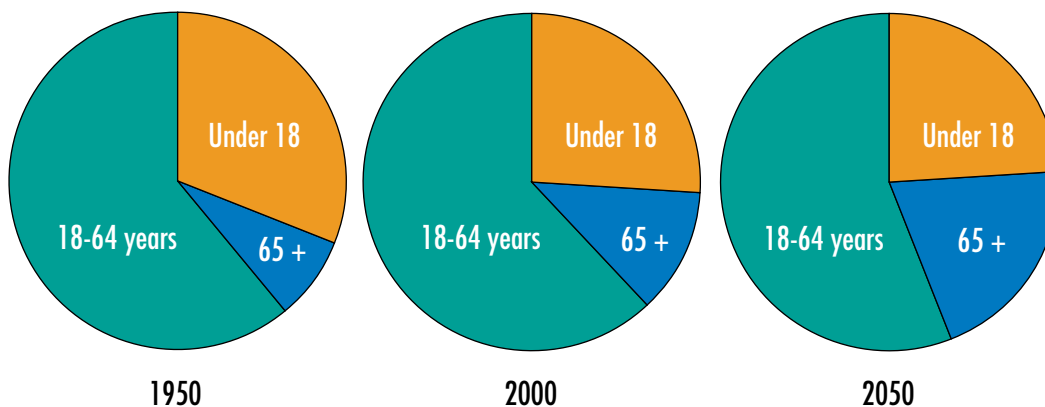


Health status of the population

Figure 2: Percent of population in 3 age groups: United States, 1950, 2000, and 2050.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 and 2000 decennial censuses and 2050 middle series population projections

As the US population continues to grow older, the incidence of chronic disease will increase. At the same time, an increasing percentage of morbidity and mortality is associated with personal behaviors (e.g., diet/inactivity, substance abuse), which mitigates the impact of the significant medical breakthroughs that have eradicated some diseases and improved treatment options for others. The current health care infrastructure was designed to treat acute illness and needs to evolve to more effectively treat chronic illness and address personal behaviors associated with poor health.

Trends

- Americans' average life expectancy continues to rise and reached 77.2 years in 2001.¹⁴ Life expectancy at age 65 also increased. Average life expectancy at age 65 for women is 19 years, up from 12 years, and among men life expectancy at age 65 is 16 years, up from 12.¹⁵
 - The population is aging; the 85+ group is the fastest growing population segment in the US.¹⁶
 - In 2001, U.S. infant mortality rates remained at its 2000 record low of 6.9 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁷
- Currently, 35 million Americans are over age 65 and that number is growing rapidly. By age 65, statistics indicate that individuals have at least one chronic disease (eg, hypertension or arthritis).

In any given year, health care expenditures tend to be concentrated among a relatively small segment of the population. Seniors, who have multiple chronic conditions, use the most drugs, have the highest number of physician visits, and require care by a larger variety of specialists than others in their cohort group.¹⁸

- An increasing percentage of morbidity and mortality relates to personal behaviors and, therefore, is mostly preventable.
 - The leading causes of death are tobacco (400,000), diet/inactivity (300,000), alcohol (100,000), infectious diseases (90,000), toxins (60,000), firearms (35,000), illness associated with sexual behaviors (30,000), vehicles (25,000), and drug abuse (20,000).¹⁹
 - Obesity has become a growing health concern. Approximately 15 percent of children (6-11) and adolescents (12-19) were reported as overweight in 2000, compared to 4.0% in 1970. The increase in overweight status is highest among non-Hispanic black and Mexican-origin adolescents. The number of extremely obese US adults (those 100 pounds over weight) is also growing. Now, about 4 million adults are extremely obese, which equals about 1 in 50 adults. Obesity among adults has increased from 13.3 percent in 1960 to 30.9 percent in 2000. Being overweight substantially elevates the risk of illness from heart disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer.²⁰
 - In 2001, about 38 percent of high school girls and 24 percent of boys did not engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity.²¹
- The number of diseases that can be prevented by immunizations is on the rise. 70,000 people die each year from immune-preventable diseases such as measles and hepatitis B.²²
 - In 2001, 77 percent of children younger than 3 were vaccinated. For children in poor families, the number was only 72 percent.²³
 - In 2001, the percentage of people 65 and over who received the influenza vaccine dropped slightly to 63 percent. The percentage of older Americans receiving the pneumococcal vaccine continues to rise and reached 54 percent. The vaccine protects against the most common type of bacterial pneumonia and only needs to be administered once.²⁴
- Among teen and young adults (15-24 years of age), the leading cause of death is unintentional injuries (45 percent), of which nearly three-quarters are the result of motor-vehicle traffic related injuries. Homicide and suicide are the next two leading causes of death for this age group.²⁵
- Among 45 to 64 year olds, the leading causes of death were cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and chronic lower respiratory diseases. These conditions accounted for 70 percent of all deaths in this age category. In 2001, diabetes was the underlying cause for more than 14,000 deaths. Moreover, diabetes was mentioned as a contributing factor on the death certificates of almost twice as many additional deaths.²⁶
- Of those age 65 and over, heart disease accounted for one-third of all deaths and cancer accounted for one-fifth.²⁷
- In 2002, the percentage of high school students who reported in surveys that they had smoked cigarettes in the last month fell from 34.5 percent in 2000 to 28.4 percent.²⁸
- In 2001, the birthrate for teenage girls was 45 births per 1,000, the lowest rate in more than 60 years.
- Drug resistant diseases are a growing concern.²⁹

Predicted impacts for patients

- With the graying of America, the prevalence of acute illness and chronic disease will increase, placing more pressure on Medicare and Medicaid.
- As Americans age, and more individuals suffer from acute and chronic illnesses, there will be an increased need to provide palliative care, and end-of-life decision-making will become increasingly important. Patients and their families will come to expect, if not demand, these services and care.
- Due to the growing prevalence of chronic conditions, more Americans will require medical care and/or supportive services in their homes.
- Elderly patients with multiple chronic conditions will become increasingly frustrated with the US health care system due to the lack of a system that assures continuity of care.
- If baby boomers are true to form, then they will demand better, more affordable health care.
- Government, employers, and accrediting bodies will require increased accountability for patient outcomes.

Predicted impacts for physicians

- Physicians will see increasing numbers of patients with several chronic diseases. These patients will require improved coordination of care and, therefore, physicians will have to spend more time coordinating patient care. Payment for coordinating care will be an issue. According to the Health Care Advisory Board's research, the physician fees for chronic visits are \$0.40/minute less than acute care visits.
- Due to the aging population, a shortage of intensivists (critical care specialists) and pulmonologists is anticipated by 2007.
- Physicians will experience increased pressure from baby boomers to increase quality and decrease cost of health care.
- Physicians will face increased pressure to practice population-based preventive medicine, (eg, administering immunizations, reducing personal risk-taking, and detecting risk factors).
- Physicians will be treating patients with pre-symptomatic illness, diffusing the age specific orientation to diseases and moving disease management to a life time coordination of care.
- Physicians will need expanded education regarding the impact of the Human Genome Project on human health, the appropriate use of genetic testing, and the provision of adequate counseling and support for patients regarding test results. The importance of being informed on ethical, legal, and social implications of genetic testing will increase.
- CME will increasingly be important because of the Human Genome project, increased patient access to health information and direct marketing by pharmaceutical companies to patients.

Other predicted impacts

- Public health programs at all levels will be under increased pressure to expand their activities.