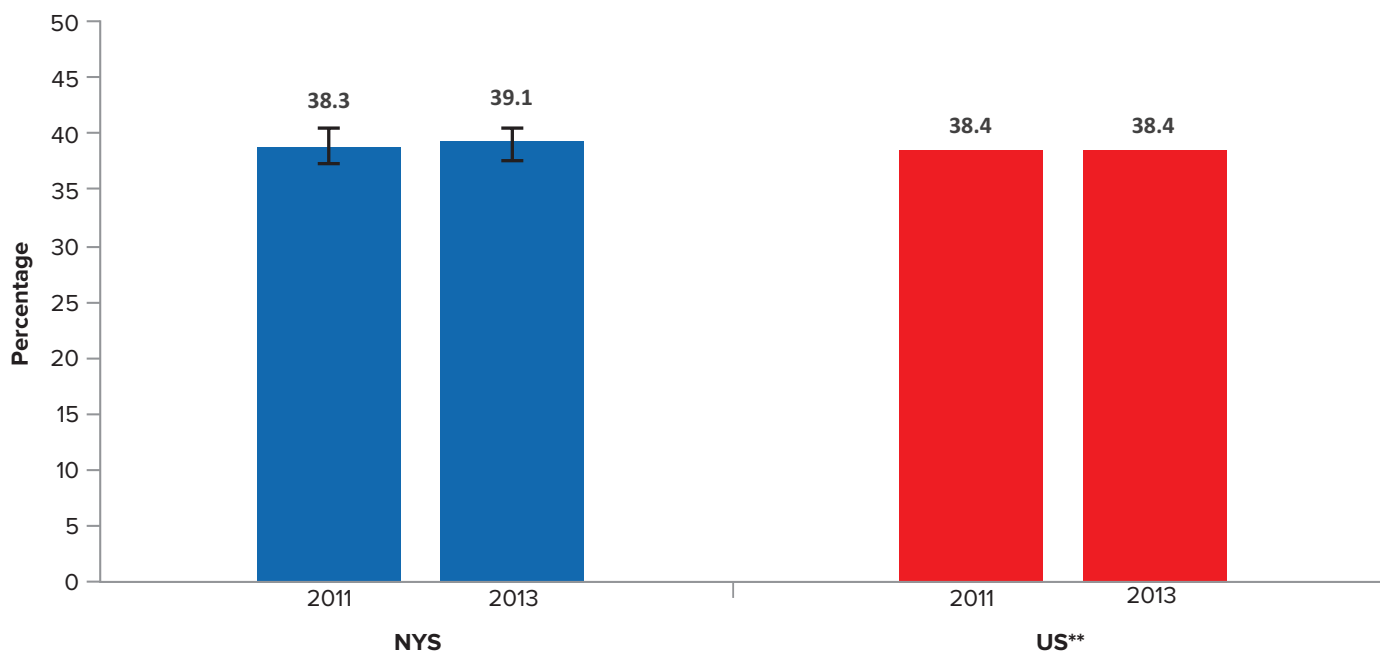
3. Have you ever been told by a doctor, nurse, or other health professional that your blood cholesterol is high?

Figure 1. Cholesterol checked within the past 5 years among U.S. and New York State adults, BRFSS 2011 and 2013



*Median percent; includes data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals

Figure 2. High cholesterol* among U.S. and New York State adults, BRFSS 2011 and 2013



*Those who ever had blood cholesterol checked.

**Median percent; includes data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals

Blood cholesterol among New York State adults, 2013 BRFSS

	Blood cholesterol			
	High cholesterol ^a		Checked within past 5 years	
	% ^b	95% CI ^b	%	95% CI
Total New York State (NYS) n=8979	39.1	37.6-40.5	81.3	80.1-82.5
Sex				
Male	41.4	39.1-43.6	79.2	77.3-81.1
Female	37.0	35.2-38.8	83.3	81.7-84.9
Age (years)				
18-24	11.4	7.4-15.5	50.4	45.1-55.6
25-34	18.9	15.5-22.4	68.6	65.3-72.0
35-44	27.6	23.9-31.3	79.5	76.3-82.6
45-54	41.6	38.4-44.8	89.1	87.0-91.1
55-64	53.2	50.0-56.4	93.5	91.9-95.1
65+	57.1	54.4-59.8	95.9	94.9-97.0
Race/ethnicity				
White non-Hispanic	39.7	38.0-41.3	84.5	83.1-86.0
Black non-Hispanic	37.3	32.8-41.8	82.0	78.6-85.4
Hispanic	39.7	35.8-43.7	73.0	69.7-76.3
Other non-Hispanic	35.8	29.9-41.7	75.4	70.0-80.8
Annual household income				
<\$25,000	42.6	39.6-45.7	75.3	72.7-77.8
\$25,000-\$49,999	40.1	36.9-43.4	80.0	77.1-82.9
\$50,000 and greater	37.0	34.9-39.2	87.1	85.5-88.7
Missing ^c	37.0	33.2-40.8	79.5	75.6-83.4
Educational attainment				
Less than high school (HS)	48.5	43.7-53.3	72.8	68.4-77.2
High school or GED	41.7	38.8-44.7	79.7	77.2-82.1
Some college	37.4	34.7-40.2	82.2	79.8-84.5
College graduate	34.2	32.1-36.2	86.5	85.0-87.9
Disability^d				
Yes	53.0	49.8-56.1	87.6	85.1-90.1
No	34.8	33.2-36.4	79.8	78.3-81.2
Have health care coverage				
Private	37.2	35.2-39.3	86.7	85.1-88.4
Medicare	58.0	54.8-61.2	92.4	90.1-94.7
Medicaid	37.6	32.2-42.9	76.6	71.7-81.5
Other government assistance plans	39.9	32.0-47.8	79.8	73.6-86.0
Other insurances	41.5	34.8-48.2	81.7	75.9-87.5
No coverage	24.9	19.5-30.2	54.6	48.9-60.4
Weight status				
Neither overweight nor obese	31.8	29.6-34.1	76.2	73.9-78.6
Overweight	42.1	39.6-44.6	84.1	82.2-86.0
Obese	46.3	43.4-49.2	86.5	84.4-88.6
Diabetes				
Yes	64.9	60.5-69.3	95.5	93.5-97.5
No	35.3	33.8-36.8	79.6	78.3-81.0
Region				
New York City (NYC)	38.1	35.8-40.3	80.2	78.3-82.1
NYS exclusive of NYC	39.8	37.9-41.6	82.1	80.5-83.7

^a If ever had blood cholesterol checked, and ever told by a doctor, nurse or other health professional that blood cholesterol was high.

^b % = weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval.

^c "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income.

^d All respondents who report activity limitations due to physical, mental, or emotional reasons OR have health problems that require the use of special equipment.

References

1. National Cholesterol Education Program, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health. Third Report of the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults (Adult Treatment Panel III) Executive Summary. NIH Publication No. 01-3670. May 2001. [cited May 10, 2011] Available at: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cholesterol/atp3xsum.pdf>

Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research
Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention

Order Information

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