



National Health Interview Survey

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 on the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

National Health Interview Survey

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) provides information on the health of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population through confidential interviews conducted in households. NHIS is one of the nation's largest in-person household health surveys. It provides data for analyzing health trends and tracking progress toward achieving national health objectives.

These data, continuously collected throughout the year, are also used for epidemiological and policy analysis, such as characterizing those with various health conditions, determining barriers to accessing and using appropriate health care, and evaluating federal health programs.

Major health topics addressed

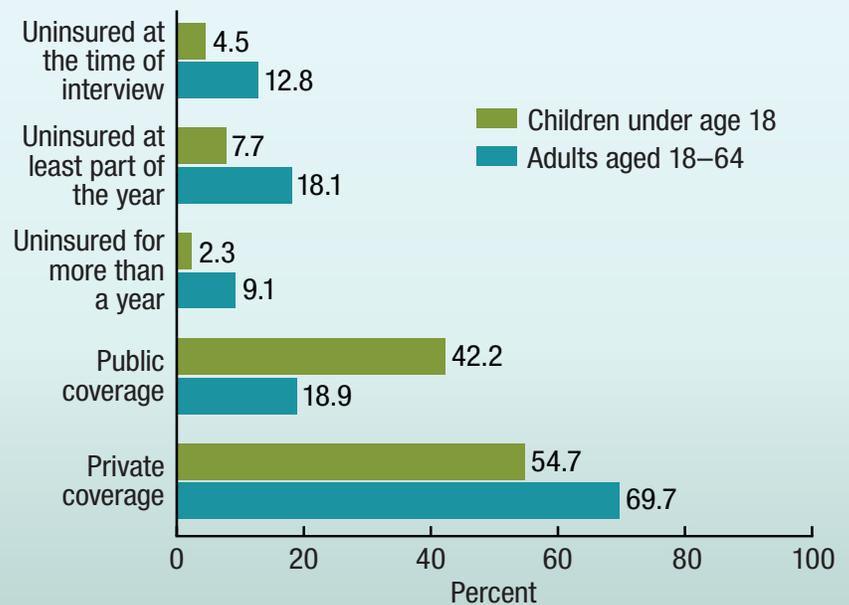
- Physical and mental health status
- Chronic conditions, including asthma and diabetes
- Access to and use of health care services
- Health insurance coverage and type of coverage
- Health-related behaviors, including smoking, alcohol use, and physical activity
- Measures of functioning and activity limitations
- Immunizations

Examples of NHIS data

Health insurance

- The number of uninsured persons declined in the previous year. In 2015, 28.6 million persons of all ages (9.1%) were uninsured at the time of interview—7.4 million fewer than in 2014.
- Among persons under age 65, 65.6% (176.8 million) were covered by private health insurance plans at the time of interview.
- Among adults aged 18–64, the percentage who were uninsured at the time of interview decreased from 16.3% in 2014 to 12.8% in 2015.
- In 2015, the percentage of persons under age 65 who were uninsured at the time of interview varied by state. For example, 2.9% were uninsured in Massachusetts, whereas 18.8% were uninsured in Texas.

Health insurance coverage status among persons under age 65, by age group: United States, 2015



NOTE: Data are based on household interviews of a sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population.
SOURCE: NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2015, Family Core component.

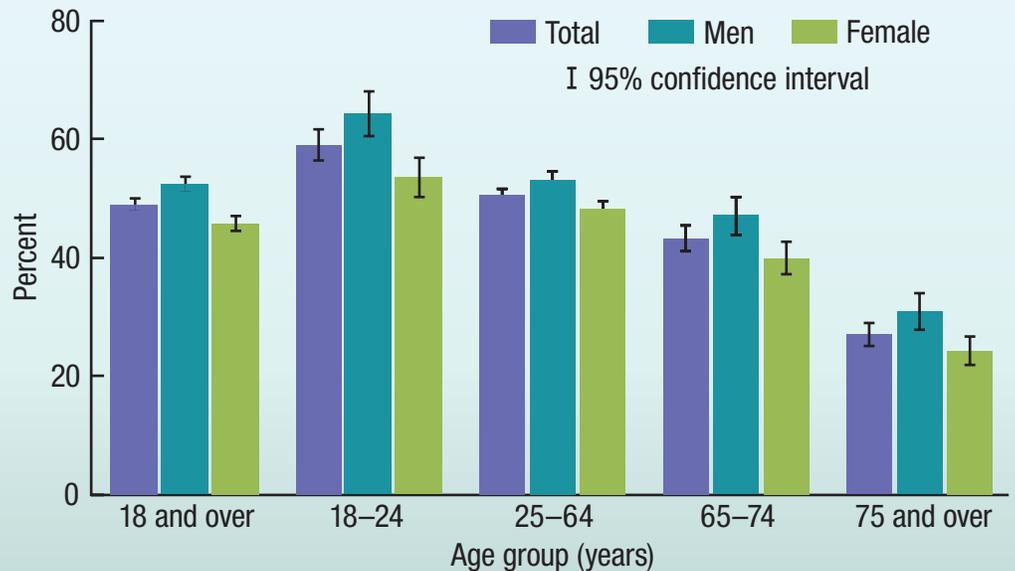
Physical activity

Current federal physical activity guidelines recommend that adults perform at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity, 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity, or an equivalent combination of both.

NHIS leisure-time physical activity data from 2015 show:

- For both sexes combined, as age increased, the percentage of adults who met the 2008 physical activity guidelines for aerobic activity (based on leisure-time activity) decreased.
- For adults aged 18 and over and within all age groups, women were less likely than men to meet the federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic activity (based on leisure-time activity).

Percentage of adults who met the 2008 federal physical activity guidelines for leisure-time aerobic activity, by age group and sex: United States, 2015



NOTES: Data are based on household interviews of a sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. Estimates are limited to leisure-time physical activity only and may underestimate the percentage of adults who met the 2008 federal Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, which refer to any kind of aerobic activity. The analyses exclude the 1.4% of persons with unknown physical activity participation.
SOURCE: NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2015, Sample Adult Core component.

Other NHIS data from 2015 show:

- The percentage of persons of all ages with a usual place to go for medical care was highest for non-Hispanic white persons at 88.8% and lowest for Hispanic persons at 82.6%.
- The percentage of current smokers among adults aged 18 and over was highest for non-Hispanic white persons at 17.4% and lowest for Hispanic persons at 9.9%.
- The prevalence of diagnosed diabetes (based on self-report of a diagnosis by a doctor or other health professional) was higher among non-Hispanic black and Hispanic persons than among non-Hispanic white persons.

Wireless substitution data

- Twice a year, NHIS releases the most up-to-date 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. 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.
- Results show that nearly one-half of American homes (48.3%) had only wireless telephones during the second half of 2015, an increase of 2.9 percentage points since the second half of 2014. In addition, more than two-thirds of all adults aged 25-34 and of adults renting their homes were living in wireless-only households.
- The percentage of adults who had at least one heavy drinking day in the past year was substantially higher among wireless-only adults (29.6%) than among adults living in landline households (17.2%).

Challenges and Future Opportunities

- Redesign the survey questionnaire to increase relevance, enhance data quality, and minimize respondent burden, in consultation with other federal agencies and the Healthy People program
- Implement an online system for dissemination of NHIS estimates, allowing users easier access to customized national and subnational data
- Maintain efforts successful since 2005 to release public-use data files within 6 months of the data collection year

