

Older Adults Fall Prevention ISSUE BRIEF

December 2021

The Wyoming Injury and Violence Prevention Program is dedicated to helping reduce the number of falls and fall related injuries.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries in older adults aged 65 and older. In the United States, approximately 25% of adults over 65 reports at least one (1) fall per year.

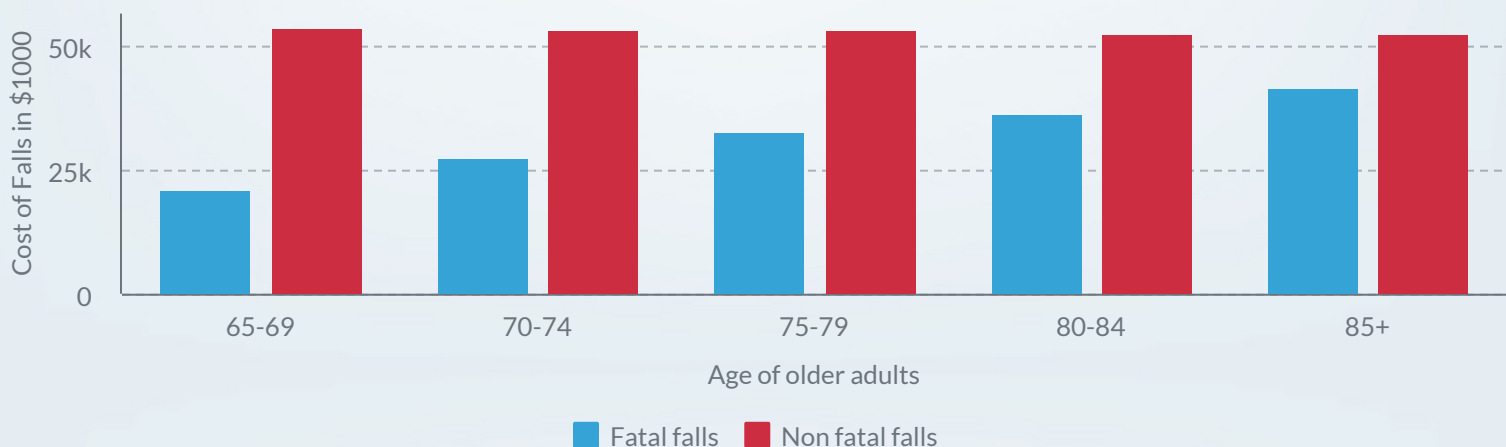
Wyoming ranks among the top 10 states with the highest percentage of adults reporting a fall. Since 2004 the number of fatal falls among older adults has increased 150%. In 2017, 68 older adults in Wyoming died from a fall-related injury. In 2019 the number increased to 88.

Even when a fall is not fatal, it can still be severe. Head injuries, broken bones, and fractures occur in 20% of all falls, making falls the leading cause of traumatic brain injuries (TBI's).

These injuries in older adults can result in problems performing activities in their daily lives and thus cause the loss of independence. Let alone the physical effects of falling, the experience of falling also creates a "fear" of falling.

The average cost of fatal falls vs. non-fatal falls that resulted in hospitalization in Wyoming are on the rise.

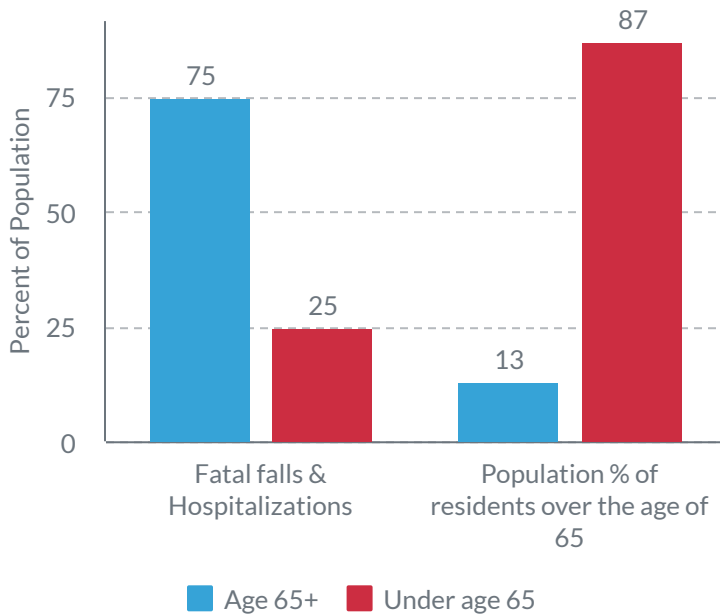
Cost of falls: Fatal vs. Non fatal



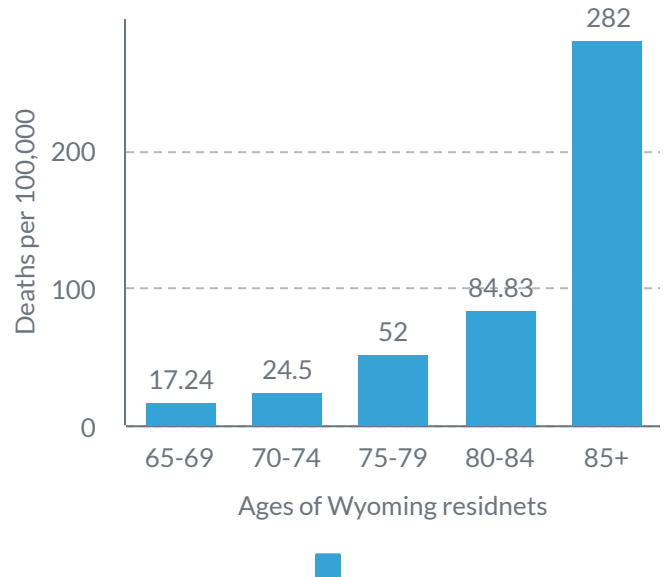
*Data obtained from Center for Disease Control 10/13/21

Fall Statistics for Wyoming

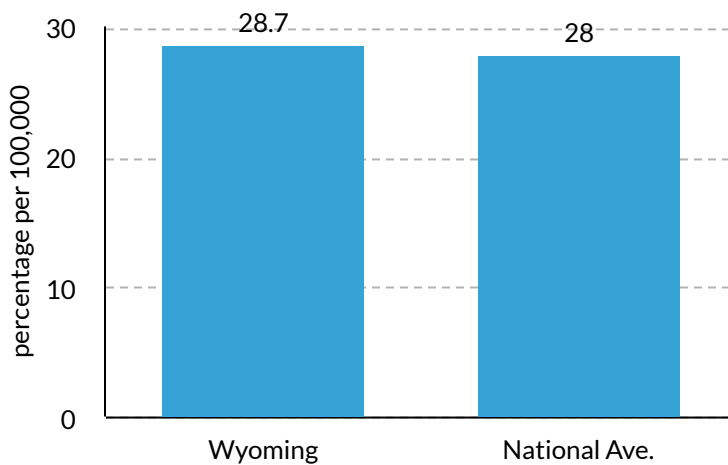
*Falls vs Population



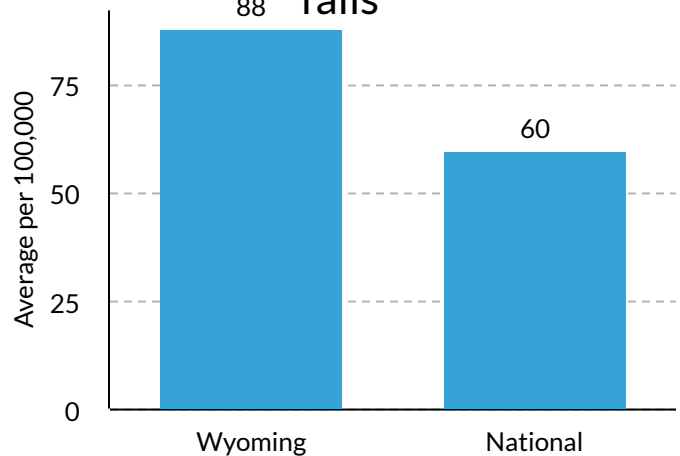
*Mortality Rate due to falls of Wyoming 2008-2018



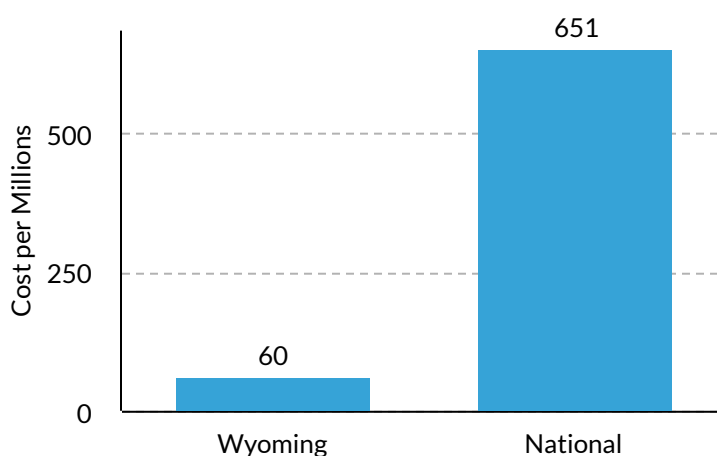
*Comparisons of Falls by State



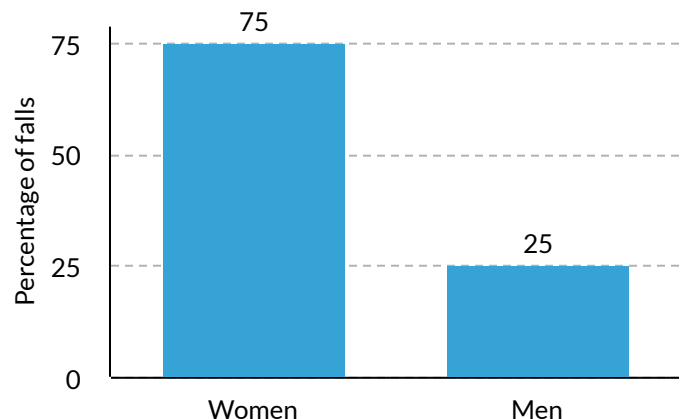
*Comparison of Deaths due to falls



*Comparison of Costs



*Comparison of falls resulting in hip fractures in men vs. women



****4 things YOU can do to help prevent falls***



Have your health care provider review your medicine

Tell your physician right away if you fall (even if it does not cause a severe injury) if you worry about falling or feel unsteady. Have your doctor or pharmacist review all the medicines you take, even over-the-counter medicines. As you get older, how drugs work in your body can change. Some medications, or combinations of drugs, can make you sleepy or dizzy and can cause you to fall. Ask your provider about taking vitamin D supplements to improve bone, muscle, and nerve health.



Exercise to improve your balance and strength

Exercises that improve balance and make your legs stronger lower your chances of falling. It also helps you feel better and more confident. Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling.



Have your eyes and feet checked

Once a year, check with your eye doctor and update your eyeglasses if needed. You may have a condition like glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling. Also, have your healthcare provider check your feet once a year. Discuss proper footwear, and ask whether seeing a foot specialist is advised.



Make your home safer

- Remove things you can trip over (like papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you often use in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars next to and inside the tub and next to the toilet. Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights installed on all staircases.
- Wear well-fitting shoes with good support inside and outside the house.

Wyoming Department of Health Evidence-Based Programs to help reduce falls

An evidence-based fall prevention program has been tested using a rigorous research design and shown to reduce falls in older adults. The intervention is then translated into a program before being implemented in a community setting. However, to remain effective, an evidence-based program must maintain fidelity to the original intervention—that is, it must retain the key elements that made the intervention effective—while being adapted to fit the requirements of the implementation setting, such as a senior center or community center.



[A Matter of Balance](#) is an eight-week structured group intervention that emphasizes practical strategies to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels for older adults. Participants learn to view falls and fear of falling as controllable, set realistic goals to increase activity, change their environment to reduce fall risk factors, and exercise to increase strength and balance.



[Tai Chi for Arthritis](#) for falls prevention is an evidence-based community program developed to reduce the risks of falling among older adults. Studies have shown that older adults 65+ who regularly participate in a Tai Chi falls prevention class can reduce their risk of falling by as much as 55% when compared to the control group. How does Tai Chi work? It emphasizes shifting your weight, improving your posture, and ensuring that one foot remains in firm contact with the ground at all times as you walk and stand. Many people who participate in a Tai Chi program over multiple weeks report increased balance, improved leg strength, flexibility, and a higher level of overall confidence.



[Bingocize](#)® is a 10-week program that combines a bingo-like game with exercise and health education. The unique addition of bingo addresses many of the barriers to older adults' participation because the game is fun, familiar, and done in a group setting. The program has been shown to increase older adults' functional fitness, health knowledge, and social engagement in a variety of settings. The overall goals of the program are to help older adults improve and/or maintain mobility and independence, learn and use health information focused on falls reduction and other health-related behaviors, and socially engage with other older adults. A mobile app version is also available.

