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Health Practices Among Adults: United States, 1977^a

A study of the relationship between personal health practices and health consequences was conducted in Alameda County, California, in 1965 by the Human Population Laboratory of the California State Department of Public Health.¹ Findings indicated a positive relationship between good health practices and physical health status. A 9-year followup study, examining mortality rates among the original sample of 6,928 adults, showed a strong inverse relationship between the total number of good health practices reported in 1965 and age-specific mortality rates.² Seven good health practices were identified in this study: (1) sleeping an average of 7-8 hours a night; (2) eating breakfast almost every day; (3) seldom, if ever, eating snacks; (4) controlling one's weight (weighing within 5 percent under and 19.9 percent over the desirable standard weight, if male, or weighing not more than 9.9 percent over the desirable standard weight, if female); (5) exercising: engaging in active sports, swimming, taking long walks, gardening, or doing physical exercises; (6) limiting alcohol consumption to less than five drinks at one sitting; and (7) never having smoked cigarettes. Persons reporting six or seven of these health practices were shown to have better health status and to live longer than persons reporting less than four of them.

In 1977 the National Health Interview Survey included a supplement designed to obtain data on the prevalence of seven preventive health practices among the noninstitutionalized U.S. population aged 20 years and over. The ques-

tions on health practices, modified somewhat from those of the Alameda County study, included (1) average number of hours of sleep per night; (2) frequency of eating breakfast; (3) frequency of eating snacks; (4) physical activity level relative to one's peers; (5) frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption; (6) smoking status (never smoked, former smoker, or current smoker) and amount smoked; and (7) body weight as compared with desirable body weight (weight for height). This report presents data on persons 20 years of age and over for these seven practices, by sex, race or ethnicity, age, income, and education.

SLEEPING

Data on sleeping practices are presented in table 1. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents reported getting an average of 7-8 hours of sleep a night, with about 2 in 10 reporting 6 hours of sleep or less. Nearly identical proportions of men and women reported sleeping 7-8 hours a night. Proportionately more men reported sleeping 6 hours or less, while proportionately more women reported sleeping 9 hours or more.

Slight differences in sleeping habits were found among white, black, and Hispanic respondents. About 68 percent of white respondents reported sleeping 7-8 hours a night, in contrast to about 61 percent of Hispanic respondents and 56 percent of black respondents.

EATING BREAKFAST

Estimates of breakfast-eating habits of the U.S. population are shown in table 2. A majority of persons (58.1 percent) reported eating breakfast every day, about 16 percent reported eating

^aThis report was prepared by Charlotte A. Schoenborn, M.P.H., and Kathleen M. Danchik, Division of Analysis.

Table 1. Total population 20 years of age and over and percent distribution of persons 20 years of age and over by average number of hours of sleep a night, according to selected characteristics: United States, 1977

Characteristic	Total population 20 years of age and over ¹	Hours of sleep				
		Total ²	6 or less	7	8	9 or more
All persons 20 years of age and over.....	139,959	100.0	21.7	27.9	37.8	12.5
<u>Sex</u>						
Male.....	65,798	100.0	23.3	29.8	35.8	11.1
Female.....	74,162	100.0	20.4	26.4	39.5	13.7
<u>Race or ethnicity</u>						
White.....	108,055	100.0	20.5	29.4	38.2	11.9
Black.....	13,544	100.0	28.2	21.2	34.3	16.2
Hispanic.....	6,192	100.0	24.5	19.5	41.3	14.7
<u>Age</u>						
20-34 years.....	51,230	100.0	20.2	28.9	38.2	12.6
35-44 years.....	23,106	100.0	21.9	31.2	37.7	9.2
45-54 years.....	23,190	100.0	23.0	31.5	36.8	8.8
55-64 years.....	20,166	100.0	22.8	25.4	38.6	13.3
65 years and over.....	22,266	100.0	22.7	21.2	37.5	18.6
<u>Income</u>						
Less than \$5,000.....	18,020	100.0	27.0	20.4	35.2	17.3
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	25,965	100.0	21.4	24.4	38.6	15.5
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	26,564	100.0	21.4	28.8	38.9	10.9
\$15,000-\$24,999.....	34,630	100.0	20.8	31.7	37.8	9.7
\$25,000 or more.....	21,679	100.0	19.3	33.6	38.0	9.2
<u>Education of individual</u>						
Less than 12 years.....	44,430	100.0	25.3	21.3	37.0	16.4
12 years.....	50,957	100.0	20.8	29.0	38.7	11.5
More than 12 years.....	42,349	100.0	19.1	33.8	37.7	9.3

¹Includes unknowns.²Excludes unknown hours of sleep.

breakfast sometimes, and about 26 percent said they never eat breakfast. There are almost no differences in this practice between men and women. A pattern emerges, however, with respect to age. The proportion of people eating breakfast every day increases steadily with advancing age, from about 42 percent for those 20-34 years of age to about 86 percent for those 65 years and over.

There are also differences in breakfast-eating habits according to race or ethnicity. About 60 percent of white respondents and about 56 per-

cent of Hispanic respondents reported that they eat breakfast every day, while only 47 percent of black respondents reported regular breakfast-eating habits. Approximately 26 percent of black respondents and about 23 percent of Hispanic respondents reported that they sometimes eat breakfast, in contrast to 14.3 percent of white respondents. About equal proportions of black and white persons reported that they never eat breakfast (27.8 percent and 25.9 percent, respectively), compared with a smaller proportion of Hispanic persons (21.6 percent).

People in the lower income categories are relatively more likely to eat breakfast than those at the higher end of the income spectrum. Approximately 65 percent of those with incomes of less than \$5,000 reported eating breakfast every day, while only about 53 percent of persons with incomes of \$15,000-\$24,999 reported similar behavior. The proportion of persons eating breakfast every day rises slightly in the highest income category, to approximately 57 percent. The proportion of persons reporting

that they sometimes eat breakfast remains relatively constant across all income groups.

EATING SNACKS

Table 3 shows that among American adults, approximately 38 percent eat snacks every day, about 27 percent sometimes snack, and about 35 percent never snack. The practice of eating between meals, like the practice of eating breakfast, appears to be related to age. The per-

Table 2. Percent distribution of persons 20 years of age and over by frequency of eating breakfast, according to selected characteristics: United States, 1977

Characteristic	Eats breakfast:			
	Total ¹	Every day	Sometimes	Never
All persons 20 years of age and over.....	100.0	58.1	15.9	26.1
<u>Sex</u>				
Male.....	100.0	57.3	15.8	27.0
Female.....	100.0	58.7	15.9	25.4
<u>Race or ethnicity</u>				
White.....	100.0	59.8	14.3	25.9
Black.....	100.0	46.6	25.6	27.8
Hispanic.....	100.0	55.8	22.6	21.6
<u>Age</u>				
20-34 years.....	100.0	41.6	22.7	35.8
35-44 years.....	100.0	49.3	18.3	32.4
45-54 years.....	100.0	61.5	14.1	24.3
55-64 years.....	100.0	73.1	9.5	17.4
65 years and over.....	100.0	86.2	5.7	8.0
<u>Income</u>				
Less than \$5,000.....	100.0	64.9	14.8	20.3
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	100.0	59.6	15.3	25.1
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	100.0	56.4	16.8	26.8
\$15,000-\$24,999.....	100.0	53.3	17.2	29.5
\$25,000 or more.....	100.0	56.5	15.3	28.1
<u>Education of individual</u>				
Less than 12 years.....	100.0	62.2	14.5	23.3
12 years.....	100.0	54.0	17.1	28.9
More than 12 years.....	100.0	58.2	15.9	25.9

¹Excludes unknown breakfast-eating habits.

NOTE: See table 1 for population.

Table 3. Percent distribution of persons 20 years of age and over by frequency of eating snacks, according to selected characteristics: United States, 1977

Characteristic	Eats snacks:			
	Total ¹	Every day	Sometimes	Never
All persons 20 years of age and over.....	100.0	38.0	27.4	34.7
<u>Sex</u>				
Male.....	100.0	40.1	25.4	34.4
Female.....	100.0	36.3	28.9	34.8
<u>Race or ethnicity</u>				
White.....	100.0	38.4	26.9	34.7
Black.....	100.0	37.0	29.1	34.0
Hispanic.....	100.0	34.2	30.6	35.1
<u>Age</u>				
20-34 years.....	100.0	43.2	31.7	25.1
35-44 years.....	100.0	40.5	29.1	30.4
45-54 years.....	100.0	36.6	26.4	37.1
55-64 years.....	100.0	34.6	22.7	42.7
65 years and over.....	100.0	28.3	21.1	50.5
<u>Income</u>				
Less than \$5,000.....	100.0	33.9	25.3	40.8
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	100.0	37.2	27.6	35.3
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	100.0	39.6	28.8	31.6
\$15,000-\$24,999.....	100.0	40.7	28.0	31.2
\$25,000 or more.....	100.0	38.6	26.7	34.7
<u>Education of individual</u>				
Less than 12 years.....	100.0	35.8	24.9	39.3
12 years.....	100.0	39.7	28.5	31.8
More than 12 years.....	100.0	38.2	28.6	33.3

¹Excludes unknown snacking habits.

NOTE: See table 1 for population.

cent of persons reporting that they snack every day declines from about 43 percent of those aged 20-34 years to about 28 percent of those 65 years of age and over. The proportion of people reporting that they sometimes eat snacks similarly declines—from approximately 3 in 10 in the youngest group to about 2 in 10 among those 65 years of age and over. Together, the data on breakfast eating and snacking indicate that regular eating habits (eating breakfast every day and avoiding snacks) are positively associated with age.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The physical activity measure used in the National Health Interview Survey (table 4) provides only a rough approximation of the level of physical activity in the adult population. Respondents were asked to rate their own level of physical activity relative to other persons their age: more active, about as active, or less active. About half of the respondents judged their own activity level to be about the same as that of their peers, with slightly less than 4 in 10 saying they are more active than others. Among women, 54 percent indicated they are about as active as others their age; about 46 percent of men gave this response. Proportionately more men than women (42.1 percent and 33.3 percent, respectively) reported that they are more active than their peers. The self-perceived level of physical activity exhibits a positive relationship to income. As income level increases, the percent of persons who indicated that they are more active than their peers increases, and the percent of persons indicating that they are less active decreases.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Estimates of the frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption are shown in table 5. Respondents were asked: "How often do you drink wine (beer, liquor)—never, occasionally, once or twice a week, or more than twice a week?" Separate questions were asked for each type of alcoholic beverage. The data in table 5 reflect the consumption frequency of the most frequently consumed beverage. Persons who stated that they drink two or three types of alcohol once or twice a week may be misclassified in this analysis. A person who drinks beer twice a week

Table 4. Percent distribution of persons 20 years of age and over by physical activity level relative to persons of same age, according to selected characteristics: United States, 1977

Characteristic	Physical activity level			
	Total ¹	More active	Same	Less active
All persons 20 years of age and over.....	100.0	37.2	50.5	12.3
<u>Sex</u>				
Male.....	100.0	42.1	46.2	11.7
Female.....	100.0	33.3	54.0	12.7
<u>Race or ethnicity</u>				
White.....	100.0	38.6	49.9	11.5
Black.....	100.0	30.2	53.4	16.4
Hispanic.....	100.0	33.8	51.1	15.2
<u>Age</u>				
20-34 years.....	100.0	33.6	56.2	10.2
35-44 years.....	100.0	38.2	51.5	10.2
45-54 years.....	100.0	35.6	52.4	12.0
55-64 years.....	100.0	37.0	45.9	17.1
65 years and over.....	100.0	44.7	40.1	15.2
<u>Income</u>				
Less than \$5,000.....	100.0	31.1	47.5	21.5
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	100.0	34.6	50.4	15.0
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	100.0	36.8	52.9	10.3
\$15,000-\$24,999.....	100.0	38.4	52.8	8.9
\$25,000 or more.....	100.0	44.9	47.3	7.7
<u>Education of individual</u>				
Less than 12 years.....	100.0	32.2	51.4	16.5
12 years.....	100.0	36.5	52.7	10.8
More than 12 years.....	100.0	43.4	47.2	9.4

¹Excludes unknown physical activity level.

NOTE: See table 1 for population.

and wine once a week, for example, is classified here as drinking "once or twice a week," while in fact he drinks three times a week. The magnitude of the potential error is small, however, with a maximum possible misclassification of only about 2½ percent of the adults who drink alcohol.

The data on quantity are based on responses to the questions: "When you drink wine (beer, liquor), how many drinks do you have at one sitting?" and "On any one occasion during the

Table 5. Percent distribution of persons 20 years of age and over by frequency of alcohol consumption and percent of persons who drink alcohol who consumed 5 or more drinks at one sitting in past year, according to selected characteristics: United States, 1977

Characteristic	Alcohol consumption					
	Total ¹	Never	Occasionally	1 or 2 times a week	3 or more times a week	5 or more drinks at one sitting
All persons 20 years of age and over.....	100.0	28.6	41.9	15.5	14.0	29.4
	Percent distribution					Percent of persons who drink alcohol
<u>Sex</u>						
Male.....	100.0	21.5	35.9	20.2	22.5	43.1
Female.....	100.0	34.2	46.7	11.8	7.3	18.5
<u>Race or ethnicity</u>						
White.....	100.0	26.2	42.7	15.9	15.2	30.3
Black.....	100.0	34.1	40.2	15.2	10.5	26.4
Hispanic.....	100.0	32.1	43.2	15.3	9.4	32.2
<u>Age</u>						
20-34 years.....	100.0	18.9	47.3	19.5	14.3	43.1
35-44 years.....	100.0	24.5	43.5	17.3	14.7	33.7
45-54 years.....	100.0	27.3	40.7	14.8	17.2	26.7
55-64 years.....	100.0	36.0	37.7	12.6	13.6	18.4
65 years and over.....	100.0	48.6	33.3	8.2	9.9	7.2
<u>Income</u>						
Less than \$5,000.....	100.0	46.2	35.0	10.3	8.5	20.4
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	100.0	34.3	40.9	13.6	11.2	26.2
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	100.0	26.4	44.6	16.1	12.9	32.2
\$15,000-\$24,999.....	100.0	21.1	45.5	17.1	16.3	33.4
\$25,000 or more.....	100.0	14.9	42.5	20.7	21.9	36.8
<u>Education of individual</u>						
Less than 12 years.....	100.0	42.1	35.2	12.0	10.7	22.1
12 years.....	100.0	25.7	45.5	15.6	13.2	31.1
More than 12 years.....	100.0	17.0	45.0	19.2	18.8	35.4

¹Excludes alcohol consumption.

NOTE: See table 1 for population.

past 12 months, did you have five or more drinks of wine, beer, or liquor?" The data on quantity reflect the proportion of persons who had five or more drinks at any one sitting during the past 12 months. No distinction can be made between the habitual heavy drinker and the occasional heavy drinker.

Approximately 3 in 10 adults reported that they never drink any type of alcoholic beverage, and about 4 in 10 reported drinking only oc-

asionally. About 16 percent of American adults said they drink wine, beer, or liquor an average of once or twice a week, and the remaining 14 percent drink alcohol an average of three or more times a week. Among respondents who drink alcohol, about 3 in 10 indicated that they had consumed five or more drinks at a sitting at least once during the past 12 months.

Men and women exhibit different patterns of alcohol consumption. A greater proportion of

women reported that they never drink (34.2 percent compared with 21.5 percent of men) or only drink occasionally (46.7 percent compared with 35.9 percent of men). While less than 2 in 10 women reported that they drink at least once a week on a regular basis, more than 4 in 10 men reported this behavior. Similarly, among men and women who reported drinking alcohol, 43.1 percent of men and 18.5 percent of women reported having five or more drinks at least once during the past year.

Drinking habits are clearly related to age, income, and education. Both frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption decrease with advancing age and increase with income and education.

Among adults 20-34 years of age, 34 percent reported drinking at least once a week. In contrast, only about 18 percent of persons 65 years and over reported drinking this often. Similarly, the percent of alcohol drinkers who reported having had five or more drinks at one sitting declines steadily from about 43 percent in the youngest age group to about 7 percent among the oldest respondents.

Persons with higher incomes drink more than persons with lower incomes. The percent of persons who reported drinking three or more times a week increases from 8.5 percent among those with incomes of less than \$5,000 a year to about 22 percent among those with incomes of \$25,000 or more. The proportion of persons drinking once or twice a week increases from about 1 in 10 to about 2 in 10 between the lowest and the highest income groups. In the lowest income category, about 20 percent of adults who drink alcohol reported having had five or more drinks at one sitting, while about 37 percent of those in the highest income group reported this behavior.

Persons with higher levels of education reported more frequent alcohol consumption than did persons with less education. While 38 percent of respondents having more than 12 years of education reported drinking at least once a week, only 29 percent of those with 12 years of education and less than 23 percent of those with under 12 years of education reported drinking this often. About 42 percent of respondents having less than 12 years of education reported that they never drink alcohol, while only 17 percent of persons with more than

12 years of education reported abstaining. Quantity of alcohol consumption also increases with education. The proportion of alcohol drinkers who reported consuming five or more drinks at one sitting ranges from 22 percent of those with less than 12 years of education to about 35 percent of those with more than 12 years of education.

SMOKING

Table 6 provides information on the smoking practices of the U.S. adult population in 1977. At the time that these data were collected, about 36 percent of adults aged 20 years and over currently smoked cigarettes, about 20 percent had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetimes but were not currently smoking (former smokers), and about 44 percent had never smoked. Men were more likely to currently be smoking than were women (40.9 percent and 32.1 percent, respectively). They were also more likely to have quit. Adjusting for differences in the proportions of men and women who had ever smoked shows that about 4 in 10 male smokers had quit, while only about 3 in 10 female smokers had quit.

More recent data on smoking, collected in 1978 and 1979, are currently available in *The Health Consequences of Smoking for Women, A Report of the Surgeon General*,³ an earlier *Advance Data* report,⁴ and *Health, United States, 1979*.⁵ Additional 1979 data will be available in *Health, United States, 1980*.⁶

BODY WEIGHT

The final health measure included in the 1977 National Health Interview Survey was body weight as compared with desirable body weight. Respondents were asked to estimate their height and weight.^b This ratio was compared with a standard table of desirable weights prepared by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.⁸ People were classified according to how closely their height-weight ratio approximated the Metropolitan Life standard: 10 percent or more below desirable body weight; 5-9.9 percent below; plus or minus 4.9 percent; 5-9.9 percent above; 10-19.9 percent above;

^b For a discussion of the validity and reliability of self-reported height and weight data, see reference 7.

Table 6. Percent distribution of persons 20 years of age and over by smoking status and percent distribution of current smokers by number of cigarettes smoked daily, according to selected characteristics: United States, 1977

Characteristic	Smoking status				Number of cigarettes smoked daily				
	Total ¹	Never smoked	Former smoker	Current smoker	All current smokers ²	Less than 15	15-24	25-34	35 or more
Percent distributions									
All persons 20 years of age and over....	100.0	43.9	20.1	36.0	100.0	30.3	43.2	12.8	13.7
<u>Sex</u>									
Male.....	100.0	30.9	28.2	40.9	100.0	24.4	42.3	15.1	18.2
Female.....	100.0	54.4	13.5	32.1	100.0	36.2	44.2	10.5	9.1
<u>Race or ethnicity</u>									
White.....	100.0	43.1	21.7	35.2	100.0	25.2	45.1	14.0	15.8
Black.....	100.0	45.0	13.0	42.0	100.0	53.8	36.2	7.3	2.7
Hispanic.....	100.0	54.1	12.3	33.5	100.0	59.1	27.0	4.9	8.7
<u>Age</u>									
20-34 years.....	100.0	45.3	14.6	40.1	100.0	33.3	45.1	11.7	9.9
35-44 years.....	100.0	37.1	19.5	43.4	100.0	23.8	42.7	15.4	18.0
45-54 years.....	100.0	36.8	23.4	39.8	100.0	26.3	40.7	13.7	19.3
55-64 years.....	100.0	40.3	25.2	34.5	100.0	29.0	44.1	12.4	14.5
65 years and over.....	100.0	57.8	24.8	17.4	100.0	42.1	39.6	10.5	7.8
<u>Income</u>									
Less than \$5,000.....	100.0	50.0	16.4	33.5	100.0	39.3	40.2	9.5	11.0
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	100.0	43.6	18.6	37.8	100.0	35.0	39.2	11.6	14.1
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	100.0	42.2	19.3	38.4	100.0	26.3	47.1	14.3	12.2
\$15,000-\$24,999.....	100.0	41.1	21.6	37.3	100.0	26.2	44.9	14.2	14.6
\$25,000 or more.....	100.0	40.9	25.3	33.9	100.0	26.8	43.9	12.7	16.6
<u>Education of individual</u>									
Less than 12 years.....	100.0	43.1	19.2	37.6	100.0	31.1	43.0	11.0	14.2
12 years.....	100.0	41.7	19.0	39.3	100.0	27.9	45.0	13.3	13.8
More than 12 years.....	100.0	47.2	22.1	30.6	100.0	32.8	40.8	13.5	12.9

¹Excludes unknown smoking status.
²Excludes unknown amount smoked.

NOTE: See table 1 for population.

20-29.9 percent above; and 30 percent or more above. The distribution is shown in table 7.

Only about 24 percent of the adults were found to be within 5 percent of their desirable body weight using this standard, with about 18 percent below and 58 percent above the optimal range. Almost 15 percent of the adult population is 30 percent or more overweight using the Metropolitan Life standard.

Approximately equal proportions of men and women are within 5 percent of their optimal weight (21.6 percent and 24.9 percent, respec-

tively). There are sex differences, however, in some of the other weight categories. Women are more likely to be underweight than men are (23.1 percent and 12.0 percent, respectively), and men are more likely to be 5-29.9 percent overweight (about 55 percent of men versus about 35 percent of women). A larger proportion of women than men, however, fall in the highest weight category, 30 percent or more overweight. About 17 percent of women are in this category, in contrast to about 12 percent of men. Overall, about 69 percent of men and

Table 7. Percent distribution of persons 20 years of age and over by body weight,¹ according to selected characteristics: United States, 1977

Characteristic	Total ²	10 percent or more below desirable weight	5-9.9 percent below desirable weight	Plus or minus 4.9 percent of desirable weight	5-9.9 percent above desirable weight	10-19.9 percent above desirable weight	20-29.9 percent above desirable weight	30 percent or more above desirable weight
All persons 20 years of age and over.....	100.0	9.1	9.1	23.5	12.5	20.2	11.1	14.5
Percent distribution								
<u>Sex</u>								
Male.....	100.0	5.2	6.8	21.6	16.3	24.4	14.0	11.7
Female.....	100.0	12.2	10.9	24.9	9.5	16.9	8.9	16.7
<u>Race or ethnicity</u>								
White.....	100.0	9.4	9.4	24.3	12.8	20.2	11.0	13.1
Black.....	100.0	6.0	6.2	20.1	9.7	20.1	13.0	25.0
Hispanic.....	100.0	5.8	8.6	19.0	11.6	23.2	13.0	18.8
<u>Age</u>								
20-34 years.....	100.0	13.0	12.8	27.6	12.4	16.6	7.6	10.0
35-44 years.....	100.0	6.8	8.5	23.2	13.2	21.4	11.8	15.0
45-54 years.....	100.0	5.1	6.4	20.8	13.3	23.5	13.4	17.5
55-64 years.....	100.0	5.3	6.4	19.6	12.3	22.1	14.8	19.6
65 years and over.....	100.0	10.2	6.4	20.5	11.4	22.2	12.8	16.4
<u>Income</u>								
Less than \$5,000.....	100.0	11.5	8.8	20.5	9.8	18.9	11.4	19.2
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	100.0	9.2	9.0	22.9	11.5	19.7	11.1	16.5
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	100.0	9.0	8.3	23.1	12.8	21.2	11.0	14.5
\$15,000-\$24,999.....	100.0	8.0	9.7	24.4	13.5	20.3	11.3	12.6
\$25,000 or more.....	100.0	8.9	10.3	26.0	14.0	20.5	10.7	9.5
<u>Education of individual</u>								
Less than 12 years.....	100.0	7.8	6.5	18.5	11.0	21.1	14.0	21.0
12 years.....	100.0	9.3	9.2	24.4	12.2	20.6	10.7	13.5
More than 12 years.....	100.0	10.3	11.5	27.6	14.4	18.7	8.7	8.8

¹Desirable weight modified from 1960 Metropolitan Life Insurance Company data.

²Excludes unknown height or weight.

NOTE: See table 1 for population.

about 58 percent of women are in the weight categories identified as "good" by the Alameda County study.¹

Desirable weight is inversely related to age in this population. With advancing age, there is a small but steady decline in the proportion of persons reporting optimal weight. About 28 percent of persons aged 20-34, compared with about 21 percent of those 65 years and over,

reported height-weight ratios within 5 percent of the Metropolitan Life standard. Desirable weight is positively related to both income and education. As these increase, the proportion of persons in the optimal weight category (plus or minus 4.9 percent of desirable weight) increases, and the proportion of persons in the extreme overweight category (30 percent or more) decreases.

Black persons are overrepresented in the most extreme weight category. About one-quarter of all black persons are 30 percent or more overweight, compared with about 13 percent of white persons and about 19 percent of the Hispanic group. Racial and ethnic differences in the other weight categories are minimal.

SUMMARY

This report has presented estimates of the prevalence of seven health practices pertaining to hours of sleep, eating breakfast, eating snacks, physical activity, alcohol consumption, smoking, and weight. In future publications from the National Center for Health Statistics, interrelationships found among these practices will be discussed in more detail and examined in relation to physical health status. The data presented here will be further examined in a Series 10 report in the *Vital and Health Statistics*

series.⁹ A comparison of the National Health Interview Survey findings with those of the Alameda County study is planned.

The health practices supplement to the National Health Interview Survey was designed to provide national estimates of the health habits found to be important in Alameda County so that their relationship to health status could be examined. The measures used were only rough approximations of those employed in the original Human Population Laboratory study. The National Center for Health Statistics is currently conducting a national telephone survey designed to include some of the features of the Alameda County study. Analysis of these data will shed light on the issue of the generalizability of the Alameda County findings on the relationship between health practices and physical health status.

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TECHNICAL NOTES

Data presented in this report were obtained from household interviews of the National Health Interview Survey. These interviews were conducted among a probability sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. During 1977, approximately 111,000 persons living in about 41,000 households were included in the sample. The total noninterview rate for the National Health Interview Survey was about 3.3 percent, including 1.9 percent due to respondent refusal and 1.4 percent due to failure to find an eligible respondent at home after repeated calls.

Questions concerning health practices were asked of a one-third subsample of all persons 20 years of age and over, or approximately 23,000 persons. Self-reporting was generally required for these questions, but proxy responses were accepted when subsample persons were physically or mentally incapable of answering the questions for themselves. The noninterview rate for the subsample was about 9.4 percent. In addition, individual item nonresponse ranged from about 0.2 to 1.7 percent. Persons with unknown characteristics are excluded from the analysis.

Estimates for the white and black populations, shown in table 1, are based on self-

reported racial identifications and therefore are not identical to official U.S. Census estimates for the same period, which are based primarily on interviewer observation. Hispanic classification is also based on self-reporting. The white, black, and Hispanic categories are mutually exclusive. For detailed definitions of other sociodemographic terms used here, see appendix II in most Series 10 reports in the *Vital and Health Statistics* series.

Since the estimates shown in this report are based on a sample of the population rather than on the entire population, they are subject to sampling error. Standard errors appropriate for estimated percentages of persons are shown in table I. These standard errors may be somewhat underestimated for the Hispanic population. Information on vital statistics for Hispanic persons does not currently exist, and thus there are no benchmark population estimates that can be used to adjust the sample weights for this ethnic category.

In this report, terms such as "similar" and "the same" mean that no statistical significance exists between the statistics being compared. Terms relating to differences ("greater," "less," etc.) indicate that differences are statistically significant. The *t*-test with a critical value of 1.96 (0.05 level of significance) was used to test all comparisons that are discussed. Lack of comment regarding the difference between any two statistics does not mean the difference was tested and found to be not significant.

To better understand the limitations of the estimates presented in this report, data users are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the survey design, the methods used in estimation, and the general qualifications of the data, which are described in appendix I of the 1977 Current Estimates report (Series 10, No. 126, in the *Vital and Health Statistics* series). Definitions of certain terms used in this report but not specifically addressed in this section and the questionnaire and flashcards used during 1977 appear in appendixes II and III of that report.

Table I. Standard errors, expressed in percentage points, of estimated percents

Base of percent in thousands	Estimated percent				
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	20 or 80	50
50.....	5.0	7.8	10.7	14.3	17.9
70.....	4.2	6.6	9.1	12.1	15.1
100.....	3.5	5.5	7.6	10.1	12.7
300.....	2.0	3.2	4.4	5.9	7.3
500.....	1.6	2.5	3.4	4.5	5.7
700.....	1.3	2.1	2.9	3.8	4.8
1,000.....	1.1	1.7	2.4	3.2	4.0
5,000.....	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.8
10,000.....	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.3
20,000.....	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.9
30,000.....	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.7
50,000.....	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6
100,000.....	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4

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