

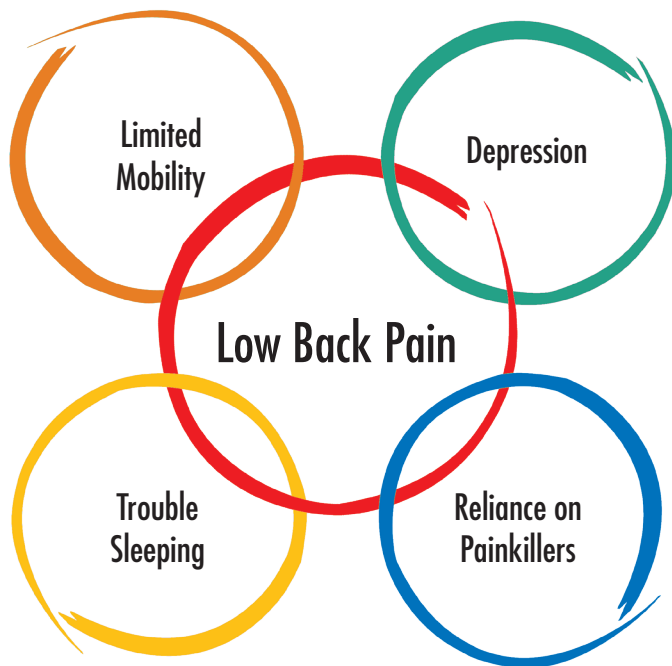


# THE HIDDEN IMPACT of Low Back Pain on Americans



Every day, tens of thousands of Americans visit physician offices, emergency departments, and outpatient clinics seeking relief from low back pain. For some, the pain is a constant nagging ache; for others it is more severe and often debilitating.

Low back pain occurs when one or more of the structures in the lower spine become weakened or damaged. This may be due simply to poor posture, an awkward bending or twisting movement, or overexertion. More serious causes include spine injuries or disorders. It is also common in persons with chronic health conditions and diseases. Whatever the cause, **low back pain can have serious side effects such as limited mobility, depression, trouble sleeping, and reliance on painkillers.**



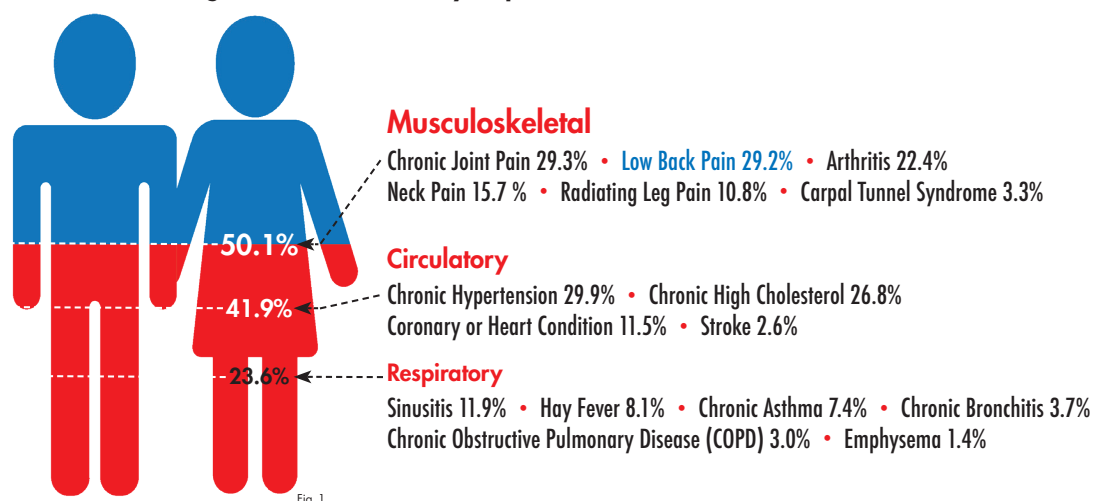
## Prevalence and Costs

Low back pain is one of the most commonly reported conditions in Americans over the age of 18 (Fig. 1). It affects more than 1 in 4 adult men and women of all races/ethnicities and from every region of the country (Figs. 2-3). Most cases of low back pain do not require hospitalization; however, even conservative treatment methods—doctor visits, physical therapy, and medications—can be costly for some patients. When hospitalization for low back pain is necessary, charges are higher, on average, than those of other hospital stays, according to the country's largest all-payer inpatient healthcare database.

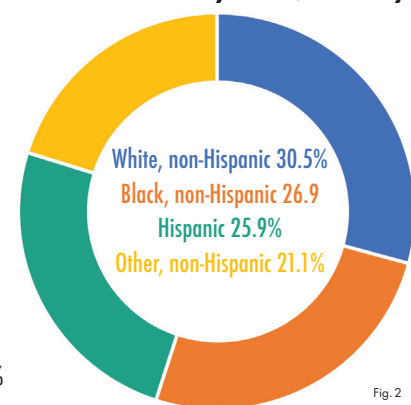


**Low back pain is a leading cause of disability in the United States, resulting in considerable losses in wages and productivity. In 2015, U.S. workers lost nearly 264 million workdays—nearly 2 lost workdays for every full-time employee—due to back pain.**

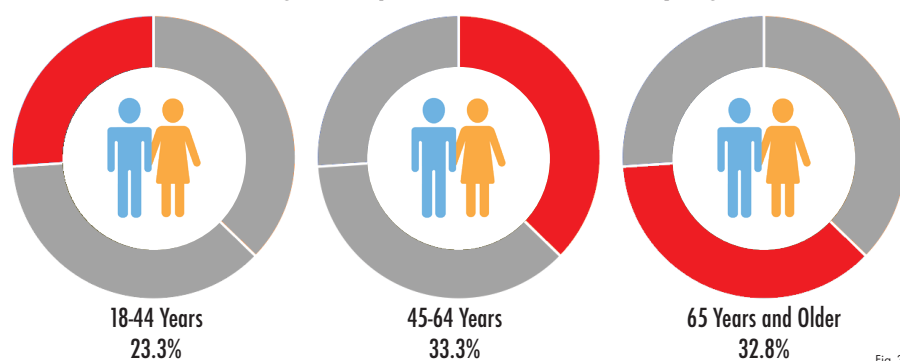
## Percentage of Most Commonly Reported Medical Conditions in Adults



## Percentage of Reported Low Back Pain by Race/Ethnicity



## Percentage of Reported Low Back Pain by Age



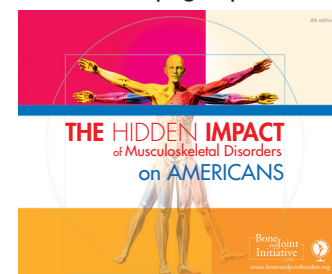
## Reducing the Burden through Research and Education

Despite its prevalence and impact, low back pain receives far less research funding than other conditions. Addressing this disparity is critical. Increased funding is needed to better understand low back pain, compare the effectiveness of treatment alternatives, develop new treatments, and evaluate prevention strategies.

Notwithstanding the need for more, research has already led to knowledge which is not always being practiced. Some known and effective therapies for low back pain have little or no cost. Pain medications are not necessarily the solution, and some of these therapies do not involve them. Opioid treatment is rarely indicated for acute back pain (short-term/lasting from a few days to a few weeks) and is not indicated for chronic back pain (long-lasting/12 weeks or longer). Greater investments in education that address knowledge gaps such as these can help get patients back to work and performing their daily activities quicker and with less expense.

Advances in prevention and treatment of low back pain are possible, but they can only occur with adequate funding and within a health system organized to deliver care effectively.

For the sources of data quoted in this document, and for more information, visit the chapter on Spine Disorders (4th Edition) and Fast Facts sheet on Low Back and Neck Pain at [boneandjointburden.org](http://boneandjointburden.org).



## About the United States Bone and Joint Initiative

The United States Bone and Joint Initiative (USBJI) is part of the worldwide multi-specialty campaign to advance understanding, prevention, and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders through education and research.

To learn more, visit [usbji.org](http://usbji.org).