

Marital Status and Health: United States, 1999–2002

by Charlotte A. Schoenborn, M.P.H., Division of Health Interview Statistics

Abstract

Objective—This report presents prevalence estimates by marital status for selected health status and limitations, health conditions, and health risk behaviors among U.S. adults, using data from the 1999–2002 National Health Interview Surveys (NHIS).

Methods—Data for the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population were collected using computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI). The household response rate for the NHIS was 88.7%. This report is based on a total of 127,545 interviews with sample adults aged 18 years and over, representing an overall response rate of 72.4% for the 4 years combined. Statistics were age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population. Marital status categories shown in this report are: married, widowed, divorced or separated, never married, and living with a partner.

Results—Regardless of population subgroup (age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, education, income, or nativity) or health indicator (fair or poor health, limitations in activities, low back pain, headaches, serious psychological distress, smoking, or leisure-time physical inactivity), married adults were generally found to be healthier than adults in other marital status categories. Marital status differences in health were found in each of the three age groups studied (18–44 years, 45–64 years, and 65 years and over), but were most striking among adults aged 18–44 years. The one negative health indicator for which married adults had a higher prevalence was overweight or obesity. Married adults, particularly men, had high rates of overweight or obesity relative to adults in other marital status groups across most population subgroups studied. Never married adults were among the least likely to be overweight or obese.

Keywords: marital status • health status • limitation of activity • ADL • IADL • headache • low back pain • serious psychological distress • health behaviors • leisure-time physical activity • overweight • obesity • smoking • alcohol • National Health Interview Survey • National Center for Health Statistics

Introduction

Marital status and health has been a topic of research interest for over a century with the earliest studies focusing

on differential mortality rates of married and unmarried adults (1,2). Studies generally have found that married persons are healthier than unmarried persons, whether the unmarried are

never married, divorced, separated, or widowed. Studies have also focused on selected population subgroups—women, young adults, middle-aged adults, older adults, ethnic subgroups—and have included analysis of both mortality and morbidity associated with various marital status groups. The two major theories for better health found among married adults have been referred to as marriage protection and marriage selection. Marriage protection is the theory that married people have more advantages in terms of economic resources, social and psychological support, and support for healthy lifestyles. Marriage selection is the theory that healthier people get married and stay married, whereas less healthy people either do not marry or are more likely to become separated, divorced, or widowed. Recent research has found evidence that household composition and living arrangements associated with marital status may partially explain the differences in health status among various marital status groups (3–5).

Since researchers first identified an association between marital status and health status, enormous societal changes have taken place that have influenced the meaning and context of marital status. Age at first marriage has risen; divorce, once considered a stigma, is now common; living with a domestic partner outside a legal union, once



rarely acknowledged, was reported in 3.7 million households in the 2000 census (6,7). A surge of research on marital status and health in the 1970s explored many aspects of the associations between marital status and health and longevity (8–11). Research continued through the 1980s and 1990s as definitions of family and expectations for marriage and its dissolution underwent substantial change (12–15). This report offers a renewed look at the age-old question of whether married adults in the United States are healthier than unmarried adults in terms of a variety of health measures.

This analysis examines three hypotheses: (a) married adults are less likely than adults in other marital status categories to have selected health limitations and conditions and less likely to have engaged in selected health risk behaviors; (b) living with a domestic partner, though similar in some respects to marriage, does not show the same relationship with health; and (c) the marital status-health relationship varies by social and economic context—that is, differences between married and unmarried adults in terms of their health limitations, conditions, and behaviors are greater in some population subgroups than in others.

This report presents national prevalence estimates for selected health indicators for five marital status groups—currently married, widowed, divorced or separated, never married, and living with a partner—among U.S. adults 18 years of age and over. Marital status is respondent-defined and may not reflect legal status. Estimates are shown by age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino origin, level of education, poverty status, and nativity, using data from the 1999–2002 National Health Interview Surveys. The health indicators shown and discussed include health status, limitations in activity, selected health conditions, and key health-related behaviors. The descriptive statistics presented in this report provide the foundation for future investigations of the mechanisms underlying the associations between marital status and health in the population as a whole and among specific population subgroups.

Methods

Data source

The statistics shown in this report are based on data from the 1999–2002 National Health Interview Surveys (NHIS) (16–19). The NHIS, one of the major data collection systems of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), is a survey of a nationally representative sample of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized household population. Basic health and demographic information is collected on all household members in the Family Core questionnaire. Adults present at the time of the initial family interview are asked to respond for themselves. However, proxy responses are accepted for the family core questions for adults not present at the time of the interview, for adults who are physically or mentally incapable of responding for themselves, and for children. Additional information is collected from one randomly selected adult aged 18 years and over in the Sample Adult questionnaire and about one randomly selected child aged 0–17 years in the Sample Child questionnaire. Information collected in the Sample Adult questionnaire is self-reported except when the sample adult is physically or mentally incapable of responding. Information collected in the Sample Child questionnaire is obtained from an adult who is knowledgeable about the child’s health. See note on [tables 3 and 4](#) for specific health status items that are collected in the Family Core questionnaire and thus may be proxy reported.

Measurement

Marital status

Marital status is determined from the information collected in the household roster section of the interview and from the question, “Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated, never married, or living with a partner?” (The marital status question is prefilled for persons identified as spouses or domestic partners on the roster of household members.) Although

information on marital status is obtained for persons aged 14 years and over, this report presents data only for persons aged 18 years and over. Marital status is respondent-defined and may not reflect legal marital status. For example, a person could be both “divorced” and “living with a partner” and may choose either of these categories. Although they were separate response categories, for this analysis, “divorced” and “separated” were combined into a single category. In the tables and discussion, “married” includes all adults who said they were married, regardless of whether the spouse was living in the home. Only about 3% of married adults reported that the spouse was absent from the household.

Sociodemographic characteristics

Findings are presented for both sexes combined and for men and women separately for three age groups: younger adults (18–44 years), middle-aged adults (45–64 years), and older adults (65 years and over). Although important differences exist within some of these groups, most notably those aged 18–44 years and those aged 65 years and over, the relatively small sample sizes for some of the marital status categories made it impractical to present data for more detailed age groups.

Age-adjusted statistics are shown for several subpopulations. Data on race are limited to estimates for white adults and Black or African-American adults. Although health data for other single and multiple race groups are collected in the NHIS in accordance with guidelines from the Office of Management and Budget (20) and are published in other NCHS reports (21–28), estimates for these other groups are not shown due to statistical unreliability associated with small sample sizes when examined by five marital status categories.

With the exception of race (for which a subset of categories is shown), sociodemographic characteristics were dichotomized to simplify interpretation of differences in health characteristics across marital status groups. Although there may be heterogeneity within each

of the dichotomous groups shown, the categories were selected to represent key differences with respect to the study of the association between marital status and health.

Health status and limitations

Indicators for health status and limitations (tables 3,4) include: fair or poor reported health status; limitations in any type of activity; limitations in work activity (unable to work or limited in kind or amount of work); limitations in activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, etc.) or instrumental activities of daily living (shopping, household chores, etc.); and limitations in physical or social functioning (walking, climbing, carrying, etc.).

Health conditions

Self-assessed health conditions (tables 5,6) include low back pain, headaches, and serious psychological distress. Low back pain and headaches are each based on a single question about symptoms experienced in the past 3 months. Serious psychological distress is defined as a total score of 13 or higher on an index of psychological distress developed by Kessler, et al. (29). The index is derived from a series of six questions that ask about frequency of feeling sad, nervous, restless, hopeless, that everything was an effort, and worthless during the past 30 days. Response options for each question ranged from “none of the time” (score=0) to “all of the time” (score=4), with a total possible score ranging from zero to 24.

Health-related behaviors

Four health-related behaviors (tables 7,8) are included in this report: leisure-time physical inactivity, overweight or obese body weight status, current cigarette smoking, and heavier drinking in the past year. Each of these is based on respondent self-reports. Physical inactivity is defined as never engaging in any light, moderate, or vigorous leisure-time physical activity. This includes adults who said they never did any of these types of activities as well as adults who said they were unable to do them. Overweight or obese

body weight status is defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 25, calculated using the formula kilograms/meters², based on respondent-reported height and weight. Current cigarette smokers are defined as adults who had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and were currently smoking every day or some days. Heavier drinkers are defined as adults who, on average during the past year, consumed more than 14 drinks per week (if male) or more than 7 drinks per week (if female). Additional information on measurement of variables included in this report may be found in the “[Technical Notes](#).”

Statistical analysis

The household response rate for the NHIS data years 1999–2002 was 88.7%. This report is based on data from 127,545 completed interviews with sample adults aged 18 years and over, representing an overall sample adult response rate of 72.4%. Procedures used in calculating response rates are described in detail in “Appendix I” of the Survey Description of the NHIS data files (16–19). Four years of data were combined to increase reliability of estimates.

Estimates and associated standard errors shown in tables 1–8 were generated using SUDAAN, a software package that is designed to handle complex sample designs such as that used by the NHIS (30). Estimates were weighted, using the Sample Adult Record Weight, to reflect the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 18 years and over. Estimates with a relative standard error of more than 30% are identified with an asterisk (*). Readers should exercise caution when interpreting these statistics.

Statistical tests performed to assess significance of differences in the estimates were two-tailed with no adjustments for multiple comparisons. The critical value used to compare the estimates at the .05 level was 1.96. Terms such as “greater than” and “less than” indicate a statistically significant difference. Terms such as “similar” or “no difference” indicate that the statistics being compared were not

significantly different. Lack of comment regarding the difference between any two statistics does not mean that the difference was tested and found to be not significant.

Estimation procedures

Tables 1 and 2 provide context for the health-related findings presented in tables 3–8. Table 1 shows population estimates for selected subgroups of U.S. adults and unadjusted percentage distributions by marital status for each subgroup. Table 2 presents age-adjusted percentage distributions for the same subgroups. Data for selected health indicators are presented in tables 3–8. Three types of health indicators are shown in sets of two tables each: health status and limitations (tables 3,4); health conditions (tables 5,6); and health-related behaviors (tables 7,8). The first table of each set (tables 3,5,7) shows unadjusted estimates for both sexes combined and for men and women separately for three age groups—18–44 years, 45–64 years, and 65 years and over. Population estimates are provided in the first column of each of these tables. These population estimates include all adults in a particular age-sex-marital status category, including those for whom data on a particular health measure were missing. By multiplying the population estimate by the percentage of persons in that age-sex-marital status group with a given health-related characteristic, the reader can estimate the number of adults in that age-sex-marital status category that have the health characteristic. This procedure assumes that the unknown responses for a given health-related characteristic are distributed in the same way as the known responses.

The second table in each set (tables 4,6,8) shows age-adjusted estimates for the same health indicators for selected sociodemographic subgroups, age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population (31,32). In some cases, age adjusting resulted in large standard errors when the sample size for the subgroup was particularly small (such as widowed adults or adults who were living with a partner), thereby complicating interpretation of subgroup

differences. Nevertheless, age adjustment is important for the study of the association between marital status and health because both marital status and health vary by age. It is unwise to interpret findings without taking these differences into account. The following age groups were used for age adjusting estimates shown in this report: 18–44 years, 45–64 years, 65–74 years, and 75 years and over (table 1).

In tables 3–8, estimates for all adults in a particular population subgroup appear in bold, followed by estimates for each marital status category. The estimates for all adults include adults for whom marital status was unknown and provide a point of comparison for assessing the prevalence of health characteristics for various marital status groups relative to all adults in a particular subgroup. For each health indicator, findings regarding important age differences in overall prevalence rates will be presented, followed by a brief discussion of the most notable marital status differences for adults within each of three age groups: 18–44 years, 45–64 years, and 65 years and over. Discussion of age-adjusted marital status differences in each health indicator for the total adult population and for selected population subgroups will follow.

Results

Marital status by subgroups (tables 1,2)

Overall, nearly 6 in 10 U.S. adults (58.2%) were married, 6.6% were widowed, 10.4% were divorced or separated, 19.0% were never married, and 5.7% were living with a partner (table 1). The distribution of marital status for the three age groups studied showed that middle-aged adults were the most likely to be married (70.4%) compared with both younger adults (52.1%) and older adults (55.5%); adults aged 65 years and over (32.2%) were the most likely to be widowed compared with adults aged 45–64 years (4.0%) and adults aged 18–44 years (0.4%). Middle-aged adults (15.7%) were about twice as likely as younger (8.1%) and older adults (7.8%) to be divorced or

separated. Whereas nearly 1 in 3 younger adults (31.0%) had never been married, a considerably smaller percentage of middle-aged (6.3%) and older adults (3.6%) had never been married. Overall prevalence of living with a partner was relatively low (5.7%), although rates for this marital category varied substantially by age: 8.5% of adults in the youngest age group were living with a partner compared with 3.5% of middle-aged adults and 1.0% of older adults.

Men and women differed substantially in terms of marital status, especially in the oldest age groups. Among adults aged 65 years and over, more than 7 in 10 men (74.4%) were currently married compared with 4 in 10 women (41.4%). Nearly one-half of women aged 65 years and over (46.0%) were currently widowed compared with 13.5% of men. In the middle-aged group, men (74.7%) were more likely than women (66.4%) to be currently married.

For many of the population subgroups studied, the age-adjusted percent distributions of marital status differed only modestly from the distribution of marital status for adults overall (table 2). There were, however, two noteworthy exceptions—differences between white adults and black adults and between adults who were poor or nearly poor compared with those who had higher incomes. White women (59.8%) were nearly twice as likely as black women (31.4%) to be married, and black women (31.1%) were more than twice as likely as white women (14.2%) to have never been married. Similarly, white men (62.9%) were more likely than black men (46.7%) to be married, and black men (28.0%) were more likely than white men (20.1%) to have never been married. Women who were poor or near poor were about twice as likely as women who were not poor to be widowed, divorced, or separated, and nearly twice as likely to have never been married. Like women, men who were poor or near poor were more likely than men who were not poor to be widowed, divorced, separated, or to have never been married; however, the differences

between the two income groups were not as large as for women.

Health status and limitations (tables 3,4)

Older adults were considerably more likely than younger adults to be in fair or poor health or to have some type of health limitation (table 3). A consistent pattern was observed between current marital status and selected indicators of health status and limitations for all age groups. In general, married adults were less likely to be in fair or poor health and less likely to experience limitations in their activities than adults in other marital status groups. The magnitude of the marital status differences varied by age, with differences found to be greatest among younger adults.

Fair or poor health

Irrespective of marital status, the percentage of adults in fair or poor health was lowest in the youngest age group and increased substantially with age (table 3). Among adults aged 18–44 years, only 5.5% were in fair or poor health compared with 15.2% of adults aged 45–64 years and about 1 in 4 adults (25.8%) aged 65 years and over. For each of the age groups shown, widowed adults were the most likely and married adults were the least likely to be in fair or poor health, but the magnitude of the marital status differences in health status were not uniform across age groups (figure 1). Widowed adults aged 18–44 years (14.1%) were about three times as likely as married adults in the same age group (4.5%) to be in fair or poor health. Among adults aged 45–64 years, widowed adults (24.9%) were about twice as likely as married adults (12.8%) to be in fair or poor health. By comparison, widowed adults aged 65 years and over (28.3%) were only somewhat more likely than married adults in this age group (24.2%) to be in fair or poor health.

Overall age-adjusted prevalence of fair or poor health was highest among widowed adults (19.6%) and lowest among married adults (10.5%), with prevalence among divorced or separated

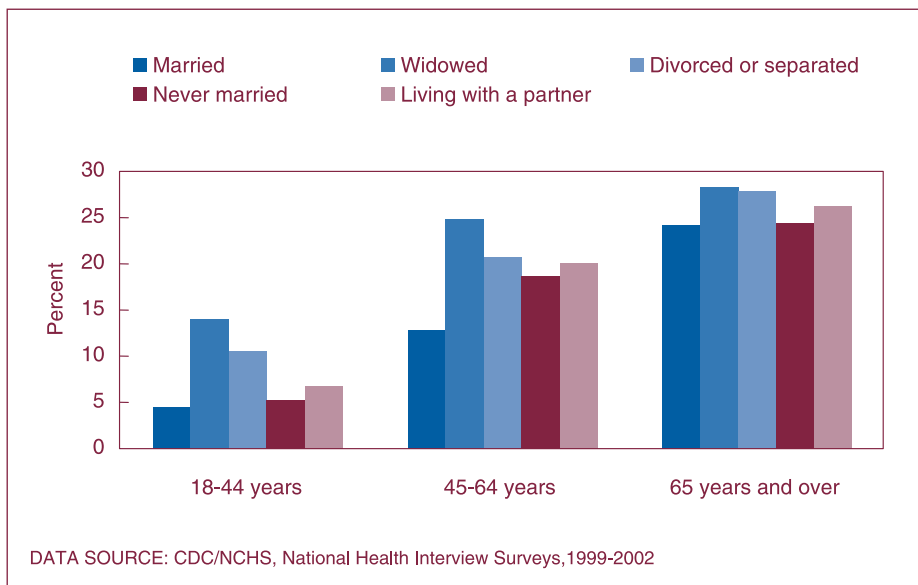


Figure 1. Percent of adults who were in fair or poor health, by age and marital status: United States, 1999-2002

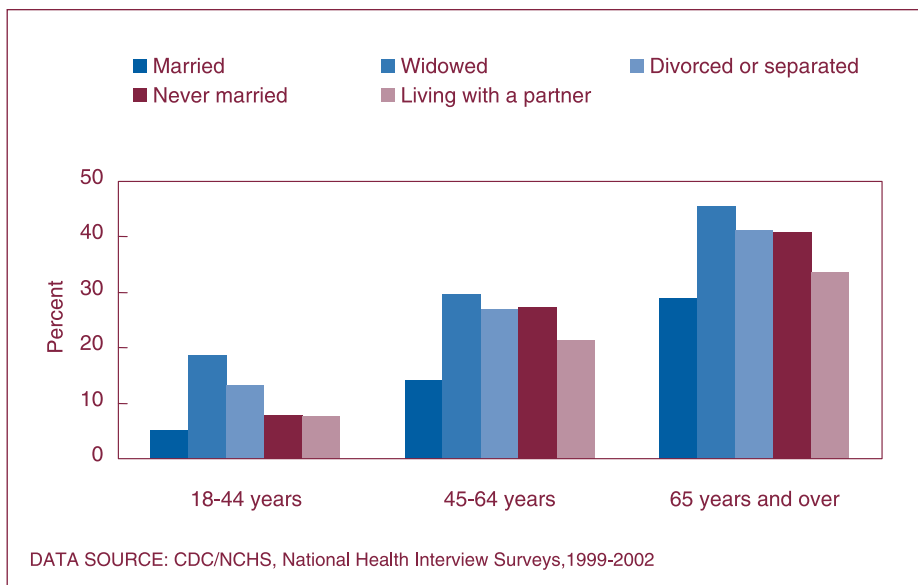


Figure 2. Percent of adults who had an activity limitation, by age and marital status: United States, 1999-2002

adults (16.7%), those living with a partner (14.0%) and those who had never married (12.5%) falling in between (table 4). Although this pattern is found in most of the population subgroups studied, large standard errors in some cases suggest that interpretation of findings for some groups may not be advisable.

Any activity limitation

The percentage of adults having some type of activity limitation was

somewhat higher than the percentage in fair or poor health (noted above) for each of the three age groups, but the increases with age showed a similar pattern: 6.9% of adults aged 18–44 years had some type of limitation compared with 17.8% of adults aged 45–64 years and more than one in three (35.7%) adults aged 65 years and over (table 3). Marital status patterns in prevalence of limitation of activity for each of the three age groups were comparable with those observed for fair or poor health. That is, among the

youngest age group, widowed adults (18.6%) were more than three times as likely as married adults (5.2%) to have any activity limitation; middle-aged widowed adults (29.8%) were about twice as likely as middle-aged married adults (14.1%) to have any activity limitation; and among adults aged 65 years and over, widows (45.6%) were about 50% more likely than married adults (28.9%) to have some activity limitation (table 3 and figure 2).

Overall age-adjusted prevalence of limitation of activity by marital status showed a pattern similar to that observed for fair or poor health: prevalence of limitation of activity was lowest among married adults (12.2%) and highest among widowed adults (26.0%) with prevalence among divorced or separated adults (22.5%), never married adults (19.4%), and those living with a partner (16.3%) falling in between (table 4). Similar patterns were observed for many of the population subgroups studied, although large standard errors for some groups make interpretation difficult. In some cases, prevalence of limitation of activity among divorced or separated adults was similar to that of widowed adults.

Limitation in work activity

Limitation in work activity is a more salient health characteristic for adults under age 65 years than for older adults, although it is not unusual for adults to continue to work at the older ages. Estimates for this indicator are presented for all three age groups with the caveat that estimates for the oldest group should be interpreted with caution as many of these adults may have left the workforce. Limitations in work activity increased steadily with age from 5.5% of adults aged 18–44 years to 14.9% of adults aged 45–64 years and 24.7% of adults aged 65 years and over—paralleling very closely the prevalence of fair or poor health in these age groups.

Marital status patterns in prevalence of work limitations generally resembled those of the other health indicators as well. Among adults aged 18–44 years, widowed adults (16.3%) were four times as likely as married adults (4.0%) to be

limited in work activity (table 3). Among adults aged 45–64 years, widowed adults (25.7%) were twice as likely as married adults (11.5%) to have a work limitation. Widowed adults aged 65 years and over (30.7%) were also more likely than their married counterparts (19.9%) to be limited in work activity, although the differences between the two marital status groups were not as large as for younger adults. Among the youngest adults, prevalence of work limitation for those who were divorced or separated (11.0%) was lower than for those who were widowed (16.3%). The same was true for adults aged 45–64 years, although the differences between the two groups were smaller. Among adults aged 65 years and over, prevalence of work limitations among divorced or separated adults (32.4%) was similar to that of widowed adults (30.7%).

Overall age-adjusted prevalence of work limitations was lowest among married adults (9.1%) and highest among widowed adults (21.3%) with prevalence among divorced or separated adults (18.5%), never married adults (15.3%), and those living with a partner (12.8%) falling in between (table 4). Although overall prevalence of limitation in work activity varied across population subgroups, married adults were considerably less likely than adults in other marital status groups to be limited in work activity regardless of race, Hispanic origin, level of education, poverty status, or nativity.

Activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living

Limitations in activities of daily living (ADL) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) were relatively uncommon compared with the other health indicators shown in table 3, but increased 10-fold between the youngest and oldest groups: 1.3% of adults aged 18–44 years had an ADL or IADL limitation compared with 3.6% of adults aged 45–64 years and 12.9% of adults aged 65 years and over.

As with the other health indicators, married adults were among the least likely to have an ADL or IADL

limitation in each of the age groups studied. Among adults aged 18–44 years, married adults (0.8%), adults living with a partner (1.1%), and adults who had never married (1.6%) were less likely than widowed adults (5.5%) to have an ADL or IADL limitation. Middle-aged married adults (2.5%) were less likely than middle-aged adults in other marital status categories to have an ADL or IADL limitation; prevalence of ADL and IADL limitations was similar for widowed adults (7.0%) and for never married adults (7.5%) in this age group. Among adults aged 65 years and over, married adults (7.6%) and those who were living with a partner (5.5%) were the least likely to have a limitation in ADL or IADL, and widowed adults (21.5%) were about three times as likely as their married peers to have such a limitation. In each of the age groups studied, prevalence of ADL or IADL limitations among those living with a partner was similar to prevalence among adults who were married.

Overall, after adjusting for age, married adults (2.6%) and adults who were living with a partner (2.7%) were the least likely and widowed adults (8.2%) were the most likely to have an ADL or IADL limitation (table 4). Divorced or separated adults (5.9%) and never married adults (5.9%) were similar in terms of prevalence of this health characteristic. This pattern was observed across most sociodemographic groups studied. It is interesting to note that of the health characteristics shown in tables 3 and 4, limitation in ADL or IADL is the only one for which prevalence among adults who were living with a partner was similar to that of married adults.

Limitation in physical or social functioning

Prevalence of limitation in physical or social functioning (functional limitations) was considerably higher than prevalence of any other health indicator shown in tables 3 and 4. Like the other health indicators, prevalence of functional limitations increased sharply with age (table 3). Among adults aged 18–44 years, 17.5% of adults had a

functional limitation compared with 36.5% of adults aged 45–64 years and 61.9% of adults aged 65 years and over. In the two oldest age groups, the marital status patterns were similar to those of the other health measures: prevalence of functional limitations was lowest among married adults and highest among those who were widowed. Among adults aged 18–44 years, however, it was those who had never been married (14.9%) who had the lowest prevalence of functional limitations, followed by married adults (17.3%).

Overall, after adjusting for age, about 3 in 10 married adults (29.5%) and 3 in 10 never married adults (29.8%) had a functional limitation compared with 4 in 10 widowed adults (39.3%) (table 4). Across most population subgroups studied, prevalence of functional limitations was similar for married adults and never married adults. Overall prevalence of functional limitations was higher among adults who were living with a domestic partner (34.3%) than among married adults (29.5%). This was true for men and for women, for white adults, non-Hispanic adults, those who had education beyond high school, adults who were not poor, and adults who were born in the United States. Findings were suggestive of a similar relationship for other population subgroups, but the differences were not statistically significant due to the large variability associated with the relatively small number of adults living with a partner.

Health conditions (tables 5,6)

Prevalence of selected health conditions—low back pain, headaches, and serious psychological distress—did not show the sharp increase with age that was found for fair or poor health status and for health limitations discussed in the previous section. Although prevalence of low back pain was modestly higher in the two older age groups, prevalence of headaches declined with age, and prevalence of serious psychological distress peaked in the middle age group (table 5). Married adults and never married adults generally had lower prevalence of these health conditions than adults who were

widowed, divorced or separated, or living with a partner.

Low back pain

Adults aged 18–44 years (25.2%) were somewhat less likely than adults aged 45–64 years (31.4%) and those aged 65 years and over (29.9%) to have experienced low back pain (table 5). Marital status differences in prevalence of low back pain were modest. Among adults aged 18–44 years, prevalence of low back pain was lowest among those who had never been married (21.7%). Among adults aged 45–64 years, those who were never married (28.4%) or currently married (30.3%) were less likely than widowed adults (35.2%), divorced or separated adults (35.3%), and those living with a partner (37.5%) to have low back pain. Among adults aged 65 years and over, no statistically meaningful marital status differences were found in prevalence of low back pain; about 3 in 10 adults aged 65 years and over experienced some low back pain.

Overall, after adjusting for age, adults who had never been married (24.7%) were the least likely of all the marital status groups to have had low back pain in the past 3 months (table 6). Across most population subgroups studied, divorced or separated adults were more likely than married adults to have experienced low back pain.

Headaches

Prevalence of headaches declined with age: nearly 1 in 5 adults (18.3%) aged 18–44 years had severe headaches or migraines compared with 15.2% of adults aged 45–64 years and 6.8% of adults aged 65 years and over (table 5). In each age group, married adults and never married adults were less likely than widowed adults or divorced or separated adults to have experienced headaches. Prevalence of headaches among adults who were living with a domestic partner was similar to prevalence among divorced or separated adults, regardless of age. Although differences between men and women were observed in many of the health indicators described in this report, headaches stand out as unique in terms

of the magnitude of the differences between men and women (table 5). In each of the age groups studied, women were at least twice as likely as men to report having had severe headaches or migraines in the past 3 months.

Marital status differences in prevalence of severe headaches were more noteworthy for women than for men. After adjusting for age, never married women (19.6%) and married women (20.2%) were less likely than women who were divorced or separated (25.6%) or living with a partner (26.1%) to have experienced severe headaches or migraines in the past 3 months (table 6 and figure 3). Among men, age-adjusted prevalence of headaches ranged from 9.3% for married men and 9.7% for never married men to 11.9% for men who were living with a partner. In general, across most of the population subgroups studied, adults who were currently married or who had never been married were less likely than adults who were divorced or separated to have had a severe headache in the past 3 months. Prevalence of headaches among widowed adults and those who were living with a partner was generally similar to that of divorced or separated adults.

Serious psychological distress

Prevalence of serious psychological distress was relatively low in all three age groups, ranging from 2.3% among adults aged 65 years and over to 3.5% among adults aged 45–64 years, with a prevalence of 2.6% among younger adults (table 5). Marital status differences in serious psychological distress were noteworthy particularly among younger adults. Among adults aged 18–44 years, nearly 1 in 10 widowed adults (9.5%) experienced serious psychological distress compared with 6.0% of those who were divorced or separated, 3.6% of those living with a partner, 2.5% of never married adults, and 1.9% of married adults. Among middle-aged adults, widowed adults (6.3%) and divorced or separated adults (6.4%) were more than twice as likely as married adults (2.5%) to have experienced serious psychological distress. Marital status differences among adults aged 65 years and over were more modest than in the younger age groups, although married adults (2.0%) were still less likely than widowed adults (3.3%) or divorced or separated adults (2.8%) to have experienced serious psychological distress in the past 30 days.

Overall, after adjusting for age, about 2.8% of adults experienced



Figure 3. Age-adjusted percent of adults who experienced severe headaches or migraines, by sex and marital status: United States, 1999–2002

serious psychological distress in the past 30 days. Prevalence of serious psychological distress was lowest for married adults (2.1%) and highest for widowed adults (7.4%). White widowed adults (8.9%) were more than four times as likely as white married adults (2.0%) to have experienced serious psychological distress. Marital status differences among black adults were more modest, although married black adults (2.3%) remained among the least likely to report distress. Formerly married Hispanic adults, whether widowed (7.3%) or divorced or separated (6.4%), were more than twice as likely to have experienced serious psychological distress as their currently married counterparts (3.0%). Marital status differences in prevalence of serious psychological distress were particularly noteworthy for adults living at or near poverty: about 1 in 10 low income widowed (11.5%) or divorced or separated adults (10.4%) experienced serious psychological distress in the past 30 days compared with about 1 in 20 married adults (5.0%) (figure 4). Among higher income adults, although rates of serious psychological distress were considerably lower than among lower income adults, marital status differences remained: widowed (3.7%) and divorced or separated adults (3.2%) were more

likely than married adults (1.5%) to have experienced serious psychological distress.

Health-related behaviors (tables 7,8)

Prevalence of selected health-related behaviors—physical inactivity in leisure time, overweight or obesity, current cigarette smoking, and heavier drinking—varied by marital status and age. Marital status differences were not the same across all behaviors.

Leisure-time physical inactivity

Leisure-time physical inactivity increased with age. Overall, about 3 in 10 adults aged 18–44 years (32.7%) were physically inactive in their leisure time compared with 4 in 10 adults aged 45–64 years (39.8%) and more than 5 in 10 adults aged 65 years and over (53.1%) (table 7). Among the youngest adults, aged 18–44 years, those who had never been married (29.2%) were the least likely to be physically inactive; young widowed adults (44.6%) were the most likely to be physically inactive. Among adults aged 45–64 years, those who were currently married (37.6%) were the least likely and those who were widowed (50.8%) were the most likely to be physically inactive; prevalence of inactivity among middle-

aged adults in other marital status categories ranged from 44% to 45%. Among adults aged 65 years and over, married adults (47.7%) were also the least likely of the marital status groups to be physically inactive in their leisure time.

Among all adults aged 18 years and over, after adjusting for age, married adults (37.3%) were the least likely and widowed adults (48.9%) were the most likely to be physically inactive in their leisure time (table 8). Rates of leisure-time physical inactivity were about the same for divorced or separated adults (42.8%) as for adults living with a partner (42.1%). Prevalence of leisure-time physical inactivity was about the same for married white adults (35.9%) and never married white adults (35.2%). In contrast, among black adults, only those who were currently married (47.5%) had rates of physical inactivity that were significantly lower than rates for black adults in the other marital status groups (52.7%–56.2%). Rates of leisure-time physical inactivity were high among adults with the least education (49.3%) and the lowest incomes (51.4%) and were particularly high among widowed adults in these lower socioeconomic subgroups; about 6 in 10 widowed adults who had a high school education or less (58.0%) and 6 in 10 poor or near poor widowed adults (61.4) were classified as physically inactive in leisure time.

Overweight or obese

Overall, more than one-half of all adults (56.7%) were overweight or obese in 1999–2002. Prevalence of overweight or obesity was lowest among adults 18–44 years (51.8%), highest in the middle-age group (65.1%), and intermediate among the adults aged 65 years and over (57.1%) (table 7). Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the various marital status groups varied according to age and sex. Among adults aged 18–44 years, never married men (48.7%) and never married women (38.4%), along with women who were living with a partner (40.2%), were among the least likely to be overweight or obese. In this youngest age group, rates of overweight or obesity were

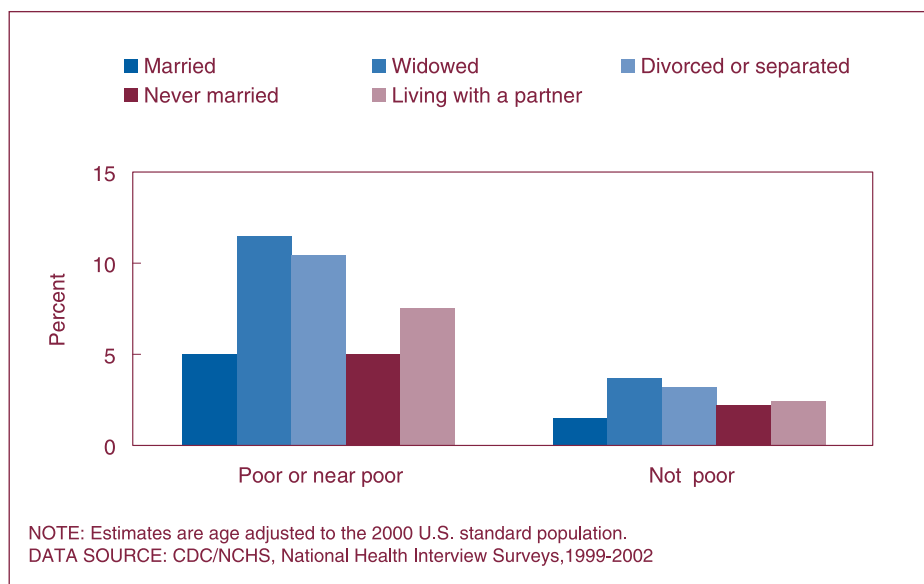


Figure 4. Age-adjusted percent of adults who experienced serious psychological distress, by poverty status and marital status: United States, 1999–2002

particularly high among men who were married (70.3%) or widowed (70.5%). Middle-aged married men (75.2%) had the highest rate of overweight or obesity of any marital status group studied. In contrast, the prevalence of overweight or obesity for middle-aged women was lower for women who were married (55.6%) than for those who were divorced or separated (59.3%), never married (64.4%), or widowed (64.8%). Among adults aged 65 years and over, married men (65.2%) also had among the highest rates of overweight or obesity compared with men in other marital status groups; no statistically significant differences in overweight or obesity by marital status were noted for older women.

Overall age-adjusted prevalence of overweight or obesity was higher for men (65.1%) than for women (48.5%). Among all men aged 18 years and over, age-adjusted prevalence of overweight or obesity was lowest for those who had never been married (53.5%) (table 8 and figure 5). Never married women also had among the lowest rates of overweight or obesity, but unlike men, prevalence among never married women (48.2%) was about the same as for married women (48.6%) and those living with a partner (46.1%). Rates of overweight or obesity were modestly higher among women who were

widowed (53.2%) or divorced or separated (52.5%). In general, never married adults were less likely than adults in any other marital status category to be overweight or obese regardless of race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, poverty status, or nativity status.

Cigarette smoking

Cigarette smoking prevalence declined with age with the most noticeable decline occurring in the oldest age group (table 7). More than 1 in 4 adults aged 18–44 years (26.7%) were current smokers compared with fewer than 1 in 4 adults aged 45–64 years (23.4%) and 1 in 10 adults aged 65 years and over (9.9%).

Marital status differences in smoking rates are striking. In most age groups and for both men and women, married adults were less likely to currently smoke cigarettes than adults who were not married (table 7). Overall, among adults aged 18–44 years, married adults (21.9%) were about half as likely as divorced or separated adults (40.2%) or those living with a partner (43.5%) to be current smokers. Among men aged 45–64 years, smoking rates were nearly twice as high for men who were divorced or separated (40.4%) or living with a partner (38.3%) as for married

men (21.9%). The smoking rate for middle-aged women who were living with a partner (39.1%) was more than twice the rate for middle-aged married women (17.3%). Smoking prevalence dropped dramatically in the oldest age group regardless of marital status, but married men (8.8%) and married women (7.6%) in this age group, along with never married women (7.5%), were among the least likely to smoke cigarettes. As was true for the younger age groups, adults aged 65 years and over who were divorced or separated (19.1%) and those living with a partner (24.9%) were the most likely to smoke compared with the oldest adults in other marital status groups.

Overall age-adjusted prevalence of cigarette smoking among all adults was 22.9% (table 8). Smoking prevalence differed markedly among the marital status groups. About 1 in 5 married adults (18.8%) were current smokers compared with about 4 in 10 adults who were living with a partner (38.4%). Divorced or separated men (38.8%) and men who were living with a partner (39.3%) were nearly twice as likely as married men (20.9%) to currently smoke cigarettes (figure 6). Similarly, divorced or separated women (31.8%) and women who were living with a partner (37.6%) were about twice as likely as married women (16.8%) to currently smoke cigarettes. In nearly every population group studied, smoking rates were lowest among married adults and highest among adults living with a partner. Smoking rates for adults who were living with a partner were particularly high for those with a high school diploma or less (45.1%) and those with incomes near or below poverty (48.0%).

Alcohol use

Overall, 4.7% of all adults were heavier drinkers, with this level of drinking more prevalent among younger (5.1%) and middle-aged adults (4.9%) than among older adults (3.1%) (table 7). In each age group, adults living with a partner had among the highest rates of heavier drinking. Among younger adults, married men (4.1%) and married women (2.7%) were the least

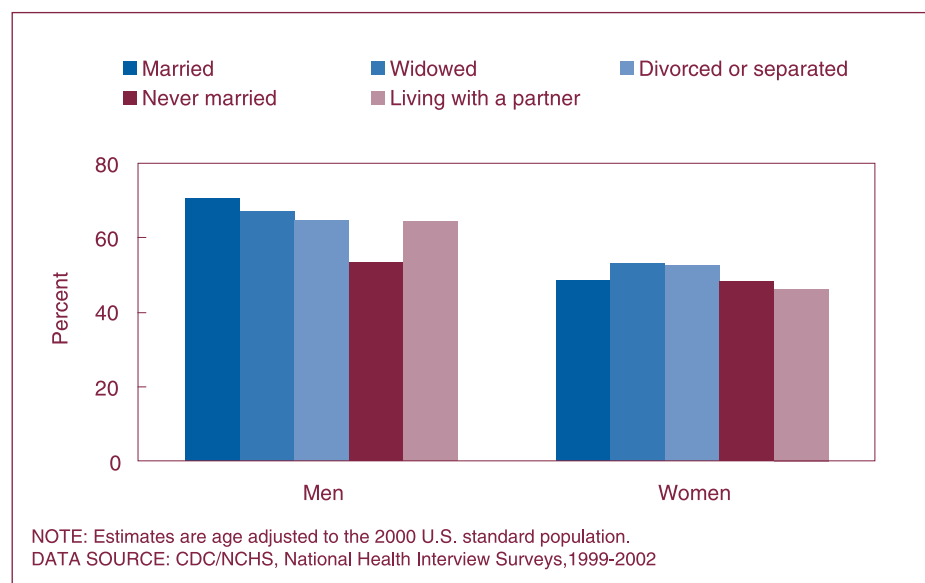


Figure 5. Age-adjusted percent of adults who were overweight or obese, by sex and marital status: United States, 1999–2002

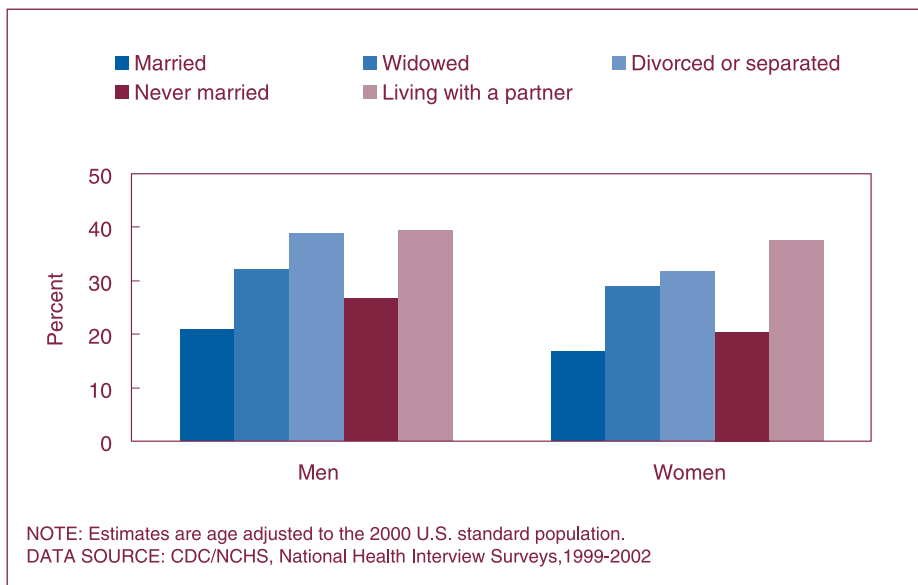


Figure 6. Percent of adults who were current smokers, by sex and marital status: United States, 1999–2002

likely to be heavier drinkers compared with men and women, respectively, in other marital status groups. Among middle-aged men, those who were married (4.7%) were the least likely to be heavier drinkers. Divorced or separated men aged 65 and over (6.6%) were nearly twice as likely as married men in this age group (3.4%) to be heavier drinkers.

Overall, after adjusting for age, rates of heavier drinking among men were highest for men who were widowed (9.2%), divorced or separated (9.5%), or living with a partner (9.2%) and lowest for those who were married (4.1%), with rates for never married men (6.2%) falling in between (table 8). Among women, only those who were living with a partner (7.3%) had a markedly higher prevalence of heavier drinking compared with the other marital status groups (3.3%–4.4%). Although large standard errors make interpretation difficult in some cases, for each of the population subgroups studied, married adults had among the lowest rates of heavier drinking (ranging from 2.2% to 4.2%), and adults who were living with a partner had among the highest rates (ranging from 6.1% to 9.0%).

Discussion

For the most part, data presented and discussed in this report offer further evidence that married adults are healthier than those in other marital status groups. In general, married adults were the least likely to experience health problems and the least likely to engage in risky health behaviors (with the notable exception of being overweight or obese) compared with adults in other marital status groups. In the 1970s, national health data indicated that divorced or separated adults had the worst health status (3). Findings presented in this report indicate that, in many cases, widowed adults were as likely as or more likely than divorced or separated adults to have experienced health problems and to have engaged in health risk behaviors. This was especially true of younger widows. Although the relationship between marital status and health was found in each of the three age groups studied, marital status differences were greatest in the younger age groups. The only negative health indicator for which married adults had higher prevalence was overweight or obese body weight status, and this was true only for men.

For most negative health indicators, adults living with a partner had higher rates than married adults: they were more likely to be in fair or poor health, to have some type of limitation of activity for health reasons (table 4), and to have experienced low back pain and headaches in the past 3 months and serious psychological distress in the past 30 days (table 6). Adults living with a partner were also more likely to be physically inactive in their leisure time, to currently smoke cigarettes, and to be heavier drinkers compared with married adults (table 8). In general, the health status and behaviors of adults living with a partner most closely resembled those of divorced or separated adults. The only health characteristic for which adults living with a partner consistently resembled married adults was in prevalence of ADL and IADL limitations, which was very low for both groups.

Generally, the differences by marital status persist regardless of population subgroup, although the prevalence rates sometimes varied substantially among subgroups. For example, the rate of serious psychological distress for poor or near poor adults overall (6.2%) was more than three times the rate for adults who were not poor (1.9%), yet in both economic groups, widowed adults and divorced or separated adults were more likely than those who were married to have experienced these symptoms. Similarly, U.S.-born adults were nearly twice as likely as foreign-born adults to have a work limitation, yet regardless of nativity, divorced or separated adults and widowed adults were more than twice as likely as married adults to report a work limitation.

A few caveats should be kept in mind when interpreting these findings. First, the National Health Interview Survey is a cross-sectional survey and thus causality in the marital status and health relationship cannot be determined. Although these data document that married adults are, for the most part, healthier than adults in other marital status categories, the reasons for this finding cannot be determined from these data. It could be that these adults

came to the marriage with better health status and healthier behaviors, that marriage promotes these characteristics, or both. Longitudinal studies are required to disentangle the relationship between marital status and health.

A second caveat is that information on marital status is limited to the respondent's current marital status and includes no information about marital history or overlapping status groups. For example, someone who is living with a partner may also be separated or divorced. It is likely that the health status characteristics shown and discussed in this report are associated both with current marital status and with marital history. Third, respondents are given no definition or criteria for reporting marital status. Hence, individuals living in a nonlegal marital union may report that they are "married" or "living with a partner." Classification of marital status is left entirely to the respondent, and no information is available to assess the extent to which married persons are legally married. Also, "married" includes adults whose spouse does not live in the home. Information on presence or absence of the spouse was collected, but not considered for this report. Fourth, the context of any given marital status may vary. Adults in any of the marital status groups (including married adults) may live alone, in families with children, or in multi-generational households. This information is collected on the NHIS, although it is not taken into account here. Finally, as with all information collected in a household interview, the quality of the information is limited by the ability and willingness of respondents to report their marital status and health characteristics.

Conclusions

The findings presented offer support for two of the three hypotheses mentioned in the "Introduction." The first hypothesis—that married adults are healthier than unmarried adults—was generally supported. Married persons were healthier for nearly every measure of health—the one important exception being body weight status. Explanations

for the higher rates of overweight and obesity among married adults compared with adults in other marital status categories await further study. The second hypothesis—that the health characteristics of adults living with a partner would differ from currently married adults—was also supported. In many cases, prevalence of health limitations, conditions, and unhealthy behaviors among adults living with a partner resembled or exceeded the prevalence among adults who were divorced or separated. The third hypothesis—that the marital status health relationship would vary by social and economic context—was not supported. Although most notable in the youngest age group, marital status differences were relatively consistent across the subgroups studied. Regardless of sex, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, level of education, income, or nativity, married adults generally had lower prevalence rates for unfavorable health characteristics, conditions and health risk behaviors (with the notable exception of being overweight or obese) than adults in other marital status groups.

The National Health Interview Survey offers the opportunity to explore in some depth the mechanisms underlying the finding that married adults generally are healthier than those who are not married. It provides extensive health and demographic information, including family structure and living arrangements, as well as a large sample size using multiple data years.

References

1. Berkman J. Mortality and marital status. Reflections on the derivation of etiology from statistics. *AJPH*; 52(8):1318–29. 1962.
2. Verbrugge LM. Marital status and health. *J Marriage and Fam*; 41(2):267–85. 1979.
3. Hughes ME, Waite LJ. Health in household context: Living arrangements and health in late middle age. *J Health Soc Behav*. 43:1–21. 2002.
4. Lund R, Due P, Modvig J, et al. Cohabitation and marital status as predictors of mortality—an eight year follow-up study. *Soc Sci Med*; 55:673–9. 2002.
5. Michale YL, Berkman LF, Colditz GA, Kawachi I. Living arrangements, social integration, and change in functional health status. *Am J Epidemiol*; 153(2):123–31. 2001.
6. Fields J, Casper LM. American families and living arrangements: March 2000. P20–537, 1–16. Washington. U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Reports. 2001.
7. Saluter AF. Marital status and living arrangements: March 1994. P20–484, 1–130. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office. Current Population Reports. 1996.
8. Gove WR. Sex, marital status, and mortality. *Am J Soc*; 79(1):45–67. 1973.
9. Somers AR. Marital status, health, and use of health services. An old relationship revisited. *JAMA*; 241(17):1818–22. 1979.
10. Glenn ND. The contribution of marriage to the psychological well-being of males and females. *J Marriage and Fam*; 37:594–601. 1975.
11. Gove WR. Sex, marital status and suicide. *J Health Soc Behav*; 13:204–13. 1972.
12. Wilson BF, Schoenborn C. A healthy marriage: Does marriage foster a healthy lifestyle or do healthy people get married? *Am Demographics* 40–43. 1989.
13. Venters M, Jacobs DR, Pirie P, et al. Marital status and cardiovascular risk: The Minnesota Health Survey and the Minnesota Heart Health Program. *Prev Med*; 15:591–605. 1986.
14. Goldman N, Korenman S, Weinstein R. Marital status and health among the elderly. *Soc Sci Med*; 40(12):1717–30. 1995.
15. Power C, Rodgers B, Hope S. Heavy alcohol consumption and marital status: disentangling the relationship in a national study of young adults. *Addiction*; 94(10):1477–87. 1999.
16. National Center for Health Statistics. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Public-Use Data Release. NHIS Survey Description Document. National Center for Health Statistics. 1999.
17. National Center for Health Statistics. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Public-Use Data Release.

- NHIS Survey Description Document. National Center for Health Statistics. 2000.
18. National Center for Health Statistics. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Public-Use Data Release. NHIS Survey Description Document. National Center for Health Statistics. 2001.
19. National Center for Health Statistics. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Public-Use Data Release. NHIS Survey Description Document. National Center for Health Statistics. 2002.
20. Office of Management and Budget. Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Race and Ethnicity. Federal Register; 62(210):58782–90. 1997.
21. Schiller JS, Bernadel L. Summary health statistics for the U.S. population: National Health Interview Survey, 2002. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(220). 2004.
22. Lethbridge-Çejku M, Schiller JS, Bernadel L. Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2002. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(222). 2004.
23. Lucas JW, Schiller JS, Benson V. Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2001. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(218). 2004.
24. Barnes PM, Adams PF, Schiller JS. Summary health statistics for the U.S. population: National Health Interview Survey, 2001. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(217). 2003.
25. Schoenborn CA, Adams PF, Schiller JS. Summary health statistics for the U.S. population: National Health Interview Survey, 2000. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(214). 2003.
26. Pleis J, Benson V, Schiller JS. Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2000. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(215). 2003.
27. Pleis J, Coles R. Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey, 1999. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(212). 2003.
28. Blackwell DL, Tonthat L. Summary health statistics for the U.S. population: National Health Interview Survey, 1999. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(211). 2003.
29. Kessler RC, Barker PR, Colpe LJ, Epstein JF, et al. Screening for Serious Mental Illness in the General Population. Arch Gen Psychiatry; 60:184–9. 2003.
30. SUDAAN (Release 8.0.1). Research Triangle Park, NC: Research Triangle Institute, 2002.
31. Day JC. Population projections of the United States by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1995–2050. P25–1130. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office. Current Population Reports. 1996.
32. Klein RJ, Schoenborn CA. Age adjustment using the 2000 projected U.S. population. Healthy People Statistical Notes; 20:1–10. 2001.
33. Schmidley D. The foreign-born population in the United States: P20–539, 1–8. 2003. Washington. U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports. March 2002.

Table 1. Number of adults 18 years of age and over and percent distributions of marital status among adults 18 years of age and over, by selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Selected characteristic	Adults 18 years of age and over	Marital status					
		Total	Married	Widowed	Divorced or separated	Never married	Living with a partner
	Number in thousands ¹	Percent distribution ² (standard error)					
Both sexes							
Ages 18 years and over ³	202,743	100.0	58.2 (0.27)	6.6 (0.09)	10.4 (0.11)	19.0 (0.23)	5.7 (0.09)
Age:							
18–44 years	108,387	100.0	52.1 (0.35)	0.4 (0.02)	8.1 (0.12)	31.0 (0.34)	8.5 (0.14)
45–64 years	61,582	100.0	70.4 (0.33)	4.0 (0.10)	15.7 (0.22)	6.3 (0.14)	3.5 (0.12)
65 years and over	32,774	100.0	55.5 (0.44)	32.2 (0.38)	7.8 (0.18)	3.6 (0.12)	1.0 (0.07)
Race: ⁴							
White, single race	164,508	100.0	61.1 (0.28)	6.8 (0.10)	9.8 (0.11)	16.7 (0.23)	5.5 (0.10)
Black or African American, single race	22,907	100.0	37.5 (0.55)	7.2 (0.23)	15.7 (0.30)	32.7 (0.53)	6.9 (0.25)
Hispanic or Latino origin: ⁵							
Hispanic or Latino	21,601	100.0	57.9 (0.47)	3.8 (0.19)	9.8 (0.23)	21.7 (0.39)	6.8 (0.24)
Not Hispanic or Latino	181,099	100.0	58.3 (0.30)	7.0 (0.10)	10.4 (0.11)	18.7 (0.25)	5.6 (0.10)
Education: ⁶							
High school diploma or less	95,471	100.0	55.4 (0.32)	9.7 (0.14)	10.7 (0.14)	17.8 (0.24)	6.3 (0.13)
At least some college	105,190	100.0	60.8 (0.37)	3.7 (0.08)	10.0 (0.14)	20.2 (0.34)	5.2 (0.12)
Poverty status: ⁷							
Poor or near poor	43,071	100.0	41.8 (0.52)	10.8 (0.23)	15.1 (0.25)	26.0 (0.60)	6.3 (0.18)
Not poor	111,725	100.0	65.1 (0.29)	3.8 (0.08)	9.0 (0.12)	16.4 (0.21)	5.7 (0.12)
Nativity: ⁸							
U.S. born	176,856	100.0	57.3 (0.29)	6.8 (0.09)	10.7 (0.11)	19.2 (0.24)	5.9 (0.10)
Foreign born	25,460	100.0	64.5 (0.49)	5.2 (0.20)	7.9 (0.21)	17.7 (0.41)	4.7 (0.19)
Men							
Ages 18 years and over ³	97,172	100.0	60.8 (0.33)	2.5 (0.06)	8.8 (0.13)	21.8 (0.29)	6.1 (0.13)
Age:							
18–44 years	53,415	100.0	49.4 (0.43)	0.2 (0.02)	6.7 (0.15)	35.0 (0.43)	8.6 (0.20)
45–64 years	29,795	100.0	74.7 (0.40)	1.5 (0.08)	13.4 (0.26)	6.7 (0.20)	3.6 (0.17)
65 years and over	13,962	100.0	74.4 (0.50)	13.5 (0.36)	7.1 (0.27)	3.6 (0.19)	1.4 (0.14)
Race: ⁴							
White, single race	79,323	100.0	63.0 (0.35)	2.6 (0.07)	8.6 (0.14)	20.1 (0.30)	5.7 (0.14)
Black or African American, single race	10,176	100.0	44.9 (0.82)	2.9 (0.19)	12.4 (0.43)	31.2 (0.80)	8.6 (0.42)
Hispanic or Latino origin: ⁵							
Hispanic or Latino	10,636	100.0	59.9 (0.65)	1.3 (0.13)	6.6 (0.28)	25.1 (0.62)	7.0 (0.33)
Not Hispanic or Latino	86,505	100.0	60.9 (0.36)	2.7 (0.07)	9.1 (0.14)	21.4 (0.31)	5.9 (0.14)
Education: ⁶							
High school diploma or less	45,141	100.0	58.1 (0.42)	3.5 (0.10)	9.7 (0.20)	21.7 (0.35)	7.0 (0.20)
At least some college	50,974	100.0	63.2 (0.46)	1.7 (0.07)	8.1 (0.16)	21.8 (0.43)	5.2 (0.16)
Poverty status: ⁷							
Poor or near poor	18,678	100.0	48.5 (0.72)	3.7 (0.17)	11.1 (0.33)	29.2 (0.80)	7.5 (0.31)
Not poor	56,798	100.0	65.0 (0.37)	1.9 (0.07)	8.4 (0.16)	19.0 (0.28)	5.7 (0.16)
Nativity: ⁸							
U.S. born	84,348	100.0	59.9 (0.35)	2.7 (0.07)	9.3 (0.15)	21.9 (0.31)	6.2 (0.14)
Foreign born	12,596	100.0	66.8 (0.68)	1.5 (0.14)	5.6 (0.27)	21.1 (0.62)	5.0 (0.29)
Women							
Ages 18 years and over ³	105,571	100.0	55.9 (0.31)	10.4 (0.15)	11.8 (0.14)	16.5 (0.24)	5.5 (0.11)
Age:							
18–44 years	54,972	100.0	54.7 (0.43)	0.5 (0.03)	9.4 (0.16)	27.1 (0.40)	8.3 (0.19)
45–64 years	31,788	100.0	66.4 (0.42)	6.4 (0.17)	17.9 (0.30)	5.9 (0.17)	3.4 (0.15)
65 years and over	18,812	100.0	41.4 (0.56)	46.0 (0.51)	8.3 (0.23)	3.6 (0.16)	0.7 (0.07)
Race: ⁴							
White, single race	85,185	100.0	59.4 (0.33)	10.7 (0.16)	10.9 (0.15)	13.5 (0.25)	5.4 (0.12)
Black or African American, single race	12,731	100.0	31.6 (0.60)	10.6 (0.37)	18.4 (0.40)	33.8 (0.62)	5.5 (0.29)
Hispanic or Latino origin: ⁵							
Hispanic or Latino	10,965	100.0	56.0 (0.62)	6.2 (0.30)	12.9 (0.33)	18.3 (0.46)	6.6 (0.32)
Not Hispanic or Latino	94,594	100.0	55.8 (0.33)	10.9 (0.16)	11.6 (0.14)	16.3 (0.27)	5.3 (0.12)
Education: ⁶							
High school diploma or less	50,331	100.0	53.1 (0.38)	15.3 (0.23)	11.6 (0.19)	14.3 (0.27)	5.7 (0.16)
At least some college	54,215	100.0	58.5 (0.41)	5.7 (0.13)	11.9 (0.19)	18.6 (0.36)	5.3 (0.16)

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Number of adults 18 years of age and over and percent distributions of marital status among adults 18 years of age and over, by selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002—Con.

Selected characteristic	Adults 18 years of age and over	Marital status					
		Total	Married	Widowed	Divorced or separated	Never married	Living with a partner
		Number in thousands ¹	Percent distribution ² (standard error)				
Poverty status:⁷							
Poor or near poor	24,393	100.0	36.7 (0.56)	16.2 (0.35)	18.1 (0.33)	23.6 (0.60)	5.4 (0.20)
Not poor	54,927	100.0	65.2 (0.35)	5.7 (0.13)	9.6 (0.17)	13.7 (0.25)	5.7 (0.16)
Nativity:⁸							
U.S. born	92,508	100.0	55.0 (0.33)	10.6 (0.15)	12.0 (0.15)	16.8 (0.27)	5.6 (0.12)
Foreign born	12,864	100.0	62.3 (0.64)	8.8 (0.35)	10.1 (0.32)	14.5 (0.47)	4.4 (0.25)

¹Includes adults with unknown marital status.

²Unknowns for marital status were not included in denominators when calculating percent distributions. Percents are not age-adjusted. See table 2 for age-adjusted percent distributions.

³Total includes persons of all races and persons with unknown race, Hispanic or Latino origin, education, poverty status, and nativity status.

⁴In accordance with the 1997 Standards for Federal data on race and Hispanic or Latino origin, detailed information on single race and multiple race combinations is collected in the NHIS. However, due to the nature of this analysis and small sample sizes associated with studying marital status and health, only two single race groups are shown. [Information on other groups and selected multiple race groups is presented in annual Summary Health Statistics reports.] In addition, although the tables in this report use the complete new Office of Management and Budget (OMB) race and Hispanic origin terms, the text uses shorter versions of these terms for conciseness. For example, the category "Black or African American, single race" in the tables is referred to as "black persons" in the text.

⁵Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race or combination of races. Similarly, the category "Not Hispanic or Latino" refers to all persons who are not of Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race.

⁶Education is based on the question: "What is the highest level of school (person) completed or the highest degree (person) has received? In this table, adults with a high school diploma or a GED and adults with less than a high school diploma are included in the category "high school diploma or less"; adults who had any schooling beyond a high school diploma are included in "at least some college."

⁷Poverty status is based on family income and family size using the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for the previous calendar year. "Poor" persons have family incomes that are below the poverty threshold. "Near poor" persons have family incomes of 100% to less than 200% of the poverty threshold. "Not poor" persons have family incomes that are 200% of the poverty threshold or greater.

⁸Nativity is based on the question "Where was (person) born?" Response options included any of the 50 States or the District of Columbia or "not in U.S." If not born in U.S., a question on the country or territory of birth was asked. A follow-up question, "Are you a citizen of the United States?" identified persons born outside the U.S. to parents who were U.S. citizens. The category "U.S. born" includes persons born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, or any of the U.S. territories, and persons born abroad to a parent or parents who were U.S. citizens. All others were classified as "foreign born." See Technical note for details.

NOTE: Population sizes and percent distributions shown in this table may be used for estimating the number of adults in each marital status category for each of the demographic groups studied.

DATA SOURCE: Data on marital status were collected in the Family Core component, family identification (FID) section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002.

Table 2. Age-adjusted percent distributions of marital status among adults 18 years of age and over, by selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Selected characteristic	Total	Marital status				
		Married	Widowed	Divorced or separated	Never married	Living with a partner
Both sexes						
Age-adjusted percent distribution ¹ (standard error)						
Ages 18 years and over ²	100.0	58.1 (0.26)	7.0 (0.07)	10.3 (0.11)	18.9 (0.20)	5.7 (0.09)
Race: ³						
White, single race	100.0	60.9 (0.27)	6.7 (0.08)	9.7 (0.11)	17.1 (0.21)	5.6 (0.10)
Black or African American, single race	100.0	38.0 (0.53)	9.8 (0.22)	16.2 (0.31)	29.7 (0.43)	6.4 (0.23)
Hispanic or Latino origin: ⁴						
Hispanic or Latino	100.0	58.4 (0.48)	6.6 (0.24)	10.8 (0.26)	18.3 (0.31)	5.9 (0.21)
Not Hispanic or Latino	100.0	58.0 (0.28)	7.0 (0.07)	10.3 (0.11)	19.1 (0.22)	5.7 (0.09)
Education: ⁵						
High school diploma or less	100.0	55.5 (0.31)	8.0 (0.10)	10.9 (0.15)	18.9 (0.24)	6.7 (0.14)
At least some college	100.0	60.8 (0.33)	5.4 (0.09)	10.0 (0.14)	18.9 (0.27)	4.9 (0.11)
Poverty status: ⁶						
Poor or near poor	100.0	42.7 (0.50)	10.0 (0.15)	16.4 (0.26)	24.7 (0.47)	6.2 (0.18)
Not poor	100.0	64.7 (0.27)	5.3 (0.09)	8.7 (0.12)	15.8 (0.19)	5.5 (0.11)
Nativity: ⁷						
U.S. born	100.0	57.1 (0.28)	7.0 (0.07)	10.6 (0.11)	19.4 (0.21)	5.9 (0.10)
Foreign born	100.0	64.3 (0.48)	7.1 (0.22)	8.2 (0.22)	16.0 (0.34)	4.3 (0.18)
Men						
Ages 18 years and over ²	100.0	61.2 (0.30)	3.0 (0.07)	8.8 (0.13)	21.2 (0.24)	5.9 (0.12)
Race: ³						
White, single race	100.0	62.9 (0.32)	2.9 (0.07)	8.5 (0.14)	20.1 (0.26)	5.7 (0.14)
Black or African American, single race	100.0	46.7 (0.78)	4.4 (0.28)	13.0 (0.43)	28.0 (0.67)	7.8 (0.38)
Hispanic or Latino origin: ⁴						
Hispanic or Latino	100.0	63.3 (0.64)	2.8 (0.26)	7.6 (0.34)	20.3 (0.46)	6.0 (0.30)
Not Hispanic or Latino	100.0	60.8 (0.32)	3.0 (0.07)	9.0 (0.14)	21.3 (0.27)	5.9 (0.13)
Education: ⁵						
High school diploma or less	100.0	58.2 (0.40)	3.5 (0.10)	9.8 (0.20)	21.6 (0.33)	6.9 (0.20)
At least some college	100.0	64.0 (0.40)	2.4 (0.09)	7.9 (0.16)	20.8 (0.34)	5.0 (0.16)
Poverty status: ⁶						
Poor or near poor	100.0	49.8 (0.65)	4.0 (0.16)	12.3 (0.34)	26.7 (0.63)	7.0 (0.29)
Not poor	100.0	65.4 (0.34)	2.8 (0.10)	8.1 (0.15)	18.3 (0.25)	5.5 (0.15)
Nativity: ⁷						
U.S. born	100.0	60.0 (0.32)	3.1 (0.07)	9.2 (0.14)	21.6 (0.26)	6.1 (0.13)
Foreign born	100.0	68.6 (0.63)	2.5 (0.23)	6.0 (0.30)	18.4 (0.49)	4.6 (0.26)
Women						
Ages 18 years and over ²	100.0	56.0 (0.30)	10.0 (0.10)	11.7 (0.14)	16.7 (0.23)	5.5 (0.11)
Race: ³						
White, single race	100.0	59.8 (0.32)	9.5 (0.10)	10.9 (0.15)	14.2 (0.25)	5.6 (0.13)
Black or African American, single race	100.0	31.4 (0.59)	13.5 (0.30)	18.8 (0.40)	31.1 (0.51)	5.2 (0.27)
Hispanic or Latino origin: ⁴						
Hispanic or Latino	100.0	54.7 (0.62)	9.6 (0.34)	13.9 (0.37)	16.1 (0.41)	5.7 (0.28)
Not Hispanic or Latino	100.0	56.0 (0.32)	10.0 (0.10)	11.6 (0.15)	16.9 (0.25)	5.5 (0.12)
Education: ⁵						
High school diploma or less	100.0	54.3 (0.37)	11.1 (0.13)	12.0 (0.20)	16.2 (0.29)	6.5 (0.18)
At least some college	100.0	57.6 (0.39)	8.3 (0.15)	12.0 (0.19)	17.3 (0.30)	4.8 (0.14)
Poverty status: ⁶						
Poor or near poor	100.0	37.9 (0.56)	13.8 (0.22)	19.8 (0.35)	23.0 (0.49)	5.5 (0.20)
Not poor	100.0	64.2 (0.34)	7.7 (0.14)	9.3 (0.17)	13.3 (0.23)	5.5 (0.15)
Nativity: ⁷						
U.S. born	100.0	55.1 (0.32)	9.9 (0.10)	12.0 (0.15)	17.3 (0.25)	5.8 (0.12)
Foreign born	100.0	61.5 (0.61)	10.6 (0.30)	10.4 (0.33)	13.5 (0.42)	4.1 (0.23)

¹Unknowns for marital status were not included in denominators when calculating percent distributions.

²Total includes persons of other races and with unknown race, Hispanic or Latino origin, education, poverty status, and nativity status.

³In accordance with the 1997 Standards for Federal data on race and Hispanic or Latino origin, detailed information on single race and multiple race combinations is collected in the NHIS. However, due to the nature of this analysis and small sample sizes associated with studying marital status and health, only two single race groups are shown. [Information on other groups and selected multiple race groups is presented in annual Summary Health Statistics reports.] In addition, although the tables in this report use the complete new Office of Management and Budget (OMB) race and Hispanic origin terms, the text uses shorter versions of these terms for conciseness. For example, the category "Black or African American, single race" in the tables is referred to as "black persons" in the text.

⁴Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race or combination of races. Similarly, the category "not Hispanic or Latino" refers to all persons who are not of Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race.

⁵Education is based on the question: "What is the highest level of school {person} completed or the highest degree {person} has received? In this table, adults with a high school diploma or a

GED and adults with less than a high school diploma are included in the category "high school diploma or less;" adults who had any schooling beyond a high school diploma are included in "at least some college."

⁶Poverty status is based on family income and family size using the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for the previous calendar year. "Poor" persons have family incomes that are below the poverty threshold. "Near poor" persons have family incomes of 100% to less than 200% of the poverty threshold. "Not poor" persons have family incomes that are 200% of the poverty threshold or greater.

⁷Nativity is based on the question "Where was {person} born?" Response options included any of the 50 States or the District of Columbia or "not in U.S." If not born in U.S., a question on the country or territory of birth was asked. A follow-up question, "Are you a citizen of the United States?," identified persons born outside the U.S. to parents who were U.S. citizens. The category "U.S. born" includes persons born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, or any of the U.S. territories, and persons born abroad to parents who were U.S. citizens. All others were classified as "foreign born." See Technical note for details.

NOTE: Estimates are age adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population using the age groups: 18–44 years, 45–64 years, 65–74 years, and 75 years and over. See "Technical Notes" for details.

DATA SOURCE: Data on marital status were collected in the Family Core component, family identification (FID) section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002.

Table 3. Percent of adults 18 years of age and over who were in fair or poor health and percent with selected limitations due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem, by age, sex, and marital status: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Age, sex, and marital status	Adults 18 years of age and over	Health characteristic				
		Fair or poor health ¹	Any activity limitation ²	Limitation in work activity ³	Limitation in ADL ⁴ or IADL ⁵	Limitation in physical or social functioning ⁶
		Percent ^a (standard error)				
Adults ages 18 years and over ⁹	202,743	11.7 (0.15)	14.9 (0.18)	11.4 (0.15)	3.8 (0.07)	30.4 (0.24)
18–44 years						
Total ⁹	108,387	5.5 (0.12)	6.9 (0.15)	5.5 (0.12)	1.3 (0.06)	17.5 (0.23)
Married	56,316	4.5 (0.14)	5.2 (0.16)	4.0 (0.13)	0.8 (0.06)	17.3 (0.29)
Widowed	400	14.1 (2.08)	18.6 (2.24)	16.3 (2.12)	5.5 (1.36)	25.6 (2.51)
Divorced or separated	8,733	10.6 (0.44)	13.3 (0.47)	11.0 (0.41)	2.6 (0.23)	24.3 (0.58)
Never married	33,462	5.2 (0.19)	7.9 (0.25)	6.3 (0.22)	1.6 (0.11)	14.9 (0.34)
Living with a partner	9,149	6.8 (0.43)	7.7 (0.45)	6.2 (0.40)	1.1 (0.16)	21.6 (0.68)
Men ⁹	53,415	4.9 (0.16)	6.7 (0.20)	5.2 (0.16)	1.2 (0.08)	14.6 (0.28)
Married	26,327	4.2 (0.19)	4.9 (0.22)	3.6 (0.18)	0.7 (0.09)	15.0 (0.37)
Widowed	113	11.5 (3.37)	16.3 (3.81)	14.1 (3.63)	*5.0 (2.31)	18.5 (4.20)
Divorced or separated	3,590	8.8 (0.63)	12.5 (0.75)	9.9 (0.66)	1.7 (0.31)	19.3 (0.90)
Never married	18,631	4.9 (0.25)	7.9 (0.33)	6.5 (0.29)	1.7 (0.16)	12.2 (0.41)
Living with a partner	4,585	6.2 (0.60)	7.3 (0.64)	5.7 (0.58)	1.1 (0.23)	18.1 (0.93)
Women ⁹	54,972	6.0 (0.15)	7.2 (0.20)	5.7 (0.16)	1.4 (0.07)	20.3 (0.30)
Married	29,989	4.8 (0.18)	5.5 (0.22)	4.3 (0.19)	0.9 (0.08)	19.3 (0.39)
Widowed	287	15.1 (2.65)	19.5 (2.81)	17.2 (2.67)	5.7 (1.65)	28.3 (3.07)
Divorced or separated	5,143	11.9 (0.56)	13.9 (0.59)	11.8 (0.54)	3.2 (0.31)	27.8 (0.74)
Never married	14,832	5.7 (0.27)	7.9 (0.33)	6.0 (0.28)	1.5 (0.15)	18.3 (0.51)
Living with a partner	4,564	7.5 (0.58)	8.1 (0.65)	6.6 (0.55)	1.2 (0.23)	25.0 (0.98)
45–64 years						
Total ⁹	61,582	15.2 (0.25)	17.8 (0.29)	14.9 (0.26)	3.6 (0.11)	36.5 (0.36)
Married	43,219	12.8 (0.28)	14.1 (0.33)	11.5 (0.29)	2.5 (0.11)	34.2 (0.43)
Widowed	2,480	24.9 (1.04)	29.8 (1.10)	25.7 (1.05)	7.0 (0.58)	47.8 (1.16)
Divorced or separated	9,651	20.7 (0.52)	26.9 (0.56)	23.0 (0.55)	6.1 (0.28)	42.6 (0.63)
Never married	3,869	18.7 (0.79)	27.3 (0.92)	23.2 (0.89)	7.5 (0.55)	38.4 (0.97)
Living with a partner	2,149	20.1 (1.31)	21.5 (1.30)	19.2 (1.26)	4.3 (0.62)	40.8 (1.58)
Men ⁹	29,795	14.4 (0.33)	17.4 (0.38)	14.7 (0.35)	3.1 (0.14)	31.1 (0.46)
Married	22,183	12.5 (0.36)	14.2 (0.42)	11.8 (0.38)	2.2 (0.15)	29.7 (0.55)
Widowed	452	26.1 (2.46)	30.8 (2.58)	26.1 (2.43)	6.0 (1.36)	40.3 (2.71)
Divorced or separated	3,983	20.1 (0.80)	26.2 (0.81)	23.1 (0.81)	5.1 (0.38)	35.6 (0.94)
Never married	2,000	18.8 (1.18)	29.6 (1.35)	25.4 (1.33)	7.6 (0.81)	33.2 (1.38)
Living with a partner	1,077	20.8 (1.90)	20.2 (1.76)	18.1 (1.71)	3.8 (0.79)	35.2 (2.14)
Women ⁹	31,788	15.8 (0.32)	18.3 (0.34)	15.1 (0.30)	4.1 (0.15)	41.6 (0.45)
Married	21,036	13.1 (0.38)	14.0 (0.40)	11.2 (0.35)	2.7 (0.17)	39.0 (0.56)
Widowed	2,027	24.7 (1.15)	29.6 (1.21)	25.6 (1.17)	7.2 (0.67)	49.5 (1.26)
Divorced or separated	5,669	21.2 (0.65)	27.3 (0.71)	23.0 (0.67)	6.8 (0.40)	47.5 (0.80)
Never married	1,869	18.5 (0.99)	24.8 (1.18)	20.7 (1.11)	7.4 (0.72)	43.9 (1.35)
Living with a partner	1,072	19.5 (1.72)	22.8 (1.89)	20.2 (1.84)	4.8 (0.93)	46.5 (2.26)
65 years and over						
Total ⁹	32,774	25.8 (0.37)	35.7 (0.44)	24.7 (0.39)	12.9 (0.27)	61.9 (0.43)
Married	18,151	24.2 (0.50)	28.9 (0.53)	19.9 (0.48)	7.6 (0.29)	57.6 (0.61)
Widowed	10,529	28.3 (0.56)	45.6 (0.61)	30.7 (0.56)	21.5 (0.51)	69.6 (0.54)
Divorced or separated	2,550	27.8 (0.99)	41.3 (1.09)	32.4 (1.06)	14.1 (0.79)	62.3 (1.05)
Never married	1,172	24.4 (1.50)	40.8 (1.73)	29.6 (1.64)	16.0 (1.25)	60.7 (1.66)
Living with a partner	323	26.3 (3.32)	33.7 (3.97)	23.2 (3.43)	5.5 (1.58)	60.5 (3.86)
Men ⁹	13,962	26.1 (0.56)	33.5 (0.60)	23.8 (0.54)	9.0 (0.34)	55.9 (0.62)
Married	10,372	25.5 (0.68)	30.5 (0.68)	21.3 (0.63)	7.1 (0.37)	55.0 (0.76)
Widowed	1,881	27.3 (1.11)	43.6 (1.30)	29.9 (1.17)	17.5 (1.06)	62.0 (1.25)
Divorced or separated	993	29.8 (1.56)	42.6 (1.69)	33.8 (1.63)	12.7 (1.13)	55.9 (1.68)
Never married	497	24.2 (2.17)	40.5 (2.70)	31.7 (2.62)	13.2 (1.88)	52.0 (2.68)
Living with a partner	201	26.6 (4.30)	31.9 (5.01)	22.5 (4.39)	*2.6 (1.31)	56.7 (5.08)

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 3. Percent of adults 18 years of age and over who were in fair or poor health and percent with selected limitations due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem, by age, sex, and marital status: United States, average annual, 1999–2002—Con.

Age, sex, and marital status	Adults 18 years of age and over	Health characteristic				
		Fair or poor health ¹	Any activity limitation ²	Limitation in work activity ³	Limitation in ADL ⁴ or IADL ⁵	Limitation in physical or social functioning ⁶
		Percent ⁸ (standard error)				
	Number in thousands ⁷					
Women ⁹	18,812	25.7 (0.47)	37.4 (0.54)	25.4 (0.48)	15.7 (0.37)	66.4 (0.51)
Married	7,779	22.4 (0.68)	26.8 (0.75)	17.9 (0.64)	8.3 (0.47)	61.0 (0.85)
Widowed	8,649	28.6 (0.62)	46.1 (0.66)	30.9 (0.61)	22.4 (0.56)	71.3 (0.58)
Divorced or separated	1,558	26.5 (1.28)	40.4 (1.43)	31.5 (1.35)	15.0 (1.03)	66.4 (1.37)
Never married	675	24.5 (2.02)	41.0 (2.24)	28.1 (2.03)	18.1 (1.67)	67.2 (2.06)
Living with a partner	122	25.8 (5.04)	36.8 (5.91)	24.2 (5.26)	*10.3 (3.50)	66.7 (5.82)

* Estimates preceded by an asterisk have a relative standard error of greater than 30% and should be used with caution as they do not meet the standard of reliability and precision.

¹Fair or poor health status is based on the question, "Would you say (person's) health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?"

²Any activity limitation is based on a series of questions concerning limitations in a person's ability to engage in a variety of activities, including work and school activities, activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, walking, remembering, or any other unspecified life activities because of a physical, mental or emotional problem.

³Limitation in work activity is based on the questions "Does a physical, mental, or emotional problem NOW keep (family member 18 years of age or older) from working at a job or business?" and for persons not kept from working, "Are (family members 18 years of age and older) limited in the kind or amount of work they can do because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem?"

⁴ADL is activities of daily living. Limitation in ADL is based on the question, "Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, does (person) need the help of other persons in handling PERSONAL CARE NEEDS, such as bathing, dressing, or getting around inside the home?"

⁵IADL is instrumental activities of daily living. Limitation in IADL is based on the question, "Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, does (person) need the help of other persons in handling ROUTINE NEEDS, such as everyday household chores, doing necessary business, shopping, or getting around for other purposes?"

⁶Limitations in physical or social functioning refers to any degree of difficulty experienced in any of a number of different physical and social activities. In a series of separate questions, respondents were asked the degree of difficulty they experienced performing twelve activities by themselves, and without using any special equipment. The activities included walking a quarter of a mile (or three city blocks); standing for two hours; stooping/bending/kneeling; climbing ten steps without resting; sitting for two hours; reaching over one's head; using one's fingers to grasp or handle small objects; lifting or carrying a ten pound object (such as a full bag of groceries); pushing or pulling a large object (such as a living room chair); going shopping, going to movies, or attending sporting events; participating in social activities (such as reading, watching television, sewing, or listening to music). The response categories consisted of "not at all difficult," "only a little difficult," "somewhat difficult," "very difficult," "can't do at all," or "does not do this activity."

⁷Includes adults with unknown health characteristics.

⁸Unknowns for the health characteristics (column variables) were not included in the denominators when calculating percents. Percents are not age adjusted. See table 4 for age-adjusted percents.

⁹Includes adults with unknown marital status.

DATA SOURCE: Data on health status and limitations shown in columns 2–5 were collected in the Family Core component, family health status section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002. Questions related to limitations in physical and social functioning (column 6) were asked in the adult health status (AHS) section of the Sample Adult Core questionnaire for these years.

Table 4. Age-adjusted percent of adults 18 years of age and over who were in fair or poor health, and age-adjusted percent with selected limitations due to a physical, mental or emotional problem, by marital status and selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Selected characteristic	Health characteristic				
	Fair or poor health ¹	Any activity limitation ²	Limitation in work activity ³	Limitation in ADL ⁴ or IADL ⁵	Limitation in physical or social functioning ⁶
	Age-adjusted percent ⁷ (standard error)				
All adults aged 18 years and over ⁸	11.9 (0.14)	15.2 (0.18)	11.6 (0.14)	4.0 (0.07)	30.8 (0.22)
Married	10.5 (0.16)	12.2 (0.19)	9.1 (0.16)	2.6 (0.07)	29.5 (0.27)
Widowed	19.6 (1.16)	26.0 (1.25)	21.3 (1.18)	8.2 (0.76)	39.3 (1.38)
Divorced or separated	16.7 (0.35)	22.5 (0.38)	18.5 (0.34)	5.9 (0.22)	36.5 (0.42)
Never married	12.5 (0.37)	19.4 (0.45)	15.3 (0.42)	5.9 (0.29)	29.8 (0.44)
Living with a partner	14.0 (0.73)	16.3 (0.89)	12.8 (0.76)	2.7 (0.33)	34.3 (0.95)
Sex					
Men ⁸	11.4 (0.17)	14.6 (0.22)	11.3 (0.19)	3.2 (0.08)	26.7 (0.26)
Married	10.4 (0.20)	12.3 (0.24)	9.2 (0.21)	2.3 (0.09)	26.5 (0.32)
Widowed	18.5 (1.97)	24.7 (2.18)	20.1 (2.09)	6.9 (1.29)	31.9 (2.41)
Divorced or separated	16.1 (0.50)	22.1 (0.58)	18.2 (0.53)	4.9 (0.31)	30.8 (0.64)
Never married	12.4 (0.55)	20.2 (0.66)	16.6 (0.63)	5.5 (0.44)	25.5 (0.67)
Living with a partner	13.8 (0.97)	15.3 (1.11)	12.2 (0.99)	2.2 (0.35)	30.0 (1.22)
Women ⁸	12.3 (0.17)	15.6 (0.20)	11.9 (0.17)	4.6 (0.09)	34.5 (0.27)
Married	10.5 (0.21)	12.0 (0.24)	8.8 (0.20)	2.9 (0.12)	32.7 (0.35)
Widowed	20.1 (1.46)	26.4 (1.53)	21.8 (1.45)	8.5 (0.92)	41.5 (1.67)
Divorced or separated	17.3 (0.44)	22.8 (0.47)	18.7 (0.43)	6.6 (0.29)	40.5 (0.54)
Never married	12.7 (0.47)	18.6 (0.56)	14.1 (0.52)	6.1 (0.37)	34.3 (0.59)
Living with a partner	14.4 (1.15)	17.7 (1.34)	13.4 (1.12)	3.6 (0.67)	39.3 (1.32)
Race ⁹					
White, single race ⁸	10.8 (0.15)	14.8 (0.19)	11.2 (0.15)	3.7 (0.07)	31.0 (0.24)
Married	9.9 (0.17)	12.2 (0.20)	9.0 (0.17)	2.5 (0.08)	30.0 (0.29)
Widowed	18.2 (1.45)	25.2 (1.54)	20.2 (1.43)	6.6 (0.72)	38.5 (1.65)
Divorced or separated	14.9 (0.38)	22.1 (0.43)	18.0 (0.39)	5.4 (0.24)	36.1 (0.47)
Never married	10.4 (0.38)	18.5 (0.49)	14.5 (0.45)	5.6 (0.32)	29.3 (0.50)
Living with a partner	12.9 (0.80)	15.8 (0.94)	12.3 (0.79)	2.5 (0.32)	35.1 (1.01)
Black or African American, single race ⁸	19.2 (0.41)	19.1 (0.40)	15.3 (0.38)	6.2 (0.23)	31.5 (0.44)
Married	16.9 (0.60)	14.0 (0.56)	10.8 (0.53)	3.6 (0.35)	28.5 (0.67)
Widowed	26.2 (2.61)	28.6 (2.79)	25.2 (2.79)	11.3 (2.12)	40.3 (2.94)
Divorced or separated	23.4 (0.85)	23.8 (0.84)	20.0 (0.79)	7.9 (0.53)	36.3 (0.93)
Never married	20.2 (1.04)	22.9 (1.05)	18.7 (1.01)	7.6 (0.79)	31.1 (1.05)
Living with a partner	19.8 (2.35)	19.7 (2.40)	14.9 (2.11)	*5.4 (1.76)	31.1 (2.51)
Hispanic or Latino origin ¹⁰ and marital status					
Hispanic or Latino ⁸	16.7 (0.37)	13.2 (0.33)	10.0 (0.29)	4.1 (0.20)	25.3 (0.42)
Married	15.6 (0.48)	10.2 (0.42)	7.5 (0.36)	2.8 (0.26)	23.1 (0.55)
Widowed	25.7 (2.61)	25.1 (2.73)	19.9 (2.63)	9.6 (1.97)	35.8 (2.99)
Divorced or separated	19.8 (0.89)	19.3 (0.94)	15.8 (0.89)	5.6 (0.60)	31.5 (1.06)
Never married	17.2 (1.21)	18.2 (1.19)	15.2 (1.12)	5.9 (0.90)	25.7 (1.34)
Living with a partner	17.4 (2.30)	14.3 (1.92)	9.6 (2.04)	*1.9 (0.62)	27.8 (2.41)
Not Hispanic or Latino ⁸	11.4 (0.15)	15.4 (0.19)	11.8 (0.15)	4.0 (0.07)	31.5 (0.24)
Married	10.0 (0.17)	12.4 (0.21)	9.3 (0.18)	2.6 (0.08)	30.3 (0.29)
Widowed	19.1 (1.29)	26.1 (1.40)	21.5 (1.31)	8.0 (0.82)	39.5 (1.53)
Divorced or separated	16.4 (0.37)	22.9 (0.40)	18.8 (0.37)	6.0 (0.23)	37.1 (0.46)
Never married	12.1 (0.38)	19.5 (0.48)	15.4 (0.45)	5.9 (0.31)	30.3 (0.47)
Living with a partner	13.7 (0.78)	16.7 (0.94)	13.2 (0.80)	2.8 (0.35)	35.1 (1.02)
Education ¹¹ and marital status					
High school diploma or less ⁸	16.4 (0.20)	18.5 (0.24)	14.8 (0.21)	4.9 (0.10)	34.0 (0.29)
Married	14.8 (0.24)	14.8 (0.26)	11.6 (0.24)	3.1 (0.11)	33.0 (0.36)
Widowed	24.8 (1.90)	30.3 (1.92)	25.7 (1.88)	9.1 (1.12)	43.1 (2.09)
Divorced or separated	22.1 (0.51)	26.1 (0.55)	22.3 (0.52)	7.0 (0.31)	38.6 (0.58)
Never married	17.5 (0.58)	24.7 (0.65)	20.4 (0.62)	8.3 (0.47)	32.3 (0.66)
Living with a partner	17.8 (1.05)	18.7 (1.22)	15.4 (1.07)	3.0 (0.45)	34.8 (1.27)

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 4. Age-adjusted percent of adults 18 years of age and over who were in fair or poor health, and age-adjusted percent with selected limitations due to a physical, mental or emotional problem, by marital status and selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002—Con.

Selected characteristic	Health characteristic				
	Fair or poor health ¹	Any activity limitation ²	Limitation in work activity ³	Limitation in ADL ⁴ or IADL ⁵	Limitation in physical or social functioning ⁶
Education ¹¹ and marital status					
Age-adjusted percent ⁷ (standard error)					
At least some college ⁸	7.3 (0.13)	12.0 (0.19)	8.5 (0.15)	2.9 (0.08)	27.8 (0.24)
Married	6.4 (0.17)	9.9 (0.23)	6.9 (0.18)	2.0 (0.10)	26.5 (0.31)
Widowed	11.9 (1.17)	19.3 (1.45)	14.6 (1.27)	5.8 (0.74)	33.3 (1.74)
Divorced or separated	11.3 (0.41)	18.8 (0.49)	14.7 (0.46)	4.6 (0.29)	34.7 (0.59)
Never married	7.4 (0.41)	14.1 (0.55)	10.3 (0.47)	3.1 (0.29)	27.6 (0.62)
Living with a partner	9.7 (1.09)	12.9 (1.11)	9.3 (0.99)	2.2 (0.49)	33.9 (1.42)
Poverty status ¹² and marital status					
Poor or near poor ⁸	22.9 (0.33)	26.2 (0.38)	22.1 (0.36)	7.5 (0.18)	40.0 (0.40)
Married	21.9 (0.47)	21.1 (0.50)	17.3 (0.48)	5.0 (0.25)	37.9 (0.59)
Widowed	29.2 (2.07)	35.4 (2.20)	31.4 (2.20)	12.6 (1.50)	48.5 (2.37)
Divorced or separated	28.5 (0.66)	35.6 (0.68)	31.3 (0.67)	10.5 (0.43)	48.5 (0.72)
Never married	20.9 (0.73)	29.8 (0.79)	25.1 (0.77)	9.0 (0.56)	36.5 (0.77)
Living with a partner	25.9 (2.02)	26.3 (2.22)	24.1 (1.93)	6.7 (1.20)	41.9 (2.00)
Not poor ⁸	8.1 (0.14)	11.7 (0.18)	8.3 (0.14)	2.7 (0.08)	29.6 (0.26)
Married	7.9 (0.17)	10.5 (0.22)	7.5 (0.18)	2.1 (0.09)	29.3 (0.31)
Widowed	10.4 (1.17)	18.5 (1.68)	12.6 (1.34)	4.9 (0.86)	32.4 (1.84)
Divorced or separated	8.6 (0.42)	14.5 (0.50)	10.8 (0.47)	2.9 (0.32)	31.0 (0.63)
Never married	6.8 (0.47)	13.1 (0.64)	9.5 (0.58)	3.1 (0.39)	28.0 (0.69)
Living with a partner	10.4 (1.16)	12.4 (1.28)	8.0 (1.07)	1.5 (0.29)	34.1 (1.31)
Nativity ¹³ and marital status					
U.S. born ⁸	11.8 (0.15)	15.9 (0.19)	12.3 (0.16)	4.1 (0.07)	32.2 (0.24)
Married	10.4 (0.18)	12.8 (0.21)	9.7 (0.18)	2.7 (0.08)	31.0 (0.30)
Widowed	20.1 (1.30)	27.3 (1.40)	22.6 (1.32)	8.2 (0.83)	40.8 (1.54)
Divorced or separated	16.8 (0.37)	23.3 (0.40)	19.3 (0.37)	6.1 (0.23)	37.6 (0.45)
Never married	12.6 (0.39)	20.1 (0.47)	16.0 (0.45)	6.0 (0.31)	30.9 (0.47)
Living with a partner	14.1 (0.77)	16.9 (0.94)	13.5 (0.80)	3.0 (0.36)	35.7 (1.01)
Foreign born ⁸	12.2 (0.31)	9.9 (0.27)	6.8 (0.23)	3.4 (0.17)	21.4 (0.38)
Married	11.5 (0.40)	7.9 (0.35)	5.2 (0.28)	2.5 (0.23)	20.2 (0.49)
Widowed	17.1 (2.34)	17.8 (2.30)	13.0 (2.18)	8.1 (1.98)	29.4 (2.72)
Divorced or separated	16.3 (0.94)	14.6 (0.91)	11.0 (0.80)	4.5 (0.55)	26.9 (1.25)
Never married	11.6 (1.14)	12.6 (1.17)	9.0 (1.06)	4.5 (0.79)	20.3 (1.25)
Living with a partner	14.6 (2.65)	13.5 (1.81)	8.7 (2.40)	*0.5 (0.23)	22.5 (2.14)

* Estimates preceded by an asterisk have a relative standard error of greater than 30% and should be used with caution as they do not meet the standard of reliability and precision.

¹Fair or poor health status is based on the question, "Would you say {person's} health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?"

²Any activity limitation is based on a series of questions concerning limitations in a person's ability to engage in a variety of activities, including work and school activities, activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, walking, remembering, or any other unspecified life activities because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem.

³Limitation in work activity is based on the questions "Does a physical, mental, or emotional problem NOW keep {family member 18 years of age or older} from working at a job or business?" and for persons not kept from working, "Are {family members 18 years of age and older} limited in the kind or amount of work they can do because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem?"

⁴ADL is activities of daily living. Limitation in ADL is based on the question, "Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, does {person} need the help of other persons in handling PERSONAL CARE NEEDS, such as bathing, dressing, or getting around inside the home?"

⁵IADL is instrumental activities of daily living. Limitation in IADL is based on the question, "Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, does {person} need the help of other persons in handling ROUTINE NEEDS such as everyday household chores, doing necessary business, shopping, or getting around for other purposes?"

⁶Limitations in physical or social functioning refers to any degree of difficulty experienced in any of a number of different physical and social activities. In a series of separate questions, respondents were asked the degree of difficulty they experienced performing twelve activities by themselves, and without using any special equipment. The activities included walking a quarter of a mile (or three city blocks); standing for two hours; stooping/bending/kneeling; climbing ten steps without resting; sitting for two hours; reaching over one's head; using one's fingers to grasp or handle small objects; lifting or carrying a ten pound object (such as a full bag of groceries); pushing or pulling a large object (such as a living room chair); going shopping, going to movies, or attending sporting events; participating in social activities (such as reading, watching television, sewing, or listening to music). The response categories consisted of "not at all difficult," "only a little difficult," "somewhat difficult," "very difficult," "can't do at all," or "does not do this activity."

⁷Unknowns for the health characteristics (column variables) were not included in the denominators when calculating percents.

⁸Includes adults with unknown marital status.

⁹In accordance with the 1997 Standards for Federal data on race and Hispanic or Latino origin, detailed information on single race and multiple race combinations is collected in the NHIS.

However, due to the nature of this analysis and small sample sizes associated with studying marital status and health, only two single race groups are shown. [Information on other groups and selected multiple race groups is presented in annual Summary Health Statistics reports.] In addition, although the tables in this report use the complete new Office of Management and Budget (OMB) race and Hispanic origin terms, the text uses shorter versions of these terms for conciseness. For example, the category "Black or African American, single race" in the tables is referred to as "black persons" in the text.

¹⁰Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race or combination of races. Similarly, the category "not Hispanic or Latino" refers to all persons who are not of Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race.

¹¹Education is based on the question: "What is the highest level of school {person} completed or the highest degree {person} has received?" In this table, adults with a high school diploma or a GED and adults with less than a high school diploma are included in the category "high school diploma or less"; adults who had any schooling beyond a high school diploma are included in "at least some college."

¹²Poverty status is based on family income and family size using the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for the previous calendar year. "Poor" persons have family incomes that are below the poverty threshold. "Near poor" persons have family incomes of 100% to less than 200% of the poverty threshold. "Not poor" persons have family incomes that are 200% of the poverty threshold or greater.

¹³Nativity is based on the question "Where was {person} born?" Response options included any of the 50 States or the District of Columbia or "not in U.S." If not born in U.S., a question on the country or territory of birth was asked. A follow-up question, "Are you a citizen of the United States?," identified persons born outside the U.S. to parents who were U.S. citizens. The category "U.S. born" includes persons born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, or any of the U.S. territories, and persons born abroad to parents who were U.S. citizens. All others were classified as "foreign born." See Technical note for details.

NOTE: Estimates are age adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population using the age groups: 18–44 years, 45–64 years, 65–74 years, and 75 years and over. See “Technical Notes” for details.

DATA SOURCE: Data on health status and limitations shown in columns 1–4 were collected in the Family Core component, family health status section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002. Data on limitations in physical and social functioning (column 5) were collected in the adult health status (AHS) section of the Sample Adult Core questionnaire for the same years.

Table 5. Percent of adults 18 years of age and over with selected health conditions, by age, sex, and marital status: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Age, sex, and marital status	Adults 18 years of age and over	Health condition		
		Low back pain ¹	Headaches ²	Serious psychological distress ³
		Number in thousands ⁴	Percent ⁵ (standard error)	
All adults ages 18 years and over ⁶	202,743	27.8 (0.20)	15.5 (0.15)	2.8 (0.06)
18–44 years				
Total ⁶	108,387	25.2 (0.25)	18.3 (0.21)	2.6 (0.07)
Married	56,316	25.5 (0.33)	18.2 (0.28)	1.9 (0.09)
Widowed	400	26.9 (2.47)	26.3 (2.59)	9.5 (1.93)
Divorced or separated	8,733	31.0 (0.62)	23.2 (0.56)	6.0 (0.34)
Never married	33,462	21.7 (0.38)	16.2 (0.33)	2.5 (0.13)
Living with a partner	9,149	31.3 (0.75)	21.7 (0.66)	3.6 (0.29)
Men ⁶	53,415	23.7 (0.33)	11.2 (0.24)	1.9 (0.09)
Married	26,327	25.5 (0.47)	11.3 (0.32)	1.4 (0.11)
Widowed	113	25.6 (4.73)	14.5 (3.97)	*8.9 (3.83)
Divorced or separated	3,590	28.1 (1.00)	12.1 (0.72)	4.3 (0.50)
Never married	18,631	19.1 (0.48)	10.4 (0.39)	1.9 (0.16)
Living with a partner	4,585	29.0 (1.08)	14.1 (0.83)	2.4 (0.34)
Women ⁶	54,972	26.7 (0.31)	25.2 (0.30)	3.3 (0.11)
Married	29,989	25.4 (0.40)	24.3 (0.39)	2.4 (0.13)
Widowed	287	27.4 (3.00)	30.9 (3.14)	9.7 (2.20)
Divorced or separated	5,143	33.0 (0.82)	31.0 (0.79)	7.2 (0.43)
Never married	14,832	25.1 (0.54)	23.6 (0.54)	3.4 (0.21)
Living with a partner	4,564	33.5 (1.00)	29.3 (0.99)	4.9 (0.47)
45–64 years				
Total ⁶	61,582	31.4 (0.30)	15.2 (0.22)	3.5 (0.12)
Married	43,219	30.3 (0.37)	14.2 (0.27)	2.5 (0.13)
Widowed	2,480	35.2 (1.16)	17.2 (0.95)	6.3 (0.57)
Divorced or separated	9,651	35.3 (0.61)	18.5 (0.48)	6.4 (0.31)
Never married	3,869	28.4 (0.87)	15.5 (0.71)	4.4 (0.38)
Living with a partner	2,149	37.5 (1.55)	19.6 (1.29)	5.1 (0.71)
Men ⁶	29,795	29.7 (0.41)	9.3 (0.26)	2.9 (0.15)
Married	22,183	29.3 (0.49)	8.8 (0.30)	2.3 (0.18)
Widowed	452	33.3 (2.68)	10.3 (1.79)	4.8 (1.33)
Divorced or separated	3,983	32.2 (0.89)	10.7 (0.60)	5.0 (0.40)
Never married	2,000	25.3 (1.28)	11.6 (0.96)	4.2 (0.57)
Living with a partner	1,077	34.7 (2.15)	11.5 (1.46)	3.6 (0.88)
Women ⁶	31,788	33.0 (0.40)	20.7 (0.35)	4.0 (0.16)
Married	21,036	31.3 (0.51)	19.8 (0.44)	2.7 (0.17)
Widowed	2,027	35.6 (1.26)	18.8 (1.06)	6.6 (0.64)
Divorced or separated	5,669	37.4 (0.79)	23.9 (0.68)	7.5 (0.43)
Never married	1,869	31.8 (1.21)	19.5 (1.02)	4.6 (0.51)
Living with a partner	1,072	40.3 (2.23)	27.8 (2.02)	6.5 (1.08)
65 years and over				
Total ⁶	32,774	29.9 (0.34)	6.8 (0.20)	2.3 (0.11)
Married	18,151	29.3 (0.49)	6.1 (0.26)	2.0 (0.15)
Widowed	10,529	30.8 (0.53)	7.4 (0.32)	2.8 (0.19)
Divorced or separated	2,550	31.0 (1.00)	9.6 (0.66)	3.3 (0.39)
Never married	1,172	27.3 (1.48)	6.0 (0.89)	2.3 (0.50)
Living with a partner	323	36.9 (4.00)	7.5 (1.92)	*2.2 (1.11)
Men ⁶	13,962	26.6 (0.52)	4.3 (0.23)	2.0 (0.16)
Married	10,372	27.4 (0.62)	4.2 (0.28)	1.8 (0.19)
Widowed	1,881	23.6 (1.09)	4.0 (0.47)	2.5 (0.34)
Divorced or separated	993	26.3 (1.50)	5.9 (0.78)	2.7 (0.55)
Never married	497	19.6 (1.98)	4.2 (1.06)	*3.2 (1.02)
Living with a partner	201	37.0 (5.31)	*6.5 (2.31)	*3.5 (1.78)

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 5. Percent of adults 18 years of age and over with selected health conditions, by age, sex, and marital status: United States, average annual, 1999–2002—Con.

Age, sex, and marital status	Adults 18 years of age and over	Health condition		
		Low back pain ¹	Headaches ²	Serious psychological distress ³
65 years and over	Number in thousands ⁴	Percent ⁵ (standard error)		
Women ⁶	18,812	32.3 (0.43)	8.7 (0.29)	2.6 (0.15)
Married	7,779	31.8 (0.71)	8.8 (0.49)	2.2 (0.23)
Widowed	8,649	32.3 (0.59)	8.1 (0.37)	2.9 (0.22)
Divorced or separated	1,558	34.0 (1.32)	12.0 (0.96)	3.7 (0.55)
Never married	675	33.0 (2.04)	7.4 (1.34)	1.6 (0.44)
Living with a partner	122	36.8 (6.00)	*9.3 (3.35)	—

* Estimates preceded by an asterisk have a relative standard error of greater than 30% and should be used with caution as they do not meet the standard of reliability and precision.

— Quantity zero.

¹Low back pain is based on the question, "During the past three months, did you have low back pain?"

²Headaches are based on the question, "During the past three months, did you have severe headache or migraine?"

³Serious psychological distress is based on a summary score derived from a series of six questions: "During the past 30 days, how often did you feel ... (so sad that nothing could cheer you up; nervous; restless or fidgety; hopeless; that everything was an effort; worthless)?" Response categories were "all of the time," "most of the time," "some of the time," "a little of the time," and "none of the time." The score for each item ranged from zero (none of the time) to 4 (all of the time). Unknowns for individual items were assigned a score of zero for that item. Serious psychological distress is defined as a total psychological distress score of 13 or higher for the six items combined (Kessler, et al., 2003).

⁴Includes adults with unknown health conditions.

⁵Unknowns for the low back pain and headaches (column variables) were not included in the denominators when calculating percents. Unknowns for serious psychological distress were included with "none of the time." Percents are not age adjusted. See table 6 for age-adjusted percents.

⁶Includes adults with unknown marital status.

DATA SOURCE: Data on health conditions were collected in the Sample Adult Core component, adult health conditions (ACN) section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002.

Table 6. Age-adjusted percent of adults aged 18 years of age and over with selected health conditions, by marital status and selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Selected characteristic	Health condition		
	Low back pain ¹	Headaches ²	Serious psychological distress ³
	Age-adjusted percent ⁴ (standard error)		
All adults aged 18 years and over ⁵	27.9 (0.20)	15.4 (0.14)	2.8 (0.06)
Married	27.6 (0.24)	14.9 (0.18)	2.1 (0.07)
Widowed	30.0 (1.36)	20.4 (1.41)	7.4 (1.03)
Divorced or separated	32.2 (0.44)	19.4 (0.36)	5.7 (0.22)
Never married	24.7 (0.43)	14.2 (0.32)	3.1 (0.16)
Living with a partner	33.9 (0.98)	18.7 (0.65)	3.7 (0.30)
Sex			
Men ⁵	26.0 (0.25)	9.5 (0.16)	2.2 (0.08)
Married	27.0 (0.32)	9.3 (0.20)	1.7 (0.09)
Widowed	27.5 (2.64)	11.5 (2.16)	*6.5 (2.06)
Divorced or separated	29.1 (0.66)	10.6 (0.46)	4.2 (0.33)
Never married	21.0 (0.59)	9.7 (0.42)	2.8 (0.28)
Living with a partner	31.8 (1.28)	11.9 (0.74)	2.8 (0.40)
Women ⁵	29.5 (0.24)	21.0 (0.21)	3.4 (0.09)
Married	28.3 (0.31)	20.2 (0.28)	2.4 (0.10)
Widowed	30.6 (1.65)	23.5 (1.72)	7.6 (1.17)
Divorced or separated	34.4 (0.56)	25.6 (0.50)	6.7 (0.28)
Never married	28.4 (0.59)	19.6 (0.47)	3.5 (0.21)
Living with a partner	36.5 (1.46)	26.1 (1.16)	4.5 (0.41)
Race ⁶			
White, single race ⁵	28.5 (0.22)	15.6 (0.16)	2.7 (0.07)
Married	28.2 (0.26)	15.2 (0.20)	2.0 (0.07)
Widowed	30.7 (1.66)	20.0 (1.70)	8.9 (1.38)
Divorced or separated	32.6 (0.51)	19.3 (0.41)	5.7 (0.25)
Never married	24.9 (0.48)	14.1 (0.37)	2.9 (0.19)
Living with a partner	35.1 (1.10)	19.0 (0.72)	3.8 (0.32)
Black or African American, single race ⁵	25.0 (0.46)	14.9 (0.33)	3.2 (0.16)
Married	23.6 (0.72)	12.9 (0.53)	2.3 (0.22)
Widowed	28.9 (3.09)	20.4 (2.90)	*3.4 (1.05)
Divorced or separated	28.7 (0.89)	18.6 (0.78)	4.7 (0.40)
Never married	23.9 (0.97)	14.9 (0.67)	3.6 (0.38)
Living with a partner	27.3 (2.34)	18.2 (2.06)	2.5 (0.54)
Hispanic or Latino origin ⁷ and marital status			
Hispanic or Latino ⁵	25.4 (0.43)	14.9 (0.31)	3.7 (0.18)
Married	24.4 (0.58)	14.0 (0.40)	3.0 (0.23)
Widowed	28.0 (2.70)	22.1 (3.02)	7.3 (1.37)
Divorced or separated	30.8 (1.08)	19.4 (0.89)	6.4 (0.57)
Never married	24.7 (1.20)	13.4 (0.80)	3.7 (0.41)
Living with a partner	28.1 (2.43)	16.7 (1.96)	3.3 (0.70)
Not Hispanic or Latino ⁵	28.2 (0.22)	15.6 (0.16)	2.8 (0.07)
Married	28.0 (0.26)	15.1 (0.20)	2.0 (0.08)
Widowed	30.4 (1.53)	20.5 (1.56)	7.5 (1.19)
Divorced or separated	32.4 (0.47)	19.5 (0.39)	5.6 (0.24)
Never married	24.7 (0.45)	14.4 (0.34)	3.0 (0.17)
Living with a partner	34.5 (1.04)	19.0 (0.70)	3.7 (0.32)
Education ⁸ and marital status			
High school diploma or less ⁵	29.8 (0.28)	16.5 (0.21)	4.0 (0.10)
Married	30.0 (0.35)	16.3 (0.28)	3.1 (0.13)
Widowed	32.8 (1.85)	21.1 (1.88)	11.1 (1.77)
Divorced or separated	33.9 (0.63)	20.7 (0.52)	7.2 (0.35)
Never married	25.2 (0.63)	14.5 (0.51)	4.0 (0.25)
Living with a partner	34.1 (1.28)	19.7 (0.89)	4.8 (0.45)
At least some college ⁵	26.3 (0.23)	14.4 (0.17)	1.8 (0.06)
Married	25.7 (0.30)	13.8 (0.21)	1.2 (0.07)
Widowed	26.6 (1.98)	19.5 (2.06)	3.0 (0.65)
Divorced or separated	30.8 (0.59)	18.3 (0.45)	4.2 (0.24)
Never married	24.5 (0.60)	14.1 (0.42)	2.3 (0.25)
Living with a partner	35.0 (1.52)	17.8 (1.06)	2.5 (0.38)

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 6. Age-adjusted percent of adults aged 18 years of age and over with selected health conditions, by marital status and selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002—Con.

Selected characteristic	Health condition		
	Low back pain ¹	Headaches ²	Serious psychological distress ³
Age-adjusted percent ⁴ (standard error)			
Poverty status ⁵ and marital status			
Poor or near poor ⁵	33.1 (0.42)	20.0 (0.32)	6.2 (0.18)
Married	32.9 (0.60)	19.3 (0.47)	5.0 (0.27)
Widowed	35.9 (2.31)	23.1 (2.14)	11.5 (1.93)
Divorced or separated	39.5 (0.74)	26.4 (0.67)	10.4 (0.46)
Never married	27.9 (0.78)	16.7 (0.61)	5.0 (0.34)
Living with a partner	38.9 (2.04)	23.2 (1.47)	7.5 (0.85)
Not poor ⁵	27.6 (0.23)	14.5 (0.17)	1.9 (0.06)
Married	27.6 (0.29)	14.4 (0.21)	1.5 (0.08)
Widowed	27.5 (2.17)	17.9 (2.04)	3.7 (1.08)
Divorced or separated	29.1 (0.64)	15.5 (0.51)	3.2 (0.29)
Never married	24.5 (0.67)	13.4 (0.43)	2.2 (0.32)
Living with a partner	34.0 (1.47)	16.8 (0.91)	2.4 (0.36)
Nativity ¹⁰ and marital status			
U.S. born ⁵	28.7 (0.22)	15.8 (0.16)	2.9 (0.07)
Married	28.5 (0.26)	15.4 (0.20)	2.1 (0.08)
Widowed	31.4 (1.54)	21.2 (1.58)	7.5 (1.12)
Divorced or separated	32.8 (0.46)	19.7 (0.38)	5.9 (0.24)
Never married	25.3 (0.45)	14.6 (0.33)	3.2 (0.18)
Living with a partner	34.9 (1.05)	19.4 (0.71)	3.8 (0.32)
Foreign born ⁵	22.3 (0.40)	13.1 (0.31)	2.6 (0.15)
Married	22.2 (0.51)	12.9 (0.39)	2.3 (0.20)
Widowed	21.8 (2.36)	16.9 (2.63)	*7.0 (2.80)
Divorced or separated	27.2 (1.22)	17.7 (1.03)	3.7 (0.46)
Never married	20.0 (1.28)	11.7 (1.05)	1.6 (0.23)
Living with a partner	24.3 (1.95)	12.7 (1.39)	3.1 (0.77)

* Estimates preceded by an asterisk have a relative standard error of greater than 30% and should be used with caution as they do not meet the standard of reliability and precision.

¹Low back pain is based on the question, "During the past three months, did you have low back pain?"

²Headaches are based on the question, "During the past three months, did you have severe headache or migraine?"

³Serious psychological distress is based on summary score derived from a series of six questions: "During the past 30 days, how often did you feel ... (so sad that nothing could cheer you up; nervous; restless or fidgety; hopeless; that everything was an effort; worthless)?" Response categories were "all of the time," "most of the time," "some of the time," "a little of the time," and "none of the time." Score for each item ranged from zero (none of the time) to 4 (all of the time). Unknowns for individual items were assigned a score of zero for that item. Serious psychological distress is defined as a total psychological distress score of 13 or higher for the six items combined (Kessler, et al, 2003).

⁴Unknowns for the low back pain and headaches (column variables) were not included in the denominators when calculating percents. Unknowns for serious psychological distress were included with "none of the time."

⁵Includes adults with unknown marital status.

⁶In accordance with the 1997 Standards for Federal data on race and Hispanic or Latino origin, detailed information on single race and multiple race combinations is collected in the NHIS. However, due to the nature of this analysis and small sample sizes associated with studying marital status and health, only two single race groups are shown. [Information on other groups and selected multiple race groups is presented in annual Summary Health Statistics reports.] In addition, although the tables in this report use the complete new Office of Management and Budget (OMB) race and Hispanic origin terms, the text uses shorter versions of these terms for conciseness. For example, the category "Black or African American, single race" in the tables is referred to as "black persons" in the text.

⁷Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race or combination of races. Similarly, the category "not Hispanic or Latino" refers to all persons who are not of Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race.

⁸Education is based on the question: "What is the highest level of school (person) completed or the highest degree (person) has received?" In this table, adults with a high school diploma or a GED and adults with less than a high school diploma are included in the category "high school diploma or less;" adults who had any schooling beyond a high school diploma are included in "at least some college."

⁹Poverty status is based on family income and family size using the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for the previous calendar year. "Poor" persons have family incomes that are below the poverty threshold. "Near poor" persons have family incomes of 100% to less than 200% of the poverty threshold. "Not poor" persons have family incomes that are 200% of the poverty threshold or greater.

¹⁰Nativity is based on the question "Where was (person) born?" Response options included any of the 50 States or the District of Columbia or "not in U.S." If not born in U.S., a question on the country or territory of birth was asked. A follow-up question, "Are you a citizen of the United States?" identified persons born outside the U.S. to parents who were U.S. citizens. The category "U.S. born" includes persons born in one of the 50 states or any of the U.S. territories, and persons born abroad to parents who were U.S. citizens. All others were classified as "foreign born." See Technical note for details.

NOTE: Percents are age adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population using the age groups: 18–44 years, 45–64 years, 65–74 years, and 75 years and over. See "Technical Notes" for details.

DATA SOURCE: Data on health conditions were collected in the Sample Adult Core component, adult health conditions (ACN) section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002.

Table 7. Percent of adults aged 18 years of age and over with selected health behavior characteristics, by age, sex, and marital status: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Age, sex, and marital status	Adults 18 years of age and over	Health behavior			
		Physically inactive ¹	Overweight or obese ²	Current smoker ³	Heavier drinker ⁴
		Percent ⁶ (standard error)			
All adults ages 18 years and over ⁷	202,743	38.2 (0.31)	56.7 (0.19)	23.0 (0.19)	4.7 (0.08)
18–44 years					
Total ⁷	108,387	32.7 (0.36)	51.8 (0.27)	26.7 (0.27)	5.1 (0.12)
Married	56,316	33.5 (0.43)	56.1 (0.33)	21.9 (0.31)	3.4 (0.12)
Widowed	400	44.6 (2.93)	53.4 (2.95)	35.7 (2.80)	7.0 (1.60)
Divorced or separated	8,733	37.7 (0.72)	54.7 (0.65)	40.2 (0.65)	7.3 (0.37)
Never married	33,462	29.2 (0.51)	44.2 (0.46)	26.6 (0.43)	6.6 (0.25)
Living with a partner	9,149	34.9 (0.86)	50.2 (0.84)	43.5 (0.82)	8.4 (0.44)
Men ⁷	53,415	29.8 (0.43)	61.4 (0.35)	29.2 (0.37)	6.2 (0.18)
Married	26,327	31.7 (0.55)	70.3 (0.44)	24.5 (0.45)	4.1 (0.19)
Widowed	113	39.0 (5.83)	70.5 (5.40)	36.1 (5.36)	*11.0 (3.98)
Divorced or separated	3,590	32.8 (1.12)	64.0 (1.01)	43.8 (1.04)	10.7 (0.72)
Never married	18,631	25.8 (0.62)	48.7 (0.58)	28.9 (0.57)	7.4 (0.33)
Living with a partner	4,585	32.8 (1.19)	59.8 (1.15)	45.4 (1.15)	9.4 (0.65)
Women ⁷	54,972	35.4 (0.42)	42.2 (0.36)	24.4 (0.31)	4.1 (0.13)
Married	29,989	35.1 (0.50)	43.4 (0.44)	19.7 (0.38)	2.7 (0.14)
Widowed	287	46.8 (3.32)	46.5 (3.41)	35.5 (3.31)	5.5 (1.52)
Divorced or separated	5,143	41.1 (0.89)	48.1 (0.86)	37.7 (0.81)	4.9 (0.35)
Never married	14,832	33.5 (0.69)	38.4 (0.68)	23.8 (0.57)	5.6 (0.31)
Living with a partner	4,564	37.0 (1.08)	40.2 (1.11)	41.6 (1.10)	7.3 (0.62)
45–64 years					
Total ⁷	61,582	39.8 (0.41)	65.1 (0.30)	23.4 (0.26)	4.9 (0.13)
Married	43,219	37.6 (0.46)	65.9 (0.38)	19.6 (0.31)	4.4 (0.15)
Widowed	2,480	50.8 (1.23)	65.1 (1.13)	28.7 (1.10)	3.9 (0.46)
Divorced or separated	9,651	43.9 (0.66)	63.2 (0.60)	34.5 (0.59)	6.1 (0.27)
Never married	3,869	45.4 (1.05)	63.1 (0.94)	26.4 (0.87)	5.2 (0.43)
Living with a partner	2,149	43.7 (1.69)	62.8 (1.60)	38.7 (1.59)	10.0 (0.97)
Men ⁷	29,795	39.1 (0.52)	73.1 (0.40)	25.8 (0.40)	5.7 (0.19)
Married	22,183	37.4 (0.58)	75.2 (0.48)	21.9 (0.46)	4.7 (0.23)
Widowed	452	50.3 (2.79)	66.5 (2.62)	36.1 (2.59)	8.8 (1.73)
Divorced or separated	3,983	42.7 (1.00)	68.7 (0.90)	40.4 (0.92)	9.4 (0.53)
Never married	2,000	46.5 (1.52)	61.9 (1.35)	30.7 (1.29)	6.3 (0.61)
Living with a partner	1,077	43.8 (2.33)	69.7 (2.11)	38.3 (2.29)	11.1 (1.39)
Women ⁷	31,788	40.5 (0.48)	57.4 (0.43)	21.3 (0.32)	4.1 (0.17)
Married	21,036	37.7 (0.58)	55.6 (0.58)	17.3 (0.38)	4.1 (0.22)
Widowed	2,027	50.9 (1.32)	64.8 (1.24)	27.0 (1.20)	2.9 (0.40)
Divorced or separated	5,669	44.8 (0.83)	59.3 (0.79)	30.5 (0.73)	3.8 (0.28)
Never married	1,869	44.2 (1.36)	64.4 (1.30)	21.9 (1.08)	4.1 (0.58)
Living with a partner	1,072	43.6 (2.25)	55.7 (2.36)	39.1 (2.16)	8.8 (1.35)
65 years and over					
Total ⁷	32,774	53.1 (0.48)	57.1 (0.38)	9.9 (0.22)	3.1 (0.15)
Married	18,151	47.7 (0.61)	60.3 (0.54)	8.3 (0.29)	3.5 (0.22)
Widowed	10,529	61.4 (0.61)	51.8 (0.57)	10.0 (0.36)	2.1 (0.16)
Divorced or separated	2,550	54.1 (1.12)	57.6 (1.11)	19.1 (0.91)	4.4 (0.46)
Never married	1,172	58.3 (1.70)	52.2 (1.74)	10.2 (1.01)	1.9 (0.41)
Living with a partner	323	59.6 (4.03)	65.0 (3.60)	24.9 (3.28)	6.4 (1.81)
Men ⁷	13,962	47.7 (0.67)	63.3 (0.62)	10.6 (0.37)	3.7 (0.22)
Married	10,372	45.0 (0.76)	65.2 (0.74)	8.8 (0.41)	3.4 (0.27)
Widowed	1,881	56.5 (1.34)	55.3 (1.23)	11.6 (0.80)	3.3 (0.46)
Divorced or separated	993	50.4 (1.71)	60.9 (1.65)	22.4 (1.48)	6.6 (0.81)
Never married	497	56.5 (2.62)	55.7 (2.65)	13.9 (1.84)	2.7 (0.71)
Living with a partner	201	62.1 (5.17)	71.3 (4.45)	24.8 (4.08)	*6.6 (2.36)
Women ⁷	18,812	57.1 (0.55)	52.4 (0.50)	9.5 (0.28)	2.7 (0.18)
Married	7,779	51.2 (0.88)	53.6 (0.86)	7.6 (0.41)	3.7 (0.36)
Widowed	8,649	62.4 (0.66)	51.0 (0.63)	9.7 (0.39)	1.8 (0.17)
Divorced or separated	1,558	56.5 (1.40)	55.4 (1.43)	17.0 (1.13)	3.1 (0.55)
Never married	675	59.5 (2.16)	49.7 (2.24)	7.5 (1.09)	*1.3 (0.48)
Living with a partner	122	55.4 (5.94)	54.6 (5.97)	25.1 (5.38)	*6.1 (2.73)

* Estimates preceded by an asterisk have a relative standard error of greater than 30% and should be used with caution as they do not meet the standard of reliability and precision.

¹Physically inactive is based on two questions (preceded by a statement indicating that the questions refer to leisure-time physical activities): "How often do you do vigorous activities for at least 10 minutes that cause heavy sweating or large increases in breathing or heart rate?" and "How often do you do light or moderate activities for at least 10 minutes that cause a slight to moderate increase in breathing or heart rate?" Physically inactive refers to adults who engaged in no light, moderate, or vigorous leisure-time physical activity, including those who said they were unable to do such activities.

²Overweight or obese is defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 25. BMI was calculated using respondent reported height and weight based on the questions: "How tall are you without shoes?" and "How much do you weigh without shoes?"

³Current smoker is defined as a person who had ever smoked 100 cigarettes and was smoking as of the date of the interview. Information was based on the questions: "Have you ever smoked 100 cigarettes in your entire life?" and "Do you now smoke everyday, some days, or not at all?"

⁴Heavier drinker is defined as a person who drank an average of more than 14 drinks per week (if male) or more than 7 drinks per week (if female) in the past year. It is a measure of average consumption calculated using frequency and quantity obtained from the questions: "In the past year, how often did you drink any type of alcoholic beverage?" and "In the past year, on those days that you drank alcoholic beverages, on the average, how many drinks did you have?"

⁵Includes adults with unknown health behaviors.

⁶Unknowns for the health behaviors (column variables) were not included in the denominators when calculating percents. Percents are not age adjusted. See table 8 for age adjusted percents.

⁷Includes adults with unknown marital status.

DATA SOURCE: Data on health behaviors were collected in the Sample Adult Core component, adult health behaviors (AHB) section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002.

Table 8. Age-adjusted percent of adults 18 years of age and over with selected health behaviors, by marital status and selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002

Selected characteristic	Health behavior			
	Physically inactive ¹	Overweight or obese ²	Current smoker ³	Heavier drinker ⁴
	Age-adjusted percent ⁵ (standard error)			
All adults aged 18 years and over ⁶	38.3 (0.31)	56.6 (0.19)	22.9 (0.18)	4.7 (0.08)
Married	37.3 (0.36)	59.5 (0.24)	18.8 (0.21)	3.7 (0.09)
Widowed	48.9 (1.60)	57.1 (1.59)	29.5 (1.54)	5.3 (0.85)
Divorced or separated	42.8 (0.50)	57.6 (0.44)	34.7 (0.42)	6.4 (0.22)
Never married	39.1 (0.54)	51.1 (0.47)	23.7 (0.39)	5.4 (0.20)
Living with a partner	42.1 (1.04)	56.1 (0.93)	38.4 (0.84)	8.2 (0.42)
Sex				
Men ⁶	35.8 (0.36)	65.1 (0.25)	24.9 (0.26)	5.6 (0.12)
Married	35.8 (0.43)	70.6 (0.30)	20.9 (0.30)	4.1 (0.13)
Widowed	44.9 (3.22)	67.1 (2.97)	32.2 (2.94)	9.2 (2.17)
Divorced or separated	39.2 (0.76)	64.7 (0.66)	38.8 (0.68)	9.5 (0.43)
Never married	37.3 (0.76)	53.5 (0.67)	26.8 (0.58)	6.2 (0.29)
Living with a partner	41.3 (1.34)	64.5 (1.18)	39.3 (1.14)	9.2 (0.63)
Women ⁶	40.6 (0.35)	48.5 (0.26)	20.9 (0.21)	3.9 (0.10)
Married	38.9 (0.42)	48.6 (0.34)	16.8 (0.25)	3.3 (0.12)
Widowed	50.3 (1.80)	53.2 (1.85)	28.8 (1.81)	4.1 (0.81)
Divorced or separated	45.2 (0.61)	52.5 (0.59)	31.8 (0.53)	4.2 (0.22)
Never married	41.1 (0.69)	48.2 (0.67)	20.4 (0.49)	4.4 (0.25)
Living with a partner	42.5 (1.44)	46.1 (1.39)	37.6 (1.26)	7.3 (0.61)
Race ⁷				
White, single race ⁶	36.4 (0.35)	55.9 (0.21)	23.5 (0.21)	5.0 (0.10)
Married	35.9 (0.39)	59.3 (0.25)	19.4 (0.23)	3.8 (0.10)
Widowed	47.1 (1.98)	55.0 (1.93)	31.2 (1.93)	5.9 (1.11)
Divorced or separated	40.5 (0.58)	54.5 (0.51)	36.3 (0.48)	7.0 (0.27)
Never married	35.2 (0.59)	49.2 (0.54)	23.9 (0.45)	6.0 (0.24)
Living with a partner	40.0 (1.11)	54.6 (1.03)	39.3 (0.92)	8.6 (0.49)
Black or African American, single race ⁶	50.2 (0.64)	66.3 (0.45)	22.5 (0.42)	3.2 (0.16)
Married	47.5 (0.93)	70.6 (0.73)	17.8 (0.62)	2.4 (0.25)
Widowed	56.2 (3.32)	65.9 (3.52)	26.0 (2.99)	*3.8 (1.31)
Divorced or separated	52.7 (1.12)	70.8 (0.88)	28.5 (0.94)	3.6 (0.41)
Never married	53.4 (1.02)	61.6 (1.05)	24.5 (0.84)	3.9 (0.39)
Living with a partner	54.7 (2.21)	66.2 (2.41)	37.9 (2.70)	6.3 (1.05)
Hispanic or Latino origin ⁸ and marital status				
Hispanic or Latino ⁶	54.8 (0.52)	63.0 (0.47)	16.6 (0.34)	3.3 (0.15)
Married	55.9 (0.65)	66.2 (0.61)	13.9 (0.40)	2.8 (0.20)
Widowed	57.0 (3.64)	62.2 (3.67)	22.3 (3.37)	*2.9 (1.48)
Divorced or separated	55.7 (1.14)	63.2 (1.16)	23.8 (1.05)	3.5 (0.39)
Never married	51.7 (1.31)	55.0 (1.31)	18.3 (0.89)	3.4 (0.33)
Living with a partner	59.4 (2.62)	65.0 (2.47)	26.9 (1.94)	6.1 (0.98)
Not Hispanic or Latino ⁶	36.3 (0.33)	55.8 (0.20)	23.7 (0.20)	4.9 (0.09)
Married	35.0 (0.38)	58.7 (0.25)	19.5 (0.23)	3.8 (0.10)
Widowed	48.1 (1.77)	56.5 (1.77)	30.3 (1.71)	5.6 (0.96)
Divorced or separated	41.3 (0.54)	56.9 (0.47)	36.0 (0.45)	6.7 (0.24)
Never married	37.5 (0.56)	50.6 (0.51)	24.4 (0.42)	5.6 (0.22)
Living with a partner	39.9 (1.08)	54.8 (0.98)	40.2 (0.90)	8.5 (0.46)
Education ⁹ and marital status				
High school diploma or less ⁶	49.3 (0.39)	59.4 (0.25)	29.9 (0.26)	4.9 (0.11)
Married	48.7 (0.48)	62.9 (0.33)	25.9 (0.32)	4.0 (0.14)
Widowed	58.0 (2.23)	59.2 (2.24)	33.8 (2.24)	5.3 (1.13)
Divorced or separated	53.4 (0.68)	59.6 (0.62)	41.9 (0.60)	7.0 (0.34)
Never married	50.7 (0.74)	53.8 (0.67)	29.7 (0.61)	5.1 (0.28)
Living with a partner	52.6 (1.25)	58.8 (1.21)	45.1 (1.13)	9.0 (0.58)
At least some college ⁶	28.1 (0.30)	54.3 (0.26)	17.1 (0.19)	4.7 (0.11)
Married	27.7 (0.36)	57.0 (0.33)	13.4 (0.21)	3.6 (0.13)
Widowed	35.9 (2.14)	54.6 (2.28)	24.2 (2.02)	5.5 (1.33)
Divorced or separated	32.0 (0.60)	55.5 (0.63)	27.6 (0.52)	5.8 (0.29)
Never married	28.4 (0.66)	48.8 (0.67)	18.9 (0.47)	5.7 (0.28)
Living with a partner	29.2 (1.53)	52.3 (1.52)	31.1 (1.37)	7.4 (0.63)

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 8. Age-adjusted percent of adults 18 years of age and over with selected health behaviors, by marital status and selected characteristics: United States, average annual, 1999–2002—Con.

Selected characteristic	Health behavior			
	Physically inactive ¹	Overweight or obese ²	Current smoker ³	Heavier drinker ⁴
Poverty status ¹⁰ and marital status	Age-adjusted percent ⁵ (standard error)			
Poor or near poor ⁶	51.4 (0.52)	57.9 (0.38)	30.8 (0.39)	4.7 (0.18)
Married	54.5 (0.70)	62.3 (0.59)	26.2 (0.55)	3.0 (0.21)
Widowed	61.4 (2.48)	62.2 (2.54)	33.6 (2.45)	3.7 (0.93)
Divorced or separated	53.5 (0.79)	59.3 (0.75)	41.5 (0.70)	5.4 (0.35)
Never married	46.2 (0.94)	52.1 (0.79)	28.4 (0.74)	5.9 (0.38)
Living with a partner	57.4 (1.83)	59.5 (1.66)	48.0 (1.76)	8.2 (1.02)
Not poor ⁶	30.5 (0.32)	57.2 (0.24)	20.7 (0.21)	5.1 (0.11)
Married	30.5 (0.37)	59.7 (0.31)	17.5 (0.24)	4.2 (0.12)
Widowed	34.2 (2.24)	56.2 (2.37)	26.4 (2.23)	7.0 (1.51)
Divorced or separated	31.5 (0.68)	57.3 (0.66)	31.1 (0.64)	7.5 (0.35)
Never married	30.5 (0.77)	51.8 (0.74)	21.5 (0.53)	5.5 (0.28)
Living with a partner	34.5 (1.46)	55.1 (1.46)	37.3 (1.31)	8.5 (0.58)
Nativity ¹¹ and marital status				
U.S. born ⁶	36.5 (0.33)	57.4 (0.20)	24.2 (0.20)	5.0 (0.09)
Married	34.8 (0.39)	60.5 (0.25)	19.9 (0.23)	3.9 (0.10)
Widowed	47.2 (1.73)	58.2 (1.73)	31.5 (1.68)	5.7 (0.96)
Divorced or separated	41.8 (0.54)	57.7 (0.46)	36.3 (0.45)	6.7 (0.24)
Never married	37.8 (0.56)	51.9 (0.50)	24.8 (0.41)	5.7 (0.21)
Living with a partner	40.6 (1.08)	56.2 (0.98)	40.5 (0.90)	8.7 (0.46)
Foreign born ⁶	50.4 (0.54)	51.5 (0.51)	14.3 (0.32)	2.5 (0.15)
Married	50.7 (0.66)	53.7 (0.66)	13.1 (0.39)	2.2 (0.19)
Widowed	61.4 (3.89)	48.7 (4.08)	16.9 (3.87)	*3.0 (1.31)
Divorced or separated	52.1 (1.37)	56.4 (1.35)	20.3 (1.20)	2.9 (0.43)
Never married	49.1 (1.54)	44.6 (1.43)	15.3 (1.08)	2.9 (0.47)
Living with a partner	54.7 (3.24)	55.2 (3.09)	19.4 (1.71)	4.7 (0.90)

* Estimates preceded by an asterisk have a relative standard error of greater than 30% and should be used with caution as they do not meet the standard of reliability and precision.

¹Physically inactive is based on two questions (preceded by a statement indicating that the questions refer to leisure-time physical activities): "How often do you do vigorous activities for at least 10 minutes that cause heavy sweating or large increases in breathing or heart rate?" and "How often do you do light or moderate activities for at least 10 minutes that cause a slight to moderate increase in breathing or heart rate?" Physically inactive refers to adults who engaged in no light, moderate, or vigorous leisure-time physical activity, including those who said they were unable to do such activities.

²Overweight or obese is defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 25. BMI was calculated using respondent reported height and weight based on the questions: "How tall are you without shoes?" and "How much do you weigh without shoes?"

³Current smoker is defined as a person who had ever smoked 100 cigarettes and was smoking as of the date of the interview. Information was based on the questions: "Have you ever smoked 100 cigarettes in your entire life?" and "Do you now smoke everyday, some days, or not at all?"

⁴Heavier drinker is defined as a person who drank an average of more than 14 drinks per week (if male) or more than 7 drinks per week (if female) in the past year. It is a measure of average consumption calculated using frequency and quantity obtained from the questions: "In the past year, how often did you drink any type of alcoholic beverage?" and "In the past year, on those days that you drank alcoholic beverages, on the average, how many drinks did you have?"

⁵Unknowns for the health behaviors (column variables) were not included in the denominators when calculating percents.

⁶Includes adults with unknown marital status.

⁷In accordance with the 1997 Standards for Federal data on race and Hispanic or Latino origin, detailed information on single race and multiple race combinations is collected in the NHIS.

However, due to the nature of this analysis and small sample sizes associated with studying marital status and health, only two single race groups are shown. [Information on other groups and selected multiple race groups is presented in annual Summary Health Statistics reports.] In addition, although the tables in this report use the complete new Office of Management and Budget (OMB) race and Hispanic origin terms, the text uses shorter versions of these terms for conciseness. For example, the category "Black or African American, single race" in the tables is referred to as "black persons" in the text.

⁸Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race or combination of races. Similarly, the category "Not Hispanic or Latino" refers to all persons who are not of Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race.

⁹Education is based on the question: "What is the highest level of school (person) completed or the highest degree (person) has received?" In this table, adults with a high school diploma or a GED and adults with less than a high school diploma are included in the category "high school diploma or less;" adults who had any schooling beyond a high school diploma are included in "at least some college."

¹⁰Poverty status is based on family income and family size using the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for the previous calendar year. "Poor" persons have family incomes that are below the poverty threshold. "Near poor" persons have family incomes of 100% to less than 200% of the poverty threshold. "Not poor" persons have family incomes that are 200% of the poverty threshold or greater.

¹¹Nativity is based on the question "Where was (person) born?" Response options included any of the 50 States or the District of Columbia or "not in U.S." If not born in U.S., a question on the country or territory of birth was asked. A follow-up question, "Are you a citizen of the United States?," identified persons born outside the U.S. to parents who were U.S. citizens. The category "U.S. born" includes persons born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, or any of the U.S. territories, and persons born abroad to parents who were U.S. citizens. All others were classified as "foreign born." See Technical note for details.

NOTE: Estimates are age adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population using the age groups: 18–44 years, 45–64 years, 65–74 years, and 75 years and over. See "Technical Notes" for details.

DATA SOURCE: Data on health behaviors were collected in the Sample Adult Core, adult health behaviors (AHB) section of the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires, 1999–2002.

Technical Notes

Sample design

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is a cross-sectional household interview survey of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population. Data are collected continuously throughout the year in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The NHIS uses a multi-stage, clustered sample design to produce national estimates for a variety of health indicators. Information on basic health topics is collected for all household members, by proxy from one family member if necessary. Additional information is collected from one randomly sampled adult and about one randomly sampled child in each family. Self-response is required for the Sample Adult questionnaire except in the case of sample adults who are physically or mentally incapable of responding for themselves. Interviews are conducted in the home using a computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) questionnaire with telephone followup permitted if necessary.

Response rates

The household response rate for the NHIS data years 1999–2002 was 88.7%. The final response rate for the Sample Adult component of the National Health Interview Survey was 72.4%. NHIS interviews were completed with 127,545 sample adults aged 18 years and over. Procedures used in calculating response rates for combined data years are described in detail in “Appendix I” of the Survey Description of the NHIS data files (16–19).

Item nonresponse

Item nonresponse for each of the sociodemographic indicators was less than 1%, with the exception of questions related to income. Item nonresponse for detailed income was about 19.5%. Persons with unknown sociodemographic characteristics are not shown separately in the tables, but are included in the totals and in all other variables for which data were reported. Item nonresponse for the health-related

variables was less than 3%. Except for the indicator for serious psychological distress, the denominators for percents shown in tables 1–8 exclude persons for whom the relevant information was not reported. For serious psychological distress, when data were missing for any of the individual items that make up the score, these items were assigned a value of zero (no distress), consistent with the algorithm developed by Kessler, et al. (29).

Age adjustment

Data shown in tables 2, 4, 6, and 8 and figures 3–6 were age-adjusted using the 2000 U.S. standard population (31,32). Age adjustment was used to allow comparison of marital status differences in health-related characteristics, while controlling for differences in the age composition of the various marital status groups. For example, widows are disproportionately older and expected to have more health problems. However, by age adjusting the estimates so that they are all based on the same standard age distribution, there can be greater confidence that the higher risk for widows for adverse health events observed in the data is likely due to something related to the widowed status rather than simply that widows are older. Examination of age-specific estimates also aids this interpretation, but age-adjusted estimates are needed to interpret difference for population subgroups such as race, income, etc. The following age groups were used to age adjust the estimates presented in tables 2, 4, 6, and 8 and figures 3–6: 18–44 years, 45–64 years, 65–74 years and 75 years and over (table 1). Note that the two oldest age groups differ from the age groups shown in tables 1, 3, 5, and 7 in that the age group 65 years and over was subdivided into ages 65–74 years and 75 years and over. This was done in an effort to adjust for some of the differences in health outcomes and behaviors that might be due solely to advancing age among those 65 years and over. Although details for ages 75 years and over (as well as younger than 45 years) would have been desirable, the numbers of respondents in some of the marital status categories (especially

Table 1. Age distribution used in age adjusting data shown in this report: 2000 U.S. standard population

Age	Population (in thousands)
18 years and over	203,851
18–44 years	108,150
45–64 years	60,991
65–74 years	18,136
75 years and over	16,574

widowed and those living with a partner), when examined by sociodemographic characteristics, were not sufficient to maintain statistical reliability when disaggregated further. These four groups represent major life stages and are considered adequate for controlling for the most important differences.

Estimates were calculated using software for statistical analysis of correlated data (SUDAAN) (30). The SUDAAN procedure PROC DESCRIPT was used to produce age-adjusted percents and their standard errors.

Tests of significance

Statistical tests performed to assess significance of differences in the estimates were two-tailed with no adjustments for multiple comparisons. The test statistic used to determine statistical significance of differences between two percents was:

$$Z = \frac{|X_a - X_b|}{\sqrt{S_a^2 + S_b^2}}$$

Where X_a and X_b are the two percents being compared, and S_a and S_b are the standard errors of the percents. The critical value used for two-sided tests at the 0.05 level of significance was 1.96.

Relative standard error

The relative standard error RSE(x) of an estimate x is obtained by dividing the standard error SE(x) of the estimate by the estimate itself. This quantity is expressed as a percentage:

$$RSE = 100 \left(\frac{SE(x)}{x} \right)$$

In tables 1–8, estimates having an RSE of more than 30% are indicated with an asterisk and are considered statistically unreliable.

Definition of terms

Demographic terms

Age—The age recorded for each person is the age at the last birthday. Age is recorded in single years and grouped in the tables shown in this report.

Education—Level of education is measured in terms of highest level of school completed or highest degree received and ranged from no formal education to Ph.D., medical or other advanced degree. For this report, education is dichotomized into a high school diploma or less and at least some college or other post-high school training.

Hispanic or Latino origin—Hispanic or Latino origin includes persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, or Spanish origins. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race.

Marital status—For adults identified in the initial household roster as spouses or domestic partners, marital status is automatically recorded and subsequently verified by the interviewer. For all others, respondents were asked to choose one of six marital status categories, displayed on a flash card, that they felt best described their current marital status (married, widowed, separated, divorced, never married, or living with a partner.) Beginning with data year 1997, persons who were living with a partner were considered members of the same family, whereas in the pre-1997 NHIS, they were considered separate families. The marital status “married” may include commonlaw unions.

Nativity status—Nativity status refers to place of birth. “U.S.-born” includes persons born in one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, individuals born in any of the U.S. dependencies (Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands, etc.), and persons born abroad to a parent or parents who were U.S. citizens. This definition is

consistent with that used by the U.S. Census Bureau (33). “Foreign-born” includes persons born outside the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and any of the U.S. dependencies.

Poverty status—Poverty status is based on family income and family size using the Census Bureau’s poverty thresholds. “Poor” persons are defined as persons with family incomes below the poverty threshold. “Near Poor” persons have incomes of 100% to less than 200% of the poverty threshold. “Not Poor” persons have incomes that are 200% of the poverty threshold or greater. “Poor” and “near poor” are combined in the tables to provide statistically meaningful estimates for some of the small marital status subgroups.

Race—The categories for race shown in this report are limited to two single race groups: white, single race; and black or African American, single race. These categories are consistent with those included in other NHIS reports, although the race estimates shown are less detailed than those published elsewhere (21–28). The categories also are consistent with the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Federal guidelines for reporting race and ethnicity (20). Estimates for race groups other than “white, single race” and “black or African-American, single race” could not be shown separately due to statistical unreliability as measured by their relative standard errors. Data for persons of races other than black and white are included in the analysis for all other variables. The text in this report uses shorter versions of the new OMB race terms for conciseness and the tables use the complete terms. For example, the category “Black or African American, single race” in the tables is referred to as “Black” in the text.

Health terms

Activities of daily living (ADL)—The term “activities of daily living” refers to personal care needs such as bathing, dressing, or getting around inside the home. Persons who require

the help of others to do these activities are classified as having a limitation in ADL.

Activity limitation—Any activity limitation is based on a series of questions concerning limitations in a person’s ability to engage in a variety of activities, including work and school activities, activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, walking, remembering, or any other unspecified life activities because of a physical mental or emotional problem.

Instrumental activities of daily living (IADL)—The term “instrumental activities of daily living” refers to routine needs such as everyday household chores, doing necessary business, shopping, or getting around for other purposes. Persons who require the help of others to do these activities are classified as having a limitation in IADL.

Fair or poor health—Fair or poor health status is a measure of respondent-assessed health, usually reported by the individual, but may be reported by proxy. Family respondents were asked to assess the health status of each family member. Response options were excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor. The last two categories are combined for this report.

Headaches—Headaches include severe headaches or migraines experienced within the past 3 months.

Limitation in work activity—Limitation in work activity is based on the questions, “Does a physical, mental, or emotional problem NOW keep from working at a job or business?” and for persons not kept from working, “Are {names of adults} limited in the kind or amount of work they can do because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem?” Work limitations are a subset of the health indicator “any activity limitation.”

Low back pain—Low back pain includes pain experienced within the past 3 months.

Physical or social functioning—Physical and social functioning includes 12 types of activities: walking a quarter of a mile (or three city blocks); standing for 2 hours; stooping, bending, or kneeling; climbing 10 steps without resting; sitting for 2 hours; reaching

over one's head; using one's fingers to grasp or handle small objects; lifting or carrying a 10-pound object (such as a full bag of groceries); pushing or pulling a large object (such as a living room chair); going shopping, going to movies, or attending sporting events; participating in social activities such as visiting friends, attending clubs or meetings, or going to parties; and activities to relax at home or for leisure (such as reading, watching television, sewing, or listening to music). Adults who had any degree of difficulty doing any of these 12 activities by themselves and without using special equipment, were classified as having a limitation in physical or social functioning.

Serious psychological distress—Serious psychological distress is based on a series of six questions asking about symptoms of psychological distress experienced in the past 30 days. The symptoms included feeling so sad that nothing could cheer you up; feeling nervous, restless or fidgety; feeling hopeless; feeling that everything was an effort; and feeling worthless. The response options ranged from “never” (score=0) to “all of the time” (score=4). Items with missing data were assigned a score of zero for that item. A summary score for these six items was calculated, and a total score of 13 or higher was classified as “serious psychological distress,” consistent with a scoring algorithm developed by Kessler, et al. (29).

Health behavior terms

Current smoker—A current smoker had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in his or her entire life and was smoking as of the date of interview. This includes both daily and less than daily smokers.

Heavier drinker—A heavier drinker is defined as a person who consumed an average of more than 14 drinks per week (if male) or more than 7 drinks per week (if female). Average consumption per week was calculated as follows:

$$\left(\frac{(\# \text{ days per year}) (\text{avg.} \# \text{ drinks per day})}{365 \text{ days}} \right) 7$$

Overweight or obese—Overweight or obese is defined as a body mass

index greater than or equal to 25. Body mass index is based on self-reported height and weight and calculated using the formula:

Body Mass Index (BMI) = kg/(m²), where:
kg (kilograms) = weight in pounds/2.205, and
m (meters) = height in inches/39.37.

Adults with a body mass index greater than or equal to 25 but less than 30 are considered overweight, but not obese. Adults with a body mass index greater than or equal to 30 are considered obese. The two categories are combined for this report.

Physically inactive in leisure time—Leisure-time physical inactivity is based on responses to questions on frequency of participation in vigorous leisure-time physical activity lasting at least 10 minutes and frequency of participation in light or moderate physical activity lasting at least 10 minutes. Adults who said they never engaged in either type of activity or said they were unable to do the activity were classified as physically inactive in leisure time.

The complete NHIS Sample Adult questionnaire as well as information about other components of the NHIS are available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>.

Suggested citation

Schoenborn CA. Marital status and health: United States, 1999–2002 Advance data from vital and health statistics; no 351. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2004.

Copyright information

All material appearing in this report is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission; citation as to source, however, is appreciated.

National Center for Health Statistics

Director
Edward J. Sondik, Ph.D.

Deputy Director
Jack R. Anderson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road
Hyattsville, Maryland 20782

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE & FEES PAID CDC/NCHS PERMIT NO. G-284
--

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

To receive this publication regularly, contact the National Center for Health Statistics by calling 1-866-441-NCHS (6247)
E-mail: nchsquery@cdc.gov
Internet: www.cdc.gov/nchs

DHHS Publication No. (PHS) 2005-1250
05-0034 (12/04)