

## **2008 BRFSS Cities Report Highlights**

In order to improve the BRFSS' coverage of the diverse populations across the state and to enhance our capacity to collect enough data to report at both the sub state and subgroup levels, the Massachusetts BRFSS oversamples seven cities: Boston, Fall River, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester. These seven communities comprise 20% of the Massachusetts population; 53% of the Black non-Hispanic population; 51% of the Hispanic population; and 30% of the Asian population.

The 2008 BRFSS selected Cities Report is the first MA BRFSS publication to summarize prevalence estimates of major health and health care indicators at the city level. This report presents 2008 health indicator prevalence for seven selected cities in Massachusetts, analyzes their trends from 2000-2008, and compares the prevalence estimates of health status to the state. The report also provides data that will assist policymakers to assess whether there are specific groups of adults who carry a disproportionate burden of chronic conditions and risk behaviors or who are less likely to access health care services in seven large cities in Massachusetts. The data are also intended to be used by these communities for planning, program interventions and informing local health policies.

This publication furthers our exploration of health disparities by race and ethnicity in Massachusetts, which were begun with state level data presented in the BRFSS 2007 annual report.

### **Main Findings: 2008 BRFSS Cities Report**

- The percentage of adults without health insurance dropped significantly after health care reform implementation. Still, the communities with larger racial and ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations have higher rates of the uninsured compared with the state. For example, the percentage of uninsured adults in Lawrence (12%) was four times the state average (3%).
- The prevalence of overweight or obesity increased significantly across the state from 2000 to 2008. A similar increase was found in Fall River, Lowell, Worcester, and Boston. The prevalence of overweight or obesity in 2008 remained higher than the state in Springfield and Fall River.
- The smoking rate for adults in Massachusetts was 16% in 2008. However, five oversampled cities (except Boston and Lawrence) reported a higher prevalence of current smoking than the state average. The prevalence of current smoking in New Bedford was nearly twice as high as the state (29%). The smoking rate among persons age 18-24 was more than 30% in Springfield, Lowell, Fall River, and New Bedford.
- The rate of self-reported "fair or poor health" was higher than the state average in all selected cities except Worcester. The rate remained higher than the state average over the reported time period.
- The prevalence of asthma and diabetes rose state wide and for some of the cities between 2000 and 2008. In 2008 prevalence of asthma was not different from the state average. Diabetes prevalence in Springfield (12%), Fall River (11%), and Lawrence (11%) was higher than the state overall (7%).
- Colorectal cancer screening improved state-wide and in all selected cities. However, all cities except Boston and Worcester still had a rate of colorectal cancer screening that was lower than the state. The lowest screening rate was in Lowell (51%), while the state average was 64% in 2008.

- There was a significant statewide trend downward for not having health insurance, having 6 or more teeth missing and women who had a pap smear in the past three years but that did not occur for any of the selected cities.
- Only Worcester (mirroring the state as a whole) had a significant **decreasing** trend for current smokers of any of the selected cities.
- Only Boston had a significant **decreasing** trend in binge drinking not only of any of the selected cities but also including the state as a whole.
- Only Springfield had a significant **increase** in leisure time physical activity not only of any of the selected cities but also including the state as a whole.
- Only New Bedford did NOT have a **decreasing** trend for environmental exposure to tobacco smoke compared to all other selected cities and the state as a whole.
- While the state as a whole had an **increasing** trend for receiving pneumonia vaccine in adults age 65 and older, only Fall River shared this with the state while only Lowell showed a **decreasing** trend in receiving pneumonia vaccine for the same age group.

### **Conclusions**

- The trends in the selected health indicators across the state and at the city level show similar patterns.
- The current rate of many indicators related to health care, health behaviors, chronic diseases, and prevention measures were worse than the state average for most of selected cities.
- These differences persisted for many indicators over the time period 2000-2008.
- More detailed analysis is needed in the future to determine main factors, including socioeconomic indicators such as education and income, related to the observed differences between the oversampled cities and statewide data.