



# Briefing Paper

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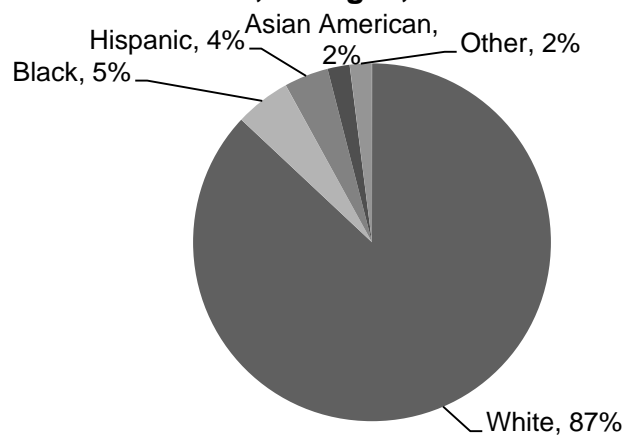
## The Status of Women in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties, North Carolina

Women in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell counties, as in North Carolina as a whole, have made much progress during the last few decades, but more remains to be done to elevate women's status. The majority of women work—many in professional and managerial jobs—and women are a mainstay of the economic health of their communities. Yet, there are ways in which women's status still lags behind men's, and not all women are prospering equally. This briefing paper provides information about the status of women in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell counties, focusing on women's earnings and workforce participation, level of education, poverty, access to child care, and health status. It also provides basic demographic information about women in this area.

### Basic Facts About Women in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties

The female population in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell counties has less racial and ethnic diversity than the female population in the state as a whole. Eighty-seven percent of women and girls in these counties combined are white, compared with approximately two-thirds of women and girls in the state overall (Figure 1 and Table 1).

**Figure 1. Distribution of Women and Girls by Race and Ethnicity in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties, All Ages, 2008–2010**



Notes: Data are not available for American Indians due to small sample size. Racial and ethnic categories are defined as exclusive: white, not Hispanic; black, not Hispanic; Asian American, not Hispanic; and Other, not Hispanic. Those whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. "Other" includes those reporting multiple race identities as well as those not classified by the Census Bureau.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

Black women and girls make up the next largest racial or ethnic group in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell at five percent of the total female population, compared with 22 percent in the state as a whole (Table 1). Only three percent of women and girls in these three counties combined are immigrants, compared with seven percent in the state and thirteen percent in the nation overall (Table 1).

The median age for women and girls in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell is 42 years, which is four years older than the median age for women and girls in both North Carolina and the United States. Seventeen percent of women and girls in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are aged 65 and older, compared with 15 percent in the state and nation as a whole (Table 1). Women aged 18 and older in the three counties combined are more likely to be married than women in North Carolina and the United States overall (Table 1).

<b>Table 1. Basic Demographic Statistics for Women and Girls</b>			
	<b>Alexander-Burke-Caldwell</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	210,725	9,561,558	309,349,689
Number of Women and Girls, All Ages	106,373	4,905,216	157,294,247
Median Age of All Women and Girls	42	38	38
Proportion of Women Aged 65 and Older	17%	15%	15%
<b>Distribution of Women and Girls by Race and Ethnicity, All Ages</b>			
White, Not Hispanic	87%	65%	64%
Black, Not Hispanic	5%	22%	13%
Hispanic	4%	8%	16%
Asian American, Not Hispanic	2%	2%	5%
American Indian, Not Hispanic	N/A	1%	1%
Other, Not Hispanic	2%	2%	2%
<b>Proportion of Women and Girls Who Are Foreign-Born, All Ages</b>	3%	7%	13%
<b>Proportion of Women Who Are Married, Aged 18 and Older</b>	56%	50%	49%

Note: Data for Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell counties are for 2008–2010. Data for North Carolina and the United States are for 2010 only. N/A indicates data are not available due to small sample size.

Those whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic may be of any race. “Other” includes those reporting multiple race identities as well as those not classified by the Census Bureau.

Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 and 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

## Work and Earnings

The majority of women aged 16 and older in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are in the labor force (56 percent; Table 2). Women’s labor force participation in this region, however, is slightly lower than in the state and nation as a whole (59 percent each; Table 2), which probably reflects the relatively high share of older women in the population in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell.

In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, as in North Carolina overall, the labor force participation rate is higher for women with children than for all women. More than seven in ten women with children under age 18 (74 percent) in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell and the state as a whole are in the labor force (Table 2). Despite the higher workforce participation rates among mothers, women with children are much less likely than men with children to be in the labor force. Ninety-four percent of fathers with dependent children in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell and North Carolina as a whole are in the workforce,<sup>1</sup> suggesting that women

are more likely than men to cut back on employment when they become parents. The higher participation of fathers in the workforce is also presumably to make up for the fact that many women are likely to reduce their labor force participation when their children are young.

In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, the majority of employed women aged 16 and older work full-time, but women are much more likely than men to have part-time jobs. In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, 17 percent of employed men work part-time, compared with 29 percent of employed women.<sup>ii</sup> Women are more likely than men to say that they work part-time because they cannot find child care or for other family care-related reasons. In the state overall (data are not available for Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell counties), 20 percent of women, compared with only 3 percent of men, give these reasons for working part-time.<sup>iii</sup> In addition, as a result of the Great Recession, both men and women have experienced an increase in part-time work for economic reasons during the last few years; women, however, are more likely than men to work in the sectors and occupations where jobs are only available on a part-time basis (and more women than men say that they work part-time because they could not find a full-time job).<sup>iv</sup> Part-time workers are much less likely than full-time workers to have access to paid leave, health care, and employer-supported pensions (Society for Human Resource Management 2011).

In addition to these differences in hours worked, women and men in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, as in the nation as a whole, tend to work in different occupations. One in three employed women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell works in professional and managerial jobs, which is a considerably higher proportion than men in these counties (31 percent compared with 18 percent; Table 2). Both women and men in these counties, however, are less likely to work in professional or managerial jobs than their counterparts in the state overall (40 percent of employed women and 30 percent of employed men in North Carolina hold professional and managerial jobs; Table 2), which suggests that Alexander-Burke-Caldwell may offer fewer opportunities for high-paying jobs than many other areas in the state.

While employed women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are more likely than employed men to work in professional and managerial occupations, men in this area are more likely to hold management positions (7 percent of employed men compared with 5 percent of employed women).<sup>v</sup> Men in the workforce are also more likely than women to work in production occupations (21 percent compared with 14 percent), transportation and material moving occupations (14 percent compared with 2 percent), and construction and extraction occupations.<sup>vi</sup> Employed women, however, are much more likely than employed men to work in office and administrative support occupations (18 percent compared with 6 percent), education, training, and library occupations (9 percent compared with 3 percent), and health care practitioner and technical occupations (10 percent compared with 2 percent).<sup>vii</sup>

**Table 2. Overview of Women's and Men's Economic Status**

	Alexander-Burke-Caldwell	North Carolina	United States
<b>Labor Force Participation Rate, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	56%	59%	59%
Men	67%	70%	70%
Mothers with Children under 18	74%	74%	73%
Fathers with Children under 18	94%	94%	94%
<b>Percent of Employed Women and Men Who Work Full-Time, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	71%	72%	71%
Men	83%	84%	84%
<b>Percent of Women and Men Employed in Professional or Managerial Occupations, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	31%	40%	39%
Men	18%	30%	33%
<b>Median Annual Earnings, Full-Time, Year-Round Workers, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	\$29,171	\$33,000	\$36,000
Men	\$33,625	\$40,000	\$45,500
<b>Earnings Ratio, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
<b>Earnings Ratio by Educational Attainment, Aged 25 and Older</b>			
Less Than High School Diploma	N/A	76%	74%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	81%	75%	74%
Some College or Associate's Degree	79%	76%	76%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	82%	70%	71%
<b>Proportion of Women and Men with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, Aged 25 and Older</b>			
Women	14%	27%	28%
Men	12%	26%	29%
<b>Proportion of Women and Men with a High School Diploma or Less, Aged 25 and Older</b>			
Women	52%	40%	42%
Men	63%	46%	44%
<b>Percent of Women and Men Living At or Below Poverty, Aged 18 and Older</b>			
Women	17%	17%	15%
Men	14%	13%	12%
<b>Percent of All Households Receiving Food Stamps</b>			
<b>Percent of Women and Men Aged 18–64 without Health Insurance Coverage</b>			
Women	21%	21%	19%
Men	28%	26%	25%

Notes: Data for Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell counties are for 2008–2010. Median annual earnings in 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars. Data for North Carolina and the United States are for 2010 only.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 and 2010 American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

Although women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell hold a higher proportion of professional occupations than men, they have lower median earnings, a trend that is partially explained by women's lower representation in management jobs and the unequal distribution of women and men across occupations. In 2008–2010, the median annual earnings for women aged 16 and older employed full-time, year-round in

Alexander-Burke-Caldwell were \$29,171 compared with \$33,625 for men. This means that women in these three counties combined earned 87 cents for every dollar earned by men, resulting in a gender wage gap of 13 percent. This gap is smaller than both the wage gap in North Carolina (17 percent) and in the United States as a whole (21 percent; Table 2).<sup>viii</sup>

## Educational Attainment

Women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are less well-educated than women in North Carolina as a whole. Only fourteen percent of women aged 25 and older in these three counties combined have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 27 percent of women in the state overall (Table 2). More than half of women (52 percent) in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell have only a high school diploma or less, compared with 40 percent of women in the state as a whole (Table 2). Men in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are more likely than women to have low levels of education: 63 percent of men aged 25 and older have a high school diploma or less (Table 2).

While men in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are more likely than women to have the lowest levels of education, women with these educational levels are less likely to have jobs with family-sustaining wages. Median annual earnings for women in these counties combined with a high school diploma or the equivalent are \$24,712, compared with \$30,492 for men with the same level of education. In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, the median annual earnings for women with some college education or an associate's degree are \$492 less than the median annual earnings for men with a high school diploma (\$30,000 for women and \$30,492 for men).<sup>ix</sup> Men with some college education or an associate's degree in this area earn \$37,800.<sup>x</sup>

In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, as in other jurisdictions, having a college degree increases earnings. Women in this area with a bachelor's degree or higher have median earnings of \$44,200 compared with \$54,000 for men.<sup>xi</sup> These earnings result in an earnings ratio of 82 percent for women with this level of education: college-educated women make 82 cents for every dollar earned by a college-educated man (Table 2). This earnings ratio results in a smaller gender wage gap (18 percent) than when women and men with only a high school diploma or with some college education or an associate's degree are compared (19 percent and 21 percent, respectively; Table 2). In this regard, Alexander-Burke-Caldwell is atypical; in the state and nation as a whole, the gender wage gap is largest for women with a bachelor's degree or higher (Table 2).

## Poverty

Women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are as likely to live in poverty as women in the state as a whole (17 percent of women aged 18 and older in these counties combined and the state overall live at or below the poverty line; Table 2). In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, approximately 13,600 women live in poverty, and another 19,770 (24 percent) are *near* poor (living with incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the poverty line).<sup>xii</sup> Women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell are more likely than their male counterparts to be poor, a pattern that also holds true in the state and nation overall (Table 2).

Poverty is a particularly severe problem for families headed by single women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell. These families make up approximately one in five families with dependent children in Alexander and slightly more than one in four families with dependent children in Burke and Caldwell. Families with children that are headed by single women, however, constitute about four in ten families in Alexander and six in ten families in Burke and Caldwell that are living in poverty (Table 3). In North

Carolina as a whole, only 12 percent of single women with young children under five and incomes below the qualifying poverty threshold receive any welfare cash assistance.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Child Care

Early care and education programs provide an important workforce support for mothers and fathers. Affordable, quality child care makes it possible for parents to do their jobs while knowing their children are receiving adequate support and a good education. Unfortunately, for many families, limited access to affordable child care is a significant burden. In the absence of quality, affordable child care, many women interrupt their tenure in the labor market, reducing their ability to provide for their families and to save for retirement or emergencies. Other women are forced to put their children in low-quality, unreliable care.

<b>Table 3. The Status of Children: Family Income, Poverty, and Child Care</b>				
	<b>Alexander</b>	<b>Burke</b>	<b>Caldwell</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>
<b>Annual Living Income Standard<sup>1</sup></b>				
Annual Income a Family of One Adult and Two Children Need to Afford Essential Living Expenses, 2010	\$39,734	\$39,262	\$39,734	\$41,920
<b>Family Income<sup>2</sup></b>				
Median Annual Income of Married-Couple Families with Children Under 18 Years, 2008–2010	\$52,250	\$55,267	\$58,156	\$70,124
Median Annual Income of Single Men With Children Under 18 Years, 2008–2010	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$29,874
Median Annual Income of Single Women With Children Under 18 Years, 2008–2010	N/A	N/A	\$16,434	\$20,393
Number of Families in Poverty with Children Under 18, 2008–2010	742	2,190	2,008	254,650
Share of Families in Poverty with Children that are Headed by Women, 2008–2010	41%	59%	63%	61%
Share of All Families with Children that are Headed by Women, 2008–2010	21%	26%	27%	29%
<b>Child Care</b>				
Children Eligible for Child Care Subsidy, SFY 2010–2011 <sup>3</sup>	1,468	3,813	3,760	391,549
Budget Currently Available to Serve Eligible Children, SFY 2010–2011 <sup>3</sup>	\$1,126,002	\$3,219,938	\$3,533,371	N/A
Percent of Eligible Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care Services, SFY 2010–2011 <sup>3</sup>	18%	19%	20%	N/A
Budget per Child Eligible for Childcare Subsidy, SFY 2010–2011	\$767	\$844	\$940	N/A
Total Number of Children Age 0 to 5 Enrolled in Child Care, 2011 <sup>4</sup>	869	1,991	1,382	207,953

Note: N/A indicates data are not available.

<sup>1</sup>Sources: Sirota and McLenaghan 2010.

<sup>2</sup>IWPR analysis based on 2008–2010 American Community Survey data accessed through American Fact Finder.

<sup>3</sup>North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education 2012.

<sup>4</sup>The Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center Kids Count 2012.

In North Carolina, the average fees for year-round, full-time child care range from \$6,227 (for a four-year old in a family child care home) to \$9,185 (for an infant in a child care center; Child Care Aware of America 2012). By comparison, the average annual tuition and fees for a public four-year college in North Carolina are \$5,685 (Child Care Aware of America 2012). In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, a total of 9,041 children are eligible to receive child care subsidies because their parents earn too little to afford the fees. Yet, only 18 percent of eligible children in Alexander, 19 percent in Burke, and 20 percent in Caldwell receive child care subsidies (Table 3).

## Health

Health is an important component of women's and girls' overall well-being that contributes to their economic stability, educational attainment, and employment opportunities. While many women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell experience good health, health outcomes vary across these three counties, suggesting that women's health care needs in this area remain an important part of their status that must be examined and addressed.

Having basic health insurance coverage is critical to women's access to health care. More than one in five women aged 18–64 in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell do not have health insurance coverage (21 percent; Table 2). Lack of health insurance leaves women without coverage not only for basic wellness and check-up visits, but also for severe or chronic medical conditions.

Chronic disease poses another challenge for many women in Alexander-Burke-Caldwell. When using an age-adjusted mortality rate, which accounts for distributional age differences among populations, women in Burke and Caldwell counties have higher mortality rates from heart disease than women in the state as a whole, while the rate for women in Alexander County is lower than the state rate (Table 4).<sup>xiv</sup> Women in Alexander and Burke counties have lower mortality rates from stroke and other cerebrovascular diseases than women in North Carolina overall; the rate for women in Caldwell County is slightly higher than in the state as a whole. Women in Burke and Caldwell also have lower mortality rates from diabetes than their counterparts in the state (data are not available for Alexander County; Table 4).

In Burke County, the breast cancer rate for women between 2005 and 2009 was the same as the rate for women in the state as a whole (23.5 per 100,000). In both Alexander and Caldwell counties, the female breast cancer rate was somewhat lower (20.1 per 100,000 and 21.8 per 100,000, respectively; Table 4). The rate of ovarian cancer during this time period was also lower in the counties for which data are available than in the state: the rates in Burke and Caldwell Counties were 6.1 and 6.4 per 100,000, respectively, while the rate in the state was 7.9 (Table 4).

The pregnancy rates for teens aged 15–19 in Caldwell County (53.1 per 1,000) exceeds the rate in the state as a whole (49.7 per 1,000). The pregnancy rate among teens in Burke County is somewhat lower than in the state (42.3 per 1,000), while it is significantly lower among teens in Alexander County (34.9 per 1,000; Table 4).

**Table 4. Overview of Women's Health Status**

	Alexander	Burke	Caldwell	North Carolina	United States
<b>Total Number of Teen Pregnancies (15–19 Years), 2010<sup>1</sup></b>	39	122	145	15,957	N/A
<b>Pregnancies Among Teens Aged 15–19, (Rate per 1,000), 2010<sup>1</sup></b>	34.9	42.3	53.1	49.7	N/A
<b>Average Annual Mortality Rates Among Women (per 100,000)<sup>2</sup></b>					
Breast Cancer, 2005–2009	20.1	23.5	21.8	23.5	23.0
Cervical Cancer, 2005–2009	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.3	2.4
Uterine Cancer, 2005–2009	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.0	4.2
Ovarian Cancer, 2005–2009	N/A	6.1	6.4	7.9	8.2
<b>Heart Disease Mortality Rate, All Ages, 2005–2009<sup>3</sup></b>	147.5	156.1	168.6	153.6	161.0
<b>Mortality Rates from Stroke and Other Cerebrovascular Diseases, All Ages, 2005–2009<sup>3</sup></b>	44.3	47.2	52.0	50.4	42.7
<b>Diabetes Mortality Rate, All Ages, 2005–2009<sup>3</sup></b>	N/A	16.1	19.2	20.8	19.8

Notes: N/A indicates data are not available.

All mortality rates are per 100,000 and age-adjusted to the total U.S. population in 2000.

Sources: <sup>1</sup>North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services 2012..

<sup>2</sup> IWPR compilation of data from the National Cancer Institute State Cancer Profiles 2012.

<sup>3</sup> IWPR compilation of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2012.

## Conclusion

Many women in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties are thriving, yet there are still areas where further improvements are needed, including in addressing the gender wage gap, increasing women’s economic security, and expanding access to affordable child care. Policy recommendations to address these challenges include

- promoting quality flexible working practices to make it easier for parents to combine paid work with care giving;
- ensuring that employers provide training to employers on best practices for recruiting and retaining female workers, particularly in sectors where they are now under-represented;
- increasing career counseling and financial supports for women with low levels of education;
- facilitating further access to education;
- monitoring workforce development to ensure that women and men have equal access to training in high-growth, well-paid careers;
- supporting more targeted teen pregnancy prevention programs and increased support for teens who are already pregnant and parenting;
- ensuring that all families who need it receive assistance from “Work First,” North Carolina’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

## Methodology

This briefing paper presents data for Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell counties combined. Demographic and economic data are based on IWPR analysis of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series version of the American Community Survey (Ruggles et al. 2010) and on American Community Survey data



accessed through American Fact Finder. To ensure sufficient sample sizes that allow for reliable reporting, IWPR used estimates that combine several years of data (2008–2010) for Alexander-Burke-Caldwell. Data for the state and nation as a whole are based on one-year (2010) data. Data on child care come from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Child Care Aware of America, and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education. Data on women’s health status are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Cancer Institute, and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; for some indicators, data are not be available for all counties because the number of sample cases is too small. To define the Alexander-Burke-Caldwell area, IWPR aggregated Public Use Micro Data Area variables (PUMAS), which are the smallest geographical unit available in the American Community Survey data.

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>ii</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>iii</sup> IWPR calculation based on U.S. Department of Labor. 2011. “Table 23: States: Persons at Work 1 to 34 Hours by Sex, Age, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Hours of Work, 2010 Annual Averages.”

<sup>iv</sup> IWPR calculation based on U.S. Department of Labor. 2011. “Table 23: States: Persons at Work 1 to 34 Hours by Sex, Age, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Hours of Work, 2010 Annual Averages.”

<sup>v</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>vi</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010). In Alexander-Burke-Caldwell, 12 percent of employed men work in construction and extraction occupations; data are not available for women due to small sample size.

<sup>vii</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010). Service occupations include support occupations in health care, education, personal care, and cleaning and janitorial occupations.

<sup>viii</sup> Because these estimates are based on the American Community Survey, they are not strictly comparable to IWPR’s standard calculation of the gender wage gap for the United States, which is based on the Current Population Survey (CPS). In 2010, the national earnings gap based on the CPS was 23 percent (Hegewisch and Williams 2011).

<sup>ix</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>x</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>xi</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>xii</sup> IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>xiii</sup> IWPR analysis of 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>xiv</sup> Heart disease includes acute and chronic rheumatic fever and heart disease, hypertensive heart and renal disease, ischaemic heart disease, pulmonary heart disease and diseases of pulmonary circulation, and other forms of heart disease. Cerebrovascular disease includes cerebral haemorrhages, cerebral infraction, stroke, and other cerebrovascular disease. Diabetes includes diabetes mellitus.

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