Major health topics addressed

The NHIS questionnaire was redesigned in 2019 to increase relevance, enhance data quality, and minimize respondent burden. Topics covered in 2019 include:

- Physical and mental health status
- Chronic conditions, including asthma and diabetes
- Measures of functioning and disability
- Access to and use of health care services
- Health insurance coverage and type of coverage
- Chronic pain, pain management, and prescription opioid use
- Demographics and social determinants of health

Examples of NHIS data

Smoking

Data from 2018 on current cigarette smoking show:

- For both sexes combined, the percentage of adults who were current cigarette smokers was highest for those aged 45–64 and lowest for those aged 65 and over. This pattern also held for women.
- For adults aged 18 and over, 18–44, 45–64, and 65 and over, men were significantly more likely than women to be current cigarette smokers.

Prevalence of current smoking among adults aged 18 years and over, by age group and sex: United States, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (years)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 and over</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–44</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Data are based on household interviews of a sample of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population.
SOURCE: NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2018 Sample Adult component.
Health insurance

Data from 2018 show:

- Among persons of all ages, 30.4 million (9.4%) were uninsured at the time of interview—not significantly different from 2017, but 18.2 million fewer persons than in 2010.
- Among adults aged 18–64, 68.9% (136.6 million) were covered by private health insurance plans at the time of interview.
- The percentage of adults aged 18–64 who were uninsured at the time of interview decreased, from 22.3% in 2010 to 13.3% in 2018.
- Among the 17 selected states presented in 2018, the percentage of adults aged 18–64 who were uninsured ranged from 4.9% in Massachusetts to 25.0% in Texas.

Other NHIS data from 2018:

- The percentage of persons of all ages with a usual place to go for medical care was highest for non-Hispanic white persons (89.1%) and lowest for Hispanic persons (82.0%).
- The percentage of adults aged 18 and over who met the 2008 federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic activity (based on leisure-time activity) was highest for non-Hispanic white persons (57.4%) and lower for Hispanic persons (47.6%) and non-Hispanic black persons (46.4%).
- The prevalence of diagnosed diabetes (based on self-report of a diagnosis by a doctor or other health professional) was higher among Hispanic and non-Hispanic black persons than among non-Hispanic white persons.

Wireless substitution data

Twice a year, along with comparable estimates for the previous 3 years, NHIS releases the most current estimates of telephone coverage available from the federal government. These estimates, based on in-person interviews, are used by survey researchers and political pollsters to ensure that their random-digit-dial telephone surveys include sufficient numbers of households with only wireless telephones (also known as cellular telephones, cell phones, or mobile phones). If telephone surveys do not include wireless-only households, coverage bias could result from differences between persons with and without landline telephones for the substantive variables of interest.

- Preliminary results from the last 6 months of 2018 indicate that the number of homes with only wireless telephones continues to grow to more than one-half of homes (57.1%), an increase of 3.2 percentage points since the second half of 2017.
- The percentage of adults who had at least one heavy drinking day in the past year was substantially higher among those in wireless-only households (30.1%) than among adults living in landline households (18.4%).

Challenges and future opportunities

- Educate data users about the redesigned survey instrument that launched January 2019
- Prepare and release redesigned key indicators reports and public-use data files in 2020
- Improve end-user experience and interface for accessing data files and key estimates