

National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)

As the Nation's principal health statistics agency, NCHS compiles statistical information to guide actions and policies to improve the health of our people. We are a unique public resource for health information — a critical element of public health and health policy. We collect data from birth and death records, medical records, interview surveys, and through direct physical exams and laboratory testing. NCHS is a key element of our national public health infrastructure, providing important surveillance information that helps identify and address critical health problems. Information is at the core of our mission.

Mission. The mission of NCHS is to provide statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people. NCHS leads the way with accurate, relevant, and timely data.

Activities. NCHS' major activities include the following:

- ▶ **National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).** The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) is a program of studies designed to assess the health and nutritional status of adults and children in the United States. The survey is unique in that it combines interviews and physical examinations. NHANES is a major program of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). NCHS is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and has the responsibility for producing vital and health statistics for the Nation.
- ▶ **National Health Care Surveys (NHCS).** The National Health Care Surveys are a family of provider-based surveys designed to meet the need for objective, reliable information about the organizations and providers that supply healthcare, the services rendered, and the patients they serve.
- ▶ **National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).** The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is the principal source of information on the health of the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States and is one of the major data collection programs of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), which is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The National Health Survey Act of 1956 provided for a continuing survey and special studies to secure accurate and current statistical information on the amount, distribution, and effects of illness and disability in the United States and the services rendered for or because of such conditions. The survey referred to in the Act, now called the National Health Interview Survey, was initiated in July 1957. Since 1960, the survey has been conducted by NCHS, which was formed when the National Health Survey and the National Vital Statistics Division were combined.
- ▶ **National Immunization Survey (NIS).** The National Immunization Survey (NIS) is sponsored by the National Center for Immunizations and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) and conducted jointly by NCIRD and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NIS is a list-assisted random-digit-dialing telephone survey followed by a mailed survey to children's immunization providers that began data collection in April 1994 to monitor childhood immunization coverage.
- ▶ **Longitudinal Studies of Aging (LSOAs).** The Longitudinal Studies of Aging (LSOAs) is a collaborative project of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA). It is a multicohort study of persons 70 years of age or older, designed primarily to measure changes in the health, functional status, living arrangements, and health services utilization of two cohorts of Americans as they move into and through the oldest ages.
- ▶ **National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).** The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) gathers information on family life, marriage and divorce, pregnancy, infertility, use of contraception, and men's and

The Power of Health Statistics

CDC's health statistics allow us to:

- ▶ **document** the health status of the population and of important subgroups;
- ▶ **identify** disparities in health status and use of health care by race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, region, and other population characteristics;
- ▶ **describe** our experiences with the health care system;
- ▶ **monitor** trends in health status and health care delivery;
- ▶ **identify** health problems;
- ▶ **support** biomedical and health services research;
- ▶ **provide** information for making changes in public policies and programs; and
- ▶ **evaluate** the impact of health policies and programs.

women's health. The survey results are used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and others to plan health services and health education programs, and to do statistical studies of families, fertility, and health. Links to some of those studies are included on this website, under "Cycle 6 (2002): Reports" and "NCHS Reports."

- ▶ **State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey (SLAITS).** The State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey (SLAITS) collects important healthcare data at state and local levels. This data collection mechanism was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (CDC). It supplements current national data collection strategies by providing in-depth state and local area data to meet various program and policy needs in an ever-changing healthcare system.

The National Vital Statistics System. The National Vital Statistics System is the oldest and most successful example of inter-governmental data sharing in Public Health and the shared relationships, standards, and procedures form the mechanism by which NCHS collects and disseminates the Nation's official vital statistics. These data are provided through contracts between NCHS and vital registration systems operated in the various jurisdictions legally responsible for the registration of vital events--births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and fetal deaths. Vital Statistics data are also available on line.