

SPOTLIGHT: IMPACT OF UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APRIL 2016

The full report is available at
www.americashealthrankings.org

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

A significant amount of research has focused on people with one or more chronic medical conditions and the individual unhealthy behaviors that often lead to chronic diseases. Less research has focused on the impact of unhealthy behaviors on a person's health status. These behaviors are often associated with many of the most problematic chronic diseases affecting the population.

More than 70% of adults in the United States have at least one of the following unhealthy behaviors: smoking, excessive drinking, insufficient sleep, physical inactivity, and obesity. *America's Health Rankings® Spotlight: Impact of Unhealthy Behaviors* looks at the population of U.S. adults who have these unhealthy behaviors – with a specific focus on those individuals who have multiple (defined as three or more) unhealthy behaviors – and examines the prevalence of multiple unhealthy behaviors by geography and demographics, as well as the impact multiple behaviors have on health status.

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING #1

The prevalence of unhealthy behaviors varies widely among the adult population in the U.S.. 72.0% of adults have at least one unhealthy behavior, while more than 25 million (12.0%) have three or more unhealthy behaviors.

FINDING #2

The odds of having fair or poor health status increase with the addition of each unhealthy behavior studied. Adults in the U.S. with three or more unhealthy behaviors are 6.1 times more likely to have fair or poor health than those who have zero unhealthy behaviors.

FINDING #3

Education and income have a protective effect on the likelihood of having multiple unhealthy behaviors among adults aged 25 and older. For example, adults aged 25 and older making less than \$25,000/year are more likely to have multiple unhealthy behaviors than those at higher income levels. Similarly, adults who have not graduated from high school are more likely to have multiple unhealthy behaviors than those with higher education levels.

FINDING #4

The percent of college graduates aged 25 and older who have multiple unhealthy behaviors is relatively consistent across states. However, the prevalence rate for multiple unhealthy behaviors among adults who have not graduated from high school varies widely by geography.

The prevalence of adults with three or more unhealthy behaviors varies widely among states.

KEY FINDING #1

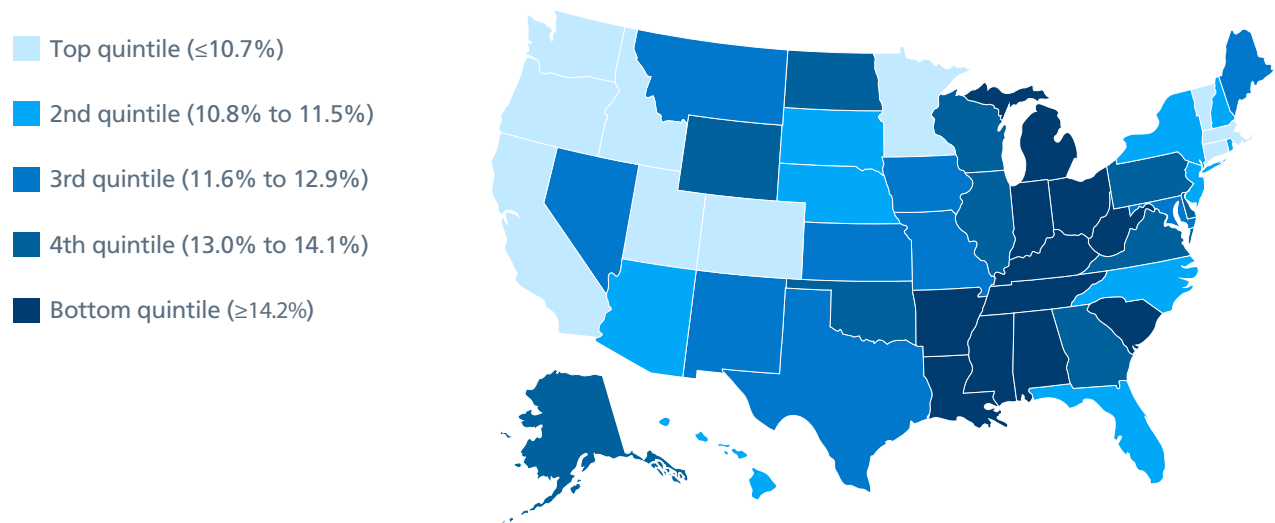
The prevalence of unhealthy behaviors varies widely among the adult population in the U.S. 72.0% of adults have at least one unhealthy behavior, while more than 25 million (12.0%) have three or more unhealthy behaviors.

12% OF THE COUNTRY HAS 3+ UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS

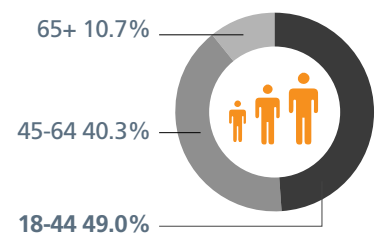
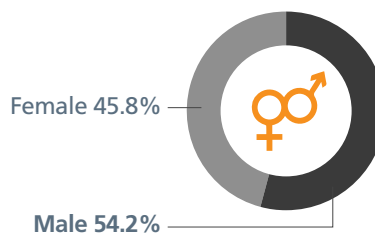
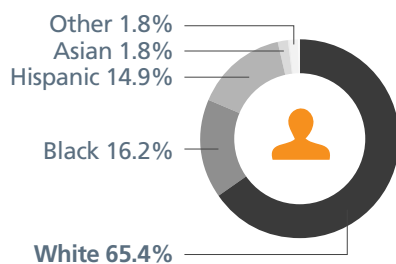


Where Do They Live?

Percent of State Population with 3+ Unhealthy Behaviors



Who Are The 12%?



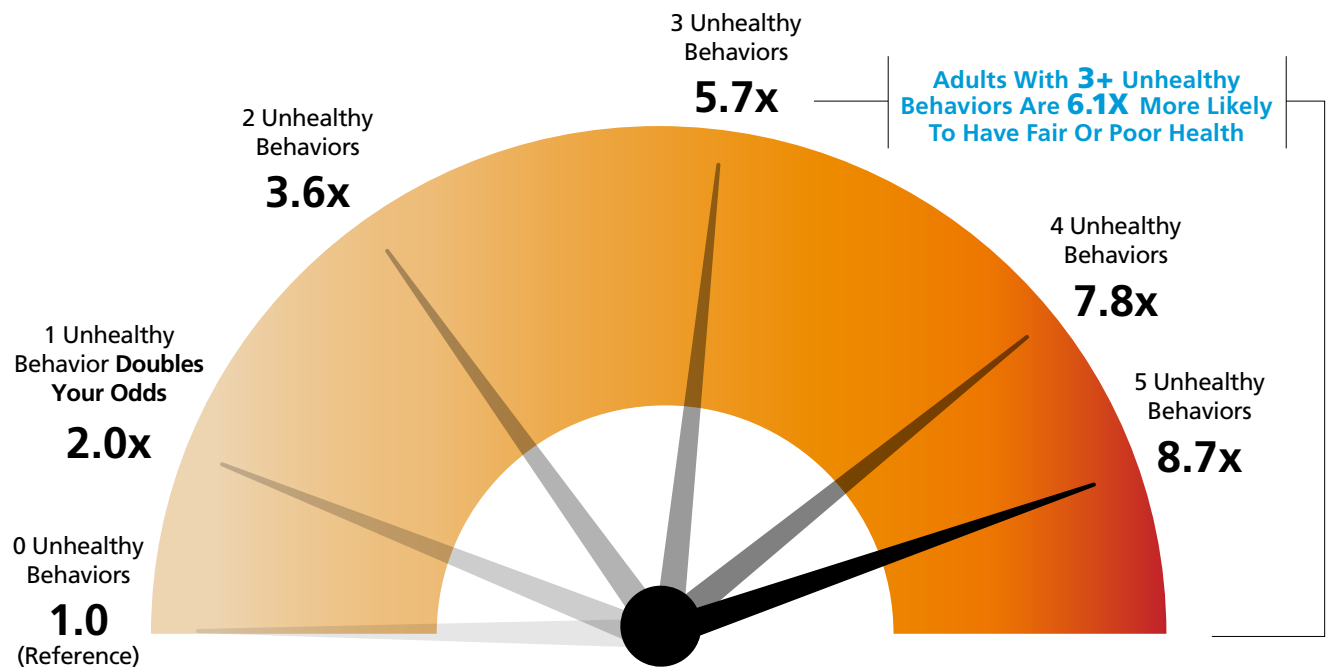
All responses coded as "don't know," "not sure," "refused," or "missing" for all variables were excluded.

Multiple unhealthy behaviors and fair or poor health status are strongly associated.

KEY FINDING #2

The odds of having fair or poor health status increase with the addition of each unhealthy behavior studied. Adults in the U.S. with three or more unhealthy behaviors are 6.1 times more likely to have fair or poor health than those who have zero unhealthy behaviors.

ADDITIONAL UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS INCREASE ODDS OF HAVING FAIR OR POOR HEALTH

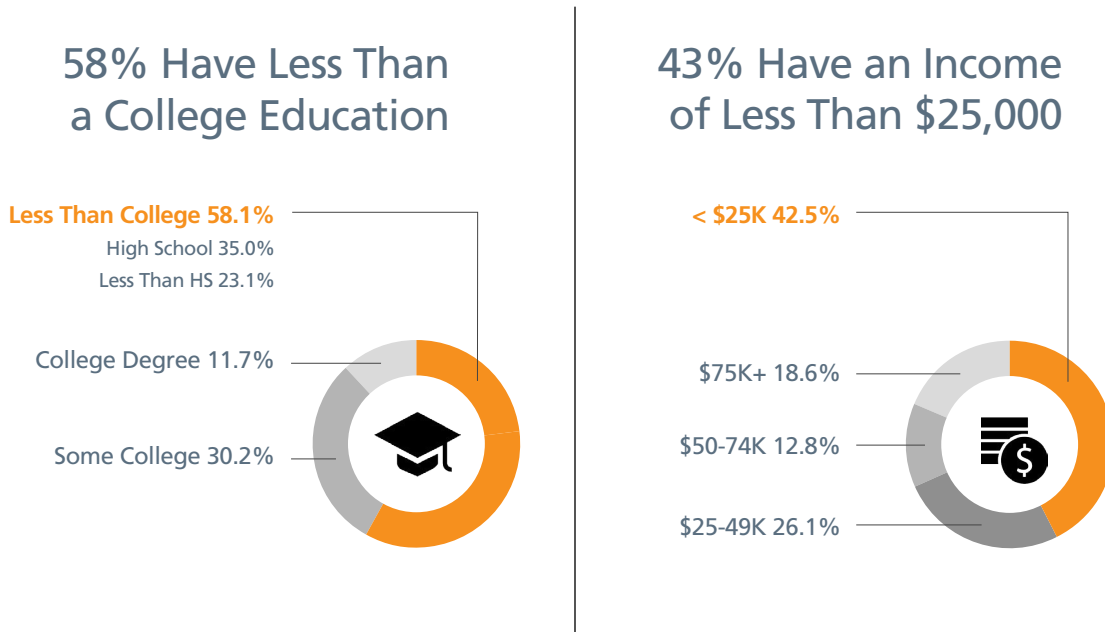


The prevalence of multiple unhealthy behaviors differs greatly by income level and education level among adults aged 25 and older.

KEY FINDING #3

Education and income have a protective effect on the likelihood of having multiple unhealthy behaviors among adults aged 25 and older. For example, adults aged 25 and older making less than \$25,000/year are more likely to have multiple unhealthy behaviors than those at higher income levels. Similarly, adults who have not graduated from high school are more likely to have multiple unhealthy behaviors than those with higher education levels.

WHO ARE THE 12%?



Data represents adults age 25 or older

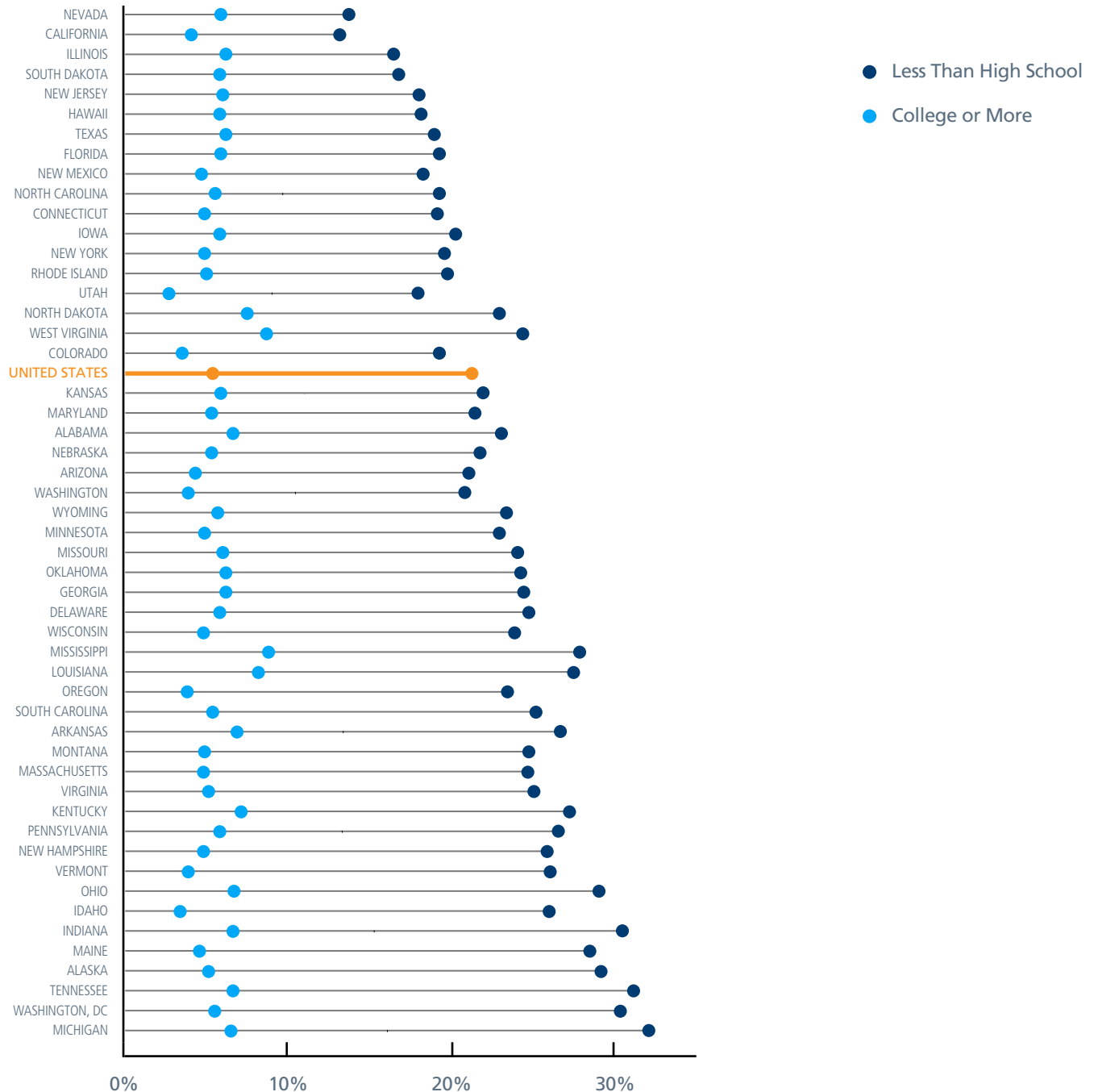
All responses coded as "don't know," "not sure," "refused," or "missing" for all variables were excluded.

The gap in prevalence of multiple unhealthy behaviors between adults with less than a high school diploma and college graduates varies by state.

KEY FINDING #4

The percent of college graduates aged 25 and older who have multiple unhealthy behaviors is relatively consistent across states. However, the prevalence rate for multiple unhealthy behaviors among adults who have not graduated from high school varies widely by geography.

RATE OF 3+ UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS BY EDUCATION LEVEL



States are ordered by the size of the difference between the two rates

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Unhealthy behaviors are associated with negative health outcomes such as heart disease and other chronic conditions, as well as higher health care spending. The association of multiple unhealthy behaviors with the increased odds of fair or poor health underscores the importance of taking action to reduce the prevalence of unhealthy behaviors and help individuals better manage their health.

Focusing public health resources and interventions on individuals with the highest risk of poor health – the **12% of adults** with multiple unhealthy behaviors – may have a substantial impact on health risks, outcomes, and costs.

In addition, the data imply that **educational attainment** is an important predictor of the prevalence of unhealthy behaviors. This suggests both opportunities to improve educational attainment as a public health strategy as well as opportunities to target public health interventions to specific sub-populations.



For more information, contact:

Ianthe Zabel

United Health Foundation

(952) 936-1771

ianthe_zabel@uhg.com

To read the full version of *Spotlight: Impact of Unhealthy Behaviors*
or explore more research from America's Health Rankings®,

<http://www.americashealthrankings.org/Spotlight/unhealthybehaviors>

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

