

# FACTSHEET

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

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

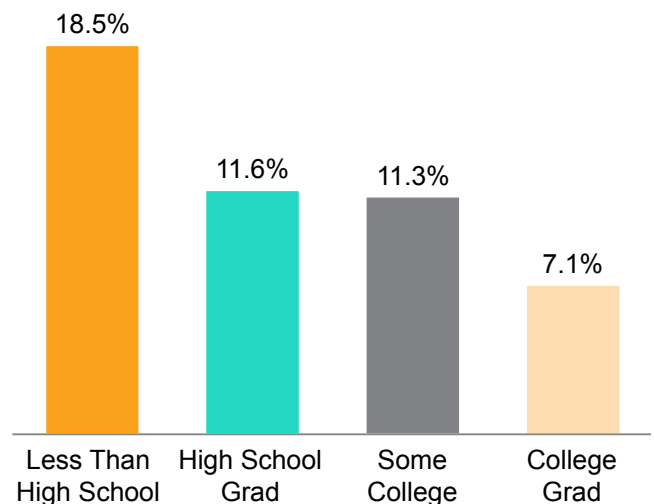
- Specifically, 11.1% of Americans aged 45 and older have subjective cognitive decline (SCD).
- African Americans are 25.2% more likely than whites to have SCD.
- Those with incomes less than \$15,000 are four times more likely to have SCD than those with incomes greater than \$75,000.
- Individuals with less education are more likely to have SCD. Of those who did not graduate from high school, 18.6% have SCD compared with 7.1% of college graduates.
- Those who live alone have a higher rate of SCD (13.6%) than the overall population. And, among those with SCD, nearly one-third live alone.

### 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 2015-2018 BRFSS surveys in all states and the District of Columbia, representing the first-ever national data on subject cognitive decline. All data were analyzed by the CDC’s Alzheimer’s Disease + Healthy Aging Program.

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



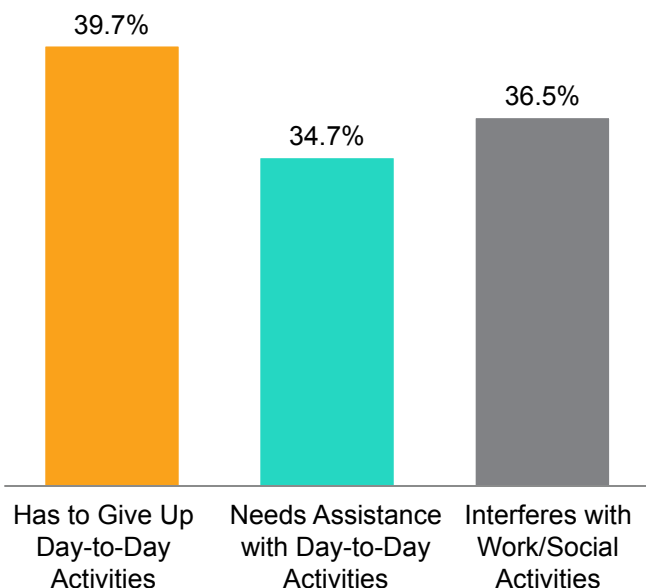
### People with SCD often have additional health issues beyond their increasing memory problems.

- 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, 40.8% get no physical activity outside of work, and 71.9% are overweight or obese.

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

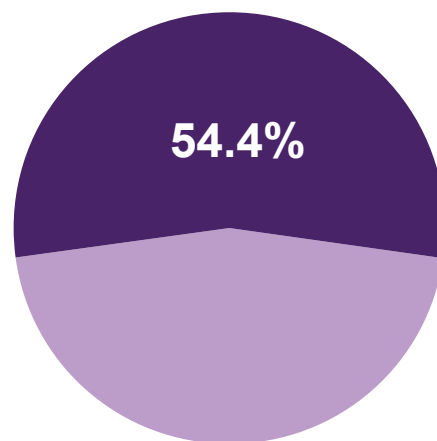
- Due to their memory problems, 39.7% of those with SCD report they had to give up day-to-day activities such as cooking, cleaning, or paying bills. And, 34.7% say they need assistance because of their memory problems.
- More than 1 in 3 adults say their worsening memory problems interfere with their ability to work, volunteer, or engage socially.
- Taken together, half 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, 41.9% 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 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 dementia and indicates a higher risk of developing the condition.