

7. Geriatrics

Ranked AL's Seventh Health Indicator

Geriatrics is a specialty that focuses on the health of individuals over 65 years old. With the elderly population rising nationally, health concerns regarding geriatrics increased from the tenth to the seventh leading health indicator in AL. The Baby Boom generation has the largest population influx in the history of the U.S. As subsequent generations enter retirement age, it is projected that almost 25 percent of the U.S. population will be 65 years or older by 2060.¹ Elderly people often need more health resources and spend more of their income on healthcare.²

The aging population can experience numerous health issues due to multiple chronic diseases. A multigenerational health plan helps older adults remain at home, maintain control of their health, and continue their routines without much interruption. Elderly populations with regular connections to their family consistently report much less depression, better physical health, and higher life satisfaction.³

Vulnerable Populations

Elderly citizens who need extra support may need additional care by an in-home nurse or relocated to a nursing home. There may be additional factors preventing a person from getting access to care, such as the inability to drive, forgetting their scheduled provider appointment(s), and having mobility problems.^{2,3}

Geographic Variation

Nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other long-term care facilities are the primary location for elderly individuals who cannot independently take care of themselves. However, rurality still plays a role in the number of long-term care facilities open and the doctors' availability for routine specialized care for chronic disease management.

Topics Addressed for This Indicator are:

- Adult abuse cases.
- Alzheimer's disease among Medicare recipients.

Highlights

Data are retrieved from the AL Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid.

- Alzheimer's disease is the sixth leading cause of death in AL with 54.2 deaths per 100,000 people in 2019.
- In AL, rural areas have a higher rate of adult abuse cases (19.2 cases per 10,000 persons),

than urban areas for 2019 (17.3 cases per 10,000 persons).

Risk Factors:

- Age.
- Family history.
- High blood pressure.
- Stroke history.
- Low physical activity.
- Geography/rural residents.
- Social isolation.
- Unable to provide self-care.

Adult Abuse Cases

The risk for elder abuse occurs more if a patient cannot take care of themselves, have a cognitive disorder (such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease), or is socially isolated:

- In 2019, 8,789 adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation cases were opened and investigated by the DHR. The most impacted group was white females.
- The top five counties with the highest case numbers were Jefferson, Mobile, Houston, Montgomery, and Madison.
- The Southeastern Public Health District had the highest rate of adult abuse per 10,000 persons in 2019.
- In AL, rural areas have a higher rate of adult abuse cases (19.2 cases per 10,000 persons), than urban areas for 2019 (17.3 cases per 10,000 persons).

The demographic data (sex, race/ ethnicity) pertains to the number of clients. The geographic data (public health districts and geographic variation) refers to the number of cases.

	2018		2019	
	Count	Rate per 10,000	Count	Rate per 10,000
AL	8,862	24.1	8,789	23.0
U.S.	-	-	-	-
Public Health Districts				
Northern	1,971	19.0	1,799	17.4
Northeastern	1,712	21.6	1,566	19.8
West Central	562	13.2	585	13.8
Jefferson	967	14.7	917	13.9
East Central	1,293	18.8	1,220	17.7

Southeastern	1,188	31.7	1,401	37.4
Southwestern	522	13.2	470	11.9
Mobile	647	15.7	691	16.8
Geographic Variation				
Rural	4,203	20.0	4,035	19.2
Urban	4,729	16.9	4,827	17.3
Sex				
Female	5,460	-	5,216	-
Male	3,697	-	3,749	-
Race/Ethnicity				
White	6,180	-	5,999	-
AA/black	2,473	-	2,504	-
Hispanic or Latino	47	-	41	-
Asian	0	-	11	-
Native Hawaiian	26	-	24	-
Other/unknown	480	-	433	-
Household Income				
N/A	-	-	-	-
Age (in years)				
N/A	-	-	-	-
Education				
N/A	-	-	-	-

Alzheimer’s Disease Among Medicare Recipients

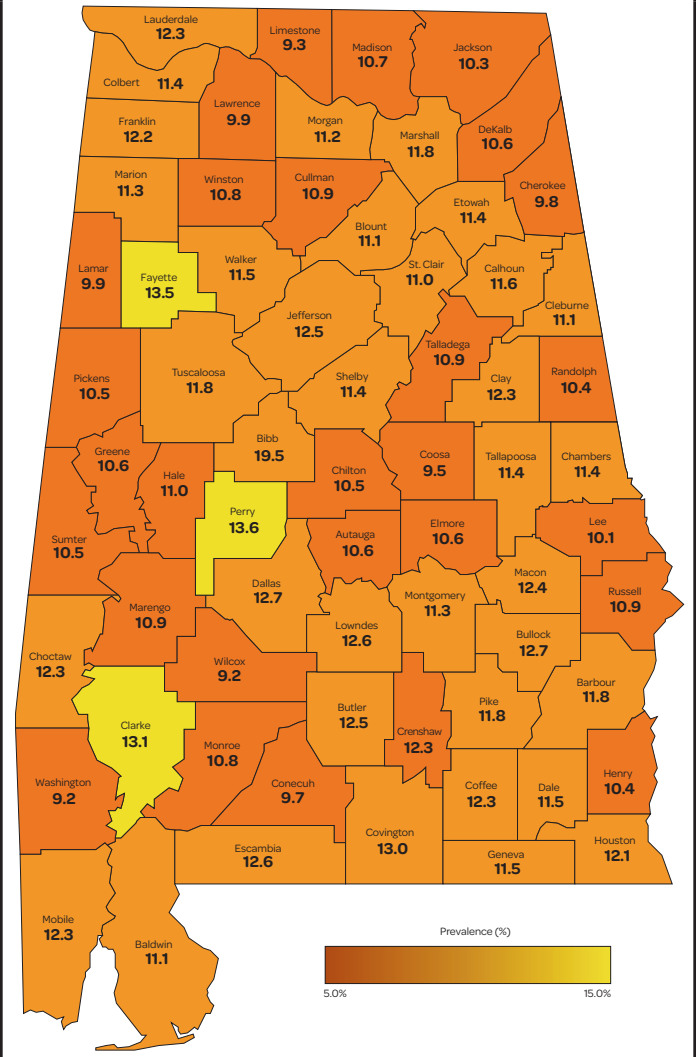
Alzheimer’s disease affects adults over the age of 50 years old, and 2,659 individuals in AL died with this co-morbidity listed on their death certificate in 2019. Alzheimer’s disease is the sixth leading cause of death in AL, and it is the most common cause of dementia.⁵ The disease often causes loss of functioning and interferes with daily activities:

- In 2018, Perry County had the highest prevalence of Medicare recipients diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in AL (13.6 percent).
- The historical trend of Alzheimer’s disease-related deaths between 2010-2018 rose proportionately in elderly populations. In 2019, the AL rate of Alzheimer’s disease-related deaths was 54.2 per 100,000 persons, compared to the U.S. rate of 37.0 deaths per 100,000 persons.³

Long-term care services, including home and community-based services, assisted living, and nursing home care, may be cost-prohibitive since disease progression is very long. Alzheimer’s disease is closely linked to access to care, because adequate care is closely related to payor source.⁶ Most individuals over 65 years old are on Medicare or private insurance.

Additional demographic information is not available at this time.

Figure 7.1 – The distribution of Alzheimer’s disease prevalence by county in 2018. Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.



Data Sources

Table 7.1 – Adult Abuse Cases, 2018-2019. DHR, Division of Adult Protective Services, 2018. Data requested July 2020.

Figure 7.1 – Alzheimer’s Disease Among Medicare Recipients, 2018. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Alzheimer’s Disease, 2019. Data requested January 2021.

Written Sources

1. U.S. Census Bureau, Projected Age Statistics, 2020.
2. CDC, Promoting Health for Older Adults, 2020.

2. ADPH, Center for Health Statistics Alzheimer's Mortality, 2019.
3. CDC, Geriatrics, 2020.
4. CDC National Center for Health Statistics, Age Adjusted Leading Causes of Death, 2019.
5. Alzheimer's Association, New Alzheimer's Association Report Reveals Sharp Increases in Alzheimer's Prevalence, Death, Cost of Care, 2018.

Community Resources

ADPH Home Health

Location: Montgomery County, AL
Type: State Government Organization

AL Department of Senior Services

Location: Montgomery County, AL
Type: State Government Organization

AL Disabilities Advocacy Program

Location: Statewide
Type: Advocacy Organization

AL Nursing Home Association

Location: Montgomery County, AL
Type: Non-profit Organization

American Association of People with Disabilities

Location: Nationwide
Type: Advocacy Organization

ARC of AL

Location: Statewide
Type: Non-profit Organization

Extencicare Health and Rehab

Location: Etowah County, AL
Type: Health Facility

National Institute on Aging

Location: Washington, DC Metro
Type: Federal Government Organization

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Senior Health

Location: Washington, DC Metro
Type: Federal Government Organization

Redstone Military Retirement Residence Association

Location: Madison County, AL
Type: Non-profit Organization

Ruth and Naomi Senior Outreach

Location: Jefferson County, AL
Type: Non-profit Organization

Social Security Administrative Office

Location: Montgomery County, AL
Type: State Government Association

U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy

Location: Washington, DC Metro
Type: Federal Government Organization