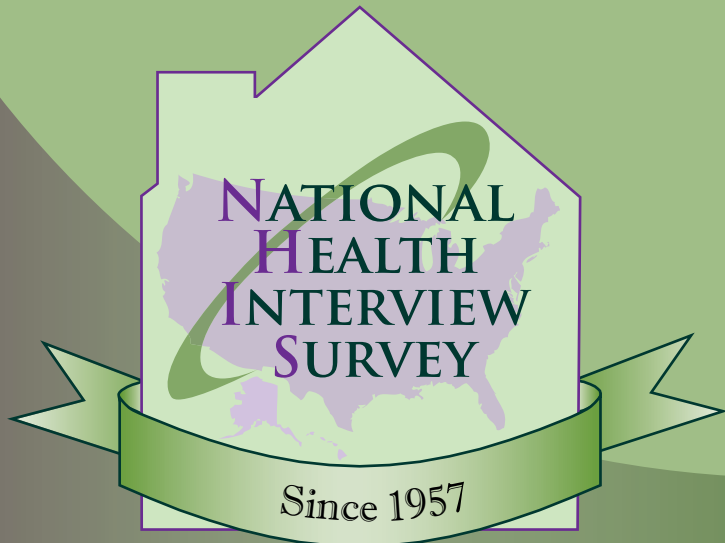


# National Health Interview Survey

The principal source  
of information  
on the health  
of the U.S. population



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Center for Health Statistics



## What is the National Health Interview Survey?

Conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) has monitored the health of the nation since 1957. NHIS data on a broad range of health topics are collected through personal household interviews. For over 50 years, the U.S. Census Bureau has been the data collection agent for the National Health Interview Survey. Survey results have been instrumental in providing data to track health status, health care access, and progress toward achieving national health objectives.

## Survey sample

The NHIS is a large-scale household interview survey of a statistically representative sample of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population. Interviewers visit 35,000–40,000 households across the country and collect data about 75,000–100,000 individuals. To ensure accuracy of the results, interviewers need to reach as many homes selected for the sample as possible. Once selected, respondents cannot be replaced with anyone else. Participation in our survey is greatly appreciated.

## Survey content

On average, an NHIS interview takes about an hour to conduct. The questionnaire consists of two main parts:

- A core set of questions that remain basically unchanged from year to year.
- Supplemental questions that change from year to year and that collect additional data pertaining to current issues of national importance.

## Sponsoring supplements

Supplements are flexible in content, customized to address the unique data needs of the supplement sponsors. Each year, several supplements become part of the NHIS. About 20 minutes of an average NHIS interview is devoted to supplemental questions. Federal agencies and private nonprofit organizations may sponsor supplements. The cost of adding questions is based on complexity and interviewing time. Lead time for developing supplements varies. Please contact us for more information about sponsoring a supplement.

## Confidentiality

All data collected in this survey are used for statistical purposes only and are guaranteed by law to be held in the strictest of confidence.

## Uses of National Health Interview Survey data

### Used by

- Policymakers
- Academics
- Other researchers
- Teachers
- Students
- Journalists
- General public

### Used to

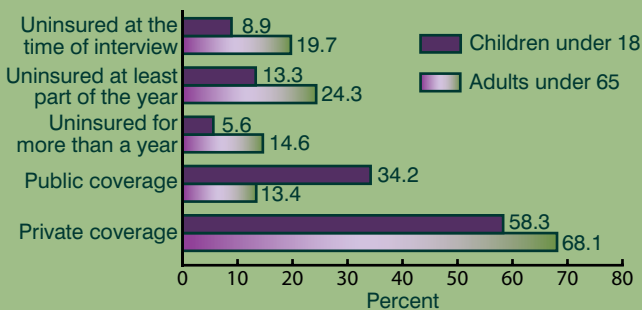
- Identify health problems
- Determine barriers to accessing health care
- Evaluate health programs
- Study health-related disparities
- Monitor progress toward national health objectives
- Monitor progress toward national well-being indicators

## Examples of how the NHIS is used by policymakers

- Analyses using the NHIS have played an integral role in shaping CDC's cervical cancer screening policy.
- NHIS data are used to monitor many of the Healthy People program objectives.
- NHIS health insurance estimates are used by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) to monitor health insurance coverage of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population.
- NHIS data helped attract attention to arthritis as a public health problem and resulted in the first-ever funding to CDC for an arthritis program.

## Example of how the NHIS is used to monitor health insurance coverage

**Percentage of persons without health insurance, by three measurements and age group, and percentage of persons with health insurance, by coverage type and age group: United States, 2008**



In 2008, 32 million Americans had been uninsured for more than a year.

*Supplements are a leading source of specialized data on a variety of health topics for adults and children. Examples of NHIS supplements and their sponsors:*

## Cancer

### Sponsor

National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health; and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### Survey Years of data collection

1987, 1992, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010

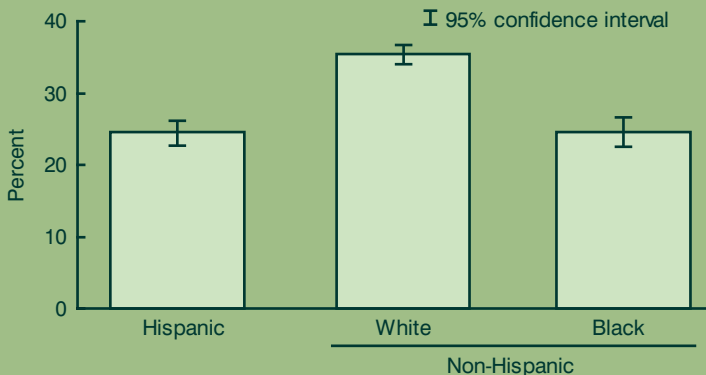
*Supplement content includes questions about:*

- **Cancer screening**
- **Diet and nutrition**
- **Physical activity**
- **Tobacco usage**
- **Sun protection**
- **Family history of cancer**

## *Selected analyses of NHIS data:*

### Leisure-time physical activity

Age-sex-adjusted percentage of adults aged 18 years and over who engaged in regular leisure-time physical activity, by race and ethnicity: United States, 2008



Non-Hispanic white adults were more likely to engage in regular leisure-time physical activity than Hispanic adults and non-Hispanic black adults.

*Supplements are a leading source of specialized data on a variety of health topics for adults and children. Examples of NHIS supplements and their sponsors:*

## **Complementary and Alternative Medicine**

### *Sponsor*

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine,  
National Institutes of Health

### *Survey Years of data collection*

2002, 2007

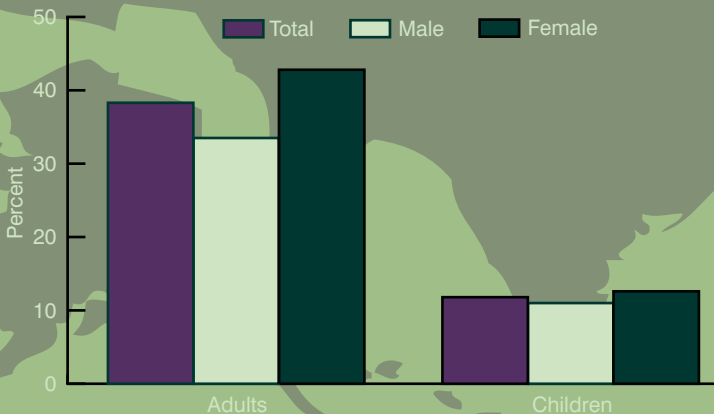
### *Supplement content includes questions about:*

- **Acupuncture**
- **Ayurveda**
- **Biofeedback**
- **Chelation therapy**
- **Energy healing**
- **Hypnosis**
- **Massage therapy**
- **Naturopathy**
- **Chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation**
- **Relaxation and stress management techniques**
- **Traditional healer**
- **Movement therapies**
- **Natural herbs**
- **Vitamins**
- **Homeopathy**
- **Special diets**
- **Yoga, Tai Chi, and Qi Gong**
- **Prayer**

### *Selected analyses of NHIS data:*

#### **Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use**

Age-adjusted percentage of adults and children who have used complementary and alternative medicine in the past 12 months, by sex: United States, 2007



Almost four out of ten adults and one out of nine children used some type of complementary and alternative medicine during the past 12 months.

*Supplements are a leading source of specialized data on a variety of health topics for adults and children. Examples of NHIS supplements and their sponsors:*

## **Immunization**

### *Sponsor*

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases,  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### *Survey Years of data collection*

Annual

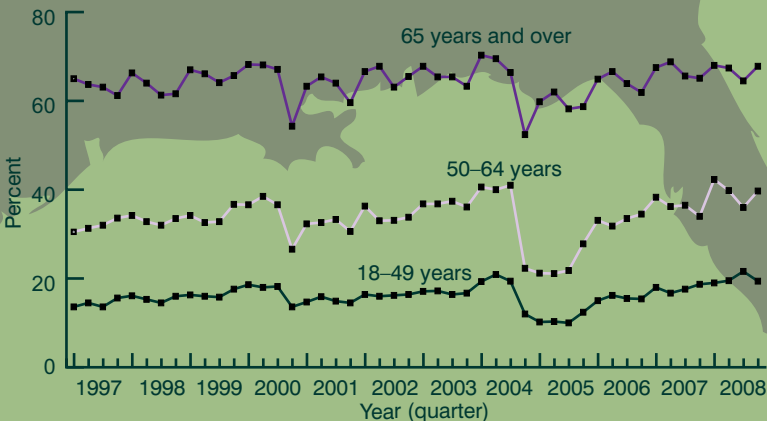
### *Supplement content includes questions about:*

- **Vaccination related to:**
- **Flu**
- **Pneumonia**
- **Hepatitis A**
- **Hepatitis B**
- **Tetanus**
- **Shingles**
- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**

### *Selected analyses of NHIS data:*

#### **Influenza immunization**

Percentage of adults aged 18 years and over who had received an influenza vaccination during the past 12 months, by age group and quarter: United States, 1997–2008



An influenza vaccination shortage occurred during the 2004–2005 flu season. Previous delays in availability of the flu shots also occurred in the fall of 2000 and, to a lesser extent, in the fall of 2001.

*Supplements are a leading source of specialized data on a variety of health topics for adults and children. Examples of NHIS supplements and their sponsors:*

## Arthritis

### *Sponsor*

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, National Institutes of Health

### *Survey Years of data collection*

2002, 2006, 2009

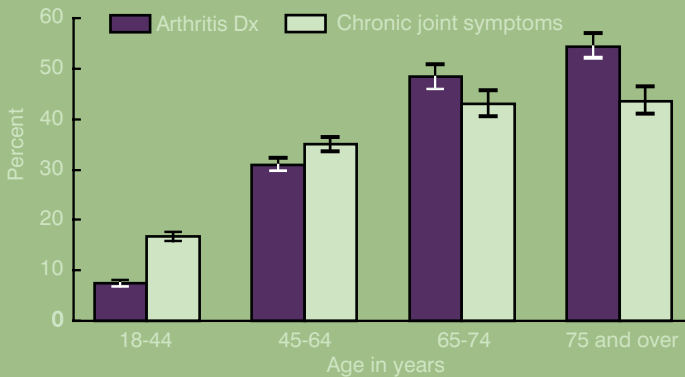
### *Supplement content includes questions about:*

- **The impact of arthritis on the type and amount of work people are able to do**
- **The receipt of medical advice to lose weight to improve joint symptoms**
- **The receipt of medical advice to engage in physical activity to improve joint symptoms**
- **Whether people have had a class to learn how to manage problems related to their arthritis or joint symptoms**

### *Selected analyses of NHIS data:*

#### Arthritis diagnosis and chronic joint symptoms

Prevalence of arthritis diagnosis and chronic joint symptoms in U.S. adults, by age, 2008 NHIS



Age was positively associated both with arthritis diagnosis and the presence of chronic joint symptoms. Fifty-four percent of adults 75 years of age and over had an arthritis diagnosis compared with 8% of adults 18-44 years of age; and 44% of adults 75 years of age and over had chronic joint symptoms compared with 17% of adults 18-44 years of age.

## NHIS data dissemination and access

**Public-use products:** Microdata files, questionnaires, documentation, and analytic reports can be downloaded for free at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>. Microdata files are released about 6 months after the end of each data collection year.

- **Early Release Program:** The NHIS Early Release Program provides very timely estimates of key health and health-related indicators through three reports released on the NHIS website. **Early Release of Selected Estimates Based on Data from the National Health Interview Survey** is published quarterly and provides estimates of 15 selected measures of health. **Health Insurance Coverage: Early Release Estimates Based on Data from the National Health Interview Survey** is published quarterly and provides additional estimates of health insurance coverage. **Wireless Substitution: Early Release Estimates Based on Data from the National Health Interview Survey** is published in May and December of each year.
- **Reports:** NHIS analyses on a variety of topics are published through *Vital and Health Statistics Series Reports*, *National Health Statistics Reports*, *NCHS Data Briefs*, and *Health E-Stats*. These products are available on the NHIS website.

### **Access to data not available from public-use releases:**

**NCHS Research Data Centers (RDCs):** To protect the privacy of survey participants, some data cannot be released on the public-use files. NHIS files containing some of these data, such as finer geographic detail, can be accessed through the NCHS Research Data Centers. Guidelines for submitting proposals to use the RDCs are available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/rdc>.

## For more information

Visit the NHIS website for survey data, documentation, and analytic products at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>

Contact us at:  
[NHIS@cdc.gov](mailto:NHIS@cdc.gov)  
or call 301-458-4001

National Center for Health Statistics  
Division of Health Interview Statistics  
3311 Toledo Road  
Hyattsville, MD 20782

## America's Health Counts