

Health

Health Status of Nonelderly Adults and Children



Stephen Zuckerman

Stephen Norton

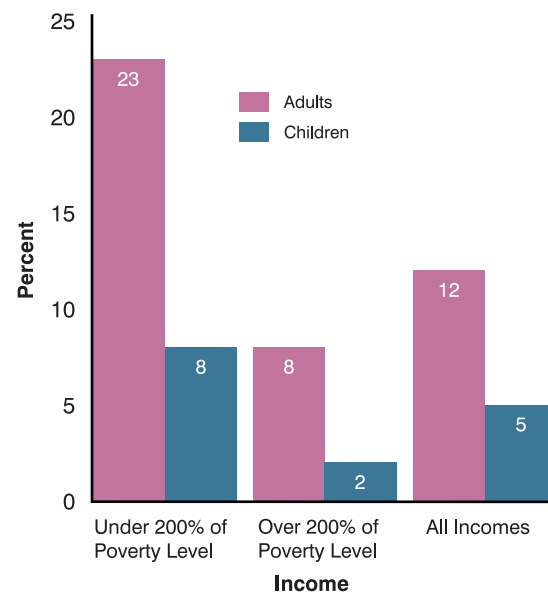
Health status affects many aspects of people's daily lives. For adults, poor health can reduce earnings, increase expenses for medical care, and make it difficult to care for their families. For children, poor health can limit their ability to attend school regularly and to interact socially with other children. Although health status depends on heredity, environment, and a wide range of other factors, policy makers may be able to improve health status by increasing access to medical care.

Differences in health status were determined by asking adults between the ages of 18 and 64 to classify themselves or their spouse and their children as generally being in excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor health.

Nationally, 12 percent of adults and 5 percent of children under age 18 were in fair or poor health, a statistically significant difference. This discrepancy in health status was consistent both in families with low incomes (below 200 percent of the poverty level) and in those with higher incomes. However, health status among adults and among children varied widely across income groups. Among adults, 8 percent of those in higher-income families were in fair or poor health, compared to 23 percent of those in low-income families, a statistically significant difference. Only 2 percent of children in higher-income families were in fair or poor health, compared to 8 percent of children in low-income families, another statistically significant difference.

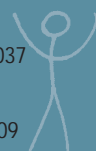
Across the 13 states surveyed, there was little difference in health status within the higher-income group. In no state did the percentage of children in fair or poor health exceed the national average for this income group, and only in Alabama did the percentage of adults exceed the national average. In three states, the percentage of higher-income adults with fair or poor health fell below the national average—Colorado, Massachusetts, and Minnesota.

Nonelderly Adults and Children in Fair or Poor Health, by Income, 1997



Source: Urban Institute

Differences in health status were greater within the low-income group. The percentage of low-income adults in fair or poor health was significantly below the national average in Colorado, Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin. Low-income children in Minnesota and Wisconsin also appeared to be healthier than the national average, with 5 percent and 6 percent, respectively, in fair or poor health.

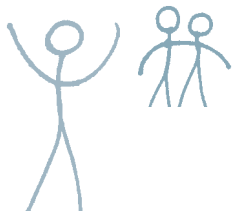




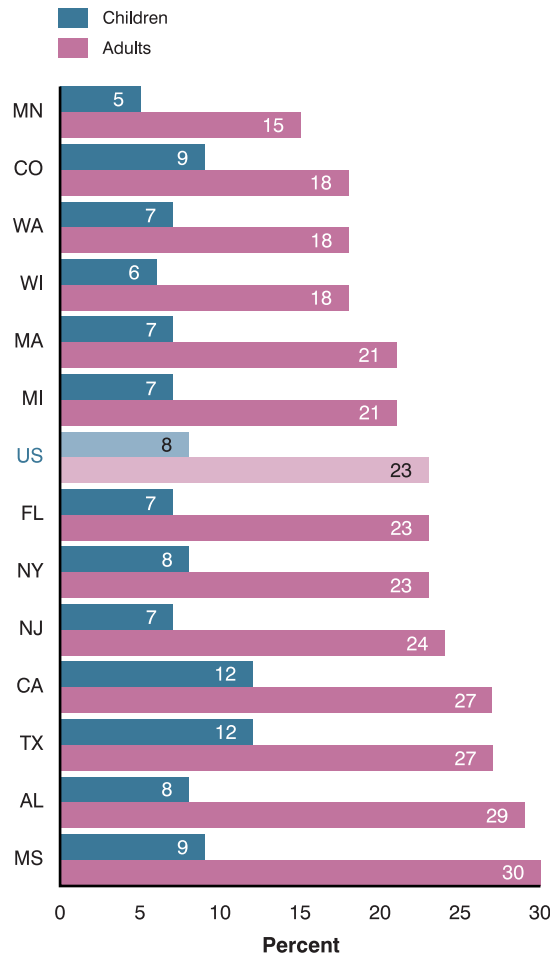
This *Snapshot* presents findings from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), a 1997 survey of 44,461 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 states. As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error.

Copyright © January 1999. Urban Institute. Permission is granted to reproduce this document with attribution to the Urban Institute. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Urban Institute, its board, its sponsors, or other authors in the series.

Copyright © January 1999. Urban Institute. Permission is granted to reproduce this document with attribution to the Urban Institute. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Urban Institute, its board, its sponsors, or other authors in the series.



Low-Income Nonelderly Adults and Children in Fair or Poor Health, by State, 1997



Source: Urban Institute

In four states, the proportion of low-income adults in fair or poor health exceeded the national average: Alabama, California, Mississippi, and Texas. California and Texas also had a greater-than-average proportion of low-income children in fair or poor health.

Nonelderly Adults (%) and Children (%) in Fair or Poor Health, 1997

Age	AL	CA	CO	FL	MA	MI	MN	MS	NJ	NY	TX	WA	WI	US
<i>Under 200% of poverty level</i>														
18-64	29.0	27.5	18.2	23.2	21.0	21.5	15.3	29.7	24.0	23.4	27.0	18.2	17.9	23.1
Under 18	8.2	12.2	9.1	6.8	6.8	7.0	4.9	8.7	7.1	7.7	12.1	6.8	5.6	8.2
<i>Over 200% of poverty level</i>														
18-64	9.5	8.1	6.0	7.0	5.1	6.5	5.8	9.4	6.9	8.9	8.3	7.3	7.3	7.6
Under 18	2.6	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.1	1.6	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.2	3.1	2.0	1.8	1.9
<i>All incomes</i>														
18-64	16.4	14.8	9.1	12.5	8.2	10.0	7.8	17.7	10.2	13.1	14.9	10.2	9.7	12.1
Under 18	5.3	7.4	4.1	4.5	2.8	3.4	2.9	5.9	3.7	4.6	7.6	3.7	3.0	4.6

Figures in color represent statistically significant differences from the national average at the .05 confidence level. Figures in black are not statistically significantly different from the national average. All figures in text, charts, and table are rounded.

Source: Urban Institute