

## United States' Diabetes Crisis among African Americans: Today and Future Trends

Diabetes is a very serious and rapidly growing problem for African Americans. They have about an 80% greater risk for developing the disease during their lifetimes than non-Hispanic whites.<sup>17</sup> A recently released study<sup>2</sup> and the 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet<sup>6</sup> from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predict a dramatic increase in diabetes between 2010 and 2050. Using this new information from the CDC, the Institute for Alternative Futures diabetes model estimates that the number of African Americans living with diabetes (diagnosed and undiagnosed) in America will increase 72% by 2025 from 5,547,700 to 9,517,200.<sup>1</sup> The resulting medical and societal cost of diabetes will be \$90.3 billion – an 81% increase from 2010.<sup>1</sup>

Type 2 diabetes is becoming a common disease for many adults, and it is even beginning to affect school-aged children. Forty percent of African American boys and 49% of girls will develop diabetes during their lifetimes<sup>7</sup> and therefore face the possibility of severe diabetes-related complications<sup>6</sup> and a life span that is reduced by 4 to 23 years.<sup>7</sup>

In 2010, there were 5,547,700 African Americans in the United States with diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Some 2,061,100 of them were undiagnosed<sup>1</sup> and possibly beginning to suffer from the common complications of diabetes, including eye, kidney, lower extremity, and heart damage.<sup>3</sup> African Americans have at least twice the risk of amputations, renal failure, and death due to their diabetes compared to non-Hispanic white Americans.<sup>18</sup> The overall cost of diabetes among African Americans in the United States, including medical expenses and lost productivity, was about \$49.8 billion in 2010.<sup>1</sup>

### Pre-Diabetes and Diabetes Trends<sup>1</sup> among African Americans in the United States

U.S. African American Diabetes Data and Forecasts	2010	2025
Population	40,951,000	49,328,000
Pre-diabetes	10,430,000	12,564,000
Diagnosed diabetes	3,486,600	6,936,300
Undiagnosed diabetes	2,061,100	2,580,900
Total with diabetes (diagnosed and undiagnosed)	5,547,700	9,517,200
<b>Complications:</b>		
Visual impairment	624,100	1,179,200
Renal failure	14,150	23,400
Leg amputations	17,150	24,600
Annual deaths attributable to diabetes	79,330	120,500
Total annual cost (2010 dollars)	\$49.8 B	\$90.3 B
Annual medical costs	\$35.0 B	\$62.7 B
Annual nonmedical costs	\$14.8 B	\$27.6 B

Another 10,430,000 African Americans in the United States had pre-diabetes,<sup>1</sup> a condition in which the blood sugar level is higher than normal but not yet in the range for diabetes.<sup>4</sup> Many scientific studies have shown that relatively simple life-style changes, such as modest weight loss and increases in regular

physical activity, can often prevent pre-diabetes from progressing to diabetes or significantly delay its onset by as much as 58%.<sup>14</sup> However, if they do not take action, individuals with pre-diabetes can often progress to diabetes within 10 years.<sup>4</sup> So if current trends continue, the number of African Americans with diabetes is projected to increase to 9,517,200 by 2025.<sup>1</sup>

We now understand more about delaying or even preventing the onset of diabetes as well as how to effectively treat it, both of which can result in a dramatic reduction in complications and premature death.<sup>12,13,14</sup> Reducing the future burden of diabetes in the United States depends upon the promotion of targeted screening for asymptomatic adults to identify those with pre-diabetes and undiagnosed diabetes, improved access to quality medical care, and increased patient compliance with therapy.<sup>14,15,16</sup> However, halting the “twin epidemics” of diabetes and obesity will also require fundamental change in all segments of society, including greater access to opportunities for physical activity in our schools, workplaces, and communities and a significant shift in the American diet away from sugar, salt, refined carbohydrates, and saturated fats and toward more fruits and vegetables.<sup>15</sup> In short, we all play an important role in conquering diabetes.

These forecasts are based on available national diabetes data, including population projections extrapolated to the state, and the CDC’s 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet and latest diabetes prevalence projections to 2050. They assume a steady, but conservative, reduction in the number of people with complications due to better awareness of the risks of diabetes, earlier screening and intervention, and more effective therapies.

**For endnote references and details on the Institute for Alternative Futures Diabetes 2025 Forecasting Model Methodology, visit [www.altfutures.org/diabetes2025](http://www.altfutures.org/diabetes2025).**

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