



NCHS DATA ON AGING

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides multiple perspectives to help understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Aging Population

Seniors are the fastest growing population group in the United States. In 2000, there were an estimated 35 million people age 65 and older, representing about 13 percent of the population. It is predicted that by 2030, this number will double to 70 million people; and about 20 percent, or 1 in 5 Americans, will be age 65 and older. During this same time, it is expected that the percentage of people ages 18 and younger will remain approximately stable, around 26 percent.

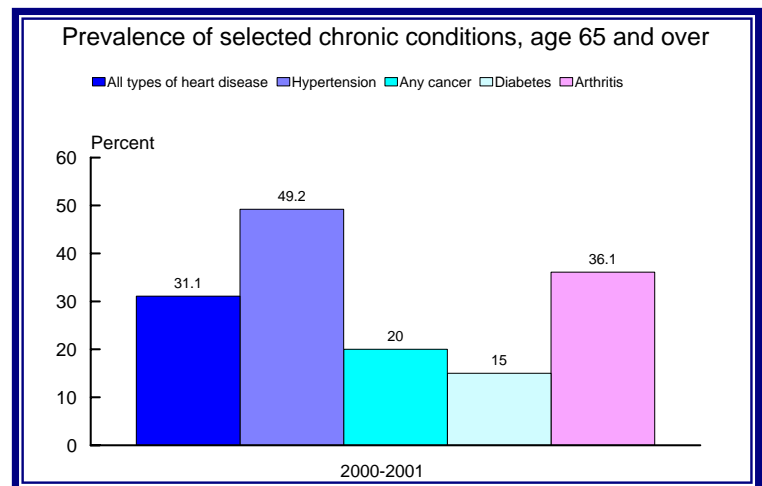
The aging of the population has important consequences for the health care system. As the elderly population increases, more services will be required for the treatment and management of chronic and acute health conditions. Providing health care services needed by Americans will be a major challenge in the 21st century.

NCHS Data on Aging

Health Status

The National Health Interview Survey asked respondents if they had ever been told by a doctor or other health professional that they had various chronic conditions.

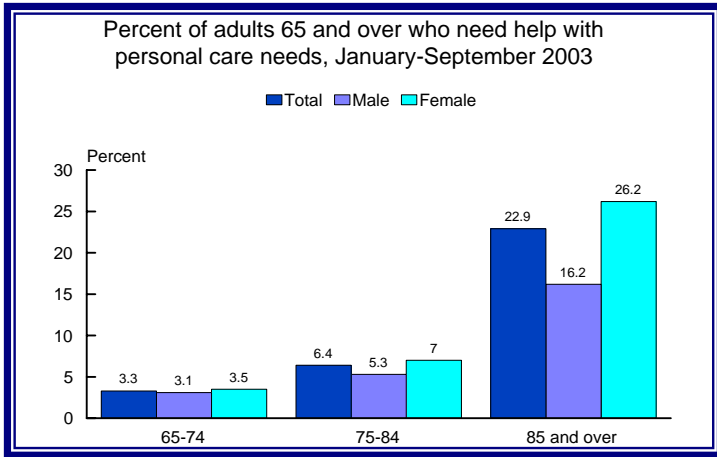
- ◆ A total of 49.2 percent of respondents reported they had been diagnosed by their doctor with hypertension, and 36.1 percent said that they had been diagnosed with arthritis.



Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2000-2001
Note: Prevalence is defined as being diagnosed by a physician or health professional.

Activity Limitation

The ability to function independently is crucial for older adults. Conditions that become more prevalent in older people can make it difficult, if not impossible for seniors to get dressed, bathe, drive, or walk to the store without assistance, thereby compromising independence. Eating, bathing, dressing or getting around inside the home are referred to as personal care needs, or activities of daily living (ADLs).



Source: National Health Interview Survey, January-September 2003

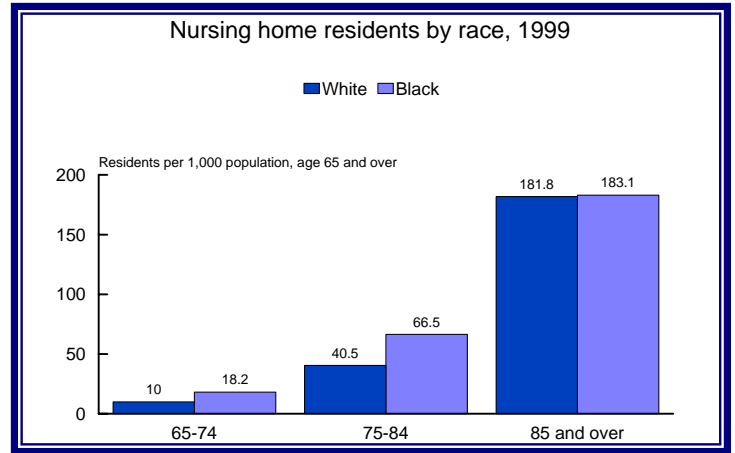
- ◆ Adults aged 85 years of age and over were more than six times as likely as adults aged 65-74 years old to need help with personal care needs from other persons (22.9 percent vs. 3.3 percent).
- ◆ For adults aged 85 years and over, the percent of women who needed help with personal care from other persons was higher than that for men.

Nursing Home Residence

In 1999, 1.6 million people ages 65 and older, lived in a nursing home. As age increases, so does the likelihood of nursing home residency. For those ages 65 to 74, approximately 11 per 1,000 people lived in nursing homes, compared to those 75-84 at 43 per 1,000, and those aged 85 and over at 182 per 1,000.

A higher proportion of women than men live in nursing homes; 49.8 per 1,000 women age 65 and over lived in a nursing home compared to 30.6 men per 1,000.

In 1985, elderly blacks were underrepresented in nursing homes compared to elderly whites (35 compared to 48 per 1,000). By 1995, this disparity had disappeared and by 1997, the residency rate among elderly blacks was significantly higher than for elderly whites (49 compared with 43 per 1,000 elderly whites). This trend continued through 1999.



Source: National Nursing Home Survey, 1999

Injuries from Falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury death among persons 65 years and older. In 2001, 11,627 people age 65 and older died as a result of a fall. Among the elderly, 54 percent of fatal falls occurred in the home, 20 percent in institutions, 13 percent in public places, and 13 percent in unspecified places. Falls are also a major cause of severe non-fatal injuries and a common cause of hospital admissions.

Other data on the elderly population:

- ◆ Life expectancy at age 65 increased from 16.4 years in 1980 to 18.2 years in 2002
- ◆ In 2003, 41.9 percent of persons 65-74 years of age reported they were in excellent or good health.
- ◆ In 2000, 27.3 percent of patients in hospice care were 85 years of age and older, 37 percent were 75-84, and 17.2 percent were 65-74 years of age.
- ◆ Older Americans had the highest rate of visits to emergency departments with about 61.1 visits for every 100 persons 75 years of age and older (compared to 38.9 visits per 100 for people of all ages).
- ◆ In 2001, about 3 percent of emergency department visits were made by patients residing in a nursing home or other institution.
- ◆ The length of hospital stay for those age 65 and over declined from 12.6 days in 1970 to 5.8 days in 2001.

Aging Data Sources

NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. They include:

- ◆ **National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)**— obtains information on the nation’s health status through confidential household interviews that measure: health status and disability, insurance coverage, access to care, use of health services, immunizations (child), health behaviors, injury, and the ability to perform daily activities.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>
- ◆ **Trends in Health and Aging Data Warehouse** – is a user-friendly, web-based archive of data on the health and well being of older Americans. Its purpose is to provide up-to-date information on trends in health-related behaviors, health status, and health care utilization.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/agingact.htm>
- ◆ **National Vital Statistics System** - collects information from birth and death certificates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including detailed race/ethnicity characteristics. Because all births and deaths are part of this database, it provides the detail needed for research on differentials.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss.htm>
- ◆ **National Health Care Survey** – a family of health care provider-based surveys that collect data from the clinical perspective. These surveys provide a picture of how the delivery system works, and provide an opportunity to learn about patients, their illnesses, and treatments. NCHS surveys hospitals, office based physician practices, emergency and outpatient departments, ambulatory surgery centers, nursing homes, and hospices to learn about the characteristics of patients and the surgical and medical treatments provided. Rates shown are based on population estimates from the 1990 census.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs.htm>

Challenges and Future Opportunities

- ◆ Diversification in the long-term care industry has expanded the types of long-term care facilities that are available and information is needed on these places. These now include assisted living facilities, residential care facilities and specialized care units within existing health care facilities. As life expectancy increases and the baby boom generation matures, data are needed to help understand emerging patterns of care and shape long-term policy.
- ◆ In the last decade or two, there seems to have been a decrease in the proportion of the elderly reporting limitations in both activities of daily living (ADLs) and in instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) (tasks like cleaning house, shopping, managing money, preparing meals). It will be important to continue to track this trend and to gather data on factors such as use of assistive devices, changes in houses to make them easier to use for people with physical limitations (e.g. user friendly kitchens and bathrooms), and medical treatments, such as arthritis drugs, that may help explain this trend.

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>, or call the Office of Planning, Budget and Legislation at 301-458-4100.