

Title: *Cognitive Struggles of West Virginia's Aging Population*

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Background: Older adults in rural areas face unique challenges. Appalachian residents contend with poor health due to their socioeconomic status, isolation, and lack of access to healthcare. This research aims to investigate cognitive issues facing rural Appalachian residents.

Research Question: Do West Virginian adults aged 65 years and older report worse cognitive health than those in other states across the U.S?

Methods: A cross tabulation using 2021 BRFSS data examined the association between reports of cognitive difficulty and difficulty doing errands alone. We compared 65+ residents across the U.S with West Virginia alone.

Results: Significant associations between cognitive difficulties and doing errands alone emerged for older adults in West Virginia, (χ^2 (DF = 1) = 82.5, $p < .001$), and for older adults in the rest of the USA, (χ^2 (DF = 1) = 414.7, $p < .001$). In addition, older adults in WV (5.9%) were more likely to report such difficulties in comparison to the rest of the nation (2.7%), (χ^2 (DF = 1) = 90.8, $p < .001$).

Conclusion: These initial comparisons are indicators that older West Virginians report more cognitive difficulty than older adults in other states. Ongoing research should examine potential causal factors.