



NCHS Nutrition Data

About NCHS

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

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

Nutrition Data

NCHS has been collecting dietary data on the U.S. population for more than 40 years. The primary data source for monitoring nutrition is the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), using personal interviews, standardized physical examinations and laboratory tests. Through NHANES, NCHS obtains nationally representative data on dietary intake and behaviors, biomarkers of nutritional status, body measurements (such as height and weight) and body composition.

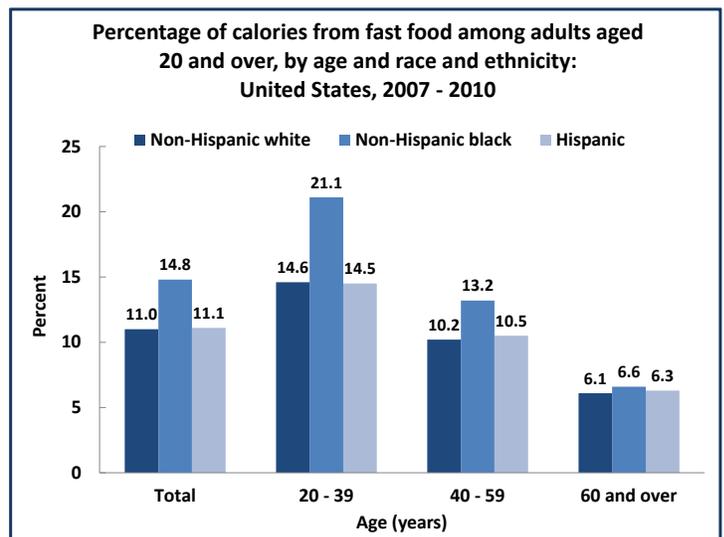
Federal agencies, researchers, educators, health care providers, and policymakers use these data to:

- Assess and monitor the nutritional status of the U.S. population.
- Identify nutrient deficiencies/excess.
- Examine the association of diet with health and disease.
- Inform nutrition programs.
- Contribute to nutrition policy development.
- Examine the impact of nutrition policies over time.

Dietary Intake and Behavior

NHANES data on dietary intake (food, beverages, and dietary supplements) are used to estimate food and nutrient intakes by the U.S. population and by specific age, gender, race/ethnic groups.

- Most adults (about 90 percent) consume more **sodium** than is recommended. In 2009-2010, average consumption of sodium exceeded the maximum daily limit (<2300 mg) for adults 20 years and older.
- Approximately 13 percent of adults' total caloric intake came from **added sugars** in 2005-2010.
- Over one-half of the U.S. population consumed **sugar sweetened beverages** on any given day in 2009-2010; between 1999-2000 and 2009-2010, both the frequency of consumption and calories consumed from sugar sweetened beverages have decreased in children (ages 2-19 years) and in adults.
- Almost half of the adult population (49 percent) used a **dietary supplement** during 2007-2010 compared to 42 percent of adults in 1988-1994.
- Data from 2007-2010 showed that adults consumed, on average, 11.3 percent of their total daily **calories from fast food**.



Source: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2007-2010.

Biomarkers of Nutritional Status

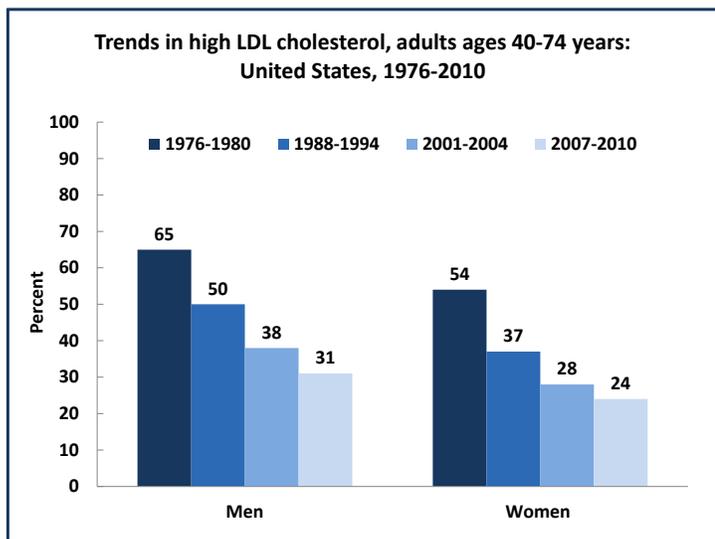
Measuring concentrations of nutrients in blood or urine helps assess and evaluate nutrient deficiencies or excess.

- **Iron deficiency** remains common in young children (1-5 years) and women of reproductive age (12-49 years); data from 2009-2010 showed low iron stores in 7 percent of children and 16 percent of women.
- NHANES 2005-2010 data showed that pregnant women in their first or second trimesters had urinary **iodine levels** that suggested less than adequate iodine intakes.
- NHANES data have documented decreases since the 1960s in **high total cholesterol** levels for adults. In 2009-2010, 13.4 percent of adults had high total cholesterol.
- Data from 1976-1980 through 2007-2010 show a steady decline in **LDL (“bad”) cholesterol** for men and women aged 40-74.

Use of NHANES Nutrition Data for Standards and Policy

NHANES dietary intake, biomarker, and body measurement data contribute to the development and evaluation of food and nutrition standards and policies, including:

- **Dietary Guidelines for Americans:** This resource for nutrition education provides recommendations for healthy eating. Dietary intake data on nutrient intake and intakes of food groups and selected dietary components are used for developing and updating these guidelines.
- **Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs):** Dietary intake data are used in setting the DRIs for vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. These recommended values contribute to national nutrition policies and programs, including nutrition labeling for foods and food assistance programs.
- **Food Fortification:** Data are used by the Food and Drug Administration in setting vitamin and mineral fortification regulations. NHANES data showed low levels of blood folate among women, which have been linked to neural tube defects in newborns. After food fortification with folic acid in 1998, blood folate levels increased by about 50 percent, decreasing folic acid deficiency to less than one percent.
- **Trans-Fatty Acids (TFAs):** Researchers analyzed stored blood samples from a subsample of white adult NHANES participants in years 2000 and 2009. They evaluated changes in blood levels of TFAs since the mandatory listing of TFAs on product labels starting in 2006. Data showed that among white adults, TFA blood levels decreased by 58 percent from 2000 to 2009, a promising trend towards improving cardiovascular health.
- **Growth Charts:** The 2000 CDC growth charts are used by physicians, epidemiologists and parents to screen for obesity and to track the growth of children and adolescents. The charts are available electronically on the CDC website.



Source: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Data Source:

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) – collects comprehensive information about the health and diet of people in the United States. NHANES is unique in that it combines home interviews with physical examinations and laboratory tests conducted in a Mobile Examination Center. NHANES can directly measure health conditions and provide reliable information on health and disease. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm>)

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