

FACTSHEET

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Subjective Cognitive Decline in the United States: Data from the BRFSS

Nearly one in ten people aged 45 and older report having confusion or memory loss that is happening more often or is getting worse (“subjective cognitive decline”).

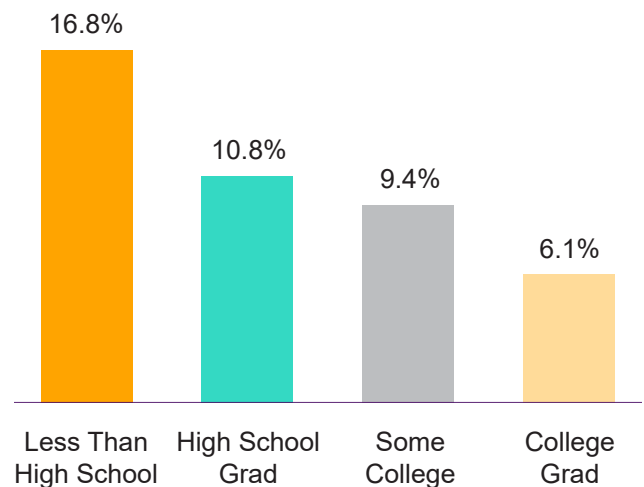
- Specifically, 9.8% of Americans aged 45 and older have subjective cognitive decline (SCD).
- Hispanic Americans are 23.8% more likely than whites to have SCD.
- Individuals with less education are more likely to have SCD. Of those who did not graduate from high school, 16.8% have SCD compared with 6.1% of college graduates.
- Those with incomes less than \$15,000 are more than 4 times more likely to have SCD than those with incomes greater than \$75,000.
- Those who live alone have a higher rate of SCD (12.5%) than those who do not live alone (8.9%).

What is the BRFSS?

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a public health survey conducted among community-dwelling individuals each year by all states in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The data presented here are from the 2019-2020 BRFSS surveys in 46 states and the District of Columbia. All data were analyzed by the Alzheimer’s Association.

Subjective Cognitive Decline Among Those Aged 45 and Over By Education Level



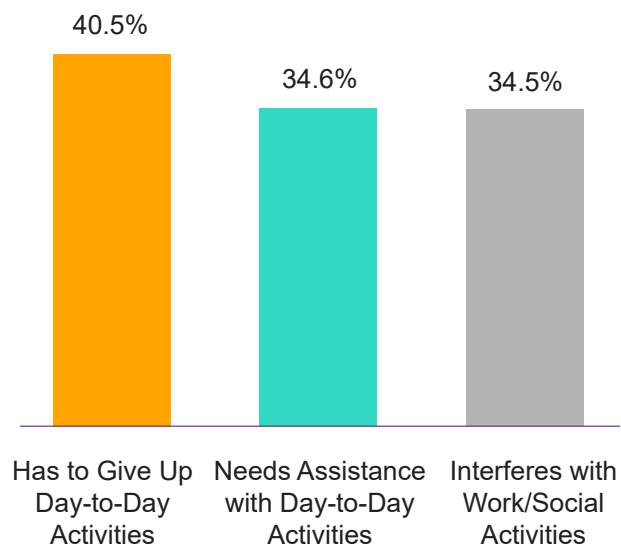
People with SCD often have additional health issues beyond their increasing memory problems.

- More than 80% of those with SCD have at least one other chronic condition (arthritis, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, COPD, and/or diabetes).
- More than half say that, in general, they are in fair or poor health, and 4 in 10 spent at least 14 days in the last month in poor physical health.
- Of those individuals with SCD, 43.6% get no physical activity outside of work, and 72.6% are overweight or obese.

For a large proportion of those with SCD, it negatively affects their ability to function.

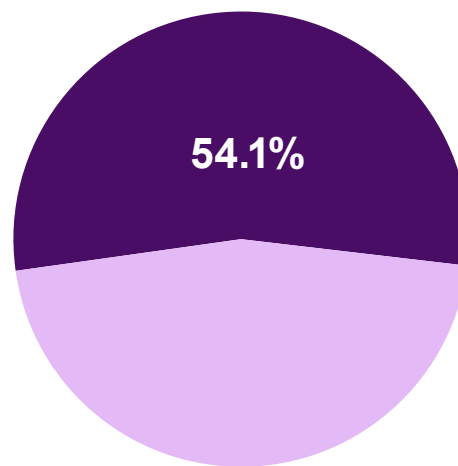
- Due to their memory problems, more than 40% of those with SCD report they had to give up day-to-day activities such as cooking, cleaning, or paying bills. And, 34.6% say they need assistance because of their memory problems.
- More than 1 in 3 adults say their worsening memory problems interfere with their ability to work, volunteer, or engage socially.
- Taken together, 48.4% of adults with SCD say it creates “functional difficulties” — that is, their memory problems disrupt everyday tasks and/or interfere with work or social activities.

Percent with Subjective Cognitive Decline Who Say It Creates Difficulties



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Percent with Subjective Cognitive Decline Who Have Not Talked to a Health Care Provider



Most are not talking about their memory problems with a health care professional.

- More than half of those aged 45 and older with SCD have not talked to a health care provider about their memory issues.
- Even among those whose memory problems are creating functional difficulties, 42.5% have not talked to a health care provider.

What Is “Subjective Cognitive Decline”?

“Subjective cognitive decline” refers to those who report that, in the previous 12 months, they have experienced confusion or memory loss that is happening more often or is getting worse. While some of these individuals in the BRFSS survey may have mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or be in the early stages of dementia, “subjective cognitive decline” does not measure the prevalence of any medical condition. Rather, it measures the prevalence of those who self-report that they are having increasing memory problems. Evidence shows subjective cognitive decline is one of the earliest warning signs of potential future dementia and indicates a higher risk of developing the condition.