

How do Chronic Diseases Affect the Workforce and the Economy?

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Abstract

Chronic diseases continue to pose a considerable concern in the economic realm. They have become a major challenge for workers and the overall economy. This study explores the various ways in which chronic diseases impact individual productivity, healthcare costs, and overall economic well-being. Through an analysis of disease prevalence, economic consequences, and potential policy interventions, this study sheds light on the significant issue of chronic diseases in both the labour market and the broader economy.

Keywords: chronic disease, labour market, NCD (non-communicable disease)

1. Introduction to the issue

In order to figure out the economic repercussions of chronic diseases, it is crucial to examine their prevalence. These diseases have emerged as a significant global health issue, steadily increasing in occurrence over the past few decades. In numerous countries, they now rank as the primary cause of death and disability. Ageing populations, lifestyle modifications, and environmental factors all contribute to this upward trend.

In the United States, 60% of adults have at least one chronic health condition: illnesses or conditions like chronic pain and fatigue that last at least one year and require ongoing management or restrict an individual's activities.

These numbers don't include Covid-19 "long-haulers," or the 10% of those who experience lingering symptoms, such as difficulties with memory and thinking ("brain fog"), fatigue, racing heartbeat, gastrointestinal problems, or chest pain for weeks, months, or longer after contracting the virus.

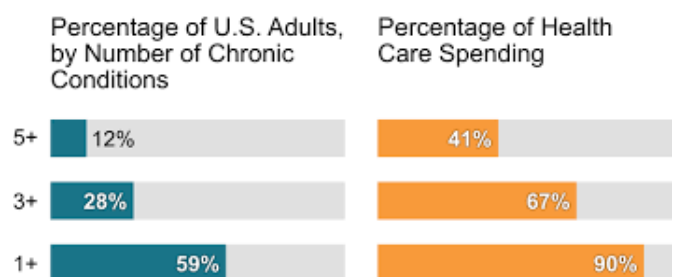


Figure 1: As we can see from the graph, 60% of adults in the US have at least one NCD, afterwards 90% of healthcare spent on it

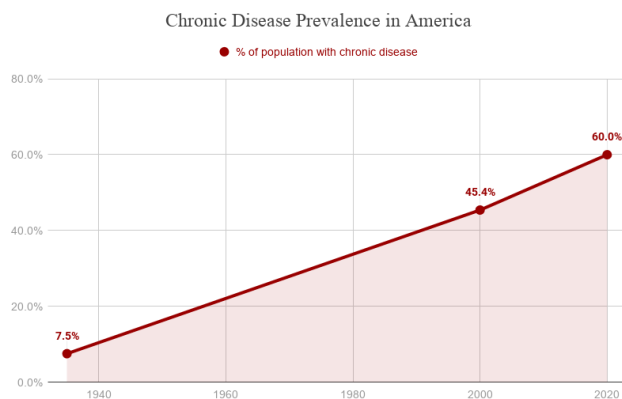


Figure 2: As we can see from the graph, % of the population with NCDs rapidly increased 8 times from 1940 till 2020.

Chronic health conditions present several challenges for employees. Even though the number of workers affected is staggering, there is surprisingly little written on how to support and manage workers with chronic illnesses. Supporting them isn't just the right thing to do — it will help you retain them, and it will convey the message that you value your employees as people.

1.1 Economic consequences of NCDs

Non-communicable diseases impact the workforce and the economy in many different ways.

Chronic illnesses have been associated with disability and this can have damaging, or serious economic implications on the individual and his/her family as they generally deprive individuals of their productivity and health potentials. From the national perspective, chronic illnesses reduce both work capacity and life expectancy, and therefore, economic productivity; leading to a reduction in the quantity and quality of the nation's labour force. Invariably, the burden of chronic illnesses primarily impacts the income and depletes investment savings of the individual and the household. Usually, the direct economic impacts on the household may arise typically in the form of hospital bills, caregiver allowances, nursing home bills, and other aspects of care

The overall cost of chronic disease — both direct and indirect — amounts to an average of \$37 trillion per

year, about 19.6% of the US gross domestic product. Direct healthcare costs for individuals with chronic diseases amount to an average of \$6,032 annually.

First: Negative Impact on Worker Efficiency

It decreases the efficiency of the workers in many spheres. Chronic illnesses can result in reduced school attendance and productivity for affected individuals. Frequent doctor visits, hospitalizations and the need for rest can lead to missed work days thoroughly affects both small and big businesses, employers

Second: Rising Healthcare Costs

It raises healthcare costs. Treating and curing such diseases is really hard as they have many symptoms. The treatment and management of chronic diseases require costly medical interventions, pharmaceuticals and long-term care. Impact on health systems and national populations is evident

Third: Reduced Economic Productivity

NCDs can lead to disability, early retirement. Therefore, people living in these conditions may contribute a lower amount to the economy throughout their lives. This diminished economic productivity can lead to decreased GDP growth and long-term economic challenges

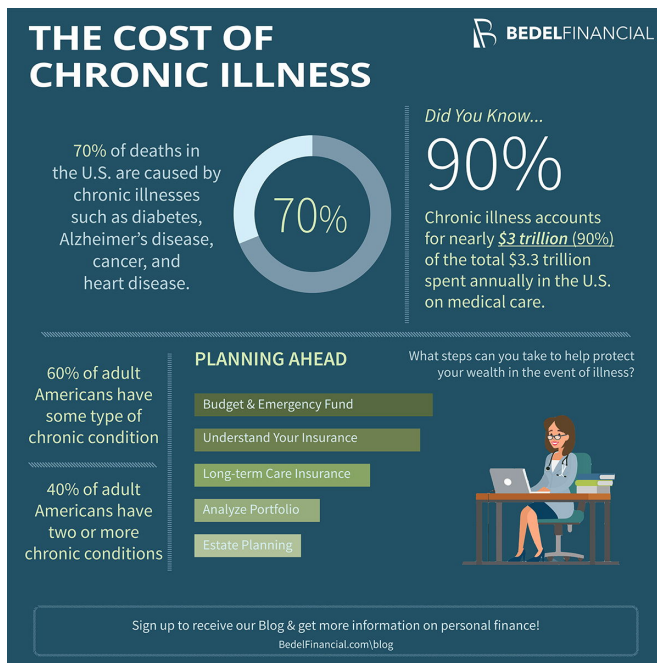


Figure 3: NCDs causes high rate of mortality (70%)

2. Political measures

Policy makers have the ability to take various actions to mitigate the negative economic impact of chronic diseases.

An important way to control NCDs is to focus on reducing the risk factors associated with these diseases. Low-cost solutions exist for governments and other stakeholders to reduce the common modifiable risk factors. Monitoring progress and trends of NCDs and their risk is important for guiding policy and priorities.

Mitigating the impact of NCDs on individuals and societies requires a comprehensive approach that requires all sectors, including health, finance, transport, education, agriculture, planning and others, to cooperate to reduce risks, NCDs, and promote prevention and control measures.

2.1 Economic policies

Investment in public health campaigns, early detection methods can help reduce the incidence of chronic diseases. By eliminating the need for costly medical treatment, these preventive measures can yield significant savings.

Improved access to health services can facilitate the timely diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases, which can potentially prevent complications and reduce health-care costs in the long term..

Conclusion

Chronic diseases, fueled by demographic shifts and changing lifestyles, present a formidable challenge to society. Our exploration has laid bare their complex economic impact.

Multiple factors play a role in the prevalence challenge, including population ageing and changing lifestyles. Chronic diseases have a wide impact on the workforce and economy, causing economic ripples

Acknowledgements

There is a strong connection between NCDs, workforce and the economy that should be understood by policymakers, economists and healthcare workers.

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