

# Data Access and Resources

## A Guide for Obtaining NCHS Reports and Accessing Data

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is a unique public resource providing statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people. As the Nation's principal health statistics agency, NCHS is the primary government resource for collecting, analyzing, and distributing data on health and health care. This brochure lists major NCHS data sources and provides information on accessing the data.

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For additional information or specific questions about NCHS reports and data access, contact: National Center for Health Statistics, 3311 Toledo Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782. E-mail: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov). Tel: 1-800-232-4636. Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>.

## ACCESSIBILITY



The NCHS website is designed to provide users with quick and easy access to the wide range of information and data available from NCHS. The site is home to the latest news, information, and publications from the Center, as well as an extensive data archive accessible to the public. The website includes an overview of NCHS' major data collection activities, presents data findings, and provides information about special activities and initiatives to improve the access to, and quality of, health statistics information. Full-text files of publications may be searched, viewed, printed, and downloaded in PDF form. Users can find links to additional sources of health information and can query NCHS electronically to obtain answers to specific questions. The home for NCHS on the Internet is: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>.

## DATA SOURCES

The major NCHS data sources are described briefly here.



The **National Health Care Surveys** gather data on health care providers, their patients, and their care. These data are used to answer key policy and research questions, including those about health care use and quality. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/dhcs.htm>.

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The **National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)** is a nationwide examination survey designed to collect information about the health and diet of people in the United States. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm>.



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The **National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)** is the principal source of information on the health of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. NHIS data are used to monitor trends in illness and disability and to track progress toward achieving national health objectives. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>.



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The **State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey (SLAITS)** collects key health care data at state and local levels through a variety of smaller surveys. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/slaits.htm>.



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The **Longitudinal Studies of Aging**—a collaborative project of NCHS and the National Institute on Aging—is a multicohort study of persons aged 70 years and older. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/lsoa.htm>.



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The **National Vital Statistics System (NVSS)** is the oldest and most successful example of inter-governmental data sharing in public health. NCHS collects and disseminates the Nation's official vital statistics on births, marriages, divorces, and deaths. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss.htm>.





The **National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)** provides information on fertility, conception, family planning, and women's reproductive health in the United States. The 2002 study included males aged 15 to 44 and covered topics similar to those addressed for females. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg.htm>.

## REPORTS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Information on the Nation's health is constantly changing. Over the years, NCHS has been instrumental in monitoring important changes in health trends. The Center provides policy makers, researchers, teachers, students, and the general public with a wide range of informative health statistics publications. Each year, NCHS distributes hundreds of reports and other publications in a variety of formats, both electronic and hard copy. Some of the Center's recurring publications are described briefly here. Most NCHS publications are available for free download. To access and download the latest NCHS publications, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products.htm>.

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## VITAL AND HEALTH STATISTICS SERIES

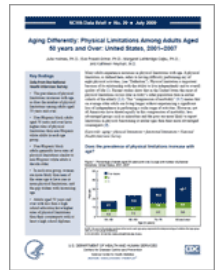
For researchers interested in NCHS' methods of statistical analysis in addition to the statistics themselves, the Vital and Health Statistics series is a valuable resource. Releases in this series comprise background, methodology, and analytical studies and presentations of findings from NCHS data collection programs. Each series presents data analyses for a data collection system or a family of related systems. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/series.htm>.



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## DATA BRIEFS

For data users looking for a short, easy-to-use set of data, Data Briefs are concise statistical publications that provide up-to-date information about current public health topics. Each brief takes a complex data subject and summarizes it in eight pages of text and graphics that provide readers with easily comprehensible information. Data are provided on a wide range of health topics drawn from NCHS studies. Data Briefs are available online and are indexed in the National Library of Medicine's Medline database. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs.htm>.





## EARLY RELEASES OF SELECTED ESTIMATES FROM NHIS

Data users interested in key measures of health, health insurance coverage, and wireless phone usage will find the National Health Interview Survey's (NHIS) Early Release Program very helpful. Early Releases provide estimates of key health and health-related indicators based on data from NHIS. Data files are released in three separate reports on the NCHS website.

*Selected Estimates Based on Data From the National Health Interview Survey* is published quarterly and provides estimates of 15 measures of health, ranging from vaccinations to obesity to psychological distress. *Health Insurance Coverage: Estimates From the National Health Interview Survey* is also published quarterly and provides estimates of health insurance coverage by selected demographic characteristics. *Wireless Substitution: Estimates From the National Health Interview Survey* is published in May and December of each year and provides estimates on exclusive wireless telephone usage in households. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/releases.htm>.

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## NCCHS HEALTH E-STATS

Researchers, teachers, and students looking for concise highlights of NCHS data systems on the Web will find a great resource in *NCHS Health E-Stats*. E-Stats are Internet-only releases on current and timely health topics. These brief, easy-to-digest reports are published several times each year on the NCHS website. E-Stats feature selected highlights from NCHS data systems. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/hestats.htm>.



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## HEALTH, UNITED STATES

Data users looking for a comprehensive statistical guide to the Nation's health should look no further than *Health, United States*. This book, published by NCHS, is the annual report on the health status of the Nation and is submitted by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the President and Congress. It presents national trends in health statistics on such topics as birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy, morbidity and health status, risk factors, use of ambulatory and inpatient care, health personnel and facilities, financing of health care, health insurance and managed care, and other health topics.



*Health, United States* has two major components: a chartbook that illustrates, with text and figures, major trends in health; and a section of detailed trend tables. These components are supplemented by an executive summary, highlights, and an index. The appendixes contain detailed source information, as well as explanations of methods and definitions of terms.

This publication is available in print and for download from the NCHS website. Previous editions, starting with *Health, United States, 1975*, are also available on the website. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hsr.htm>.



## NATIONAL HEALTH STATISTICS REPORTS

For data users seeking informative summaries on health and health-related data, *National Health Statistics Reports* are a valuable resource. These reports provide annual health data summaries, analyze health topics, and present new information on methods or measurement issues. Prior to 2008, these reports were known as *Advance Data From Vital and Health Statistics*, a series that had been running since 1976. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/nhsr.htm>.



## NATIONAL VITAL STATISTICS REPORTS

For information on vital statistics in the United States—births, deaths, marriages, and divorces—*National Vital Statistics Reports* are an excellent source. Previously known as *Monthly Vital Statistics Reports*, these reports provide monthly and cumulative data on vital events and statistics, along with brief analyses. Four to six special reports are also issued each year, which provide final data on births for the previous year and special topic analyses. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/nvsr.htm>.



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## OLDER AMERICANS: KEY INDICATORS OF WELL-BEING

Data users interested in a wide-ranging set of indicators on older adults should look to the biennial report *Older Americans: Key Indicators of Well-Being* produced by the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics (Forum). The Forum is comprised of 15 federal agencies, including the NCHS. This multi-agency report describes the overall status of the U.S. population aged 65 and over. It uses data from over a dozen national sources to construct broad indicators of well-being for the older population and to monitor changes in these indicators over time. The report is divided into five subject areas: population, economics, health status, health risks and behaviors, and health care. Indicators are updated on the Forum website. The publication is available in print and for download on the Aging Forum website. Visit: <http://www.agingstats.gov>.



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## AMERICA'S CHILDREN: KEY NATIONAL INDICATORS OF WELL-BEING

For data users seeking information on indicators of children's well-being, the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics' signature report, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being* (*America's Children*) is a valuable resource. The annual *America's Children* report provides a summary of national indicators of child well-being across seven domains: family and social environment, economic circumstances, health care, physical environment and safety, behavior, education, and health, and monitors changes in these indicators over time. A detailed



report alternates every other year with a condensed version that highlights selected indicators. All indicators are updated annually on the forum website. NCHS is one of 22 Federal agencies that comprise the Forum. NCHS data are readily found within America's Children. The publication is available in print and for download on the Children's Forum website. Visit: <http://www.childstats.gov>.

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## LIFE TABLES

Researchers interested in life expectancy have an excellent resource in NCHS' Life Tables. Life Tables are annual reports that track life expectancy in the United States each year by age, race, and sex. Each report is approximately 20 pages. Every 10 years, NCHS also releases a decennial volume of life expectancy data, with one volume for each state. Visit: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/life\\_tables.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/life_tables.htm).

## PUBLIC-USE DOCUMENTATION AND DATA

NCHS is a rich source of data for researchers, teachers, and students who want to perform data analysis. Data for this and other purposes are made available through the NCHS FTP service. Free downloadable public-use data files are accessible from our FTP file server. Users of this service have access to data sets, documentation, and questionnaires from NCHS surveys and data collection systems. Downloading instructions are available on the NCHS website. Users of NCHS public-use data files must comply with data use restrictions to ensure that the information will be used solely for statistical analysis or reporting purposes.

Public-use data files are prepared and disseminated to provide access to the full scope of the data. Users can manipulate the data in a format appropriate for their analyses. NCHS makes every effort to release data collected through its surveys and data systems in a timely manner. Visit: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data\\_access/ftp\\_data.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data_access/ftp_data.htm).

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## DATA ACCESS TOOLS

More than 400 public-use microdata files from NCHS are available free of charge. Microdata can be accessed through a number of resources: the internet, the FTP server, and onsite at NCHS.

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**Health Data Interactive** presents tables with national health statistics for infants, children, adolescents, adults, and older adults. Tables can be customized by age, gender, race/ethnicity, and geographic location to explore different trends and patterns. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hdi.htm>.



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**The Health Indicators Warehouse (HIW)** serves as a federal data hub for HHS' health data initiative. It provides a single, user-friendly source for national, state, and community health indicators, including population health (such as life expectancy, mortality, disease incidence or prevalence, or other health states); determinants of health (such as health behaviors, health risk factors, physical environments, and socioeconomic environments); and health care access, quality, and use. Depending on the measure, a health indicator may be defined for a specific population, place, political jurisdiction, or geographic



area. HIW helps to facilitate harmonization of indicators across initiatives, link indicators with evidence-based interventions, and meet the needs of multiple population health initiatives, such as Healthy People 2020. NCHS is working with data, content, and application experts in the ongoing development of this interactive system, which represents a major infusion of free, easily accessible HHS data. Visit: <http://www.healthindicators.gov>.



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**NCHS Survey Measures Catalog** provides an overview of questions about child and adolescent mental health, and functioning and disability in various surveys of the NCHS Data Systems. Some of the survey measures are included in both the mental health and the functioning and disability sections of the catalog. This website allows users to: search for mental health or functioning and disability measures by topic; print measure summaries, including the text of the question or scale, response options, and other metadata; and link to survey questionnaires, documentation, datafiles, and when available, other sites that provide access to tabulated data. Visit: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/measures\\_catalog.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/measures_catalog.htm).



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**VitalStats** is a collection of vital statistics products (including tables, data files, and reports) that allows users to access and examine vital statistics and population data interactively. Users can access prebuilt tables and reports for quick access to statistics. Data files can also be used to create tables by choosing from over 100 variables. Birth data are available for the years 1990–2008, mortality files for the year 2005, and perinatal mortality files for 2003–2005

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The **National Death Index (NDI)** is a central computerized index of death record information on file in state vital statistics offices. Working with state offices, NCHS established the NDI as a resource to aid epidemiologists and other health and medical investigators with their mortality ascertainment activities. The NDI is available to investigators solely for statistical purposes in medical and health research. A national file of identifying death record information (beginning with 1979 deaths) has been compiled from computer files submitted by state vital statistics offices. Death records are added to the NDI file annually, approximately 12 months after the end of each calendar year.



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The **Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health (DRC)** is a website that provides hands-on access to data from two SLAITS surveys: the National Survey of Children’s Health and the National Survey of Children With Special Health Care Needs. Users can access information from these two surveys, search national and state findings on child health indicators, and compare and download data for numerous population subgroups. Visit: **<http://www.childhealthdata.org/content/Default.aspx>**.



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The **NCHS Data Linkage Program** is a great resource for researchers wishing to examine the factors that influence disability, chronic disease, health care utilization, morbidity, and mortality. NCHS has developed a record linkage program designed to maximize the scientific value of the Center's population-based surveys. NCHS is currently linking various NCHS surveys with air monitoring data from the Environmental Protection Agency; with death certificate records from the National Death Index; with Medicare enrollment and claims data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; and with retirement, survivor, and disability insurance and supplemental security income benefit data from the Social Security Administration. Visit: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data\\_access/data\\_linkage\\_activities.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data_access/data_linkage_activities.htm).

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**CDC WONDER** (Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research) is an easy-to-use, menu-driven system that makes the information resources of CDC available to public health professionals and the public at large. Users can access statistical research data published by CDC, as well as reference materials, reports, and guidelines on health-related topics. Public-use data sets on mortality, cancer incidence, HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, vaccinations, births, census data, and many other topics are available for query, and the requested data can be viewed online or exported and analyzed, using dynamically calculated statistics, charts, and maps. Visit: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/>.

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The **Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)** is home to more than 70 public-use data files from NCHS. ICPSR, located within the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, is a membership-based not-for-profit organization serving member colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. The ICPSR holdings of NCHS studies include data (with electronic documentation) from NHIS, the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, the National Hospital Discharge Survey, NHANES, and the National Nursing Home Survey and follow-ups, among others. These files can be viewed or downloaded for analysis. Visit: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/>.

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## ON-SITE ACCESS

The **Research Data Center (RDC)** provides secure access to Department of Health and Human Services data for researchers comfortable using SAS or a similar statistical package to analyze standard data sets. In the past, users have included epidemiologists, economists, demographers, and health scientists. RDC is responsible for protecting the confidentiality of the survey respondents, study subjects, and institutions from which data are collected. Consequently, all researchers must submit a research proposal outlining their need for more-sensitive data. The proposal provides a framework for RDC to identify potential disclosure risk. Once the proposal is approved, RDC works with researchers to create a data file specific to the research questions. RDC cannot send the data set but offers several modes of access. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/rdc/>.

