

## 5. HEALTH STATUS

This chapter discusses results from the NSV 2001 on self-reported health status. The NSV collected general information on health status and whether current health was a limiting factor in performing selected daily activities (i.e., climbing stairs, pushing a vacuum). Information was also collected on the impact of health problems in performing daily activities (walking, bathing, shopping, getting dressed, eating). Veterans were asked whether or not they received medical treatment in the past year for a list of specific health conditions (high blood pressure, stroke, heart trouble, cancer, drug abuse/alcoholism, post-traumatic stress disorder).

### Health Care Enrollment Priority Groups

The Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996 established a national enrollment system to manage inpatient and outpatient care for veterans. The law required that most veterans must enroll to receive care. Veterans who have a service-connected disability rated 50 percent or more or if seeking care for a service connected disability do not have to enroll, although all veterans are encouraged to enroll. The national enrollment system is based on seven categories of patients, with category 1 receiving the highest priority. Following enrollment, health care service is provided on a first-come, first-served basis, rather than the health care priority groups.

The definitions of the health care enrollment priority groups at the time of the NSV 2001 data collection were:

- **Priority 1.** Veterans with service-connected conditions rated 50 percent or more disabling.
- **Priority 2.** Veterans with service-connected conditions rated 30 to 40 percent disabling.
- **Priority 3.** Veterans who are former POWs. Veterans with service-connected conditions rated 10 to 20 percent disabling. Veterans discharged from active duty for a compensable condition that was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty. Veterans awarded special eligibility classification under 38 U.S.C., Section 1151.
- **Priority 4.** Veterans who receive increased pension based on a use of regular aid and attendance or by reason of being permanently house-bound, and other veterans who are catastrophically disabled.

- **Priority 5.** Veterans with nonservice-connected and veterans with noncompensated service-connected conditions who are rated zero percent disabled, and whose income and net worth are below an established threshold.
- **Priority 6.** All other eligible veterans who are not required to make co-payments for their care. This includes:
  - World War I and Mexican Border War veterans;
  - Veterans solely seeking care for disorders associated with exposure to a toxic substance, radiation, or for disorders associated with service in the Persian Gulf; and
  - Veterans with service-connected conditions who are rated zero percent disabled but who are receiving compensation from VA.
- **Priority 7.** Veterans with nonservice-connected disabilities and veterans with noncompensated service-connected conditions who are rated zero percent disabled, and who have income or net worth above the statutory threshold and who agree to pay specified co-payments.

The distribution of the total veteran population classified according to the seven health care enrollment priority groups is displayed in Table 5-1. Slightly more than half of veterans (56.1 percent) fall into Priority Group 7. Of the remaining veterans, the largest proportion (21.1 percent) fall into priority group 5.

Table 5-1. Percent distribution of veterans by health care enrollment priority groups

	Total
Priority group 1	2.9
Priority group 2	2.3
Priority group 3	5.7
Priority group 4	0.1
Priority group 5	21.1
Priority group 6	11.2
Priority group 7	56.1
Unknown	0.6
Total	100.0
Number of Veterans	25,196,000

NOTE: Priority groups were determined by classifying the self-reported data of all respondents according to VA health care enrollee criteria and are not limited to actual VA enrollees.

## 5.1 Health Status

In the NSV 2001, veterans were asked to assess their health status as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor. As Table 5-2 illustrates, nearly half of veterans (45.6 percent) reported their health as very good or excellent; 3 out of 4 veterans (75.7 percent) assessed their health as excellent, very good, or good.

Table 5-2. Percent distribution of veterans by health status and health care priority group

	Total	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6	Priority 7
Excellent	16.8	2.0	5.0	8.4	1.1*	8.5	18.1	21.7
Very good	28.8	8.4	15.7	21.9	5.0*	18.3	29.0	35.0
Good	30.1	22.6	35.9	35.8	11.9*	32.3	31.2	28.6
Fair	16.3	32.0	27.5	22.5	20.8	26.2	15.5	10.9
Poor	7.9	34.7	15.5	11.3	59.0	14.6	5.9	3.7
Unknown	0.1	0.3*	0.4*	0.1*	2.2*	0.1*	0.3*	0.1*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	24,509,900	682,200	561,600	1,404,100	20,900	5,063,700	2,802,700	13,838,900

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because insufficient data were available to determine a priority group for some respondents.

NOTE: This table excludes those veterans for whom there was a proxy respondent. Priority groups were determined by classifying the self-reported data of all respondents according to VA health care enrollee criteria and are not limited to actual VA enrollees.

**Health Care Priority Group and Health Status.** Health care priority groups vary widely in self-assessed health status. Priority 7 has the highest proportion of veterans assessing themselves as excellent or very good, while Priority 1 and 4 have the lowest proportion rating their health as excellent or very good. The percent of veterans whose health status is fair or poor also differs widely by health care priority group.

Overall, 24.2 percent of surveyed veterans rated their health as fair or poor. Nearly 4 out of 5 veterans (79.8 percent) in Priority 4, however, assessed their health as fair or poor. Because these veterans are permanently housebound or catastrophically disabled, this is not surprising. The second highest proportion reporting fair or poor health is found in Priority 1, which includes veterans with service connected conditions rated as 50 percent or more disabled.

**Age and Health Status.** The trend in self-reported health status is a decreasing proportion reporting excellent or very good health as age increases, as shown in Table 5-3. For each age group, the largest proportion rated themselves as having excellent or very good health. The only exception was found among veterans age 75 or older, the largest proportion of whom rate their health as fair or poor (37.9 percent).

Table 5-3. Percent distribution of veterans by health status and age

	Total	Less than 35					75 years or older
		years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	
Excellent	16.8	29.0	22.8	15.7	18.6	13.1	8.6
Very good	28.8	37.3	35.0	30.4	29.4	25.2	19.9
Good	30.1	23.6	28.6	31.7	27.5	32.4	33.3
Fair	16.3	8.6	10.2	14.2	15.8	19.7	25.4
Poor	7.9	1.5	3.2	7.9	8.6	9.5	12.5
Unknown	0.1	0.0	0.2*	0.1*	0.1*	0.1*	0.3*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	24,509,900	2,288,100	3,021,700	5,390,800	4,901,100	5,087,500	3,678,300

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide their age.

NOTE: This table excludes those veterans for whom there was a proxy respondent.

The only age group that does not fit this pattern of decreasing health with increasing age is the 55-64 age group. A slightly higher proportion of these veterans rated their health status as excellent, compared to the next youngest age group (18.6 percent vs. 15.7 percent for those in the 45-54 age group). The 55-64 age group does fit the age trend, however, in the proportion rating themselves in fair or poor health. Veterans in this age group may be more strongly affected by the social desirability to appear healthy, compared to their older counterparts. This might cause the apparent bump in health status.

It comes as no surprise that older veterans do not rate their health status as highly as do younger veterans. Comparisons of veterans less than 65 years of age to veterans 65 years old or older, displayed in Table 5-4, indicate that proportionately more younger veterans rate their health as excellent or very good (52.0 percent vs. 34.2 percent, respectively). Proportionately more older veterans rate their health as either fair (22.1 percent) or poor (10.7 percent) compared to younger veterans (13.1 percent fair and 6.3 percent poor).

Table 5-4. Percent distribution of veterans by health status and age (under 65 and 65 or older)

	Total	Less than 65 years	65 years or older
Excellent	16.8	19.9	11.2
Very good	28.8	32.0	23.0
Good	30.1	28.6	32.7
Fair	16.3	13.1	22.1
Poor	7.9	6.3	10.8
Unknown	0.1	0.1*	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	24,509,900	15,680,000	9,372,600

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide their age.

NOTE: This table excludes those veterans for whom there was a proxy respondent.

**Race, Ethnicity, and Health Status.** Table 5-5 compares health status by race. Veteran self-assessed health status varies strikingly by race. The highest proportion rating their health as excellent or very good is found among Asian veterans (49.8 percent), followed by White veterans (46.8 percent). The biracial American Indian<sup>1</sup>-White group had the smallest proportion assessing their health as excellent or very good (32.1 percent), while Black veterans had the second-smallest proportion (35.5 percent). The proportion reporting their health as fair or poor was highest among American Indian veterans (35.5 percent), biracial American Indian-White veterans (34.6 percent) and Black veterans (33.6 percent). This proportion is lowest among White veterans (22.9 percent) and Asian veterans (20.0 percent).

Table 5-6 compares Hispanic<sup>2</sup> and non-Hispanic veterans in terms of their self-reported health status. Hispanic veterans did not differ from other veterans in terms of the proportion assessing their health as excellent or very good (45.7 percent vs. 45.6 percent, respectively). About 3 percentage points more Hispanic veterans assessed their health as fair or poor, compared to non-Hispanic veterans (27.2 percent vs. 24.1 percent, respectively).

<sup>1</sup> This includes veterans who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

<sup>2</sup> This includes veterans who identified as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino.

Table 5-5. Percent distribution of veterans by health status and race

	Total	One race						Two or more races		Race unknown
		Total one race	White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Total two or more races	American Indian or Alaska Native/White	
Excellent	16.8	16.9	17.3	12.6	18.2	24.2	15.8*	13.3	9.8	16.8
Very good	28.8	28.9	29.5	22.9	22.7	25.6	30.1*	23.6	22.3	29.2
Good	30.1	30.1	30.1	30.8	22.7	28.7	18.9*	31.8	33.1	29.5
Fair	16.3	16.2	15.4	23.4	19.3	16.1	25.6*	19.3	20.4	18.1
Poor	7.9	7.8	7.5	10.2	16.2	3.9*	9.6*	11.8	14.2	6.4
Unknown	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1*	0.9*	1.5*	0.0	0.1*	0.2*	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	24,509,900	23,196,600	20,754,600	2,177,600	158,200	69,700	36,500	551,600	357,500	761,600

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; only one sub-category of "Total Two or More Races" is shown because all other categories were too small to report.

NOTE: This table excludes those veterans for whom there was a proxy respondent.

Table 5-6. Percent distribution of veterans by health status and ethnicity

	Total	Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	Not Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino
Excellent	16.8	17.8	16.8
Very good	28.8	27.9	28.8
Good	30.1	27.1	30.2
Fair	16.3	17.0	16.3
Poor	7.9	10.2	7.7
Unknown	0.1	0.0	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	24,509,900	1,088,300	23,339,100

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide a category of Ethnicity.

NOTE: This table excludes those veterans for whom there was a proxy respondent.

**Gender and Health Status.** Table 5-7 compares the self-reported health status of male and female veterans. A larger proportion of women veterans rated their own health as excellent or very good, compared to their male counterparts (53.9 percent vs. 45.0 percent, respectively).

Table 5-7. Percent distribution of veterans by health status and gender

	Total	Males	Females
Excellent	16.8	16.5	20.8
Very good	28.8	28.5	33.1
Good	30.1	30.2	28.2
Fair	16.3	16.6	12.5
Poor	7.9	8.1	5.1
Unknown	0.1	0.1	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	24,509,900	23,042,600	1,467,300

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred.

NOTE: This table excludes those veterans for whom there was a proxy respondent.

Female veterans are younger as a group than male veterans, which may explain their better health. Almost 83 percent of women veterans are less than 65 years old, compared to only about 63 percent of male veterans (shown in Chapter 3, Table 3-1). Gender comparisons of the health status of younger (under age 65) and older veterans (age 65 or older), displayed in Table 5-8, show that indeed only the younger female veterans assessed their health more highly than did male veterans in either age

group. The highest proportion of veterans who rated their health as excellent or very good was found among younger female veterans (58.7 percent), while the lowest proportion was that of the older female veterans (31.0 percent). The proportion of male veterans, younger and older, fell in between (51.4 percent and 34.3 percent, respectively).

Table 5-8. Percent distribution of veterans by health status, gender, and age

	Males		Females	
	Less than 65 years	65 years or older	Less than 65 years	65 years or older
Excellent	19.7	11.3	23.5	8.2
Very good	31.7	23.0	35.2	22.8
Good	28.8	32.6	25.8	39.1
Fair	13.3	22.1	10.6	21.9
Poor	6.4	10.8	4.6	7.8*
Unknown	0.1*	0.2	0.3*	0.2*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	14,390,300	8,516,400	1,211,400	249,400

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide their age.

NOTE: This table excludes those veterans for whom there was a proxy respondent.

## 5.2 Functional Limitations

NSV 2001 asked veterans to indicate whether they had difficulties with functional activities that people do every day (e.g., eating, toileting, managing money, going places) due to health reasons. These activities have been organized into two groups, referred to as Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs). The proportion of veterans reporting difficulties ranged from as few as 3.7 percent for preparing meals to as many as 15.3 percent for going places within walking distance.

Overall, only a small proportion of veterans reported any difficulties, as Table 5-9 illustrates. These proportions are highest for activities that involve moving around or walking. For ADLs, the fewest veterans identified eating as a difficulty (4.4 percent), followed by using or getting to the toilet (5.5 percent) and bathing or showering (7.3 percent). The largest percentage of veterans identified getting into

or out of chairs as difficult (14.7 percent), walking across a room (11.4 percent), and controlling bladder or bowels (10.4 percent).

Table 5-9. Percent distribution of veterans by activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living

ADLs	Percent reporting difficulty
Eating	4.4
Using the toilet or getting to it	5.5
Bathing or showering	7.3
Getting dressed	9.0
Controlling bladder or bowels	10.4
Walking across a room	11.4
Getting in or out of chairs or bed	14.7
IADLs	
Preparing meals	3.7
Managing money, such as paying bills	5.0
Using the telephone	5.2
Doing light housework	7.6
Shopping for personal items	8.5
Shopping for groceries	8.9
Going to places out of walking distance	11.0
Going places within walking distance	15.3
Number of veterans†	25,196,000

† Estimate of number of veterans is rounded to the nearest hundred; percent estimates will not sum to 100 because veterans could indicate more than one category.

In terms of IADLs, the lowest proportion of veterans reported difficulties preparing meals (3.7 percent), managing money (5.0 percent), and using the telephone (5.2 percent). The highest proportion had difficulties going places within walking distance (15.3 percent) and going places out of walking distance (11.0 percent).

To facilitate comparisons of different veterans in terms of their functional limitations, ADLs and IADLs were collapsed into an overall indicator of the presence and number of ADLs and IADLs. Difficulties with ADLs are generally considered more limiting than difficulties with IADLs. Table 5-10 indicates that more than two-thirds of veterans (67.2 percent) reported no difficulties with ADLs or IADLs. Seven point one percent of veterans reported only IADL difficulties, while 16.3 percent had difficulties with one or two ADLs. Only 9.3 percent reported difficulties with more than two ADLs.

**Health Care Priority Group and Functional Limitations.** The proportion of veterans reporting functional limitations differed widely by health care priority group. The highest proportion reporting difficulty with five or more ADLs was found in Priority 4 (48.4 percent), which is defined by home-bound veterans or those who require assistance with ADLs. Across the other priority groups, the relative proportion with high limitations is higher among the higher priority groups and lower among lower priority groups, as Table 5-10 illustrates. This suggests that VA's priority groupings map well onto veterans' functional status and underlying health status.

Table 5-10. Percent distribution of veterans by functional limitation and health care priority group

	Total	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6	Priority 7
None	67.2	18.9	35.4	50.2	5.6*	51.1	70.9	78.4
IADL only	7.1	11.5	11.6	9.6	7.1*	10.3	5.5	5.5
One to two ADLs	16.3	31.7	31.8	25.9	18.9*	22.5	16.2	11.5
Three to four ADLs	5.4	19.1	13.1	8.0	20.0*	9.6	4.3	2.7
Five or more ADLs	3.9	18.5	7.7	6.3	48.4	6.5	3.0	1.8
Unknown	0.1	0.3*	0.4*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1*	0.1*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	719,400	580,900	1,441,600	29,000	5,326,400	2,828,300	14,125,600

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because insufficient data were available to determine a priority group for some respondents. Priority groups were determined by classifying the self-reported data of all respondents according to VA health care enrollee criteria and are not limited to actual VA enrollees.

**Age and Functional Limitations.** Table 5-11 compares functional limitations by age of veterans. The majority of all age groups except for veterans 75 years or older reported no difficulty with ADLs or IADLs. Not surprisingly, proportionately more older veterans had functional difficulties, relative to younger veterans. The only exception to this was among those age 55-64 years, where a slightly higher percent reported no difficulties compared to veterans 45-54 years (71.6 percent vs. 70.8 percent, respectively).

Table 5-11. Percent distribution of veterans by functional limitation and age

	Total	Less than 35					75 years or older
		years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	
None	67.2	83.7	76.4	70.8	71.6	63.5	45.8
IADL only	7.1	4.5	4.9	5.2	6.2	8.7	11.9
One to two ADLs	16.3	8.9	11.7	14.1	13.8	19.3	25.8
Three to four ADLs	5.4	1.7	3.8	5.6	5.3	5.3	8.6
Five or more ADLs	3.9	1.1	2.9	4.2	3.0	3.2	7.8
Unknown	0.1	0.1*	0.3*	0.1*	0.1*	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	2,288,600	3,030,300	5,415,100	4,946,000	5,256,400	4,116,100

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide their age.

To highlight differences between older and younger veterans, Table 5-12 collapses the age groups into two categories: under 65 years, and age 65 or older. A smaller proportion of older veterans had no functional limitations, compared to their younger counterparts.

Table 5-12. Percent distribution of veterans by functional limitation and age (under 65 and 65 or older)

	Total	Less than 65 years	65 years or older
None	67.2	74.0	55.7
IADL only	7.1	5.4	10.1
One to two ADLs	16.3	12.8	22.2
Three to four ADLs	5.4	4.6	6.8
Five or more ADLs	3.9	3.1	5.2
Unknown	0.1	0.1*	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	15,680,000	9,372,600

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide their age.

**Race, Ethnicity, and Functional Limitations.** Minor differences in functional status were found among veterans of different races and ethnicity, as shown in Tables 5-13 and 5-14. White and Asian veterans had the highest proportion with no functional limitations (68.4 percent and 68.8 percent, respectively), while biracial American Indian-White and American Indian veterans had the lowest proportions (51.2 percent and 56.4 percent, respectively). About the same proportions reported difficulty with only IADLs. Twice as many Black, American Indian, and biracial American Indian-White veterans as White veterans (7.6 percent, 7.2 percent, and 7.0 percent vs. 3.4 percent, respectively) reported difficulties with five or more ADLs; the overall percentage, however, was quite low regardless of race. Hispanic and non-Hispanic veterans did not differ in terms of functional limitations.

Table 5-13. Percent distribution of veterans by functional limitation and race

	Total	One race						Two or more races		Race unknown
		Total one race	White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Total two or more races	American Indian or Alaska Native/White	
None	67.2	67.5	68.4	59.7	56.4	68.8	53.9*	55.2	51.2	67.3
IADL only	7.1	7.0	7.1	6.1	8.6	7.4*	12.3*	9.7	8.8	7.8
One to two ADLs	16.3	16.3	15.9	19.6	20.8	15.6	21.5*	20.1	22.6	13.3
Three to four ADLs	5.4	5.3	5.1	7.0	7.0	3.9*	4.7*	8.8	10.4	7.0
Five or more ADLs	3.9	3.8	3.4	7.6	7.2	2.0*	7.6*	6.2	7.0	4.0
Unknown	0.1	0.1	0.1*	0.0	0.0	2.3*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	23,857,100	21,370,900	2,216,600	159,900	73,200	36,500	557,500	360,800	781,400

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; only one sub-category of "Total Two or More Races" is shown because all other categories were too small to report.

Table 5-14. Percent distribution of veterans by functional limitation and ethnicity

	Total	Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	Not Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino
None	67.2	64.3	67.4
IADL only	7.1	7.1	7.1
One to two ADLs	16.3	16.4	16.3
Three to four ADLs	5.4	7.5	5.3
Five or more ADLs	3.9	4.7	3.8
Unknown	0.1	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	1,122,200	23,990,200

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide a category of Ethnicity.

**Gender and Functional Limitations.** Table 5-15 compares functional limitations of male and female veterans. Female veterans reported fewer difficulties with ADLs than did male veterans. A higher percentage of female veterans had no ADL or IADL difficulties, compared to male veterans (70.8 percent vs. 67.0 percent, respectively). Further, a higher percentage of male veterans reported difficulties with three or more ADLs than did female veterans (9.4 percent vs. 7.6 percent, respectively). The overall percentage, however, was very low. Since female veterans are, as a group, younger than male veterans, women's higher functional status is not surprising.

Table 5-15. Percent distribution of veterans by functional limitation and gender

	Total	Males	Females
None	67.2	67.0	70.8
IADL only	7.1	7.1	7.3
One to two ADLs	16.3	16.4	13.9
Three to four ADLs	5.4	5.4	4.6
Five or more ADLs	3.9	4.0	3.0
Unknown	0.1	0.1	0.4*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	23,712,400	1,483,600

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred.

### 5.3 Health Conditions

In the NSV 2001, veterans were asked to report whether they had received medical treatment in the past year. They could select from a list of 20 health conditions that included physical problems such as high blood pressure, cancer, and stroke, and emotional problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and drug or alcohol abuse. Table 5-16 displays these results.

The proportion of veterans reporting treatment in the past year for one of these health conditions ranged from 0.3 percent for immune deficiency disease to 55.8 percent for eye or vision problems. Other common problems mentioned included high blood pressure (34.5 percent), arthritis or rheumatism (26.8 percent), heart trouble (15.9 percent), and severe chronic pain (15.1 percent). Almost 4 percent (3.8 percent) reported treatment for PTSD, and another 6.2 percent reported treatment for other mental or emotional problems. Slightly over 1 percent (1.2 percent) reported getting treatment for drug or alcohol problems.

**Health Care Priority Group and Health Conditions.** Table 5-16 also displays a comparison of health care priority groups' responses to health condition treatment in the past year. Generally speaking, the proportion of veterans reporting treatment for each condition decreased across the priority groups (with the exception being Priority Group 4). Although the relative proportions of priority groups reporting medical treatment for any particular problem varied widely, the rank order of problems was fairly similar across groups. For example, eye or vision problems was the most common problem across all priority groups, while the proportion with this problem ranged from a high of 76.5 percent of Priority 1 veterans to a low of 52.7 percent of Priority 7 veterans. Among the five most common problems for all priority groups were arthritis or rheumatism and high blood pressure. Severe chronic pain also ranked among the top five problems for all groups except those in Priority 7.

Priority 1 was characterized by relatively high proportions receiving treatment for many problems. For example, more than half of this group (54.2 percent) received treatment for severe chronic pain, compared to between 8.8 and 44.6 percent for the other priority groups. Nearly one in three Priority 1 veterans (29.9 percent) received treatment for PTSD, one in four received treatment for another mental or emotional problem (26.5 percent), and one in four were treated for some other serious condition (24.9 percent).

Table 5-16. Percent distribution of veterans by health conditions and health care priority group

	Total	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6	Priority 7
High blood pressure	34.5	47.9	45.7	39.6	44.2	41.7	28.9	31.2
Lung trouble	9.2	20.3	15.3	13.7	27.1*	13.3	11.0	6.0
Hearing condition that requires a hearing aid	9.3	22.9	18.2	14.8	30.9	12.0	6.3	7.1
Other ear, nose, or throat condition	12.9	27.9	22.0	19.2	29.3	13.6	16.8	10.0
Eye or vision problem, including needing glasses	55.8	76.5	69.0	62.6	62.5	56.7	58.0	52.7
Cancer	7.4	11.3	10.4	9.8	15.3*	9.1	5.8	6.4
Heart trouble	15.9	28.1	25.1	20.1	34.0	22.2	12.2	12.8
Stroke	3.0	6.7	3.3	3.1	17.0*	5.9	1.9	1.9
Kidney or bladder trouble	10.2	24.4	15.8	14.0	27.6	14.6	8.2	7.5
Arthritis or rheumatism	26.8	54.7	47.3	38.6	48.1	33.1	24.5	21.2
Hepatitis C or other liver disease	1.6	5.7	2.2	2.8	10.6*	2.8	1.7	0.8
Immune deficiency disease like HIV/AIDS	0.3	1.6*	0.2*	0.2*	2.7*	0.4	0.2*	0.2
Diabetes requiring insulin or diet treatment	11.2	17.7	14.9	12.3	22.6	15.7	9.7	9.1
Stomach or digestive disorder	13.0	37.4	25.7	19.4	35.9	15.2	13.9	9.6
Severe chronic pain	15.1	54.2	38.7	27.0	44.6	19.7	15.5	8.8
Drug abuse or alcoholism	1.2	3.2	1.3	0.9	0.5*	2.6	1.4	0.6
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	3.8	29.9	11.8	6.0	13.5*	5.6	4.8	1.0
Other mental or emotional problems	6.2	26.5	12.4	8.3	18.6*	8.7	6.4	3.6
Accident-related injury	8.2	15.6	11.0	11.5	12.8*	9.7	8.9	6.6
Other serious condition	9.4	24.9	17.5	12.5	38.9	11.0	9.8	7.2
No medical treatment mentioned	17.6	1.8	4.4	9.4	1.9*	13.9	17.5	21.3
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	719,400	580,900	1,441,600	29,000	5,326,400	2,828,300	14,125,600

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; percent estimates will not sum to 100 because veterans could indicate more than one health condition; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because insufficient data were available to determine a priority group for some respondents.

NOTE: Priority groups were determined by classifying the self-reported data of all respondents according to VA health care enrollee criteria and are not limited to actual VA enrollees.

**Age and Health Conditions.** Table 5-17 compares health problems by age. Veterans of different ages also varied in the kinds of health problems for which they received treatment. Some problems become more prevalent with age (e.g., eye and vision problems, high blood pressure, arthritis or rheumatism). A few problems become less prevalent with age (e.g., accident-related injury, hepatitis C or other liver disease), while some were more prevalent among the middle age groups (e.g., PTSD, mental or emotional problems).

Table 5-17. Percent distribution of veterans by health conditions and age

	Total	Less than 35 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	75 years or older
High blood pressure	34.5	4.8	13.8	27.7	39.0	49.1	51.7
Lung trouble	9.2	4.5	5.4	8.0	7.8	11.6	15.0
Hearing condition that requires a hearing aid	9.3	0.5*	1.4	3.6	6.6	13.5	25.2
Other ear, nose, or throat condition	12.9	12.0	13.4	13.6	13.0	11.9	13.3
Eye or vision problem, including needing glasses	55.8	28.7	37.2	58.5	58.3	63.6	68.4
Cancer	7.4	0.8*	1.4	2.9	6.5	11.9	16.6
Heart trouble	15.9	2.5	4.9	8.9	15.1	24.1	31.6
Stroke	3.0	0.3*	0.6	1.5	2.4	4.8	7.0
Kidney or bladder trouble	10.2	2.4	5.1	7.4	9.0	12.5	20.3
Arthritis or rheumatism	26.8	6.6	13.3	24.3	27.7	34.3	40.6
Hepatitis C or other liver disease	1.6	0.3*	1.7	3.2	1.3	1.2	1.2
Immune deficiency disease like HIV/AIDS	0.3	0.3*	0.5*	0.4	0.1*	0.2*	0.2*
Diabetes requiring insulin or diet treatment	11.2	0.8*	2.8	8.2	13.6	17.4	16.1
Stomach or digestive disorder	13.0	7.1	11.4	14.4	13.4	13.2	15.2
Severe chronic pain	15.1	10.0	16.1	17.9	15.9	13.0	15.3
Drug abuse or alcoholism	1.2	1.3	2.9	2.2	0.7	0.4	0.4*
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	3.8	2.4	3.9	7.1	3.7	1.6	2.8
Other mental or emotional problems	6.2	6.2	9.9	9.2	4.9	2.9	5.2
Accident-related injury	8.2	11.3	12.7	11.5	6.8	4.3	5.5
Other serious condition	9.4	5.8	8.1	10.0	9.5	8.8	12.2
No medical treatment mentioned	17.6	44.3	32.3	17.7	14.7	9.6	5.2
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	2,288,600	3,030,300	5,415,100	4,946,000	5,256,400	4,116,100

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide their age; percent estimates will not sum to 100 because veterans could indicate more than one health condition.

To highlight young-old age differences, Table 5-18 compares these results among veterans under 65 years and those 65 years or older. The three most prevalent problems were the same for both groups, (i.e., eye or vision problems, high blood pressure, and arthritis or rheumatism), although the relative frequency for each was higher in the older age group.

Table 5-18. Percent distribution of veterans by health conditions and age (under 65 and 65 or older)

	Total	Less than 65 years	65 years or older
High blood pressure	34.5	25.3	50.2
Lung trouble	9.2	6.9	13.1
Hearing condition that requires a hearing aid	9.3	3.7	18.6
Other ear, nose, or throat condition	12.9	13.1	12.5
Eye or vision problem, including needing glasses	55.8	50.0	65.7
Cancer	7.4	3.4	14.0
Heart trouble	15.9	9.1	27.4
Stroke	3.0	1.4	5.7
Kidney or bladder trouble	10.2	6.7	15.9
Arthritis or rheumatism	26.8	20.7	37.1
Hepatitis C or other liver disease	1.6	1.9	1.2
Immune deficiency disease like HIV/AIDS	0.3	0.3	0.2*
Diabetes requiring insulin or diet treatment	11.2	7.8	16.8
Stomach or digestive disorder	13.0	12.4	14.1
Severe chronic pain	15.1	15.7	14.0
Drug abuse or alcoholism	1.2	1.7	0.4
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	3.8	4.7	2.2
Other mental or emotional problems	6.2	7.5	3.9
Accident-related injury	8.2	10.2	4.8
Other serious condition	9.4	8.9	10.2
No medical treatment mentioned	17.6	23.5	7.7
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	15,680,000	9,372,600

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide their age; percent estimates will not sum to 100 because veterans could indicate more than one health condition.

**Race, Ethnicity, and Health Conditions.** Table 5-19 compares health conditions of veterans of different races. Across all racial groups, eye or vision problems, high blood pressure, and arthritis or rheumatism are the three most prevalent problems. Proportionately more White, Asian, and biracial American Indian-White veterans reported vision problems (56.4 percent, 61.3 percent, and 57.1 percent, respectively), while more Black veterans reported high blood pressure (41.2 percent). Black veterans were also the only racial group to have diabetes among their top five problems. However, a higher percentage of American Indian veterans reported having diabetes (14.7 percent) than did Black veterans (13.4 percent).

Table 5-19. Percent distribution of veterans by health conditions and race

	Total	One race						Two or more races		Race unknown
		Total one race	White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Total two or more races	American Indian or Alaska Native/White	
High blood pressure	34.5	34.8	34.2	41.2	31.2	29.0	26.3*	32.6	36.2	26.6
Lung trouble	9.2	9.2	9.5	7.1	12.3	6.9*	1.9*	12.8	14.7	6.6
Hearing condition that requires a hearing aid	9.3	9.4	9.9	4.3	8.3	8.7*	2.9*	8.2	9.2	7.0
Other ear, nose, or throat condition	12.9	12.9	13.0	11.5	16.6	8.5	14.7*	15.6	17.8	11.6
Eye or vision problem, including needing glasses	55.8	55.8	56.4	49.8	50.1	61.3	69.4*	55.0	57.1	55.4
Cancer	7.4	7.5	7.7	5.7	5.7	2.8*	2.0*	7.7	10.5	3.3
Heart trouble	15.9	16.0	16.5	11.6	13.4	15.7	11.3*	19.6	19.5	10.1
Stroke	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.7	2.0*	0.9*	0.0	4.5	4.9	1.1*
Kidney or bladder trouble	10.2	10.2	10.1	10.8	12.1	9.2*	6.3*	13.4	16.1	7.8
Arthritis or rheumatism	26.8	26.7	26.5	28.5	27.9	23.8	20.5*	32.2	36.4	25.4
Hepatitis C or other liver disease	1.6	1.6	1.5	2.0	3.6*	5.0*	7.6*	3.2	2.8	1.8*
Immune deficiency disease like HIV/AIDS	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.3*	0.4*	0.4*	0.2*
Diabetes requiring insulin or diet treatment	11.2	11.0	10.8	13.4	14.7	7.5*	15.5*	11.3	14.1	14.7
Stomach or digestive disorder	13.0	12.9	13.0	12.7	14.5	5.3*	17.4*	16.4	19.5	13.9
Severe chronic pain	15.1	14.8	14.3	20.0	23.2	5.2*	16.7*	26.0	30.8	14.4
Drug abuse or alcoholism	1.2	1.2	1.0	3.1	3.2*	0.0	9.1*	2.0	2.4	1.4*
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	3.8	3.6	3.2	7.4	8.6	2.2*	8.0*	7.8	9.0	5.5
Other mental or emotional problems	6.2	6.1	5.9	7.8	8.1	2.8*	4.1*	9.0	11.7	6.3
Accident-related injury	8.2	7.9	7.7	9.4	12.3	7.5*	14.7*	14.7	13.7	13.4
Other serious condition	9.4	9.4	9.3	10.2	7.0	6.2*	14.8*	12.0	12.8	6.6
No medical treatment mentioned	17.6	17.5	17.1	20.9	27.5	16.9	19.8*	18.4	14.1	19.9
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	23,857,100	21,370,900	2,216,600	159,900	73,200	36,500	557,500	360,800	781,400

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; only one sub-category of "Total Two or More Races" is shown because all other categories were too small to report; percent estimates will not sum to 100 because veterans could indicate more than one health condition.

Table 5-20 compares health conditions of Hispanic and non-Hispanic veterans. The difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic veterans was slight for most problems. Hispanic and non-Hispanic veterans received medical treatment most often for the same three problems—eye or vision problems, high blood pressure, and arthritis or rheumatism—but the proportion of Hispanic veterans reporting these problems was lower than the proportion of non-Hispanic veterans. Fewer Hispanic veterans than non-Hispanic veterans reported getting medical treatment for many problems. The exceptions to this were for: ear, nose, and throat conditions; diabetes; stomach problems; severe chronic pain; drug and alcohol problems; PTSD; mental or emotional problems; and accident-related injuries. Further, more Hispanic veterans did not mention any health problems, compared to non-Hispanic veterans (22.3 percent vs. 17.4 percent, respectively).

Table 5-20. Percent distribution of veterans by health conditions and ethnicity

	Total	Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	Not Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino
High blood pressure	34.5	28.7	34.8
Lung trouble	9.2	7.6	9.3
Hearing condition that requires a hearing aid	9.3	6.7	9.4
Other ear, nose, or throat condition	12.9	13.8	12.9
Eye or vision problem, including needing glasses	55.8	50.8	56.0
Cancer	7.4	3.3	7.6
Heart trouble	15.9	10.8	16.1
Stroke	3.0	2.4	3.1
Kidney or bladder trouble	10.2	8.7	10.2
Arthritis or rheumatism	26.8	22.8	26.9
Hepatitis C or other liver disease	1.6	2.2*	1.6
Immune deficiency disease like HIV/AIDS	0.3	0.5*	0.3
Diabetes requiring insulin or diet treatment	11.2	14.8	11.0
Stomach or digestive disorder	13.0	14.3	13.0
Severe chronic pain	15.1	16.2	15.0
Drug abuse or alcoholism	1.2	2.2	1.2
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	3.8	5.9	3.7
Other mental or emotional problems	6.2	8.1	6.1
Accident-related injury	8.2	10.9	8.1
Other serious condition	9.4	8.1	9.4
No medical treatment mentioned	17.6	22.3	17.4
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	1,122,200	23,990,200

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; the total estimate is larger than the sum of the groups because some veterans did not provide a category of Ethnicity; percent estimates will not sum to 100 because veterans could indicate more than one health condition.

**Gender and Health Conditions.** Male and female veterans differed in some respects in terms of the health conditions for which they received medical treatment, as Table 5-21 illustrates. For veterans of both genders, eye and vision problems were the most prevalent condition. For some other conditions, men and women veterans differed greatly. About twice as many male veterans as female veterans received treatment for high blood pressure (35.5 percent vs. 18.6 percent, respectively). Men were also more likely than women to report heart trouble (16.3 percent vs. 9.6 percent, respectively). As noted earlier, the younger age of female veterans as a group likely contributes to these differences. Female veterans were more likely than their male counterparts to report severe chronic pain (18.7 percent vs. 14.8 percent). Female veterans were also slightly more likely to report no medical treatment in the past year (19.4 percent vs. 17.5 percent, respectively).

Table 5-21. Percent distribution of veterans by health conditions and gender

	Total	Males	Females
High blood pressure	34.5	35.5	18.6
Lung trouble	9.2	9.2	9.1
Hearing condition that requires a hearing aid	9.3	9.7	3.1
Other ear, nose, or throat condition	12.9	12.6	17.8
Eye or vision problem, including needing glasses	55.8	55.8	55.4
Cancer	7.4	7.6	3.3
Heart trouble	15.9	16.3	9.6
Stroke	3.0	3.1	1.5
Kidney or bladder trouble	10.2	10.1	10.8
Arthritis or rheumatism	26.8	26.9	24.0
Hepatitis C or other liver disease	1.6	1.6	1.5
Immune deficiency disease like HIV/AIDS	0.3	0.3	0.3*
Diabetes requiring insulin or diet treatment	11.2	11.5	6.3
Stomach or digestive disorder	13.0	13.0	13.5
Severe chronic pain	15.1	14.8	18.7
Drug abuse or alcoholism	1.2	1.3	0.8*
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	3.8	3.8	3.9
Other mental or emotional problems	6.2	5.7	14.3
Accident-related injury	8.2	8.1	10.0
Other serious condition	9.4	9.2	11.8
No medical treatment mentioned	17.6	17.5	19.4
Unknown	0.2	0.2	0.2*
Number of veterans†	25,196,000	23,712,400	1,483,600

\* Low precision and/or sample size for the denominator between 30 and 59.

† Estimates of number of veterans are rounded to the nearest hundred; percent estimates will not sum to 100 because veterans could indicate more than one health condition.