

# Health productivity in the multigenerational workplace

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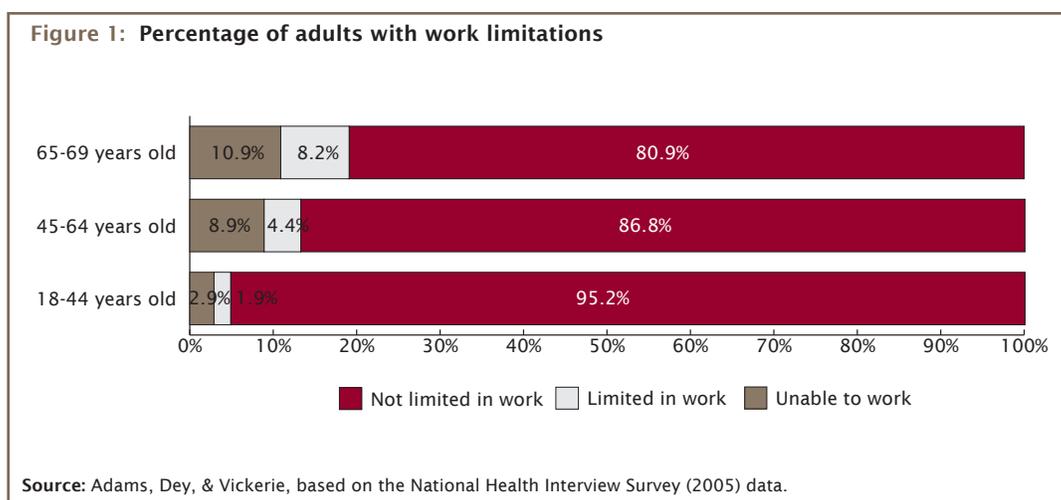
Chestnut Hill, Mass.: Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, 2008

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## HEALTH & PRODUCTIVITY IN THE MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKPLACE

### Q: Are older workers more likely to be unable to work due to health problems, as compared to younger workers?

- According to the 2005 National Health Interview Survey, 2.9% of respondents 18-44 years old reported themselves as “unable to work” due to a physical, mental or emotional problem. That figure was 8.9% for those 45-64 years old and 10.9% for those 65-69 years old. (Adams, Dey, & Vickerie, 2007: 21). See Figure 1.



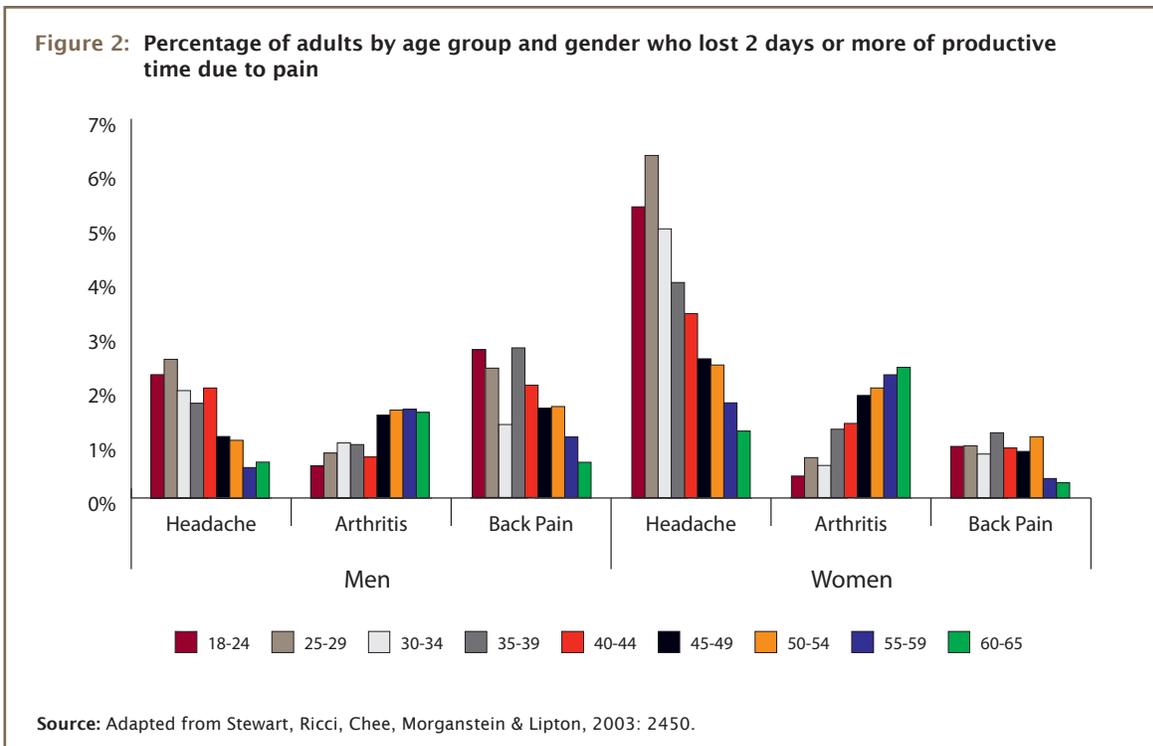
- According to data from the Current Population Survey on self-reported health status, “17 percent of persons age 55-64 have a work-limiting health problem compared with 9 percent of persons age 40-54 and 5 percent of persons age 30-39.” (United States General Accounting Office, 2001: 32).

### Q: What health problems are frequently associated with lost productive time for older workers?

- Based on analysis of the 2002-04 UnumProvident Disability Database, musculoskeletal injuries are the most prevalent cause of short-term disabilities for workers over the age of 40, accounting for almost 40% of STD claims in manufacturing and healthcare, and approximately 30% in transportation, education and banking. ((UnumProvident Company, 2005: 6).
- Based on analysis of the UnumProvident Disability Database, 2002-2004, “The primary drivers of long term impairments and work disruptions for the older worker are musculoskeletal disorders (accident/arthritis/back problems - 25%), cancer (17%), cardiovascular/circulator disorders (8%), and mental/nervous problems (7%).” (UnumProvident Company, 2005 : 5).
- For workers over the age of 40, the top four STD [short-term disability] impairments with the longest durations of time away from work are cancer and mental health disorders, e.g. depression (between 75-80 days) and musculoskeletal and circulatory disorders (between 70-75 days), according to analysis of the 2002-04 UnumProvident Disability Database. (UnumProvident Company, 2005: 7) .
- Among the workers with depression, 77.1% reported some lost productive time (LPT) related to depressive symptoms. LPT among depressed individuals was primarily explained by LPT while at work (82.1%). (Stewart, Ricci, Chee, Hahn, & Morganstein, 2003: 3140).

**Q: How much productive work time is lost due to health problems of older workers, compared to younger workers?**

- Workers ages 50 to 59 make up approximately 19 percent of the workforce and 19 percent of short-term disability claims, but 34 percent of long-term disability claims. For comparison, workers ages 30 to 39 make up 22 percent of the workforce, but 30 percent of short term disability claims and 18 percent of long term disability claims. (UnumProvident Company, 2005: 7; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007).
- 8.63 percent of 18 to 29 year old workers reported that they lost more than 2 hours a week in productive time due to pain-related conditions in the previous two weeks, compared to 8.40 percent of 30 to 39 year olds, 7.82 percent of 40 to 49 year olds, and 6.36 percent of 50 to 65 year olds. (Stewart, Ricci, Chee, Morganstein, & Lipton, 2003: 2447). See Figure 2.



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