



September 29th is World Heart Day.ⁱ High Blood Pressure is one of the leading modifiable (controllable) risk factors for heart disease and stroke. High blood pressure is a common disease in which blood flows through blood vessels (arteries) at higher than normal pressures.ⁱⁱ Hypertension, or abnormally high blood pressure, affects approximately one in three adults in the United States and more than 1 billion adults worldwide.ⁱⁱⁱ The relationship between blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease is well established: the higher the blood pressure, the greater the chance of heart attack, heart failure, stroke, and kidney disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention label high blood pressure as the “silent killer” due to the lack of warning signs or symptoms associated with the disease.^{iv}

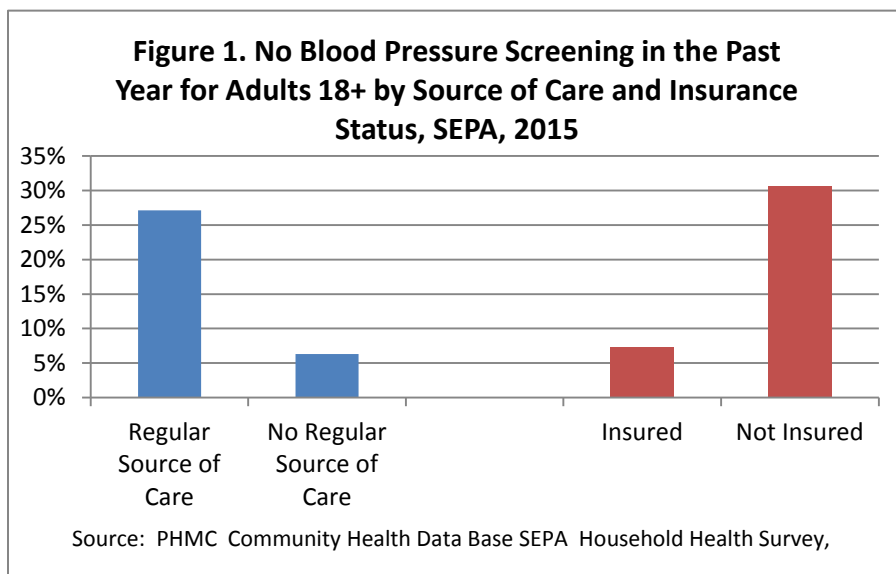
Using data from PHMC’s Community Health Data Base 2015 Household Health Survey, CHDB staff examined adults 18 or older living in the region who have not been screened for high blood pressure in the last year as well as adults who have been told they have high blood pressure.

Blood Pressure Screening among Adults

In Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA), nearly one in eleven adults (8.9%) have not had a blood pressure screening in the past year, representing nearly 281,000 adults in the region. Furthermore, one in three adults (33.3%) has high blood pressure, representing over one million (1,051,100) adults in the region.

- About one in ten adults living in Philadelphia (10.2%) has not had a blood pressure screening in the past year, followed by Bucks (9.8%), Montgomery (8.5%), Chester (7.5%), and Delaware (6.5%) Counties.
- Men (12.0%) are nearly two times more likely to have not had a blood pressure screening in the past year compared with women (6.3%).
- Almost one in five Latino adults (17.2%) has not had a blood pressure screening in the past year, compared with Black (7.6%) and White (7.8%) adults.
- As age increases, the percentage of adults who have not had a blood pressure screening in the past year decreases – 15.6% of adults ages 18 to 34, 10.8% of adults ages 35 to 49, 7.3% of adults ages 50 to 64, and 2.4% of adults ages 65 and older have not had a blood pressure screening in the past year.
- Adults without a regular source of care (27.1%) are four times more likely to have not had a blood pressure screening in the past year than adults who have a regular source of care (6.3%) (Figure 1).

- Almost one in three adults who are uninsured (30.7%) have not had a blood pressure screening in the past year compared with 7.4% of insured adults (Figure 1).
- Nearly one in eight adults living below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (12.1%) has not had a blood pressure screening in the past year compared with 8.1% of adults living at or above that poverty level.*



Characteristics of Adults with High Blood Pressure

The following points address demographic differences between adult residents in the region that have been told by a healthcare provider that they have high blood pressure.

- Over one-third of Philadelphia adults (38.2%) have high blood pressure, followed by Delaware (34.5%), Montgomery (30.4%), Bucks (29.8%), and Chester (26.4%) County adults.
- Although it is believed that men are oftentimes at higher risk for high blood pressure, men and women are affected about the same amount. One-third of men (33.9%) and women (32.8%) have high blood pressure.
- More than two in five Black adults (44.3%) have high blood pressure, compared with 31.6% of Whites and 27.3% of Latino adults.
- Two in five adults (42.4%) living below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level have high blood pressure compared with 30.8% of adults living at or above that poverty level.^v
- Adults that have a nearby park or outdoor space they are comfortable visiting (30.9%) are less likely to have high blood pressure than adults who do not (41.2%).

As heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death globally, claiming over 17 million lives per year,ⁱ World Heart Day is celebrated each year to support heart healthy lifestyles and to share heart health messages. However, prevention does not stop with regular blood pressure screenings, and many steps can be taken to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease or stroke.

For more information about the findings presented in this article, please contact Lisa Kleiner at lisa@phmc.org.

ⁱ World Heart Federation. About World Heart Day, 2012. Available at: <http://www.world-heart-federation.org/what-we-do/awareness/world-heart-day/about-world-heart-day/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/>

ⁱⁱⁱYoon SS, Fryar CD, Carroll MD. Hypertension prevalence and control among adults: United States, 2011–2014. NCHS data brief, no 220. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2015.

^{iv}Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vital signs: prevalence, treatment, and control of hypertension—United States, 1999-2002 and 2005-2008. MMWR. 2011;60(4):103-8.

^v Poverty level is calculated based on family size and income. For example, a family of four with an annual income of less than \$36,375 in 2015 was considered living below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level.