

POLICY DATA BRIEF

Paralysis in the U.S.

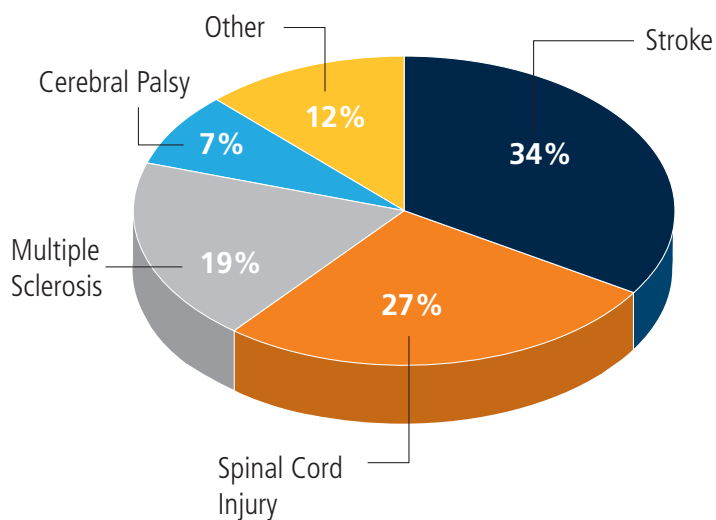
5,357,980 people — roughly 1.7% of the U.S. population — are paralyzed.

1,462,220 have a spinal cord injury.



CAUSES OF PARALYSIS

The leading causes of paralysis are stroke (34%), spinal cord injury (27%), multiple sclerosis (19%) and cerebral palsy (8%).

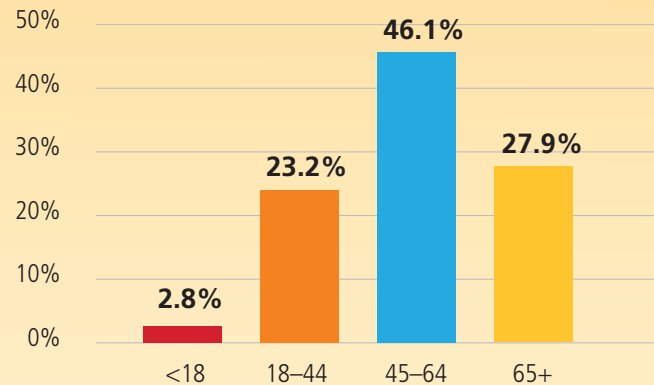


N=5,357,980

AGE DISTRIBUTION

- The average age of people reporting paralysis is 58.
- Roughly 46% of those with paralysis — the largest age group — are 45 to 64 years old. The next largest age groups include those older than 65 (28%) and those 18 to 44 (23%). Only 3% of people with paralysis reported being younger than 18.
- Most of those 65 or older (roughly 82%) became paralyzed after age 45 (considered to have *aged into* paralysis), while about 18% became paralyzed before age 45 (considered to have *aged with* paralysis).

Figure 2. Age distribution among people with paralysis

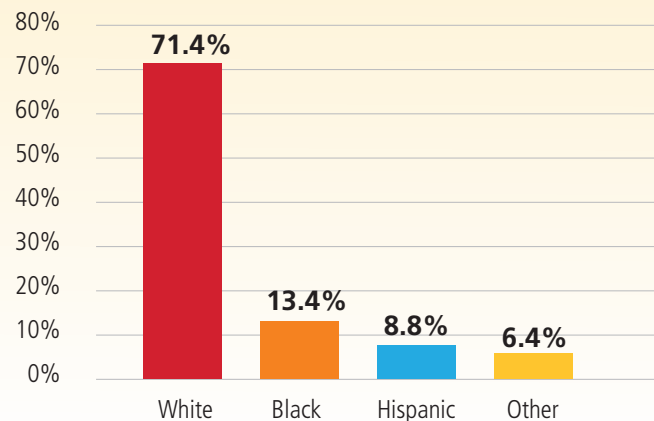


N=5,221,904

RACE AND ETHNICITY

- Roughly 71% of those with paralysis are white, 13% are black/African American, 9% are Hispanic and 6% are other.

Figure 3. Race and ethnicity of respondents with paralysis

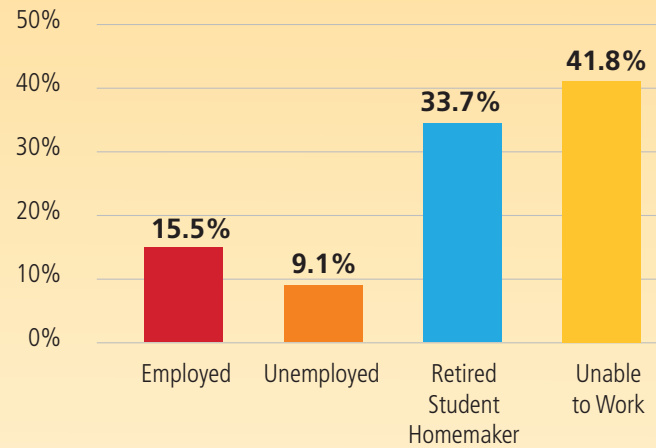


N=5,218,140

EMPLOYMENT

- Nearly half — roughly 42% — of people who are paralyzed say they are unable to work. Roughly 34% are retired, a student or a homemaker; 16% are employed; and 9% are unemployed and looking for work.

Figure 4. Work status of people with paralysis

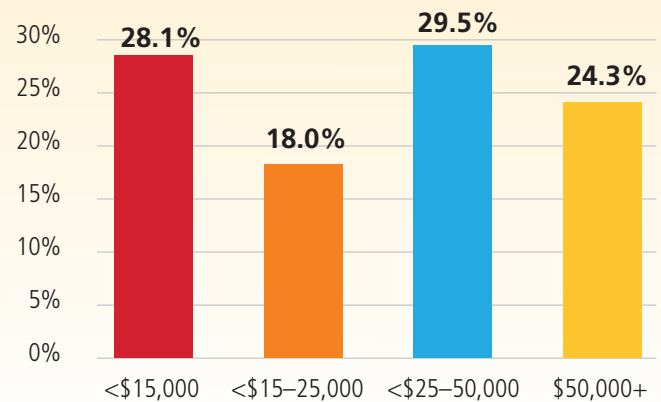


N=3,342,861

INCOME

- Almost one in three respondents with paralysis reports having an annual household income of less than \$15,000, and 18% live on \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year. Roughly 30% have an annual income of \$25,000 to \$50,000, and 24% say their income is more than \$50,000 per year.

Figure 5. Income of respondents with paralysis



N=4,678,054

PARALYSIS AND MILITARY SERVICE

- Seventeen percent of respondents with paralysis say they have served in the military.
- Roughly 41% of those with paralysis who served in the military report that their paralyzing injury occurred while they were on active duty.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

A national, population-based, random-digit-dial survey of over 70,000 households was conducted in 2012 to better understand the health and quality of life of people living with paralysis. The survey used a functional definition of paralysis based on the International Classification of Functioning: *“Paralysis is a central nervous system disorder resulting in difficulty or inability to move the upper or lower extremities.”* Paralyzing conditions include stroke, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, cerebral palsy and others. Items used on the population survey were taken from normed, validated surveys including the American Community Survey, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and others, for the purpose of comparing people who are paralyzed with people with other physical disabilities as well as with those without disabilities. The survey focused on health status, severity, use of and barriers to receiving health care, secondary conditions and comorbidity, affordability of health care, preventive care and health risk behaviors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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