

Health statistics

By John Auditore and Kristin Stoklosa

A guide to select sites for national data

Finding current, relevant health statistics is a challenging task that requires excellent reference skills. Fortunately, there are many worthwhile statistical resources on the Internet. The statistics on these select sites are compiled by reputable organizations, are referenced and dated, are directly available in HTML or PDF format, and are national statistics. All listed sites contain macro data (tables, charts, and fact sheets of statistics already compiled), as opposed to micro data, which require the user to compile statistics from raw data.

Major sites for statistical information on health come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which includes the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), a good site to start a search. Sites produced by medical associations and private agencies are also included. Statistics on population subsets, such as children, men, women, and ethnic groups, are best accessed through sites devoted to the health area in question.

Furthermore, data should be viewed within broader contexts to avoid misleading interpretations. For example, a recent increase in breast cancer incidence does not necessarily mean that more women have breast cancer but may indicate an increase in mammography screening. Also, compilers of statistics usually wait till the end of the current year before beginning analysis. Consequently, statistics for the current year are often unavailable, and most resources will display data two years old or older.

Starting points

- **America's Lifeline Online.** Animated sequences of graphs from Health Data, Inc., illustrate health and health risks. *Access:* <http://www.mindspring.com/~hlthdata/lifeline.html>.

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS.** This Web site lists CDC's most recent statistical reports. The user can search for numerical health data on disease and vital topics such as mortality, AIDS, and cancer. *Access:* <http://www.cdc.gov>.

- **CDC Wonder.** Wonder provides public health data sets to search, including mortality and vital statistics data. It also allows communication with the CDC staff and query access to more than 40 databases. *Access:* <http://wwwwonder.cdc.gov>.

- **Health Data Council, HHS.** The council coordinates data collection and analysis activities of HHS. This site explains HHS data collection methods. *Access:* <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/datacncl/index.htm>.

- **National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), HHS.** Comprehensively covering major health topics, this site merits exploration to retrieve NCHS publications directly on the Web. The user can search the site or follow links from the homepage. The "Data Warehouse" link leads to tables on chronic conditions as well as risk factors and vital events. "News Releases and Fact Sheets" provides context for select statistics from 1994 through 1997. "Frequently Asked Questions" leads to summarized statistics. "Products" consists of *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, *Vital and Health Statistics Series*, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, *Advance Data* from NCHS surveys, *Healthy People 2000*, and the annual report *Health, United States, 1995*. *Access:* <http://www.cdc.gov/nchswww/nchshome.htm>.

- **MEDLINE, National Library of Medicine.** Two distinct Web interfaces facilitate searching this premier biomedical database. Search on the subject term with the subheading "statistics" to retrieve records for statistical journal articles. PubMed links to full-text articles for select journals for which the user has subscription access. *Access:* <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed>. Internet Grateful Med is a user-friendly interface to MEDLINE and other NLM databases. *Access:* <http://igm.nlm.nih.gov>.

- **U.S. Census Bureau: The Official Statistics.** Entitled "Subjects A to Z," this page provides a list of subject word access points to demographic statistics on health sciences and peripheral topics. *Access:* <http://www.census.gov/main/www/subjects.html>.

- **White House Social Statistics Briefing Room.** The "Health" section of this site presents government tables and charts on vital statistics, health services, prevention and risk, and health expenditures. *Access:* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/fsbr/health.html>.

Aging

- **Administration on Aging, HHS.** This site features "A Statistical Profile of Older Americans: 1996" and includes tables presenting data on health status and determinants of health of older persons. *Access:* <http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/aoa/stats/statpage.html>.

- **Social Security Administration Office of Research and Statistics.** This site provides information on all aspects of the Social Security program, including statistical data on aging, survivors, and disability insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs. *Access:* http://www.ssa.gov/statistics/ores_home.html.

- **Veterans' Affairs.** The "Data" section of this site contains a summary of medical programs and profiles of veterans. *Access:* <http://www.va.gov>.

AIDS

- **AIDS Daily Summaries, NIAID, HHS.** Online reprints of newspaper articles, reports, and congressional testimony on AIDS are accessible at this site; statistics are included in the summaries. *Access:* gopher://gopher.niaid.nih.gov:70/11/aids/cdcds.

- **AIDS Data Animation Project at CIESIN.** Still frames and animations document disease trends for the years 1981 to 1993, using mortality data from the National Center for Health Statistics. *Access:* <http://www.ciesin.org/datasets/cdc-nci/cdc-nci.html>.

- **Division of AIDS Prevention, CDC, HHS.** This site presents tables from the CDC's semi-annual *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*. *Access:* http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/hiv_aids/stats.htm.

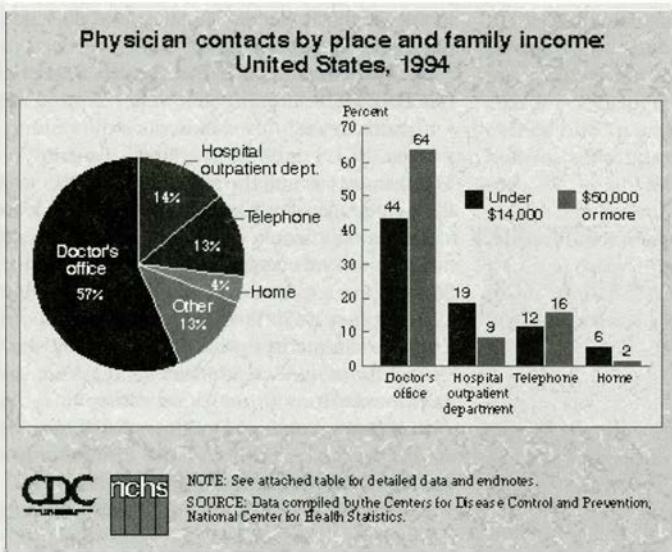
- **National AIDS Clearinghouse.** This

CDC site has limited statistics embedded in reports. *Access:* <http://www.cdncac.org/database.html>.

- **National Institute on Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID), HHS.** Each statement is referenced on this recent "AIDS/HIV Statistics" fact sheet. *Access:* <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/aidsstat.htm>.

Cancer

- **American Cancer Society.** The links for statistics lead to comprehensive charts and tables covering 1930-1993 cancer data. Data on breast cancer and cancer among African Americans are fea-



Example of chart on the White House Social Statistics Briefing Room Web site. From the National Center for Health Statistics.

ured sections. Access: <http://www.cancer.org/glance.html>.

- **NCI Fact Book, National Cancer Institute, HHS.** Annual statistics on cancer incidence, mortality, and cost are in each fact book, published yearly from 1993 through 1996. Access: <http://www.nci.nih.gov/hpage/public.htm>.

- **SEER Program, National Cancer Institute, HHS.** The Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program collects data from designated population-based cancer registries throughout the United States, covering 13.9 percent of the population. Follow the "Online Data" link for precomputed incidence and population data. The "Publications" link leads to the *Cancer Statistics Review, 1973–1994*. The data at this site are searchable through CANQUES, a database system with a Java interface; access CANQUES by following the "Online System" link off the SEER homepage. Access: <http://www-seer.ims.nci.nih.gov/>.

Cardiovascular disease

- **American Heart Association.** This is the source for the 1997 Heart and Stroke Statistical Update. Access: <http://www.amhrt.org/1996/list.html>.

Child health

- **America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being.** This publication of the Federal Inter-Agency Forum on Child and Family Statistics reflects an annual event to monitor the well-being of U.S. children via 25 indicators. Access: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchswww/about/otheract/children/child.htm>.

- **National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, HHS.** The links for "Online Publications" and "Specialized Services" provide fact sheets of summarized statistics. Access: <http://caliber3.calib.com/nccanch/>.

Diabetes

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HHS.** The CDC Diabetes Home Page features not only the National Diabetes Fact Sheet but also state-by-state analysis of the burden of diabetes. Access: <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/>.

- **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), HHS.** This diabetes fact sheet covers prevalence, cost, deaths, incidence, treatment, and

complications. <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/DiabetesStatistics/DiabetesStatistics.html>. NIDDK also produces a kidney and urologic disease fact sheet. Access: http://www.niddk.nih.gov/KU_Stats/kustats.htm.

Environmental health

- **Comprehensive Epidemiologic Data Resource (CEDR).** The Department of Energy (DOE) has developed the CEDR program to provide public access to health and exposure data concerning DOE installations. This site includes population studies on radiation health effects. Access: <http://cedr.lbl.gov/>.

Ethnic health issues

Health statistics related to ethnic groups often are embedded within health topic sites. For example, the American Lung Association Web page has fact sheets on pulmonary health related to a cross-section of ethnic groups (Access: <http://www.lungusa.org/learn/health/index.html>). The American Cancer Society's statistical offerings include data for African Americans (Access: <http://www.cancer.org/glance.html>).

- **Directory of Minority Health and Human Services Data Resources, HHS.** Available directly through HTML and also searchable, this directory provides contact information on more than 100 HHS reporting systems and data collection instruments. Access: <http://www.os.dhhs.gov/progorg/aspect/minority/index.html>.

- **Indian Health Service (IHS), HHS.** Native American health statistics are grouped under IHS Publications and include the full text of 1994, 1995, and 1996 *Trends in Indian Health* and *Regional Differences in Indian Health*. Access: <http://www.ihs.gov/5Pubs/Pubs.html>.

- **Office of Minority Health, HHS.** This site is an index of statistical publications with ordering information. Choose the "Documents" link next to the desired ethnic group; then choose the "Statistical Data" link from the subsequent list of topics. Access: <http://www.omhrc.gov/new-pubs.htm>.

Health care administration

- **Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, HHS.** National data from the Health Care Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP-3) are from the 1992 Nationwide Inpatient Sample. Recent data from the Medi-

cal Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) represent the extent of uninsured in the U.S. in the first half of 1996. *Access:* <http://www.ahcpr.gov:80/data/>.

- **American Hospital Publishing, Inc.** Broad health care trends in hospitals through August 1996 are summarized in this fact sheet. *Access:* <http://www.AmHPI.com/healthsource/facts.htm>.

- **Health Care Financing Administration, HHS.** Statistics on Medicare and Medicaid are presented on this page. *Access:* <http://www.hcfa.gov/stats/hstats96/blustcov.htm>.

International statistics

- **Center for International Health Information (CIHI).** CIHI provides data on current health conditions and trends in USAID-assisted countries. The Health Statistics Database accesses demographic and health statistics on developing countries. CIHI's Country Health Profile Series includes Health Statistical Reports of basic demographic and health data, and Country Health Profile of health conditions and trends in selected countries. *Access:* <http://www.cihi.com>.

- **Progress of Nations, UNICEF.** Statistics, by country, related to children, including mortality, nutrition, immunization, education, and maternal mortality. *Access:* <http://www.unicef.org/pon96/contents.htm>.

- **World Health Organization Statistical Information System (WHOSIS).** Search by topic to retrieve full-text WHO statistical reports. *Access:* <http://www.who.ch/whosis/whosis.htm/>.

Lung diseases

- **American Lung Association.** Search on "Fact Sheet" to retrieve statistics on pulmonary

conditions. Lists of association publications as well as data are embedded in these fact sheets. *Access:* <http://www.lungusa.org>.

Mental health and substance abuse

- **KEN: Knowledge Exchange Network.** This consumer-oriented site links to Mental Health Statistical Notes, 1995–present. *Access:* <http://www.mentalhealth.org>.

- **National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), HHS.** NCADI is the information service of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. It is the world's largest resource for current information concerning substance abuse prevention. *Access:* <http://www.health.org>.

- **National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), HHS.** NIDA's homepage is a good source for fact sheets with statistics focusing on prevalence of drug abuse among children and adolescents, lifetime use, and future trends. *Access:* <http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDACapsules/NCIndex.html>.

- **SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), HHS.** Extensive reports on this site include "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Statistics Source Book" and "The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse"; the latter details prevalence, patterns, and consequences of drug and alcohol use and abuse in the general U.S. population over 12 years of age. The site also contains the Drug Abuse Warning Network and the Drug and Alcohol Services Information System. The searcher can locate national and state data on the number and types of patients treated and the characteristics of facilities providing services. The site also includes the Drug Services Research Survey and Treatment Outcomes reports. *Access:* <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/oasftp.htm>.

Occupational Health

- **Bureau of Labor Statistics.** This page classifies occupational injuries and illnesses by criteria such as demographics and industries. *Access:* <http://stats.bls.gov/oshhome.htm>.

- **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).** Contains workplace injury and illness statistics and a useful database of OSHA standards searchable by SIC codes. *Access:* <http://www.osha.gov/oshstats/>.

(Cont. on page 639)

Internet articles on Web

The Internet Resources articles published in *C&RL News* are also posted on the Web at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/resrces.html>. Hypertext links are made to each reviewed site. Future topics will cover: careers, biotechnology, free Web graphics, investment/personal finance, social work/welfare, nutrition, distance education, tourism and travel, and East Asia.

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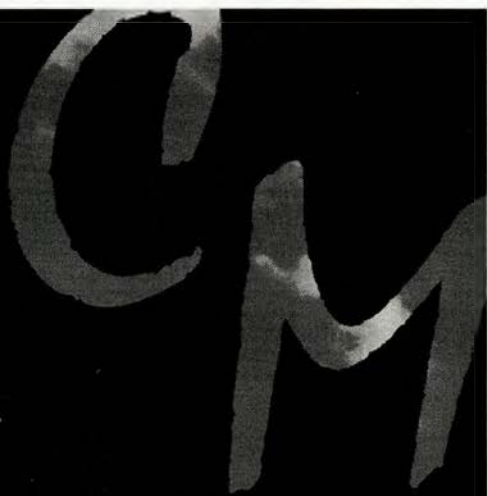
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an Information Age," which will model in its design some of the learning techniques that will be discussed at the conference. Look also for opportunities to participate before the conference even starts in postings on the ACRL Conference Web site. (<http://www.ala.org/acrl.html>) listserv discussions, and previews of papers.

Join the race

Tune up your carburetor, open the throttle, and plan ahead now to join your colleagues at the 1999 ACRL National Conference as we race together toward the 21st century. Detroit is a vibrant city and epitomizes our focus on change by the ways it has transformed itself in recent years. City officials are eager to welcome ACRL to Detroit and will go all out to assist conference planners in ensuring that you have an enjoyable as well as an educational visit to a flourishing, attractive, and culturally rich conference site.

Look for the call for participation in the January 1998 *C&RL News* and on the ACRL homepage, and send in your best ideas. Talk with colleagues to encourage them to attend. We've revved up our engines and are raring to go! ■

(*Health statistics cont. from page 630*)

Transplants

- **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), HHS.** This Web site links to solid organ and bone marrow transplant statistics and delineates transplants and donors by race. *Access:* <http://www.hrsa.dhhs.gov/bhrd/dot/dotmain.htm>.

- **UNOS: United Network for Organ Sharing.** UNOS administers the Organ Transplantation and Procurement Network, and members include all U.S. transplant programs, organ procurement organizations, and tissue typing laboratories. This site contains detailed statistics on U.S. transplants and donors. *Access:* <http://204.127.237.11:80/>.

Women's health issues

Women's health Web pages focus on diagnosis and management of conditions but do not concertedly present statistics on women's health topics. Therefore, the searcher should go to topical sites for women's health statistics. For example, go to the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Statistics Review page for data on breast cancer incidence (*Access:* <http://www-seer.ims.nci.nih.gov/Publications/index.html>), and to NCI's Fact Sheet for breast cancer data by ethnic group (*Access:* <http://www.feminist.org/>

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[other/bc/bcnci1.html](http://www.ala.org/acrl.html)).

- **Women's Health Data Book: A Profile of Women's Health in the United States.** While not available directly online, the print publication can be ordered through this American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology site. *Access:* http://www.acog.com/catalog/professional_publications.htm.

Discussion lists and groups

- **EDSTAT-L.** This mailing list addresses educational tools for statistics and issues related to the teaching and learning of statistics. The list's archive is at gopher://jse.stat.ncsu.edu/11/edstat. The corresponding newsgroup is **sci.stat.edu**. *Subscribe:* listserv@jse.stat.ncsu.edu.

- **STAT-L.** A good forum for statistical consulting issues; questions arise on the list about methods for statistical studies in health sciences and biomedical fields. The corresponding newsgroup is **sci.stat.consult**. *Subscribe:* listserv@vm1.mcgill.ca.

- **teaching-statistics.** This UK list is concerned with the initial teaching of statistics in all phases of education and follows the objectives of the journal *Teaching Statistics*. The list's archive is at <http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/teaching-statistics/1997-02/index.html>. *Subscribe:* teaching-statistics-request@mailbase.ac.uk. ■