

National Center for Health Statistics

The goal of the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics (Forum) is to bring together Federal agencies that share a common interest in improving aging-related data. The Forum provides agencies with a venue to discuss data issues that cut across agency boundaries

Lead Agency:

National Center for Health Statistics

Agency Mission:

The mission of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is to provide statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people. As the Nation's principal health statistics agency, NCHS leads the way with accurate, relevant, and timely data.

Principal Investigator:

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Partner Agencies:

Administration on Aging
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Veterans Affairs
Employee Benefits Security Administration
Environmental Protection Agency
National Institute on Aging
Office of Management and Budget
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, HHS
Social Security Administration
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Census Bureau

General Description:

The Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, established in 1986 by the National Center for Health Statistics, National Institute on Aging, and the U.S. Census Bureau, fosters collaboration among Federal agencies that produce or use statistical data on the older population.

The Forum plays a key role in improving aging-related data by critically evaluating existing data resources and limitations, stimulating new database development, encouraging cooperation and data sharing among Federal agencies, and preparing collaborative statistical reports. In 1998, the Forum was reorganized and expanded to include several new members. In addition to the original three core agencies, the members of the Forum now include the Administration on Aging, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Veterans Affairs, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the Department of Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Excellence: What makes this project exceptional?

The Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics (Forum) is an interagency committee dedicated to improving the quality of Federal statistics on older Americans. It is a collection of 15 Federal government agencies that collect, analyze, and report data on issues related to people age 65 and over. The Forum is exceptional because it brings together such a wide variety of Federal agencies with the primary purpose of improving both the quality and utility of data on the aging population. The specific goals of the Forum are to:

- widen access to information on the aging population through periodic publications and other means;
- promote communication among data producers, researchers, and public policymakers;
- coordinate the development and use of statistical databases among Federal agencies;
- identify information gaps and data inconsistencies;
- investigate questions of data quality;
- encourage cross-national research and data collection on the aging population; and
- address concerns regarding collection, access, and dissemination of data.

Significance: How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

Americans age 65 and over are an important and growing segment of our population. Many Federal agencies provide data on aspects of older Americans' lives, but it can be difficult to fit the pieces together. Thus, it has become increasingly important for policymakers and the general public to have an accessible, easy to understand portrait that shows how older Americans are faring. The Forum's periodic report *Older Americans: Key Indicators of Well-Being* monitors the health and well-being of older Americans through a broad range of indicators in five important areas: population, economics, health status, health risks and behaviors, and health care. It provides data on 37 key indicators carefully selected by the Forum to portray important aspects of the lives of older Americans and their families.

Effectiveness: What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

The Forum's periodic report, *Older Americans: Key Indicators of Well-Being*, provides the Nation with a summary of national indicators of well-being and monitors changes in these indicators over time. By following these data trends, more accessible information becomes available to target efforts that can improve the lives of older Americans and their families. *Older Americans* reflects the Forum's commitment to advancing our understanding of where older Americans stand today and what they may face tomorrow.

Innovativeness: Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

The Forum's mission is to encourage cooperation and collaboration among Federal agencies to improve the quality and utility of data on the aging population. To accomplish this mission, the Forum provides agencies with a venue to discuss data issues and concerns that cut across agency boundaries, facilitates the development of new databases, improves mechanisms currently used to disseminate information on aging-related data, invites researchers to report on cutting-edge analyses of data, and encourages international collaboration. The work of the Forum is newsworthy because in an era of agencies competing for research funds, the Forum members work together on projects that cross agency boundaries to share resources and enhance the work of the Federal statistical system.