

Stroke Risk Factors

Among African Americans in the Great Lakes Region

Most risk factor data currently available are self-reported through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Data provided by REasons for Geographic And Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS)* include clinical variables collected during an in house visit as well some that are self-reported. For the purpose of this fact sheet, the Stroke Belt is identified as North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Mississippi. This population sample is mostly urban.

Smoking

More black women in the Great Lakes region are current smokers (21%) than their counterparts in the Stroke Belt (15%) or across the entire US (16%). Rates of smoking among black males are similar at 20% in Great Lakes region and the US, and 22% in the Stroke Belt.

Exercise

Black women and men appear to be more sedentary in the Great Lakes region with 47% of black women and 36% of black men reporting no weekly exercise. This is higher than black women and men in the Stroke Belt (41 and 29% respectively) and in the US (42 and 31%).

Hypertension

Rates of hypertension are also similar among blacks in the Great Lakes region (72% for women and 70% for men), in the Stroke Belt (74% for women and 69% for men), and in the US (73% for women and 69% for men).

Diabetes

Slightly fewer black women in the Great Lakes region are diabetic (27%) compared to 33% in the Stroke Belt and 30% in the US while black men are fairly similar across regions at 30%, 32% and 32% respectively.

History of prior stroke

A history of prior stroke was similar among blacks in the Great Lakes region (8% for women and 11% for men), in the Stroke Belt (7% for women and 9% for men), and in the US (7% women and 10% men).

Mean total cholesterol

Black women in the Great Lakes region have higher cholesterol (200 mg/dL) than black men in the region (185 mg/dL) and black women in the Stroke Belt (197 mg/dL) and US (198 mg/dL). Cholesterol for black males is similar at 184 and 185 mg/dL in the Stroke Belt and US respectively.

*REGARDS is sponsored by the [National Institutes of Health, National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke \(NINDS\)](#). The project is a collaborative effort between the [University of Alabama at Birmingham](#), the [University of Vermont](#), [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#), the [University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences](#), [Alabama Neurological Institute](#), and [Examination Management Services, Inc.](#) For more information about REGARDS, please visit: <http://www.regardsstudy.org/>. Howard VJ, Cushman M, Pulley L, Gomez C, Go R, Prineas RJ, Graham A, Moy CS, Howard G. The Reasons for Geographic And Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) Study: Objectives and Design. *Neuroepidemiology* 2005;25:135-143.