

2019 Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey Early Look

In advance of the 2019 MCBS Survey File Release, this Early Look presents key preliminaryⁱ estimates relevant to beneficiaries eligible for Medicare in 2019 who live in the community.

INTRODUCTION

Using preliminary data from the 2019 MCBS Survey File, the Early Look presents a demographic portrait of the Medicare population living in the community. It also provides preliminary estimates pertaining to selected health status and functioning, access to care, and satisfaction with care measures.

The majority of Medicare beneficiaries living in the community are white non-Hispanic, between 65 and 84 years of age, and live in English-speaking households.

HIGHLIGHTS

Preliminary Estimates from the 2019 MCBS Survey File

- 77% of Medicare beneficiaries report good, very good, or excellent health.
- 48% of Medicare beneficiaries report having one or more disabilities.
- Most Medicare beneficiaries are satisfied with health care quality, ease of access, and cost.

Table 1. Selected demographic characteristics of Medicare beneficiaries living in the community, 2019ⁱⁱ

Demographic Characteristic	Response	Weighted Percent (Standard Error)
Age	< 65 years	14.3 (0.3)
	65-74 years	49.4 (0.5)
	75-84 years	27.0 (0.3)
	85+ years	9.3 (0.2)
Sex	Female	54.5 (0.4)
	Male	45.5 (0.4)
Race/Ethnicity	White non-Hispanic	74.9 (0.7)
	Black non-Hispanic	10.2 (0.4)
	Hispanic	8.2 (0.6)
	Other race/ethnicity	5.9 (0.4)
Language Spoken at Home	English	87.9 (0.7)
	Language other than English	12.0 (0.7)
Educational Attainment	Less than a high school diploma	13.9 (0.5)
	High school graduate	25.5 (0.6)
	Some college/vocational school	30.3 (0.6)
	Bachelor's degree or beyond	29.9 (0.9)
Veteran	Yes	18.5 (0.4)
	No	81.4 (0.4)

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Preliminary Data from the Survey File, 2019.

ⁱ These preliminary estimates are produced prior to final data editing and final weighting to provide early access to the most recent information from the MCBS.

ⁱⁱ Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding and/or missingness.

Over three-quarters of Medicare beneficiaries living in the community report good, very good, or excellent health. Eighty one percent report the same or better health compared to one year ago.

Table 2. Self-reported health status of Medicare beneficiaries living in the community, 2019ⁱⁱ

Health Status Characteristic	Response	Weighted Percent (Standard Error)
Current Overall Health Status	Excellent	16.9 (0.4)
	Very good	30.5 (0.5)
	Good	29.6 (0.4)
	Fair	16.8 (0.4)
	Poor	5.6 (0.2)
Overall Health Status Compared to One Year Ago	Much better than one year ago	7.9 (0.3)
	Somewhat better now than one year ago	11.2 (0.3)
	About the same	62.0 (0.5)
	Somewhat worse now than one year ago	16.1 (0.4)
	Much worse now than one year ago	2.5 (0.2)

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Preliminary Data from the Survey File, 2019.

Almost fifty percent of Medicare beneficiaries living in the community report at least one disability.

Table 3. Disabilities among Medicare beneficiaries living in the community, 2019ⁱⁱ

Serious Difficulty Reported with...	Yes	No
	Weighted Percent (Standard Error)	Weighted Percent (Standard Error)
Walking or Climbing Stairs	28.7 (0.5)	70.9 (0.5)
Concentrating, Remembering, or Making Decisions	17.1 (0.4)	82.4 (0.4)
Dressing or Bathing	10.5 (0.3)	89.3 (0.3)
Doing Errands	16.3 (0.3)	83.3 (0.3)
Hearing	17.1 (0.4)	82.6 (0.4)
Seeing	8.2 (0.3)	91.4 (0.3)
Disability Status		
Two or More Disabilities	26.2 (0.5)	73.6 (0.5)
One Disability	21.6 (0.4)	78.2 (0.4)
No Disability	52.0 (0.6)	47.8 (0.6)

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Preliminary Data from the Survey File, 2019.

The majority of Medicare beneficiaries living in the community report no trouble or delays in accessing health care and are generally satisfied with health care quality, ease of access, and cost.

Table 4. Selected access to and satisfaction with care measures for Medicare beneficiaries living in the community, 2019ⁱⁱ

Health Care Measure	Response	Weighted Percent (Standard Error)
Trouble Getting Care	Yes	7.4 (0.3)
	No	92.2 (0.3)
Delayed Care Due to Cost	Yes	9.6 (0.3)
	No	90.2 (0.3)
Satisfaction with General Care	Satisfied	92.9 (0.3)
	Dissatisfied	4.3 (0.2)
	No experience	2.3 (0.2)
Satisfaction with Ease of Access to Doctor	Satisfied	92.9 (0.3)
	Dissatisfied	4.6 (0.2)
	No experience	2.0 (0.2)
Satisfaction with Cost	Satisfied	80.1 (0.5)
	Dissatisfied	15.7 (0.4)
	No experience	3.3 (0.3)

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Preliminary Data from the Survey File, 2019.

WHAT'S NEW

The 2019 Early Look features six new estimates added to Table 3. The disability series has been expanded to include preliminary estimates of the percentage of beneficiaries who have serious difficulty doing errands, hearing, and seeing. Table 3 also contains a new section, "Disability Status", with preliminary summary estimates of number of disabilities reported.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MCBS implemented two rapid response surveys collecting information related to Medicare beneficiaries' experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2019 MCBS Survey File will include two new segments containing COVID-19 rapid response survey data collected in Summer 2020 and Fall 2020. CMS published two data snapshots shortly after each data collection at <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Data-Briefs>.

DEFINITIONS

In addition to providing definitions of key terms, this section describes the construction of the analytic variables used to create the Early Look preliminary estimates. These analytic variables may differ from the variables in the MCBS Survey File (for example, as a result of recoding into new categories).

Access to care: This refers to indicators of having access to health care services and of how access may impact health behaviors, such as whether a beneficiary has difficulty obtaining needed care or has delayed health care due to cost.

Beneficiary: An individual selected from the MCBS sample about whom the MCBS collects information. Beneficiary may also refer to a person receiving Medicare services who may or may not be participating in the MCBS.

Community interview: Survey administered for beneficiaries living in the community (i.e., not in a long-term care facility such as a nursing home) during the reference period covered by the MCBS interview.

Education: Education refers to the highest level of education that a beneficiary has completed, as reported by the respondent.

Disabilities: Serious difficulty with 1) walking or climbing stairs, 2) concentrating, remembering, or making decisions due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition, 3) dressing and bathing, 4) doing errands, 5) hearing, and 6) seeing. Beneficiaries who had no serious difficulties with these activities were included in the category "No disability." Beneficiaries who had a serious difficulty in one area were categorized as having "One disability" and those who had a serious difficulty in more than one area were categorized as having "Two or more disabilities."

Health status: Self-rated general health compared to 1) other people of the same age and 2) his or her general health from one year prior.

Race/ethnicity: Responses to beneficiary race and ethnicity questions are reported by the respondent. Beneficiaries reported as white and not of Hispanic origin were coded as white non-Hispanic; beneficiaries reported as black/African-American and not of Hispanic origin were coded as black non-Hispanic; beneficiaries reported as Hispanic, Latino/Latina, or of Spanish origin, regardless of their race, were coded as Hispanic; beneficiaries reported as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or two or more races and not of Hispanic origin were coded as other race/ethnicity.

Respondent: The person who answers Community interview questions for the MCBS; this person can be the beneficiary or a proxy.

Satisfaction with care: The questions about satisfaction with care represent the respondent's general opinion of all medical care received in the year preceding the interview.

- General care refers to the rating of the overall quality of medical care received by the beneficiary.
- Ease of access to doctor refers to the rating of the ease and convenience of getting to a doctor or other health professional from the beneficiary's residence.
- Cost refers to the rating of the out-of-pocket costs the beneficiary paid for medical care.

The respondent rates satisfaction along a four-point satisfaction scale. "Very satisfied" and "Satisfied" are collapsed into a "Satisfied" response. "Dissatisfied" and "Very dissatisfied" are collapsed into "Dissatisfied." A response of "Not applicable" is presented as "No experience."

Veteran: A beneficiary reported as ever having served in the armed forces.

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

These preliminary estimates are based on data from the 2019 MCBS, a nationally representative, longitudinal survey of Medicare beneficiaries sponsored by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and directed by the Office of Enterprise Data and Analytics (OEDA). The MCBS is the most comprehensive and complete survey available on the Medicare population and is essential in capturing data not otherwise collected through operations and administration of the Medicare program.

MCBS Limited Data Sets (LDS) are available to researchers with a data use agreement. Information on ordering MCBS files from CMS can be obtained through CMS' LDS website at <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Files-for-Order/Data-Disclosures-Data-Agreements/DUA - NewLDS>. MCBS Public Use Files (PUFs) are available to the public as free downloads and can be found through CMS' PUF website at <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Downloadable-Public-Use-Files/MCBS-Public-Use-File/index>.

For details about the MCBS sample design, survey operations, and data files, please see the most recent *MCBS Methodology Report* and *Data User's Guide* available on the CMS MCBS website at <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/index>.

The universe for the 2019 MCBS Early Look included all Medicare beneficiaries living in the community who completed a Community interview in the fall 2019 round of data collection. The final dataset included 13,999 beneficiaries (weighted N=55,745,049). Balanced repeated replication survey weights were used to account for the complex sample design.

The MCBS is authorized by section 1875 (42 USC 139511) of the Social Security Act and is conducted by NORC for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The OMB Number for this survey is 0938-0568.

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