

# West Side Community Health Assessment

## April 2000

In August 1999, West Side Community Health Services drew together key health and human service providers from St. Paul's West Side neighborhood to discuss and develop a community plan to help West Side residents achieve better health. A survey to assess health care access and use, chronic health problems, health behaviors, and knowledge of health resources of West Side residents was identified as a fundamental part of this plan.

This community health assessment, carried out by the Wilder Research Center, reports findings from a survey of 252 adults (age 18 years and older) residing in randomly-selected households on selected low-income blocks in the West Side neighborhood of St. Paul, Minnesota. The survey, with a 66 percent response rate, was conducted in-person and by telephone in English, Spanish, and Hmong between October 1999 and March 2000.

The sample is 62 percent female, with an average age of 42 years. Fifty-six percent of respondents are white, 29 percent Chicano/Hispanic/Latino, and 15 percent of other races. Half of respondents are married, and 46 percent have children in their household under age 18. The average household size is 3.1 people. Thirty-nine percent of households with members age 18 to 65 years have two or more people working full-time, and 16 percent of respondents have less than a high-school diploma. The average respondent has lived on the West Side for about 15 years.

Compared to the 1990 Census and to a similar 1993 West Side survey, this sample is younger, more racially/ethnically diverse, slightly more educated, and has lived for a shorter time on the West Side.

### Health care access and use

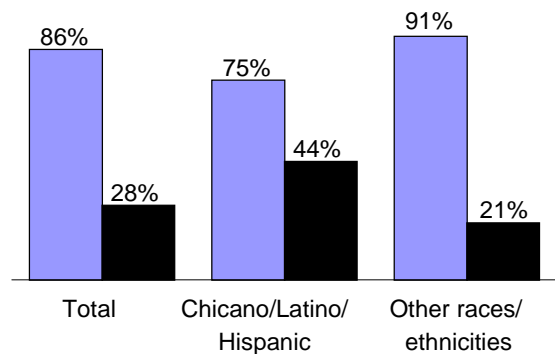
Eighty-six percent of respondents said they and others in their household currently have health insurance, but 28 percent said that at some point in the past year, household members were without insurance. [For comparison, in 1998 surveys, 92 percent of Minnesotan and 87 percent of U.S. respondents said they had health care coverage.]

- Respondents under age 30 (77%) and Chicano/Latino/Hispanics (75%) were less likely than others both to have health insurance currently and to have had it continuously over the past year.

Over a third (38%) said family members were unable to see a doctor when necessary during the past year, most commonly because of scheduling problems or cost. Half of those unable to go to the doctor were able to overcome the obstacles, usually by rescheduling appointments or getting off work, and 13 percent of them said affordable health insurance would help them obtain necessary health care.

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### HEALTH INSURANCE



■ Respondent and others in household have health insurance

■ Lacked health insurance during past year

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Respondents mentioned 48 different clinics, health centers, and doctors when asked where they usually go for health care, led by HealthPartners (20 percent of respondents), and West Side Health Center (10%). One-third said they had used West Side Health Center at least once.

- Chicano/Latino/Hispanics were much more likely than others to have ever visited WSHC (70% vs. 17%), and more likely to use it as their primary health care provider (26% vs. 3%).

Fourteen percent of respondents said they use interpreters when visiting health care centers, and 62 percent of them said interpreter assistance works well “most of the time,” down from the 95 percent satisfaction rate found in 1993.

Seventy-seven percent of female respondents said they have an annual Pap smear, 45 percent an annual mammogram, and 59 percent said they do monthly self-breast exams. Thirty-five percent said they've never had a mammogram, and 10 percent said either that their last Pap smear was more than two years ago or they'd never had one. [For comparison, in 1998 surveys, 51 percent of Minnesotan adult women and 41 percent of U.S. adult women said they had never had a mammogram.]

- White/non-Hispanics were less likely than Chicano/Latino/Hispanics and other race/ethnicities to report having an annual Pap smear (69 percent of white/non-Hispanics compared to 86 percent of others).

### Health status

Eighty-six percent of respondents said their health is good, very good, or excellent. [In 1998 surveys, 90 percent of Minnesotan and 85 percent of U.S. respondents rated their health as good, very good, or excellent.] They report their family members' health is somewhat better: 92 percent in good, very good, or excellent health. Unlike in 1993, there were no significant age or racial/ethnic differences in reported general health.

Eleven percent said their physical health was not good on 14 or more days in the last month; 6 percent said their mental health was not good on 14 or more days of the last 30. [Looked at comparatively, 13 percent of respondents said their physical health was not good on

8 or more days, compared to 11 percent of both Minnesotan and U.S. respondents in 1998 surveys. And 9 percent said their mental health was not good on 8 or more days, compared to 11 percent of both Minnesotan and U.S. respondents.] The average respondent in this survey had three days of poor physical health and two days of poor mental health in the last month.

- High school graduates reported, on average, twice as many days of poor mental health as non-high school grads.

### Chronic health problems

One-fifth of respondents said they or other adults in their household have been told they have (or have had) one or more of the following chronic health problems: arthritis, migraines, high cholesterol, chronic back pain, asthma, or depression.

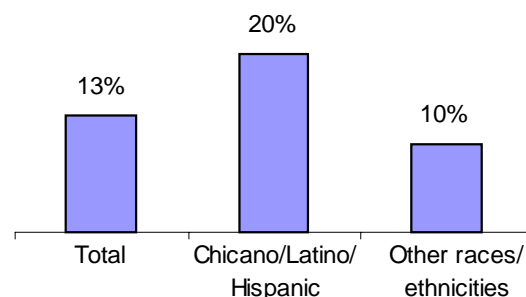
- Respondents who rated their general health as good, very good, or excellent were less likely than those in fair or poor health to suffer from arthritis, asthma, chronic back pain, depression, diabetes, heart attack before age 50, memory loss, and migraine headaches.

Thirteen percent of respondents said they or another member of their household have been told by a health care provider that they have diabetes. [For comparison, 6 percent of both Minnesotan and U.S. respondents to a 1998 survey said they *themselves* had been told by a doctor that they have diabetes.] Of those, 78 percent said they restrict their diet, 50 percent take pills, and 44 percent take insulin to control the disease. Fifty-three percent of respondents said they have blood relatives with diabetes.

- Chicano/Latino/Hispanics were more likely than others to have been told they have diabetes (20 percent compared to 10 percent).

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### RESPONDENT OR HOUSEHOLD MEMBER HAS DIABETES



Seventy-one percent of respondents said they had had their blood pressure taken within the past six months and another 19 percent within the past year. [This compares to 58 percent of Minnesotan and 72 percent of U.S. respondents to a 1998 survey saying they'd had their blood pressure taken with the past 6 months, and 24 percent of Minnesotan and 15 percent of U.S. respondents within the past year.] Eighteen percent said they've been told they have high blood pressure. [Compared to 21 percent of Minnesotan and 23 percent of U.S. respondents in 1997.]

Half of respondents said they consider themselves or other adults in their household to be overweight, and 13 percent of respondents from households with children said that children in their household are overweight. Forty-two percent said they'd tried to lose weight within the past three to six months, most commonly by reducing food intake or through exercise. [Twenty-seven percent of Minnesotan and 36 percent of U.S. respondents said in 1998 surveys that they were currently trying to lose weight.]

Ten percent of respondents said their households sometimes do not have enough to eat; one percent said this is often true. Twenty-five percent of households with children under 18 said they participate in WIC.

### Health behaviors

The percent of respondents saying they have fruits and vegetables daily varied from 53 percent for green salad to 82 percent for vegetables other than salad. Twenty percent of respondents said that in a typical week they never get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical exercise. Nineteen percent said they do so every day of the week. The average respondent exercises this much 3.2 days a week.

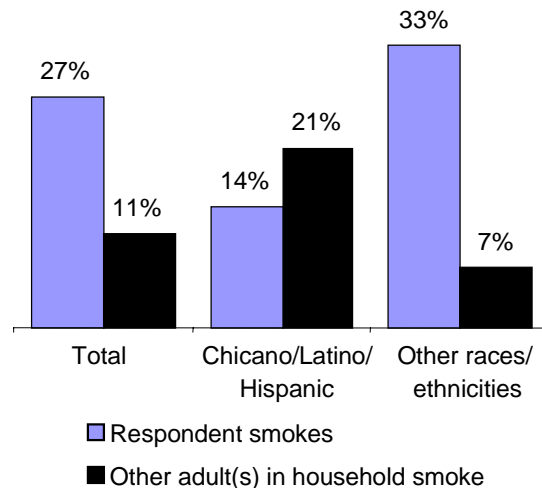
Twenty-seven percent of respondents said they smoke cigarettes, and 11 percent said another adult in their household smokes. [For comparison, in 1998 surveys, 18 percent of Minnesotan and 23 percent of U.S. respondents said they currently smoked cigarettes.]

- Chicano/Latino/Hispanic respondents were less likely than others to say they smoke cigarettes (14 percent compared to 33 percent), but more likely to report that others in their household smoke (21 percent compared to 7 percent).

Seventy-one percent of smokers said they would like to quit (down from 83 percent in 1993). Four percent of respondents said someone in their household drinks three or more drinks every day, and 5 percent said drinking or drug use has caused problems for their family or household in the past year.

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### RESPONDENT OR HOUSEHOLD MEMBER SMOKES CIGARETTES



Three-quarters of respondents said that contraceptive use is an acceptable form of birth control or family planning in their family, and most of them (92%) said they know where to go to meet their contraceptive needs. Two-thirds of adults in households whose oldest child is 14 to 17 years speak to them about birth control, as do 43 percent of parents whose eldest is 11 to 13 years old. Under half of respondents (44%) said there is a neighborhood source of information or help for problems with HIV/AIDS, and half didn't know if one exists; similar responses were found concerning neighborhood help and information about sexually-transmitted diseases. Eighty-three percent of parents whose eldest child is 14 to 17 years said they speak to them about HIV, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Fourteen percent of respondents said they have firearms at home, and nearly one-third of them (31%) said they don't store them in a locked place or with a trigger lock.

- White/non-Hispanics were more likely than others to say they have firearms at home (20 percent compared to 6 percent).

### **Knowledge of health resources**

Thirty-one percent of respondents said there is a place in their neighborhood that provides help for problems with alcohol or drug use, 27 percent for alcohol problems alone, 18 percent for tobacco use problems, 12 percent of opium use, and 16 percent for problems with other drugs. Neighborhood House was mentioned as a possible source of help by 14 percent of respondents, CLUES by 12 percent, and Alcoholics Anonymous by 12 percent.

One-third of those surveyed said there is a place in the neighborhood for help with violence or personal safety issues; the police were most commonly mentioned source of such help, followed by Neighborhood House, CLUES, Casa Esperanza, and church.

Asked where they and other household members got their health information, 60 percent of respondents said doctors or nurses. HMO newsletters were cited by 24 percent, books and the library by 19 percent,

newspapers and magazines by 18 percent, and health clinics by 17 percent. (Open-ended responses grouped into categories.)

- Older respondents were more likely than younger ones to say they depend on doctors and nurses for health information (85 percent of respondents 60 years and over compared to 56 percent of those under 60), and less likely to depend on magazines and newspapers, (22 percent of those 30 years and older compared to 7 percent of those under 30).

Respondents were also read a list of health topics and asked if they would like to learn more about them. Responses ranged from a high of 45 percent wanting to know more about exercise down to 20 percent wanting to learn about quitting smoking. Of those saying they'd attend a program to learn more about various health topics, over half said they'd attend such a program at a school, library, church, West Side Health Center, Neighborhood House, or CLUES.

### **For more information**

This summary presents highlights from the West Side Community Health Assessment report prepared for West Side Community Health Services in April 2000, and funded by West Side Community Health Services and Medtronic Foundation. The summary and complete report are available on the Internet at [www.wilder.org/wrc](http://www.wilder.org/wrc).

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