

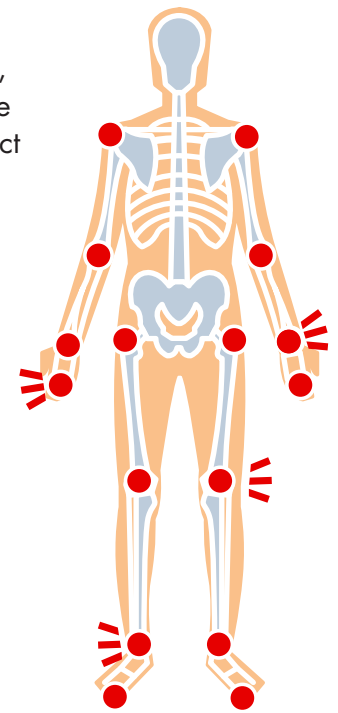


# THE HIDDEN IMPACT

## of Arthritis and Other Rheumatic Conditions on Americans

Arthritis is inflammation of one or more of the body's joints; the primary symptoms are pain, swelling, and stiffness in and around the joint. Causes can include inflammation of the tissue that lines the inside of the joint, progressive damage to cartilage and other tissues that protect joint surfaces, joint injury, and autoimmune rheumatic disorders that affect many systems throughout the body. Although any joint in the body may be affected by arthritis, it is most common in weight-bearing joints such as the knee and hip, as well as in the fingers and spine.

**There are more than 100 types of arthritis and other rheumatic conditions, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, psoriatic arthritis, spondyloarthritis, and systemic lupus erythematosus.** More than 1 in 4 adults in the United States have self-reported doctor-diagnosed arthritis, with a higher prevalence among women, individuals older than 65, and non-Hispanic whites (Figs. 1-3).



### The Burden of Arthritis

While it is true that the risk for developing arthritis increases with age, nearly two-thirds of arthritis sufferers in this country are younger than 65. Many of these individuals find it difficult to perform everyday activities—working, dressing, walking, writing—often for years or even decades. **As the leading cause of physical disability in the United States, arthritis limits the type or amount of work for at least 1 out of every 4 Americans.**

In addition, arthritis is common in people with other health conditions and diseases. Nearly half of adults with heart disease or diabetes, and close to one-third of adults with obesity, are also affected by arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions.



**For the years 2013-2015, U.S. workers with arthritis reported an average of 14.3 lost workdays in the previous 12 months due to the disease—nearly 5 days more than the number of lost workdays reported for any other medical condition—resulting in 180.9 million total lost workdays.**

Percentage of Reported Arthritis in Adults by Sex

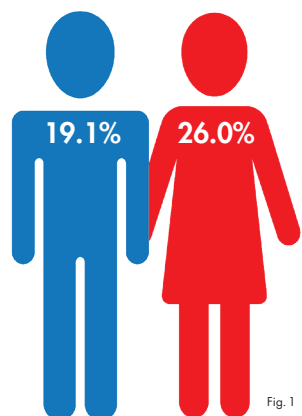


Fig. 1

Percentage of Reported Arthritis in Adults by Age

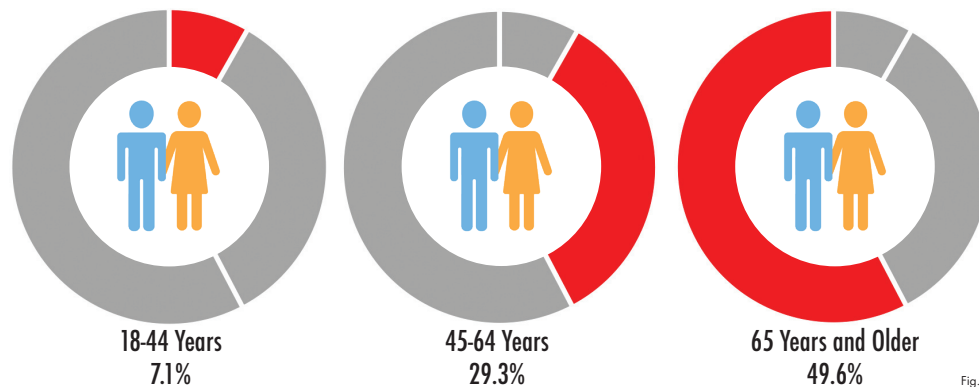


Fig. 2

Percentage of Reported Arthritis in Adults by Race/Ethnicity

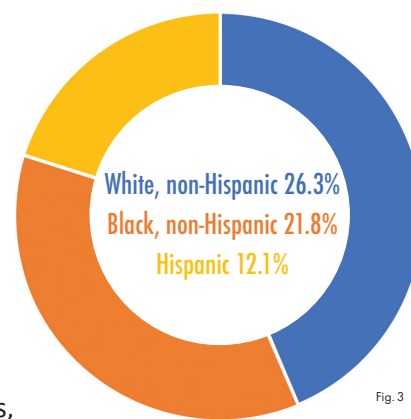


Fig. 3

## Addressing Challenges through Research and Education

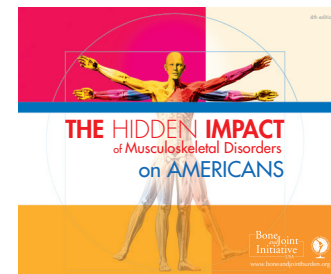
As the U.S. population ages, the prevalence and burden of arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions are expected to increase. If current trends continue, approximately 78 million Americans—22% of the projected population—will have some form of arthritis by 2040. Given the shortage of rheumatologists in most regions of the country, particularly rural areas, many patients with arthritis will likely be underserved.

Although there have been breakthroughs in the understanding and treatment of arthritis, particularly rheumatoid arthritis and spondyloarthritis, there still is no cure for these diseases. Yet, compared to other conditions, research funding to develop and evaluate more effective interventions for arthritis is relatively modest. Increased research and clinical investments in arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions—investments that more closely match the burden these conditions have on society—could lead to access to earlier diagnosis, and newer treatments, and an improved quality of life for many Americans. More data are also required to further assess risk and treatment outcomes, and the role of multiple conditions in people with arthritis.

Furthermore, more education about the importance of disease self-management—adherence to prescribed medications, and behavior modifications such as exercise and weight loss, which have been shown to help many people with arthritis significantly reduce their symptoms—is needed.

Advances such as these 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 Arthritis (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) and Fast Facts sheet on Arthritis at [boneandjointburden.org](http://boneandjointburden.org).



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## 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).