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Prevalence of migraine in the Canadian household population

An estimated 2.7 million Canadians, or 8.3% of the population, have been diagnosed with migraine. Migraine can be a debilitating disorder, characterized by pulsating headaches that can last from a few hours to several days, and are accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and/or sensitivity to light and sound.

Based on data for 2010 and 2011, a new study provides up-to-date estimates of the prevalence of diagnosed migraine among people living in private households.

Females were more than twice as likely as males to report migraine: 11.8% versus 4.7%. For both sexes, migraine was most common at ages 30 to 49. The average age at diagnosis was 26, more than three years after symptoms were first experienced. Few children younger than the age of 12, less than 1%, were affected.

Compared with the national figure, the prevalence of migraine was lower in Quebec (6.8%) and higher in Manitoba (9.5%), Nova Scotia (9.1%) and Ontario (8.8%).

The majority of people diagnosed with migraine reported symptoms of depression. Almost two-thirds of them (63%) were classified with minimal or mild depression, and 20% had moderate-to-severe depression.

Migraine limited getting a good night's sleep for three-quarters of people who reported the condition. About half (53%) of those with migraine reported that it had prevented them from driving, at least for a short time.

Although the majority of people with migraine were employed (70%), over a third of them reported missing one or more days of work in the three months prior to the survey owing to their condition.

Note to readers

This study is based on data from the 2010 and 2011 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), and from the 2011 Survey of Living with Neurological Conditions in Canada (SLNCC).

The CCHS is an ongoing survey that collects information about health status and health care use for people aged 12 or older living in private households. The Neurological Conditions Prevalence File, which was derived from the CCHS, contains information on all household members, including children younger than 12; it has a sample size of 285,971, with a response rate of 70.6%.

The 2011 SLNCC explored issues related to neurological conditions among people aged 15 or older living in private households. The SLNCC sample consisted of 4,569 respondents for a response rate of 81.6%. This study uses a subsample of 372 respondents with migraine, who represented an estimated 970,000 individuals.

The criteria for identifying people with migraine differed between the CCHS and the SLNCC. In the CCHS, which was used for prevalence estimates, respondents were classified as having migraine if they reported that they had been diagnosed by a health professional. In the SLNCC, too, respondents were instructed to report diagnosed migraine. However, the SLNCC contained additional migraine criteria: nausea, light sensitivity and activity limitation.



The study, "Prevalence of migraine in the Canadian household population," is available in the June 2014 online issue of *Health Reports*, Vol. 25, no. 6 (82-003-X) from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Pamela L. Ramage-Morin (613-951-1760; pamela.ramage-morin@statcan.gc.ca), Health Analysis Division.

This issue of *Health Reports* contains another article, "Prescription medication use by Canadians aged 6 to 79."

To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Michelle Rotermann (613-951-3166; michelle.rotermann@statcan.gc.ca), Health Analysis Division.

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca).

For information about *Health Reports*, contact Janice Felman (613-951-6446; janice.felman@statcan.gc.ca), Health Analysis Division.