

factsheet

JUNE 2013

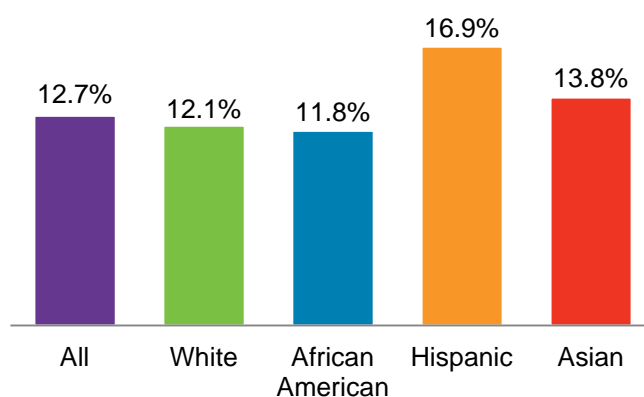
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Cognitive Data from the 2011 BRFSS

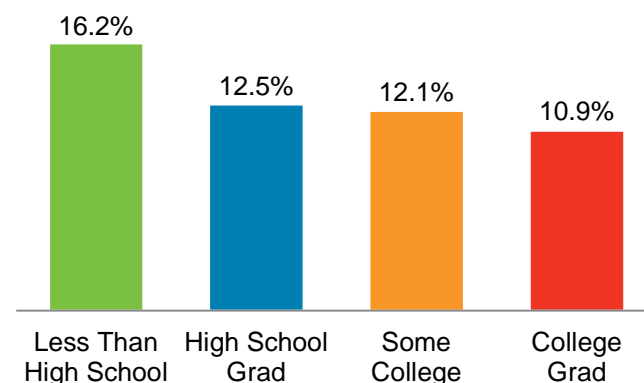
One in eight older Americans is experiencing confusion or memory loss that is happening more often or is getting worse (“cognitive decline.”)

- Data from 21 states show that 12.7 percent of Americans aged 60 and over, including 12 percent of those aged 60 to 64, are experiencing cognitive decline.
- Hispanics are 40 percent more likely than whites and 43 percent more likely than African-Americans to say they are experiencing cognitive decline.
- Individuals with lower levels of education are more likely to experience cognitive decline. Of those who did not graduate from high school, 16.2 percent are experiencing cognitive decline compared with 10.9 percent of college graduates.
- Among those experiencing cognitive decline, 34.6 percent live alone.

Cognitive Decline among Those Aged 60 and Over By Race/Ethnicity



Cognitive Decline among Those Aged 60 and Over By Education Level



What is the BRFSS?

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a public health survey conducted each year by all states, in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

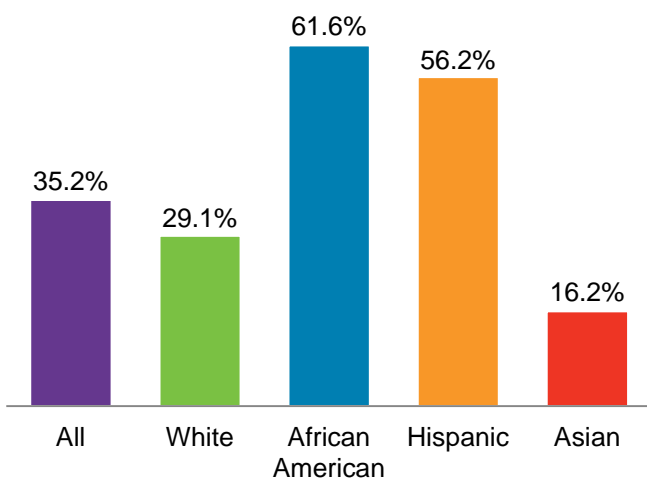
The data presented here come from the 2011 BRFSS Cognitive Module – an optional set of 10 questions that asks about memory problems, the burden of cognitive decline, and whether memory problems have been discussed with a health care professional. All data were analyzed by the CDC’s Healthy Aging Program.

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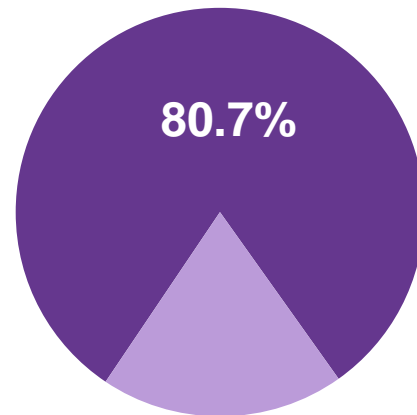
For a large proportion of those experiencing cognitive decline, it is negatively affecting their ability to function.

- More than one in three older adults (35.2 percent) who are experiencing cognitive decline report that it has created “functional difficulties” – this is, it has caused them to give up household activities or chores, or has interfered with their ability to work, volunteer or engage in social activities.
- Over half say that because of their worsening memory problems they need assistance on at least one routine activity, such as household activities, personal care and transportation.
- One in five report that as a result of cognitive decline, they have always, usually or sometimes received help from family and friends in the previous 30 days.
- African-Americans and Hispanics are about twice as likely as whites to say that cognitive decline creates functional difficulties for them.

Of Those with Cognitive Decline, Percent with Functional Difficulties By Race/Ethnicity



Percent with Cognitive Decline Who Have Not Talked to a Health Care Provider



Those experiencing worsening memory problems may be at greater risk of developing Alzheimer's and other dementias. Yet, most are not talking about it to a health care professional.

- Of those experiencing cognitive decline, over 80 percent have not talked to a health care provider about it.
- Even among those whose memory problems are creating functional difficulties, only 32.6 percent have talked to a health care provider.

Understanding “Cognitive Decline”

“Cognitive decline” refers to those who report that, in the previous 12 months, they have experienced confusion or memory loss that is happening more often or is getting worse. While some of these individuals may have Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) or be in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, “cognitive decline” does not measure the prevalence of any medical condition. Rather it measures the prevalence of those who are having increasing memory problems, which may indicate the prevalence of those at greater risk of developing the disease.