

2012 National Health Interview Survey Adult Functioning and Disability Supplement File (AFD)

The Adult Functioning and Disability Supplement (AFD) fielded with the 2012 NHIS Sample Adult module is part of an international project to develop and test improved measures of functioning. The project is part of a partnership with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) and the Budapest Initiative on the Measurement of Health State (BI). More information on the WG, the short and extended set of disability questions developed by this group, and testing efforts to date can be found on the NCHS website at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/washington_group.htm. A set of questions developed by both the WG and BI were included as a supplement (the Disability Questions Tests) in the NHIS from October 2008 through December 2012. The questions included in the 2010, 2011, and 2012 NHIS reflect changes to that set as a result of cognitive testing and analysis of the 2008/2009 questions and data. In 2010, these questions were in the Quality of Life (QOL) Supplement file; in 2011 and 2012, they are in the Adult Functioning and Disability Supplement file. As development and testing of the questions is ongoing, modifications to the questions used in the NHIS will also continue. Check http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/nhis_2012_data_release.htm for additional information and updates.

Approximately one quarter of sample adults were randomly selected to receive the 2012 AFD Supplement. As a result of the selection process, different weights were generated for these respondents (WTFA_AFD). In addition, a separate, stand-alone public use file was created for the AFD variables, rather than appending these variables to the 2012 Sample Adult file. The file itself contains information about a respondent's functioning in various basic and complex activity domains: vision (difficulty seeing), hearing (difficulty hearing), mobility (difficulty walking, climbing steps, or moving around), communication (difficulty communicating), cognition (difficulty remembering or concentrating), upper body (difficulty with self-care), affect (feelings of being worried, nervous, or anxious; feelings of being depressed), pain, and fatigue (feelings of being very tired or exhausted). The file also contains a set of questions designed to capture an individual's ability to participate in society – a measure of quality of life. Follow-up questions on the degree of difficulty, use of assistive devices, and functioning with assistance were included for most domains. However, the 2012 AFD file does not contain as many follow-up questions as the 2010 QOL file, nor does it contain the two verbatim fields that were available in the 2010 QOL file.

Although approximately one quarter of all sample adults were to be asked the questions in the AFD supplement, some persons did not complete the section. Persons who did not give responses to any of the questions in the section were given a coded value of "1" on the record completion status variable in the data file (variable RCS_AFD), which indicates that their record only contains responses of "not ascertained." These respondents are retained in the file, but they are coded as "8" in all remaining relevant fields of the AFD file. Adults who met the criteria for completing the section were coded as either "2" (all answers were "refused" or "don't know"), "3" (all answers were "refused," "don't know," or "not ascertained"), or "4" (at least one valid answer) on RCS_AFD. Over 98% of AFD respondents are coded "4" on RCS_AFD.

Many NHIS analysts will want to produce estimates and perform comparisons within key subgroups such as age, sex, and race/ethnicity. This requires merging the Adult Functioning and Disability File with one or more NHIS data files (e.g., Sample Adult, Person, etc.). Information on merging data files can be found in Appendix VI of this document. The weight WTFA_AFD provided with the AFD Supplement file is designed to produce annual-level estimates calculated based on data included in this file.

Technical Notes

Users interested in combining years of data should be aware that the 2012 AFD instrument is not identical to the 2011 AFD instrument. For the 2012 instrument, a new question (VIS_0) has been added to the vision sequence, and the order of questions in the hearing sequence has been changed. As a result, the vision and some of the hearing questions that were retained in 2012 have different contexts or universes relative to 2011, so these questions have been renamed. In addition, the wording for several of the questions in the mobility sequence has been changed, resulting in new variable names. Some of the changes in question wording are minor (e.g., “any” was removed from MOB_SS in the 2011 AFD section, and the resulting question renamed MOB_SS2 in 2012). Lastly, the universes for ANX_3 and DEP_3 in 2011 were modified in 2012 – hence, these questions have been renamed ANX_3R and DEP_3R, respectively. Users wishing to combine years of data should read the notes in the Variable Layout file in order to more completely understand the changes in 2012 variables relative to variables in the 2011 AFD file and in the 2010 QOL file.