

# Chapter 8

## The Chiropractic Patient

Respondents were asked to provide information that best described their patients in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and occupation. A five-point scale combining percentages with a corresponding label for each scale segment was utilized. (Page 43 of this report explains the conversion of survey scale to percentages. The scale is presented in Appendix C, on page 6 of the survey.) The responses in each category were averaged.

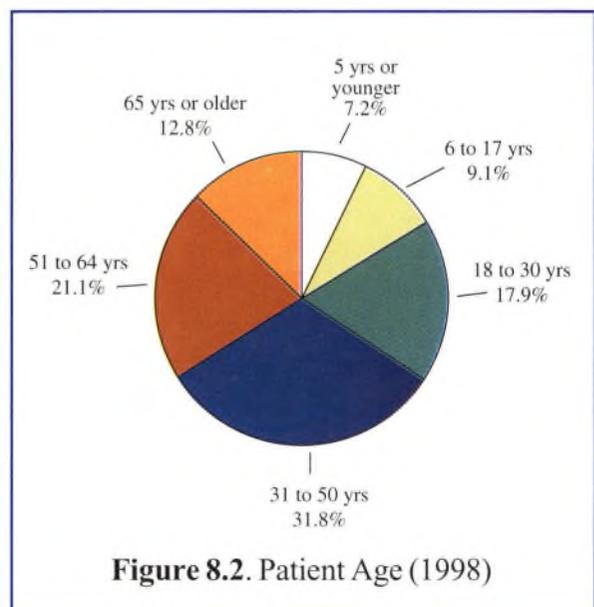
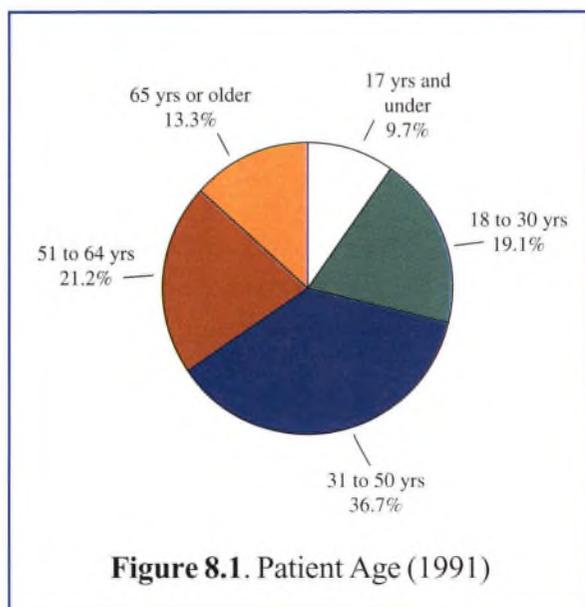
### Patient Demographics

#### Patient Gender

Chiropractors estimate that females account for 59% of their patients. There has been no change in this distribution since the 1991 NBCE survey of chiropractic practice.

#### Patient Age

Data from the current survey indicate that the percentage of patients under 17 years of age has increased 6.6% since the previous survey. The current survey asked respondents to differentiate between the percentage of youngsters in their practice who were 5 years of age and under (7.2%) and those who were between 6 and 17 years old (9.1%). The 1991 data included a category for patients 17 and under (9.7%). The rank order of patient age categories did not change from the previous report. The highest percentage of patients is the 31-50-year-old range (31.8%), followed by 51-64-year-olds (21.1%), 18-30-year-olds (17.9%), and those 65 or older (12.8%) (Figure 8.1 and Figure 8.2).



## Ethnic Background and Occupations

Chiropractors treat persons from many races and occupations. While no single occupational group predominates, Caucasians represent the majority ethnic group of patients (Table 8.1).

<i>Ethnic Origin 1998</i>	
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.9%
African American	12.7%
Caucasian	60.4%
Hispanic	13.6%
Native American	4.7%
Other	0.7%
<i>Occupation 1998</i>	
Administrative Support, including Clerical	8.8%
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing/Farming	4.9%
Assembly Workers/Laborers	8.7%
Construction and Mechanical Trades	8.4%
Entertainment, including Authors, Artists	3.4%
Executive/Managerial	7.7%
Full-time Parent/Homemaker	7.9%
Military	2.5%
Professional/Educational	7.7%
Professional Athlete	2.1%
Protective Services	3.9%
Retired	7.9%
Sales, including Retail	6.6%
Service occupations	6.6%
Student	5.4%
Technical occupations, including Health	6.3%
Other	1.3%

**Table 8.1.** Patient Ethnicity and Occupation

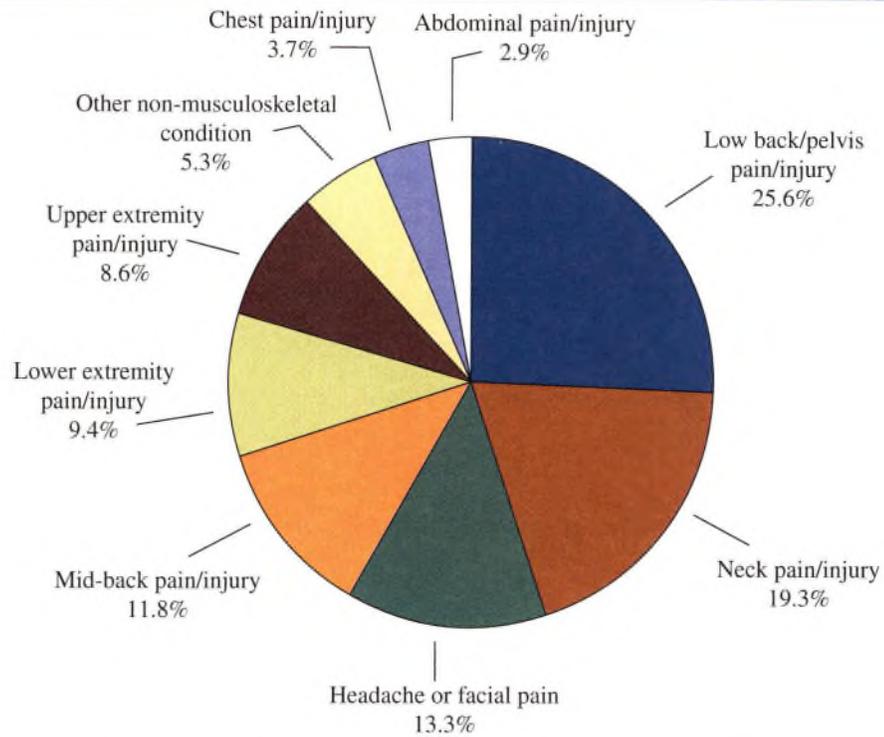
## Patient Conditions

### Chief Complaint

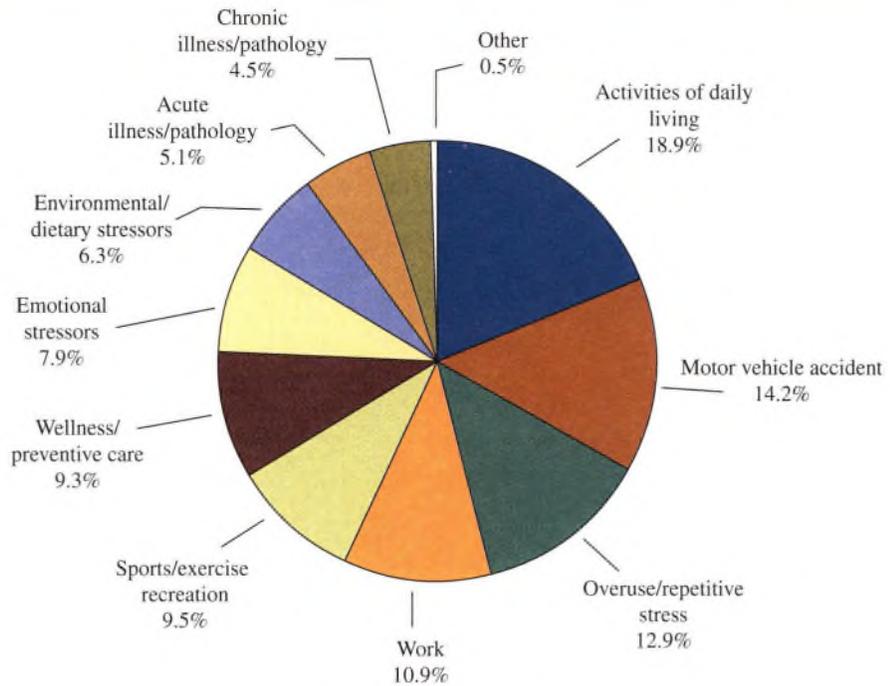
A typical patient enters a chiropractor's office complaining of some specific pain or problem (Figure 8.3). This complaint is frequently attributable to an injury or other stressor. For example, a work-related lifting injury, a kidney infection, and/or obesity might be related to, or may be the cause of, a patient's low-back pain. The practitioner, based on a proper case history, physical examination, laboratory results, and other data, reaches a diagnostic conclusion that may or may not include subluxation. Respondents were asked to estimate the distribution of new patients whom they had seen in the previous year whose chief complaint was in one of nine categories. The following chapter expands upon the diagnostic impression (under "Types of Conditions").

### Primary Etiology

Respondents were instructed to make a judgment concerning the primary etiology for their patients' chief complaints by estimating the distribution for each of eleven categories. Ten-point scales were used in these two sections and the responses were averaged as explained on page 43 (Figure 8.4).



**Figure 8.3.** Chief Complaints of Chiropractic Patients



**Figure 8.4.** Primary Etiology of Patient Conditions