

Aging in Mexico: *Disability*

MHAS Fact Sheet: 20-1, April 2020



In older adults, disability is commonly measured by the presence of physical limitations. These limitations refer to difficulties completing activities of daily living (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing, using the toilet, getting in and out of bed, and eating.¹

- Mexican adults are spending more years of life with physical limitations
- Among older Mexican adults, the number of limitations per person is also increasing
- Low education and socioeconomic status are associated with increased levels of disability in late-life
- Older Mexicans who are obese, underweight, or have diabetes are more likely to have disability

AROUND THE WORLD



More than 40% of adults aged 60 and older have physical limitations, including hearing and vision impairment.²



In the US, disability has increased in proportion to the population aging.³



People 60 and older with disability are more likely to be frail.⁴

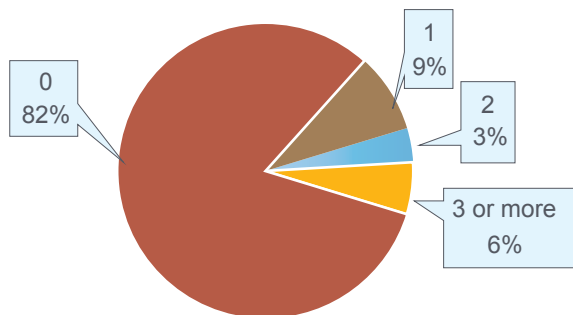


Memory loss, depression, having chronic diseases, and poverty can increase the risk of disability in older adults.⁵

IN MEXICO

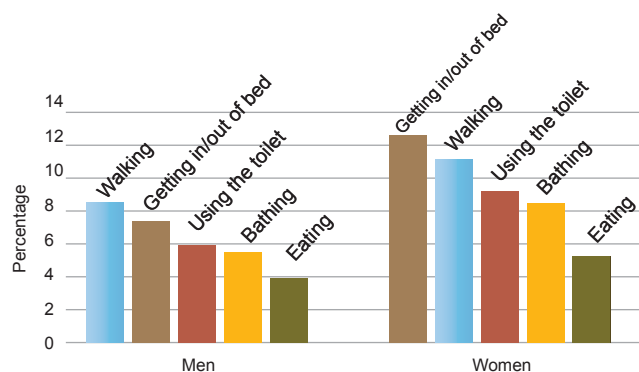
More older women develop disabilities and deteriorate faster than older men.^{14,17,10} From 2001 to 2012, ADL disability increased among adults 50 and older^{6,7} and individuals' risk of disability doubles from ages 65 to 85.⁸ However, recovery from disability is possible; approximately 60% of older adults with one ADL limitation transitioned to no ADL limitations over a two-year period.⁹ Having more chronic diseases and being underweight or obese is associated with disability.^{11,12,13} Mexicans have a higher prevalence of ADL disability (16%) than their Mexican American counterparts (13%).¹¹ Female migrants returning to Mexico from the US are 1.7 times more likely to have disability than never migrants.¹⁵

Number of ADL Limitations per Person, Aged 60 and Older



Shows number of limitations among walking and getting in/out of bed, using the toilet, bathing, and eating

ADL Limitations, Aged 60 and Older



ADL = activities of daily living; data from MHAS 2015; percentages are weighted

Almost one in five people aged 60 and older have at least one ADL limitation. Older women tend to have more physical limitations than men.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Women, low socioeconomic groups, and people with conditions such as diabetes and obesity need to be prioritized for disability prevention programs.
2. As disability increases, older women rely more heavily on help from family and friends.¹⁶ Social programs should be prioritized to assist caregivers.
3. Physical disability can be reversed.^{9, 17} Treatment of chronic conditions and rehabilitation services must be expanded and improved.

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The Mexican Health and Aging Study (MHAS) is a national study of adults 50 years and older (n=15,000) in Mexico.¹⁸ It was designed to evaluate the impact of disease on health, function and mortality. It is the first longitudinal study of older Mexicans with a broad socioeconomic perspective and has produced over 250 publications. Five waves of data have been collected since the baseline in 2001, through 2018. One more wave is planned for 2021. The MHAS is partly supported by the National Institutes of Health / National Institute on Aging (R01AG018016, R Wong, PI) and the INEGI in Mexico.

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WEBSITES

- www.MHASweb.org (English)
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