

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 segment was used (refer to Appendix D for details concerning the survey scales). The responses in each category were averaged.

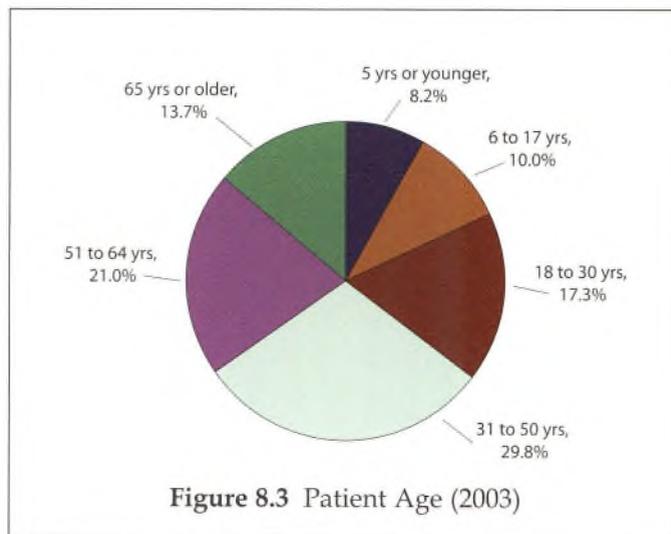
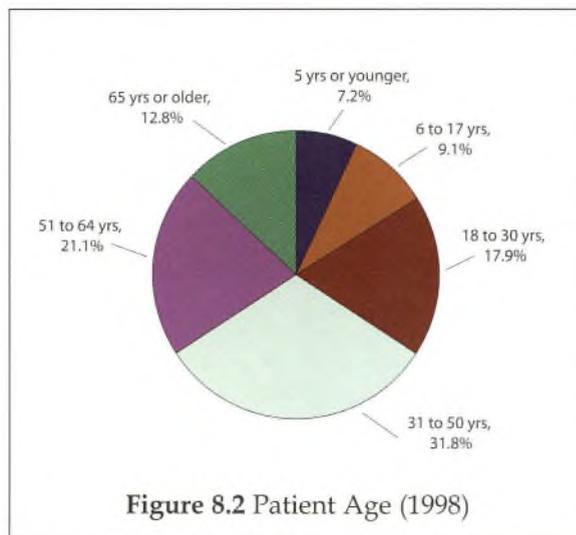
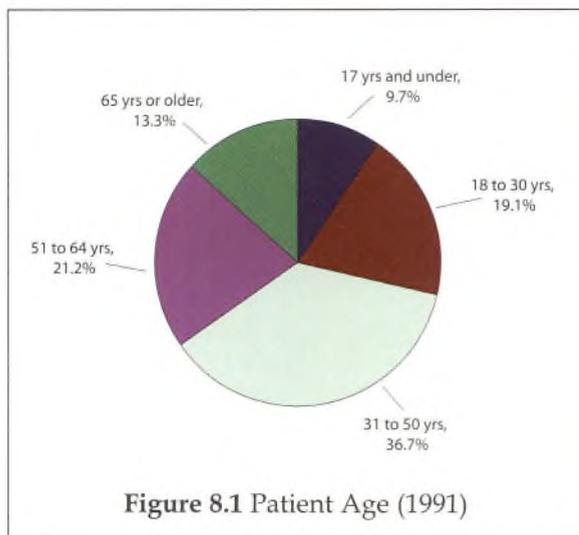
Patient Demographics

Patient Gender

Chiropractors estimate that females account for 60% of their patients. There has been essentially 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 8.5% since the 1991 survey. The current survey, like the 1998 survey, asked respondents to differentiate between the percentage of youngsters in their practice who were five years of age and under (8.2%) and those who were between 6 and 17 years old (10.0%). The 1991 data included a category for patients 17 and under (9.7%), but not five and under. The rank order of patient age categories did not change from the previous two reports. The highest percentage of patients is the 31- to 50-year-old range (29.8%), followed by 51- to 64-year-olds (21.0%), 18- to 30-year-olds (17.3%), and those 65 or older (13.7%) (Figure 8.1, Figure 8.2, and Figure 8.3).



Ethnic Background and Occupations

Chiropractors treat persons from all races and occupations. While the current survey did not ask about patient occupations, the previous two surveys revealed that no single occupational group predominates. Caucasians represent the majority ethnic group of patients (56.7%). However, compared to the 1998 data, the percentage of Caucasian patients has declined 3.7%, and the percentage of each of the other ethnicities increased (Table 8.1).

Patient Ethnicity		
	1998	2003
African American	12.7%	14.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.9%	9.0%
Caucasian	60.4%	56.7%
Hispanic	13.6%	14.4%
Native American	4.7%	5.3%
Other	0.7%	0.6%

Table 8.1 Ethnic Origin

Patient Conditions

Chief Complaint

A typical patient enters a chiropractor's office complaining of some specific pain or problem (Figure 8.4 and Figure 8.5). 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 to the 1998 survey 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 current survey added a "Wellness" category to this section and removed it from the *Primary Etiology* section. 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 patient's chief complaints by estimating the distribution for each of 10 categories in the current survey and in each of 11 categories in the 1998 survey. As noted above, the "Wellness/Preventive Care" category was removed from this section and included in the *Chief Complaint* section. Ten-point scales were used in these two sections, and the responses were averaged (Figure 8.6 and Figure 8.7).

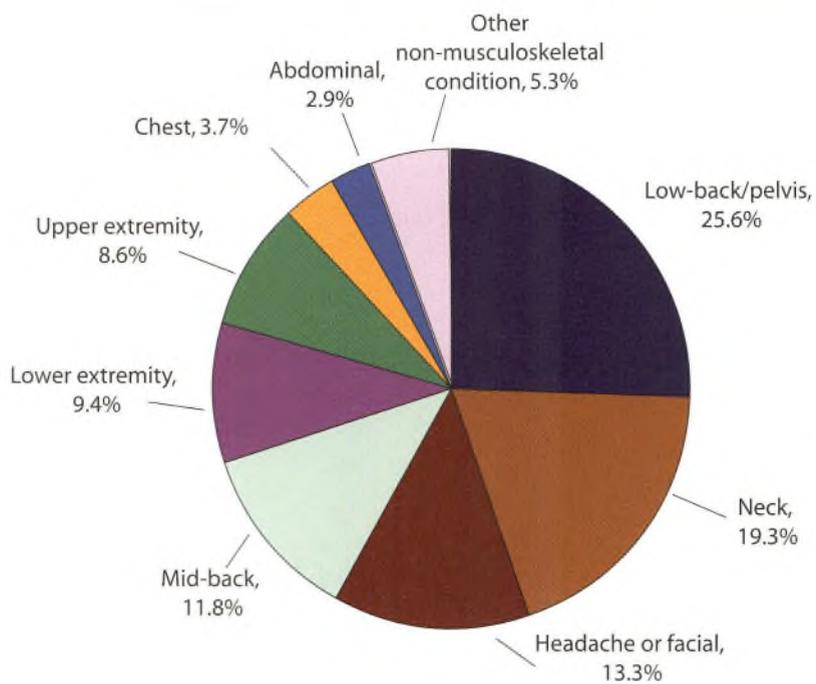


Figure 8.4 Chief Complaints (1998)

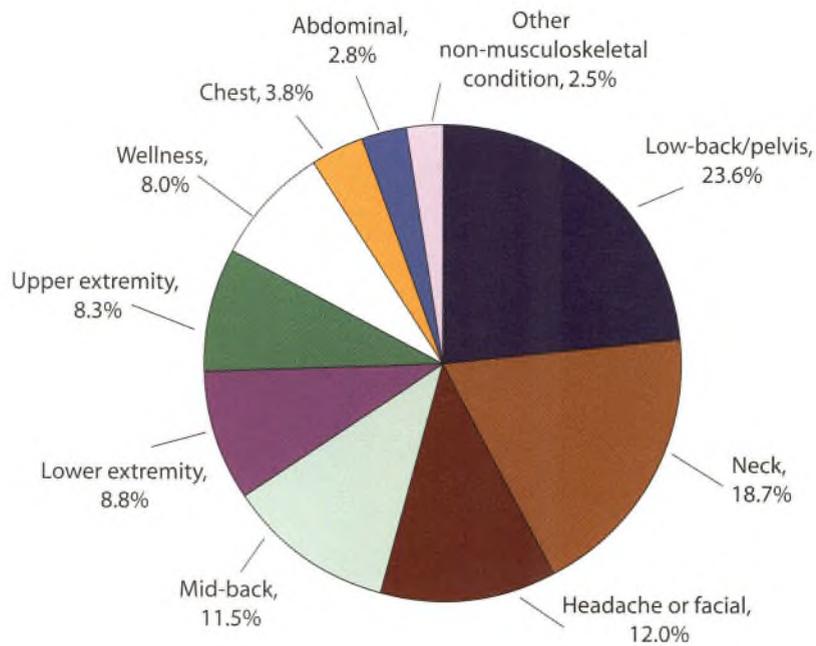


Figure 8.5 Chief Complaints (2003)

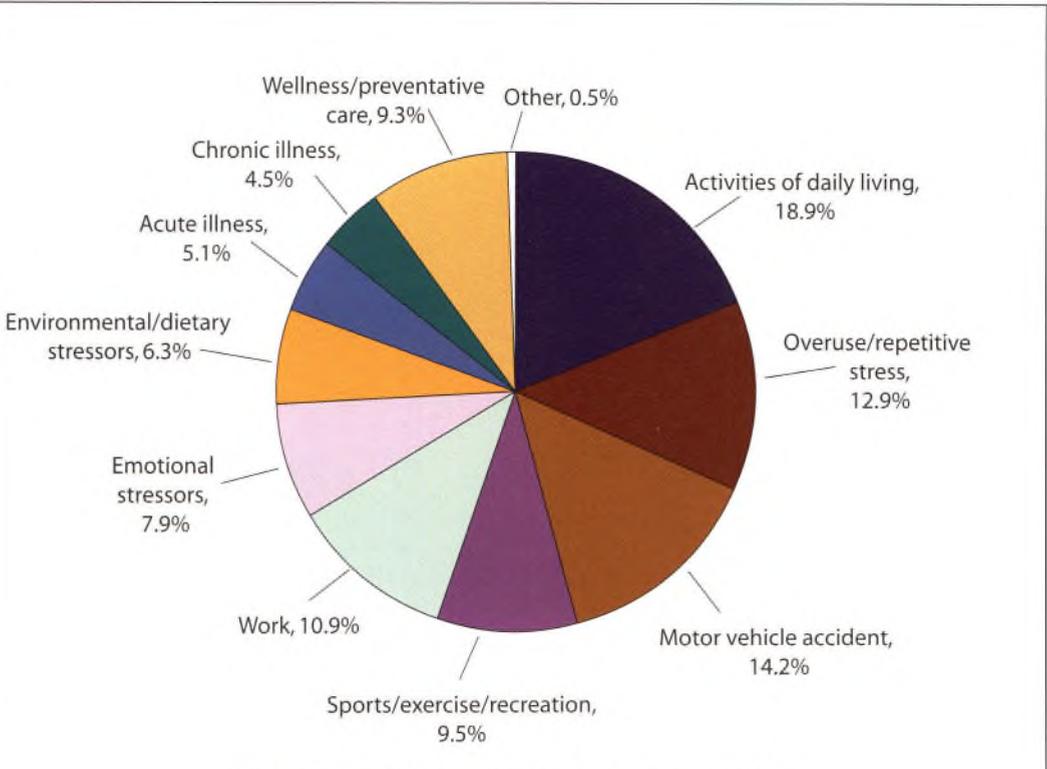


Figure 8.6 Etiology of Patient Conditions (1998)

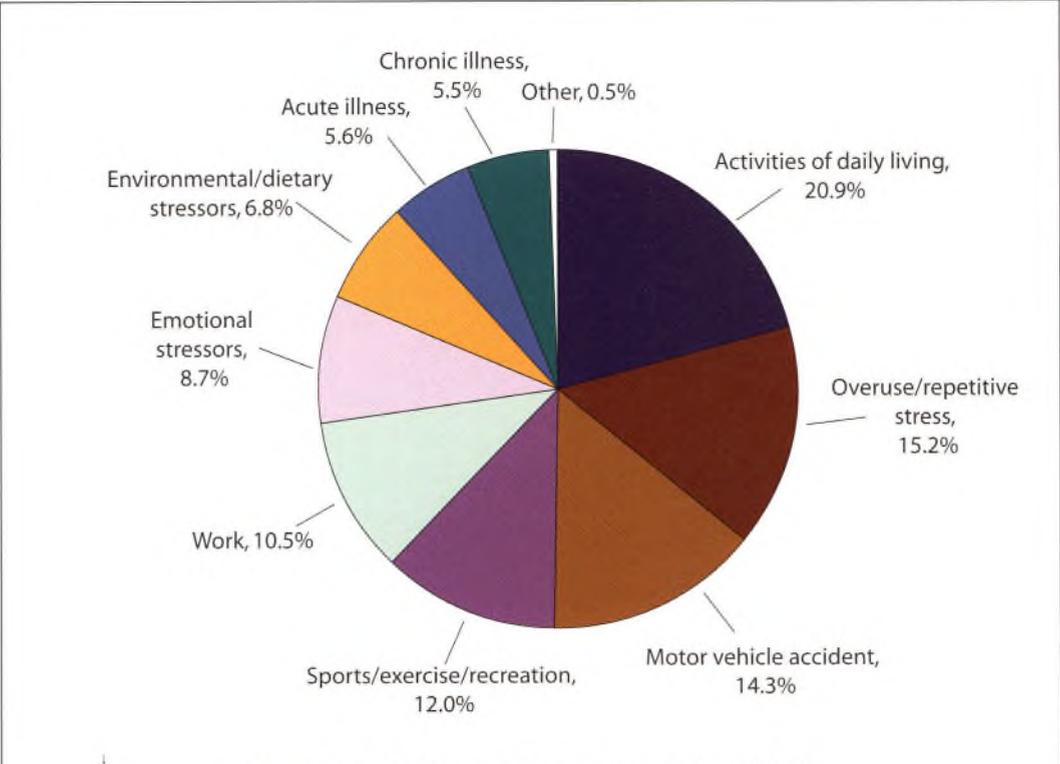


Figure 8.7 Etiology of Patient Conditions (2003)