

Health Trends in Midlife
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The improvements in health and functioning at ages 65 and older at the end of the 20th century were notable, but there is concern that trends among the under 65 group, including the Baby Boom, may not have been so positive. My colleagues and I used data for the 40 to 64 group from the National Health Interview Survey and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey to analyze trends from the late 1990s to the present in biomarkers (e.g., C-reactive protein, blood pressure), self-reports of chronic conditions, sensory and physical functional limitations, and need for help with activities of daily living. We also examined changes over time in the extent to which people attributed their limitations to different diseases, and we investigated whether trends in education, smoking, and obesity could account for the trends in functioning that we found.

Since 1997, Americans in their forties and fifties have increasingly reported that a doctor has told them that they have cardiovascular and lung disease and diabetes, even as measured high-risk C-reactive protein, blood pressure, cholesterol, and glycated hemoglobin have remained constant. Self-reports of upper body and sensory limitations have not changed, but mobility limitations have increased with arthritis increasingly cited as a cause. The need for help with instrumental activities of daily living has remained constant, but the prevalence of needing help with activities of daily living has increased, although it remains under 2 percent. Physical functional limitations would have increased more had it not been for the decline in smoking and less had it not been for the increase in obesity.

This presentation is based on three recently published papers:

- Martin, L.G., V.A. Freedman, R.F. Schoeni, & P.M. Andreski. 2009. Health and functioning among Baby Boomers approaching 60. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 64B(3):369-377.
- Martin, L.G., V.A. Freedman, R.F. Schoeni, & P.M. Andreski. 2010. Trends in disability and related chronic conditions among people ages 50 to 64. *Health Affairs* 29(4):725-731.
- Martin, L.G., R.F. Schoeni, & P.M. Andreski. 2010. Trends in health of older adults in the United States: Past, present, future. *Demography* 47(Supplement):S17-S40.