

BRFSS Brief

Number 1305

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual statewide telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administered by the New York State Department of Health. The BRFSS is designed to provide information on behaviors, risk factors, and utilization of preventive services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death among the noninstitutionalized, civilian population aged 18 years and older.

Arthritis

New York State Adults 2011

Introduction and Key Findings

Arthritis encompasses over 100 diseases and conditions that affect joints, the surrounding tissues, and other connective tissues. The most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis. Other frequently occurring types include rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, and fibromyalgia. Common symptoms include pain and stiffness in or around one or more joints. Some types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, can affect multiple organs and cause widespread symptoms.

An estimated 50 million U.S. adults (about 1 in 5) report doctor-diagnosed arthritis. Arthritis is the most common cause of disability in the nation; 21 million Americans report limitations in their activities due to their arthritis.^{1,2} The risk for developing most types of arthritis increases with age. Therefore, as the population continues to age, the number of people with arthritis is expected to increase. Although there is no cure for arthritis, effective medical treatments include physical or occupational therapy, splints or assistive aids, patient education and support, weight loss, medication, and surgery. Non-medical treatments include self-management and physical activity interventions.

KEY FINDINGS

In New York, adults who report being told by a doctor or other health professional that they have arthritis are more likely to be women and of older age. Of the approximately 3.6 million adults in New York State (NYS) living with arthritis, 1.3 million are aged 65 years and older. The prevalence of arthritis among adults living with disabilities (53.7%) is more than three times greater than the prevalence among adults living without disabilities (15.3%). Arthritis is directly associated with body mass. Compared to adults not considered overweight or obese, a higher percentage of obese adults report having arthritis, 34.6% versus 17.3%.

BRFSS Questions

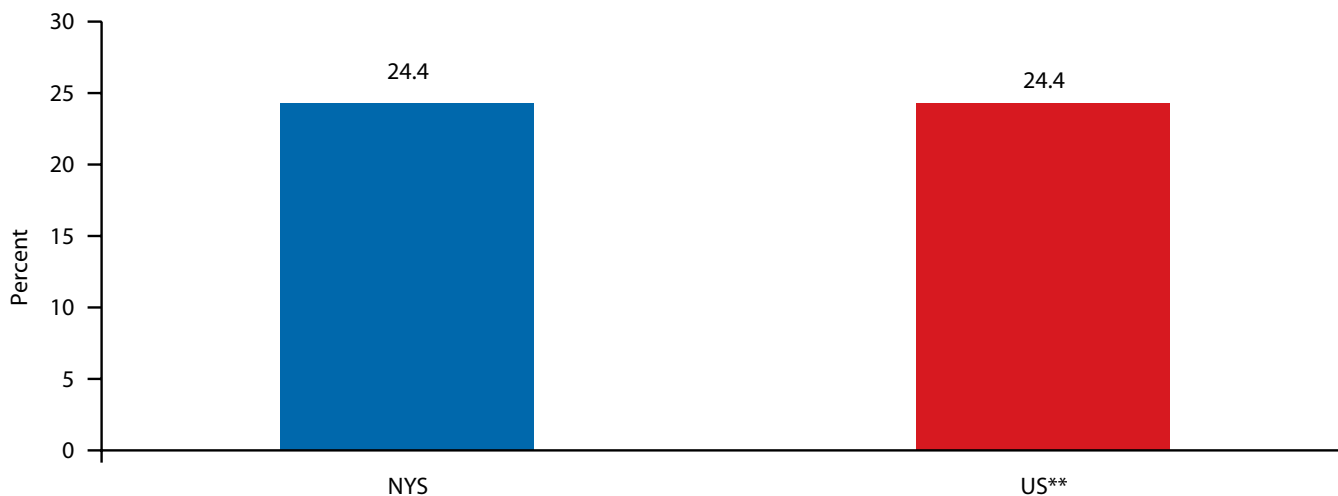
1. Have you ever been told by a doctor or other health professional that you have some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia?

[If "yes" to #1]

2. Are you now limited in any way in any of your usual activities because of arthritis or joint symptoms?

For current surveillance purposes, arthritis is defined as being "doctor-diagnosed," i.e., a "yes" response to question #1.

Figure 1. Arthritis* among New York State and US adults, BRFSS 2011

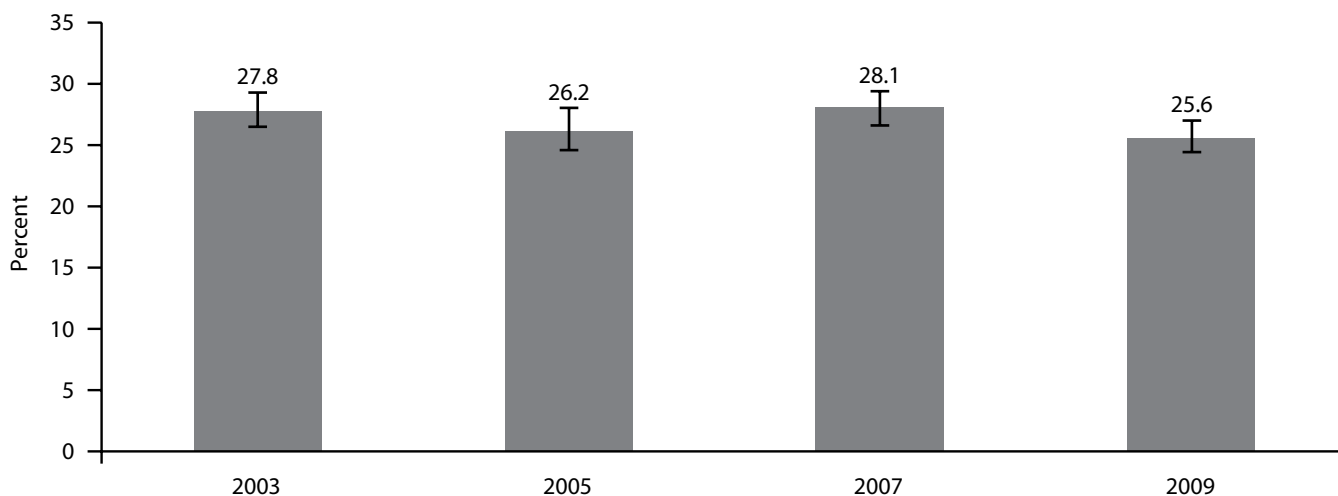


* Those ever told by a doctor or other health professional they had some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia.
**Median percent; includes data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Changes to BRFSS Methodology

Beginning in 2011, BRFSS data includes data from interviews completed by people with cell phones in addition to interviews completed by people with landlines. The data also reflect changes in how CDC weights the data. Weighting ensures that the data collected are as representative of New York’s population as possible. The new method of weighting enables more sociodemographic information about the respondents to be incorporated into the weighting. While these two changes improve the accuracy of the BRFSS, they can result in prevalence estimates that are significantly different from those calculated previously. **Because of the differences in data collection, it is not appropriate to make comparisons of 2011 data to prior years and the BRFSS 2011 prevalence data should be considered a baseline year for data analysis.**

Figure 2. Arthritis* among New York State adults, by BRFSS survey year, 2003-2009



*Those ever told by a doctor or other health professional they had some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia.
Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Arthritis^a among New York State adults, 2011 BRFSS

	Arthritis ^a		If arthritis, % with activity limitation due to arthritis or joint symptoms ^b	
	% ^c	95% CI ^c	%	95% CI
New York State (NYS) [n=7,735]	24.4	23.2-25.6	53.4	50.5-56.2
Sex				
Male	20.5	18.7-22.3	50.7	45.7-55.6
Female	28.0	26.4-29.6	55.2	51.8-58.6
Age (years)				
18-24	1.9	0.5-3.4	40.6*	—
25-34	5.9	3.8-8.0	61.7*	—
35-44	13.5	10.8-16.2	51.0	39.6-62.4
45-54	27.4	24.4-30.4	57.9	51.4-64.5
55-64	41.4	38.2-44.5	54.5	49.4-59.7
≥ 65	50.9	48.2-53.6	49.9	46.0-53.9
Race/ethnicity				
White non-Hispanic	28.0	26.5-29.6	52.1	48.9-55.3
Black non-Hispanic	17.9	15.0-20.7	57.9	48.9-66.8
Hispanic	19.3	16.2-22.5	54.3	45.1-63.4
Other non-Hispanic	18.4	13.7-23.0	57.3	42.4-72.2
Annual household income				
<\$15,000	29.0	25.2-32.9	66.2	58.6-73.8
\$15,000-\$24,999	28.8	25.5-32.2	59.9	53.3-66.5
\$25,000-\$34,999	26.5	22.3-30.7	52.5	43.4-61.6
\$35,000-\$49,999	27.2	23.4-31.0	50.5	42.4-58.7
\$50,000-\$74,999	23.1	19.7-26.4	49.7	41.7-57.8
≥\$75,000	18.0	16.0-20.1	46.3	40.0-52.5
Missing ^d	25.2	21.9-28.5	49.1	41.7-56.4
Educational attainment				
Less than high school	30.9	26.8-35.0	56.7	48.5-64.9
High school or GED	28.7	26.1-31.3	54.5	49.4-59.6
Some post-high school	23.6	21.3-25.9	52.9	47.7-58.1
College graduate	17.9	16.3-19.4	48.8	44.1-53.4
Body Mass Index (BMI) category				
Neither overweight nor obese	17.3	15.7-18.9	51.0	45.9-56.0
Overweight	26.2	24.0-28.4	49.5	44.5-54.4
Obese	34.6	31.8-37.4	58.8	53.7-63.9
Leisure-time physical activity^e				
Yes	22.4	21.0-23.8	49.1	45.7-52.5
No	30.7	28.0-33.5	62.0	57.0-67.1
Disability^f				
Yes	53.7	50.7-56.6	76.6	73.4-79.9
No	15.3	14.0-16.5	27.6	23.6-31.6
Region				
New York City (NYC)	20.8	19.1-22.5	55.3	50.6-59.9
NYS exclusive of NYC	27.1	25.4-28.9	52.3	48.7-55.9

a Those ever told by a doctor or other health professional that had some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia.

b If ever told by a doctor or other health professional that had some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia.

c % = weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval.

d "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income.

e Leisure-time physical activity during the past month.

f All respondents who report activity limitations due to physical, mental, or emotional problems OR have health problems that require the use of special equipment.

* Suppressed due to less than 50 observations.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Arthritis: Meeting the Challenge of Living Well At A Glance 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/AAG/arthritis.htm>
2. Cheng YJ, Hootman JM, Murphy LB, Langmaid GA, Helmick CG. Prevalence of doctor-diagnosed arthritis and arthritis-attributable activity limitation — United States, 2007–2009. *MMWR* 2010;59(39):1261–1265.

Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research
Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention

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