

SENIORS: Living Long and Healthy Lives in Orange County

Orange County Health Needs Assessment

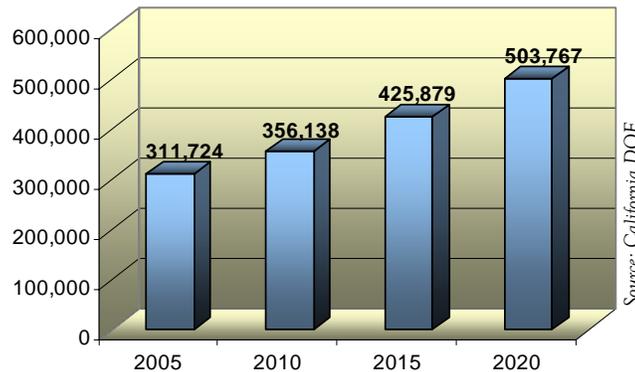
Looking Ahead: Baby Boomers Are Getting Older

California has more persons ages 65 and older than any other state, with over 3.5 million seniors. In 2004, seniors accounted for over 10 % of the Orange County population. It is important to collect information regarding health issues on these 305,771 individuals because members from this demographic account for a disproportionately high amount of health care dollars spent, more than any other age group.

With the senior population in Orange County reaching over half a million by the year 2020, the challenge is figuring out how to get the best value out of the money spent on health care. While the aging Baby Boomer population can look forward to better health and longer life than

their parents, they will certainly face a new set of challenges in order to stay healthy. One of the biggest issues will be balancing the needs of this aging population with health care resources. It is a concern that public resources will be stretched, as more and more people become eligible for Medicare. The first wave of Baby Boomers reaches retirement age in 2011.¹

Projected Population of OC Seniors



How Does Orange County Compare?

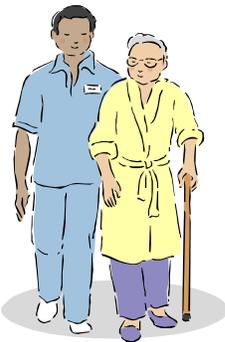
To gain a better understanding of how Orange County is doing in relation to other metropolitan areas with regard to senior health, OCHNA survey data can be directly compared with data from other counties. This is because the OCHNA survey questions were largely based on the national standard Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), which many other counties use in their own assessments.

Data from neighboring and peer counties can serve as good benchmarks by which to directly measure Orange County's progress. Peer counties are metropolitan areas that have economic or demographic characteristics similar to Orange County. Neighboring counties are

☞ To gauge how Orange County is doing, OCHNA survey data can be directly compared with data from other counties.

simply those regions that border on our own county.

Selected questions in this report are compared with Los Angeles County (our closest neighbor) and Santa Clara County (which is similar to Orange County in its ethnic/racial and economic demographics).



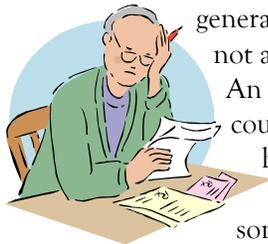
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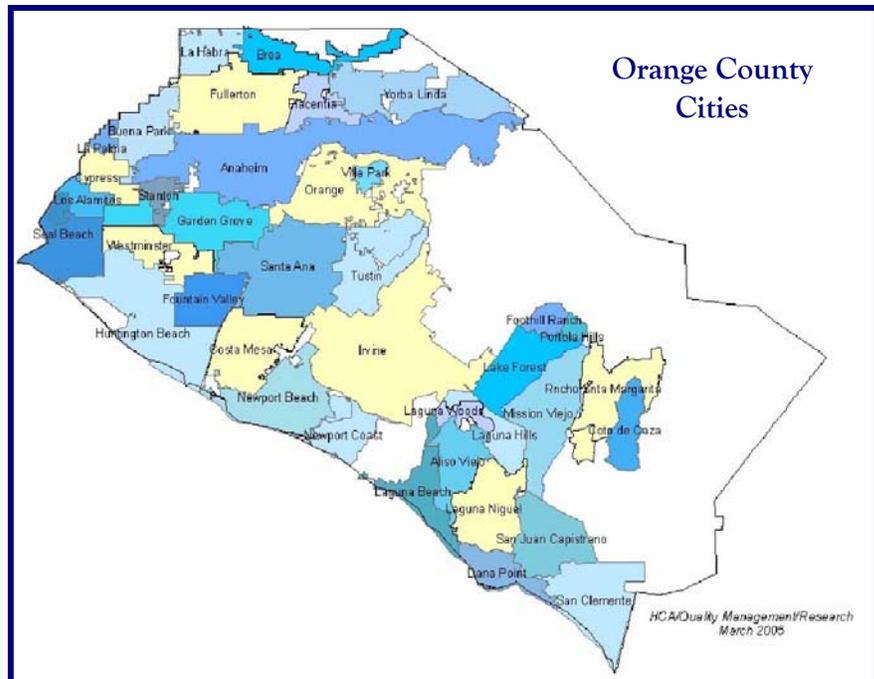
What do Orange County's Seniors Look Like?

Orange County seniors, while less diverse than the county population in general, are certainly not a uniform group. An in depth look at county seniors' health requires that we ask some basic questions about those demographic and socioeconomic factors that affect seniors' ability to live out long and healthy lives in Orange County.

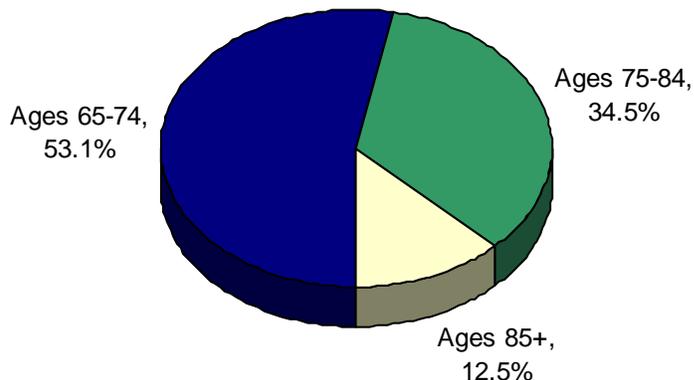


Where do they live?

The majority of older adults reside in higher concentrations in the southeast region of the county compared to other regions, due in part



Age Within Senior Population



to the large amount of residential retirement communities in that part of the county. Older adults can also be found in significant numbers in coastal areas such as Laguna Woods and Seal Beach (which both have Leisure Worlds), Newport Beach, and other coastal regions. The

- Over half of seniors in Orange County were in the younger age bracket.
- Approximately 47% of seniors were ages 75 or older.

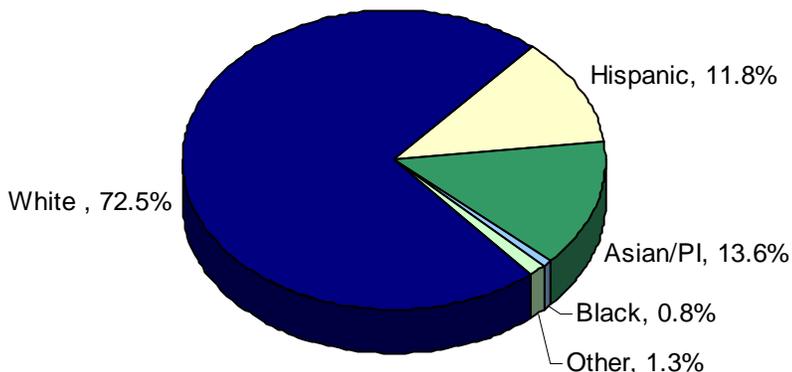
following cities in the central region of Orange County tend to have more low-income minority seniors: Anaheim, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Santa Ana.²

How old are they?

As might be expected, most of Orange

- Just over a quarter of seniors were non-white, compared to 57% among the population as a whole.

Race/Ethnicity Within Senior Population



County's seniors fall into the younger age bracket. More than half are ages 65 to 74.

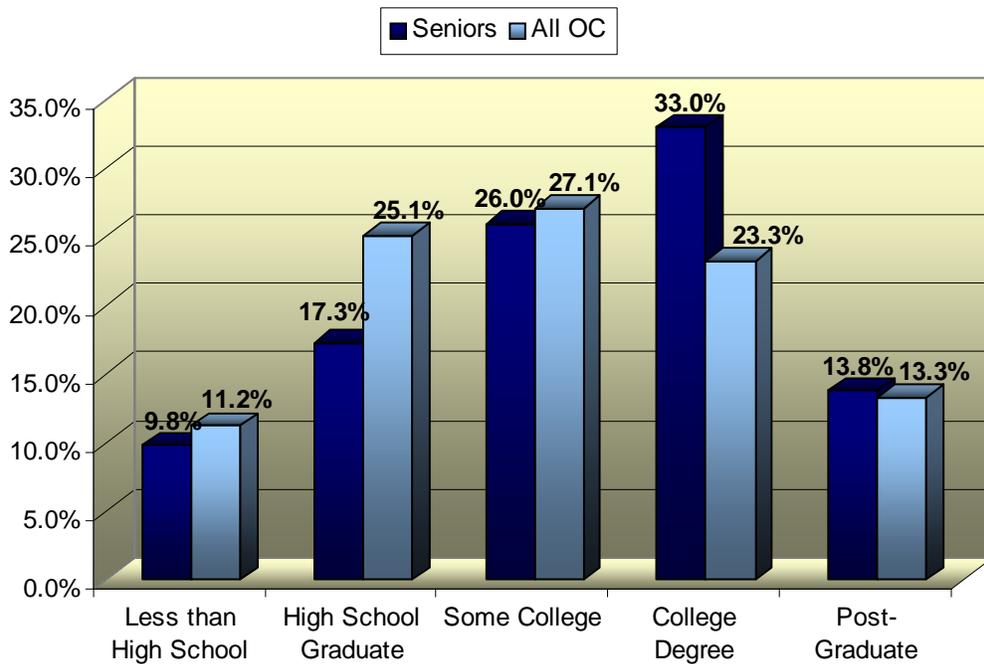
What's their race or ethnicity?

Compared to the rest of Orange County, seniors are less diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. Only about a quarter of seniors are classified as non-white, compared to about 57% among the population as a whole.³

What's their education level?

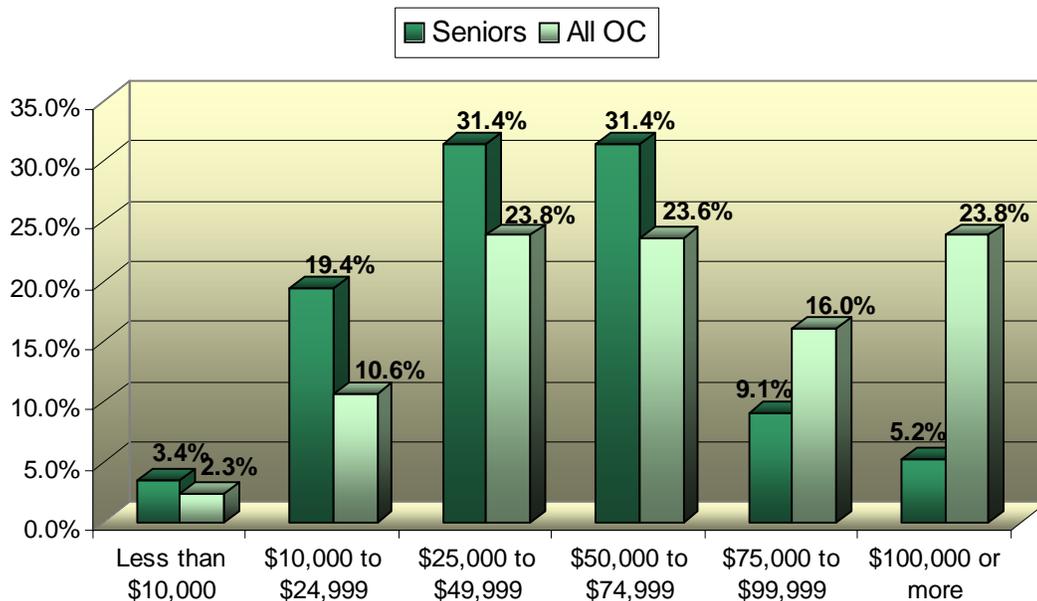
Education is the strongest predictor as to whether a person takes preventive measures in support of their health. Orange County seniors

Education Level Within Senior and General Population



Approximately 43% of those with less than a high school education had not been for a dental checkup in over a year.

Household Income Within Senior and General Population



Approximately 43% of those with less than a high school education had not been for a dental checkup in over a year.

are a fairly well educated group. They have higher levels of education than the Orange County population in general. Close to half of all seniors in the county had completed a degree in higher education.

What's their income?

Many senior citizens live on fixed incomes, such as pensions, social security, or their savings. As such, seniors' incomes in Orange County were lower than average.

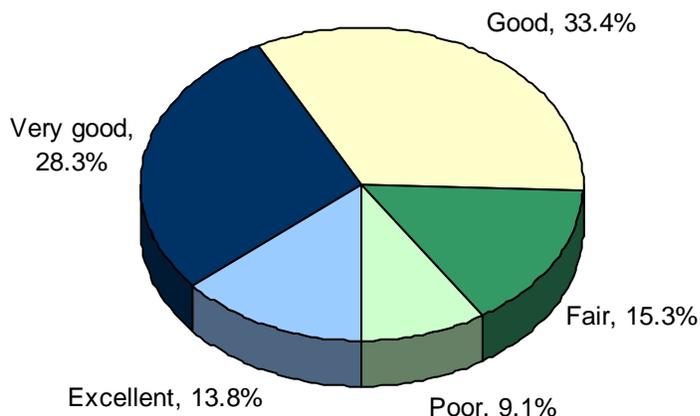
General Health & Prevention

General Health Status

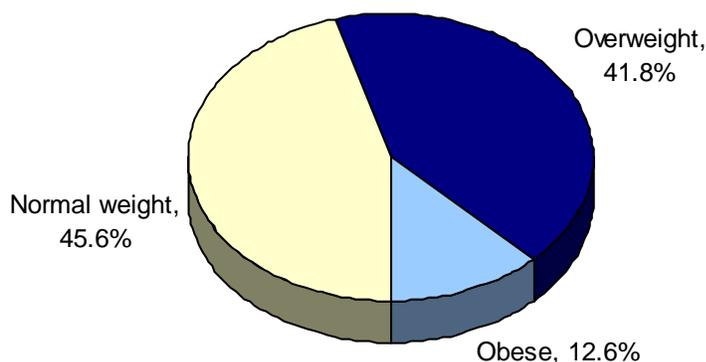
General health status is a tool for describing a person's attitude about their own overall health. Adults ages 65 and older in Orange County were asked to rate their overall health.

- Just over 42% of seniors described their health as being "very good or excellent."
- Close to a quarter of seniors described their health as only being "poor or fair."

General Health Status of Adults Ages 65+



Weight Status of Adults Ages 65+



- Over half (54.4%) of seniors in Orange County were overweight or obese.

Weight Status

As a person gets older, maintaining a healthy weight or losing weight may become more difficult. The metabolism is generally slower in older people, meaning that they burn fewer calories. Calories that were once used to meet daily energy needs are instead stored as fat. In addition, an older person's activity level may lessen, and a more sedentary lifestyle may result in weight gain.⁴

There are a number of serious health problems that are associated with overweight and obesity. For example, overweight and obese adults are more likely to experience problems with arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, liver disease, and mental health conditions.

Mental Health

Like good physical health, good mental health is essential in order to achieve and maintain a high quality of life throughout the aging process. As the population of older Americans grows, the mental health of seniors will become an important priority for those planning future health care services. Seniors are at risk for degenerative mental disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Other common disorders among seniors are depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol addiction.⁵ These disorders may arise in the context of stressful life events such as chronic health problems or the loss of a spouse.

Depression in seniors is often underreported because older people are less likely to spontaneously describe their emotional state to others. In addition, isolation and loneliness are also common problems for older adults.⁶

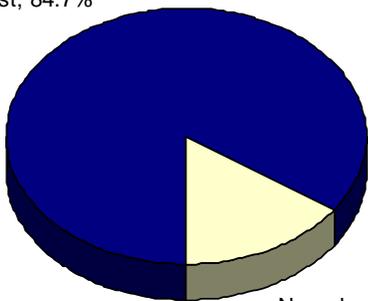
- Most of the seniors (81.1%) indicated that they had "0 or no" days of poor mental health which could include stress, depression, and/or emotional problems.

Preventive Health Behaviors

Chronic conditions and diseases, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and diabetes, are among the most prevalent, costly and preventable of all health problems. To a certain extent, the major chronic disease killers are attributable to lifestyle and environment. In particular, health damaging behaviors such as the use of tobacco, lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, and alcohol misuse can lead to chronic conditions, not to mention decreased quality of life and early death. Effective tools for prevention are available, most notably the detection of disease in its early stages, when treatment is most effective, along with simple lifestyle changes.

Ever Had a Digital Rectal Test Among Men Ages 65+

Ever had a digital rectal test, 84.7%

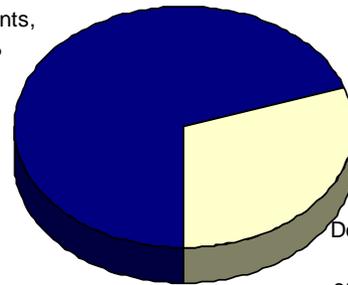


Never had a digital rectal test, 15.3%

- Close to 90% of women ages 65 and over had ever had a clinical breast exam to screen for breast cancer.
- Nearly 85% of men over the age of 65 had ever had a digital rectal test to screen for prostate cancer.
- Nearly 70% of senior women took calcium supplements to help prevent osteoporosis.

Use of Calcium Supplements Among Women Ages 65+

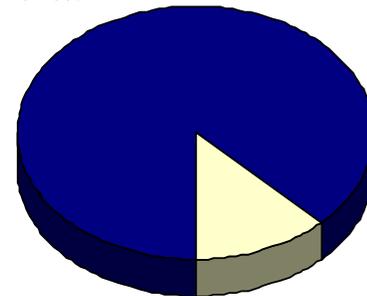
Take calcium supplements, 69.8%



Does not take calcium supplements, 30.2%

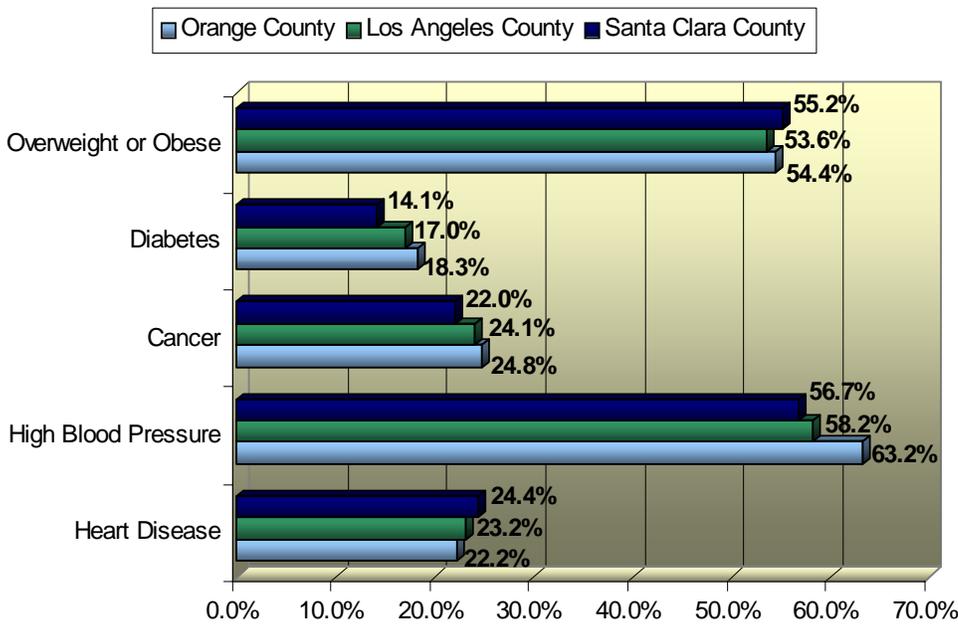
Ever Had a Clinical Breast Exam Among Women Ages 65+

Ever had a clinical breast exam (CBE), 87.5%



Never had CBE, 12.5%

How is Orange County Doing?



Source: OCHNA, CHIS 2003

- Orange County seniors had a higher incidence of diabetes than seniors from either L.A. or Santa Clara counties.
- Local seniors were also more likely to have been diagnosed with cancer.
- While Orange County seniors were more likely to have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, they were less likely to have heart disease.

Utilization of Health Services



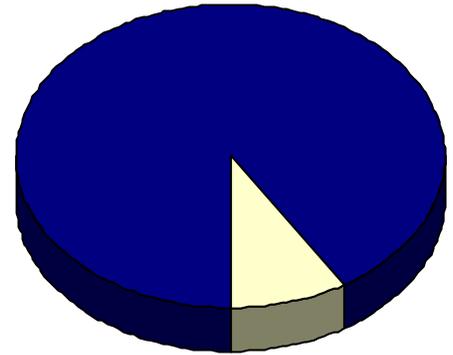
The degree to which all types of health care services are used depends on a number of environmental, social and economic factors that exist within a community. Such factors include the availability and acceptability of medical services offered, the health care system's organizational structure, and individual or community beliefs and attitudes about utilizing health services.

Furthermore, while good health is the primary objective of utilization, the interactions between patient and provider is integral to the overall process of accessing health services.

🔗 A regular relationship with a health care provider is an essential part of maintaining good health. Orange County seniors scored well in this regard: over 90% of seniors had visited their doctor within the last 6 months.

Time Since Last Visited Doctor Among Adults Ages 65+

Visited doctor in less than 6 months, 91.2%



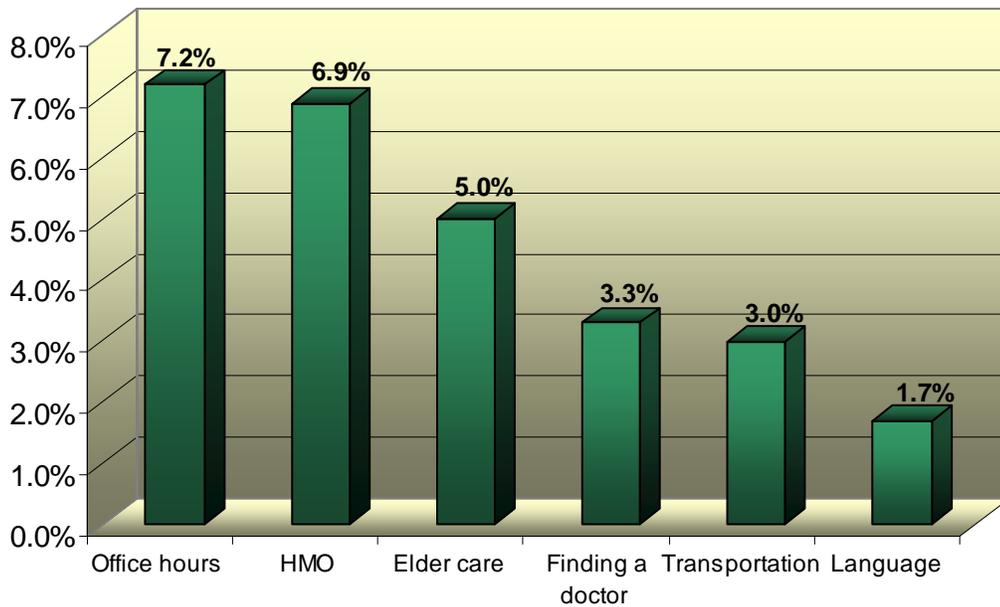
Visited doctor in 6 months or more, 8.8%

Barriers to Obtaining Health Care

There can be a number of potential barriers to overcome when accessing health care. For example, a person may lack coverage, may be unable to afford the cost of care, may lack available transportation, may have difficulty finding an acceptable health care

provider, may experience a lack of respectful, friendly attitudes, or may experience discrimination. Seniors in Orange County were asked to describe, if any, their main sources of difficulty in receiving and obtaining health care services.

Barriers to Obtaining Health Care Among Adults Ages 65+



Health and Safety Concerns

Improvements in medicine, science and technology over the last century have helped more people live longer, healthier lives. If you were born in the early 1900s in the United States, your life expectancy was only about 50 years. Today it's around 77.

Regardless of how long a person lives, time takes a toll on the organs and systems in your body. Some typical changes to expect as aging occurs include the following.

Cardiovascular system

Over time, your heart muscle becomes a less efficient pump, working harder to pump the same amount of blood through your body. In addition, your blood vessels become less elastic. This contributes

to high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and heart disease.

⚡ Aging takes a toll on the organs and systems in the body, increasing the risks for several major diseases and conditions.

Bones, muscles and joints

As you age, your bones shrink in size and density. Gradual loss of density weakens your bones and makes them more susceptible to fracture. The likelihood of osteoporosis also increases.

Brain and nervous system

The number of cells (neurons) in

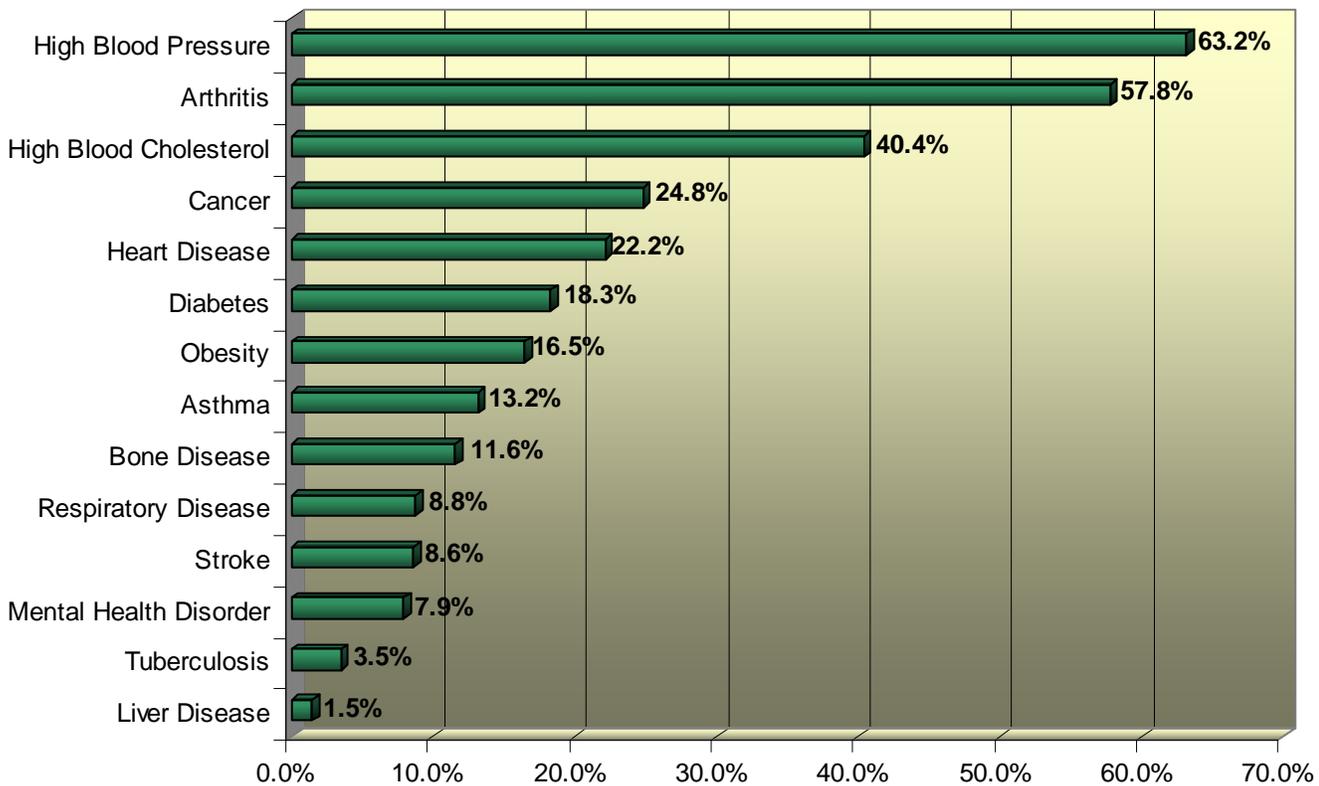
your brain decreases with age, and memory becomes less efficient. This type of deterioration is associated with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Kidneys

With age, the kidneys become less efficient in removing waste from the bloodstream. Chronic conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, and some medications can damage the kidneys further.⁷



Incidence of Major Diseases Among Orange County Seniors



Activities of Daily Life

Many seniors who currently live alone need help from another person in the activities of daily life (ADL). Such assistance can include bathing, dressing, getting into and out of bed, toileting, cleaning, shopping, and getting meals. Other services, often provided by family member caregivers, include chores,

transportation, paying bills and legal assistance. A range of home care services are available to those who find they are less able to care for themselves as they get older. For example, home care services may include skilled health care conducted under the direction of a doctor. It can also include home

dialysis, medical social work and physical therapy. Home support services include tasks such as housecleaning, running errands and preparing meals. For some, these services may be all seniors need to allow them to continue living independently in their own home.⁸

- ☞ Approximately **98%** of senior respondents did not have someone to help them with their daily care. This does not necessarily indicate that seniors were *in need* of someone to help them.
- ☞ Only **2.1%** of respondents reported that someone assisted them with their daily care, a **7.2%** drop from 2001 when **9.3%** of seniors reported that someone helped them with daily care.
- ☞ Almost **77%** of senior respondents indicated that if they were to need help, there was someone available to assist them. The 2001 survey reported **81.4%** of seniors who had available help.

Nutrition

As people age, eating nutritional and well-balanced meals becomes even more critical and can help assure that seniors live longer and more active lives. Some of the benefits of proper nutrition include higher energy levels, increased mental acuteness, a stronger immune system, and faster

recuperation when illness occurs. In general, if seniors get their recommended daily allowance of important vitamins and minerals, they have less health problems.

Community meal programs can provide free or low-cost meals to seniors who qualify. Those seniors who are homebound, ill, or frail

can get a nutritious meal delivered by a volunteer to their door.⁹

- ☞ Almost **99%** of senior respondents indicated that they were getting enough to eat on a daily basis.

Mobility

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), 13,000 people over 65 die each year because of falls.¹¹ Falls are a major health problem among seniors, not only because of the potential for serious injury, but

also because falls are a threat to individual function and independence.

Some seniors choose to avoid activities because of their fear of falling. By stopping their activities,

their physical condition begins to deteriorate, making them more prone to falls.

Each year, thousands of older Americans fall at home.

Many of them are seriously injured, while some are left disabled.¹²



- ☞ Approximately **22%** of senior respondents had fallen within the last year.
- ☞ Of those who had experienced a fall in the last year, almost **48%** were injured as a result.
- ☞ Approximately **24%** of senior respondents reported being concerned about falling.

Elder Maltreatment

Elder maltreatment, or elder abuse, refers to acts of commission or omission that result in harm or threatened harm to the health or welfare of an older adult, occurring within any relationship in which there is an expectation of trust.¹³

The Orange County Office on Aging defines elder abuse more specifically as including self-neglect (the most common form of abuse), relatives or strangers taking financial advantage of seniors, or psychological or physical abuse or

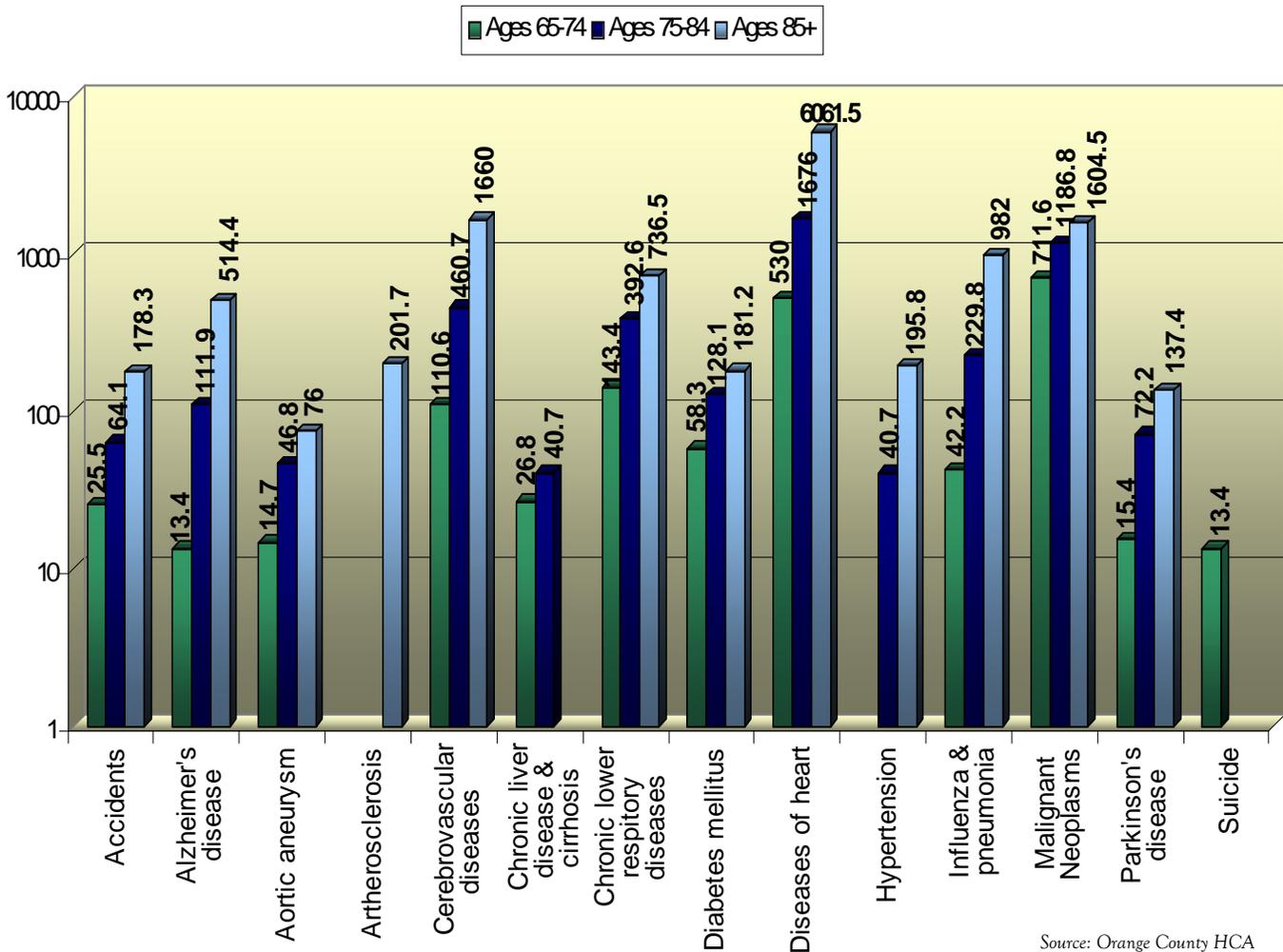
- ✎ Just over 1% of senior respondents indicated that they had been mistreated or neglected physically and/or mentally during the past 12 months.
- ✎ Approximately 10% of senior respondents reported that a merchant, neighbor or family member had taken advantage of them financially.

neglect by a family member.

The incidence of elder abuse cases in Orange County has risen over the last six years. An average of 436 cases per month were reported to the County of Orange Social Services Agency, Adult Protective Services. This is an increase of over 150 cases per month.¹⁴ The increase is due in part to an aging population, increased community awareness, and the reporting of more types of abuse.

Leading Causes of Death for Orange County Seniors

Mortality Rates for Leading Causes of Death Among Seniors by Age Group



Source: Orange County HCA

Health Care Access

Seniors or mature adults, ages 65 and over, are more likely to have healthcare coverage due to the availability of Medicare, a federally funded insurance program. However, 2.2% (6,377) of the senior population in Orange County is uninsured.

State and national data on the number of uninsured older adults is often not reported because they are likely to be enrolled in Medicare. This population, nonetheless, cannot be ignored as they are more likely to experience health issues related to

aging, such as arthritis and osteoporosis, and to have one or more chronic diseases and conditions such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.

☞ A total of 2.2% (6,549) of seniors ages 65 and over lacked health care coverage; this is an alarming number given the assumption that Medicare is generally available to all seniors.

Medicare

Medicare is a federally funded health insurance coverage program for those ages 65 and over. The Medicare plan has two components: parts A and B. Part A helps pay for inpatient hospital, skilled nursing facility, limited home health and hospice care. Medicare part A is an entitlement to seniors if they are receiving or are eligible for retirement benefits (i.e., Social Security), or have earned a minimum of 40 credits in Medicare-covered employment; most people earn 40 credits in 10 years of work.

Part B helps pay for doctors' services and outpatient hospital services. Seniors ages 65 and older who are not automatically eligible for Medicare by employment can be eligible if they are a US citizen or permanent legal resident with 5 years residency in the U.S. They would be able to enroll in Part A, Part B or both; however, a monthly premium would be

required.

There are health care costs that Medicare either does not pay in full or does not pay at all. For example, when a patient goes to the doctor or hospital for services covered by Medicare, they must pay part of the cost. Supplemental insurance, sometimes called "Medigap" insurance, covers those costs that would otherwise be paid for out of pocket.

Some mature adults who have limited income and resources and who qualify for Medicare may also be eligible for Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal helps pay for medically necessary health care, including physician visits, x-rays and laboratory tests, home health care, prescription drugs, and medical equipment. Medi-Cal also assists in paying for Medicare deductibles, co-insurance and the Part B monthly premium.¹⁵

- ☞ Just over 57% of respondents indicated that they had coverage through Medicare.
- ☞ Approximately 15% of seniors had employer-based coverage, either from their own or someone else's employer .
- ☞ Just over 93% of senior respondents had Medicare Part B.
- ☞ Of the 97.8% seniors who indicated that they have health care coverage, approximately 64% of senior respondents had some type of supplemental insurance.
- ☞ 2.1% (5,762) respondents ages 65 and over who indicated that they had health care coverage had Medi-Cal.
- ☞ 69.1% (3,979) of seniors with Medi-Cal were Vietnamese; the high percentage may be partially due to insufficient length of employment in the United States before reaching retirement age.

Dental Coverage

How the teeth and gums respond to age depends on how well they've been cared for over the years. Many persons in the U.S. do not receive essential dental services, such as routine cleanings. These regular dental visits provide an opportunity for the early diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of oral diseases and conditions, as well as the opportunity to learn good dental habits such as brushing regularly and flossing. Adults who do not receive regular professional care can develop oral diseases that eventually require complex treatment.¹⁶ For example, oral cancer is more common among older adults. Your dentist checks for oral cancer when you go for regular cleanings and checkups.

- ☞ Almost 38% of seniors did not have any type of dental coverage.
- ☞ Close to 86% of seniors indicated that they had not avoided getting needed dental work on account of cost.

Vision Coverage

Older adults are significantly more likely to experience vision related problems. With age, eyes are less able to produce tears, the retinas thin and lenses gradually turn yellow and become less clear. Beginning approximately around age 40, focusing on objects that are close up may become more difficult. Later, the colored portions of your eyes (irises) stiffen, making the pupils less responsive. This can make it more difficult to adapt to different levels of light. In addition, cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration are the most common problems of aging eyes. Vision coverage that would help pay for the treatment of these problems is not always included as a regular part of a health care plan.¹⁷

- ☞ Approximately a quarter of adults ages 65 and over lack vision coverage that would pay for routine vision care.
- ☞ Over 95% of seniors indicated that they had not avoided getting needed vision services because of cost.



Prescription Coverage

As with many other facets of health care, advancements in prescription drugs have tremendous potential for improving lives. However, prescription drug costs have skyrocketed and are increasing faster than any other area of health care. In fact, a recent study showed that manufacturer prices for brand name drugs rose 7.1% in 2004; outstripping the average annual rate of general inflation by 4.4%.¹⁸ The issue of prescription coverage is a major issue for seniors, in particular, as the high cost of prescription drugs has become out of reach for many seniors on fixed incomes.

- ☞ More than 40,000, or 14% of seniors lacked prescription coverage.
- ☞ An estimated 270,000, or over 87% of seniors had prescription drugs.

Mental Health Coverage

Mental health coverage pays for mental health services, the goal of which is to provide the treatment and support services needed by adults with mental disorders or emotional problems. Private health coverage may offer some coverage for mental health treatment. However, this treatment often is not paid for at the same rate as other health care costs.¹⁹ Mental health coverage is especially important for the senior population because seniors are at risk for degenerative mental disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

- ☞ Less than one third of seniors, or approximately 62,019 individuals, did not have any mental health coverage.
- ☞ An estimated 25.5% (75,139) of seniors interviewed did not know the meaning or definition of mental health coverage.

Orange County Health Needs Assessment



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About OCHNA

OCHNA is a community based, public-private, not-for-profit collaborative, which serves as the primary source for data on the health needs and well-being of Orange County's 3 million residents. Data from the tri-annual OCHNA survey provides a comprehensive overview of the health status of Orange County and also serves to highlight the unmet health needs of residents. Since 1997, OCHNA has grown into the largest health assessment of its kind at the county level in California.

To obtain a copy of the full-length 2005 Data Report, which contains in-depth data on the health status of seniors in Orange County and a number of other health topics, or if you have any questions, please contact OCHNA.

*Do not regret growing older. It is a
privilege denied to many.
~ Author Unknown*

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