

California African Americans and Aging

Approximately 200,000 non-Latino African American women and men in California are of retirement age (65 and over). Another 400,000 are of pre-retirement age (between 50 and 64). These groups represent 6 percent of California's 50-64 population, 5 percent of its 65 and over population, and, when combined, 2 percent of its total population. This Short Subject presents information from the most recent California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)¹ about the health risk factors, economic security, and health-related caregiving of older California African Americans and considers differences across levels of educational attainment.

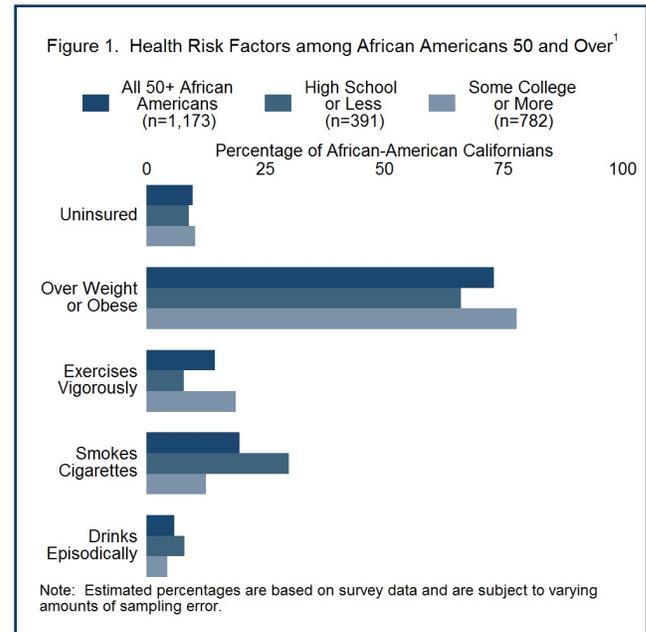
HEALTH RISK FACTORS

Figure 1 presents information about some health-related risk factors, ranging from insurance coverage to exercise, that may impact healthy aging.

Approximately 10 percent of California's African Americans over the age of 50 are uninsured. Because most California residents are eligible for Medicare when they turn 65, the majority of the uninsured are between the ages of 50 and 64. Coverage rates vary little with educational attainment.

Estimates also suggest that roughly 75 percent of California African Americans 50 years old and over are overweight or obese and that fewer than 15 percent report exercising vigorously. There are notable differences with regard to obesity, exercise, and education. Even though those who have at least some college are more likely to be overweight, this same group is also more likely to exercise.

California's African Americans who have a high school degree or less are more than twice as likely to smoke cigarettes as those with at least some college. And as a group, older African Americans are almost twice as likely to smoke cigarettes as older Californians in other race/ethnic categories. While drinking (consumption of at least four alcoholic drinks for women and five for

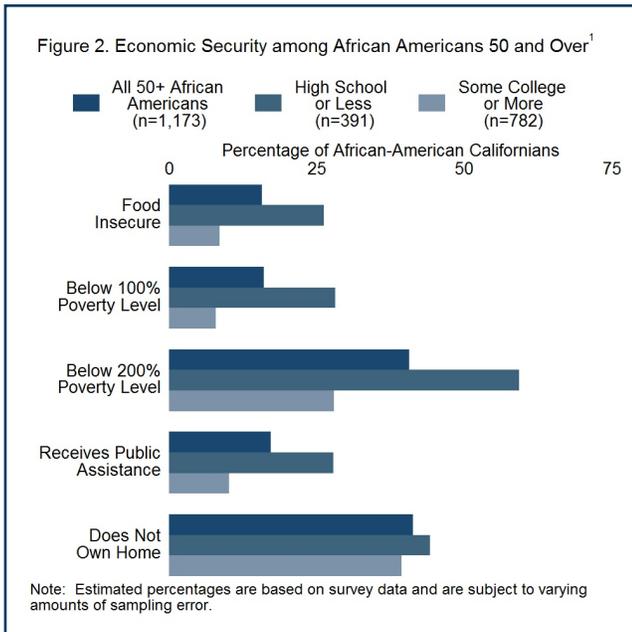


men in a day at least once per month) appears more prevalent among those with less education, the difference in these data is not statistically significant.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Figure 2 provides data about the economic security of California African Americans over the age of 50. Based on estimates from the CHIS data, about 15 percent of this group are food insecure (e.g., cannot afford to purchase sufficient food and eat balanced meals) and/or are in poverty. Roughly 40 percent live below 200 percent of the poverty level, a threshold that is roughly comparable to the California Elder Economic Security Standard Index average. With about 17 percent receiving aid through TANF, CalWORKs, SSI, and/or food stamps, older African Americans are 2.5 times as likely as other older Californians from different race/ethnic categories to receive aid through these programs.

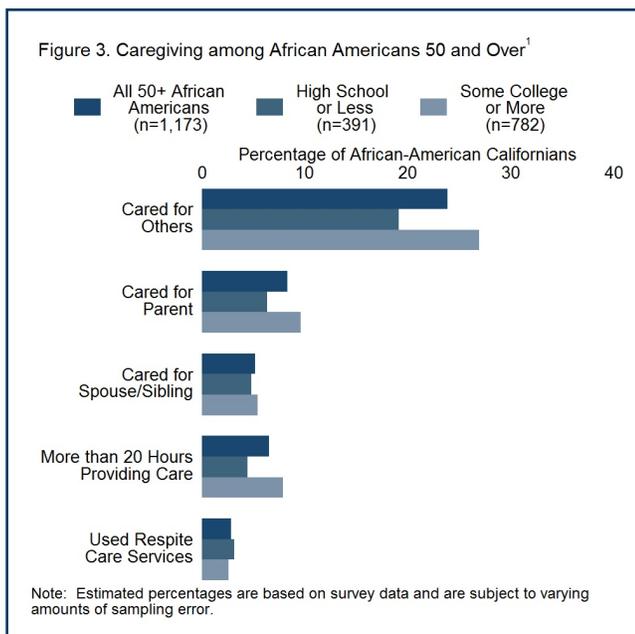
Economic security is also related to educational attainment. Older African Americans who did not go to college are between two and four times as likely to



have food insecurity, lower incomes, and receive public assistance as are those with at least some college.

INFORMAL CAREGIVING

Informal caregiving is an important dimension of healthy aging as many individuals age 50 and over provide or receive care for long-term illnesses or disabilities. Among the African American CHIS participants age 50 and over, nearly 25 percent provide care to friends or family members at some time during the year (Figure 3). As a group, they are equally likely to report providing care as are other older Californians from different race/ethnic categories.



Around 8 percent report spending more than 20 hours a week providing care and fewer than 3 percent use respite care services. While it appears that the burden of care as measured by time spent caregiving and/or not employing respite services falls heaviest on those with higher levels of education, the differences observed in the 2009 CHIS data are not statistically significant.

From the CHIS data we can infer that at least 50,000 California African Americans over the age of 50 receive informal care because 8 percent of respondents indicated that they provide care to a parent. Notably, this inference assumes that the parents receiving care are also African American.

Similarly, the most recent American Community Survey estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that more than 100,000 California African Americans over the age of 50 have disabilities that limit their ability to live independently.² It is likely that many of these people receive some support from friends and family.

FURTHER READING

Susan C. Reinhard, Carol Levine, and Sarah Samis, *Family Caregivers Providing Complex Chronic Care*, AARP and United Hospital Fund, 2012.

REFERENCES

- 1 California Health Interview Survey. CHIS 2009 Adult Public Use File, (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, November 2012).
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

This Short Subject was requested by Assembly Member Mariko Yamada, Chair of the Committee on Aging and Long-term Care.

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