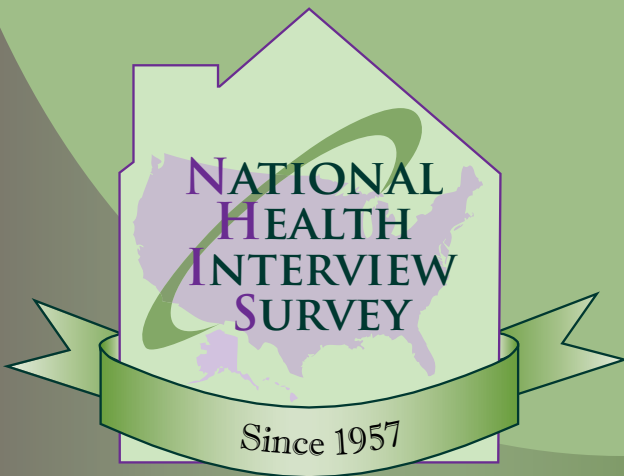




How the National Health Interview Survey Keeps Your Information

Strictly Confidential



Protecting the public's privacy...*no idle pledge*

There's safety in numbers, especially our numbers!

A message from the Director of NCHS

The law...

Information collected in the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is used only for statistical purposes. Furthermore, except for those parties we described in the letter mailed to you earlier, no information that could identify you can be released to anyone—including the President, Congress, or any court.

The affidavit...

Everyone working on or conducting the NHIS must sign an affidavit—a legal document making them subject to the Privacy Act, the Public Health Service Act, and other laws.

The penalties...

Violators can be fined up to \$250,000, lose their job, or go to jail.

The record...

For over half a century, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has maintained a perfect record in protecting the privacy of individuals, businesses, and families participating in the NHIS.

This agency is well known for the quality of information it provides to the public, the research community, and policymakers. That would be impossible without the guarantee of confidentiality, and you can be assured that we can back it up.

These principles are firmly grounded in federal laws, including the Privacy Act, the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act, the Public Health Service Act, and the United States Code, Title 18. All NCHS employees must sign a pledge making them legally liable and subject to all punishments in these laws.

Those working for NCHS must also strictly observe special practices for the careful treatment of confidential information. These practices are meant to ensure that the privacy of our respondents is fully respected.

We have, therefore, a number of very important reasons for observing strict confidentiality: It is the right thing to do, we could not collect quality information without doing so, and it is required by law.

Edward J. Sondik



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The Census Bureau and NCHS: a long and effective relationship

The U.S. Census Bureau first carried out the National Health Interview Survey for NCHS in 1957. Today, more than 50 years later, the record of honoring the promise to protect the privacy of each individual respondent remains unblemished.

We believe this record is an important reason why so many persons contacted in this survey readily participate and provide reliable information. As a result, ample representative and accurate information is made available every year to the public, the research community, and policymakers.

Other safeguards for your privacy

- Any item that could indirectly reveal who you are is removed. More than names and addresses are taken off everything we give out—no details on jobs, family, births, or residence that, if pieced together, could lead to identification, are ever released.
- NCHS withholds even statistical totals if they represent a location so small that the numbers might identify someone.
- Special security measures block outside contact with any confidential information stored in NCHS computers.
- We also use coded passwords (changed frequently) to prevent unauthorized data access.
- No authority can obtain identifiable data from NCHS. We deny access to your records to the police, military, and any branch of the federal government including the Internal Revenue Service, Immigration, and welfare agencies, for whatever reason. Your answers are also protected from the Freedom of Information Act as well as court subpoenas. NCHS' legal ability to protect your information has been upheld at the highest levels of federal courts.

For further information

If you have specific questions about how NCHS protects the information you provide, contact:

Confidentiality Officer,
National Center for Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road, Room 7116
Hyattsville, MD 20782

NCHSconfidentiality@cdc.gov
(888) 642-4159

NCHS data are released in printed reports and through the NCHS website.

For further information and to access NCHS products, visit or call:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>
(800) 232-4636

For more information about the NHIS, visit the NHIS website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>

or contact us at:

NHIS@cdc.gov
(301) 458-4001

America's Health Counts