

## Population

**Indicator 1: Number of Older Americans**

**Indicator 2: Racial and Ethnic Composition**

**Indicator 3: Marital Status**

**Indicator 4: Educational Attainment**

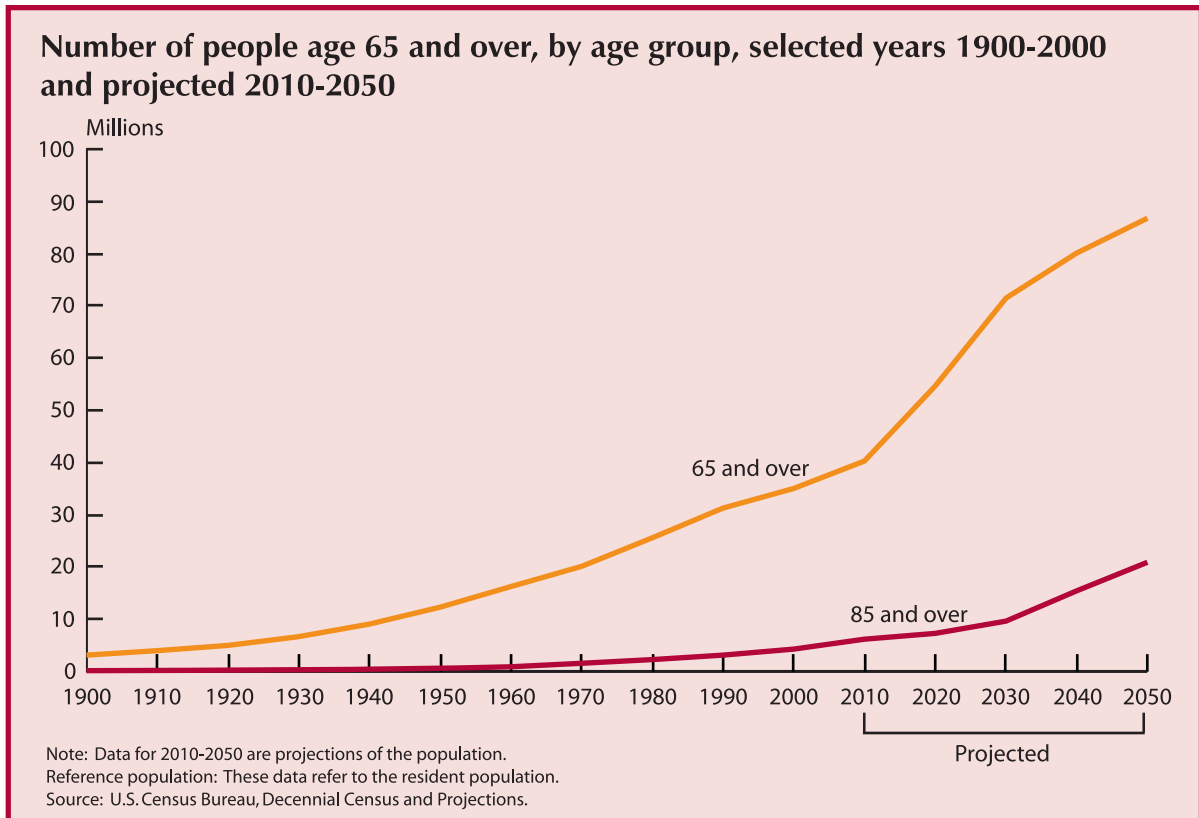
**Indicator 5: Living Arrangements**

**Indicator 6: Older Veterans**

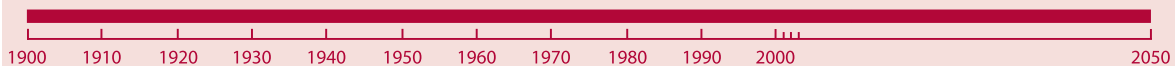
## INDICATOR 1

### Number of Older Americans

The growth of the population age 65 and over affects many aspects of our society, challenging policymakers, families, businesses, and health care providers, among others, to meet the needs of aging individuals.

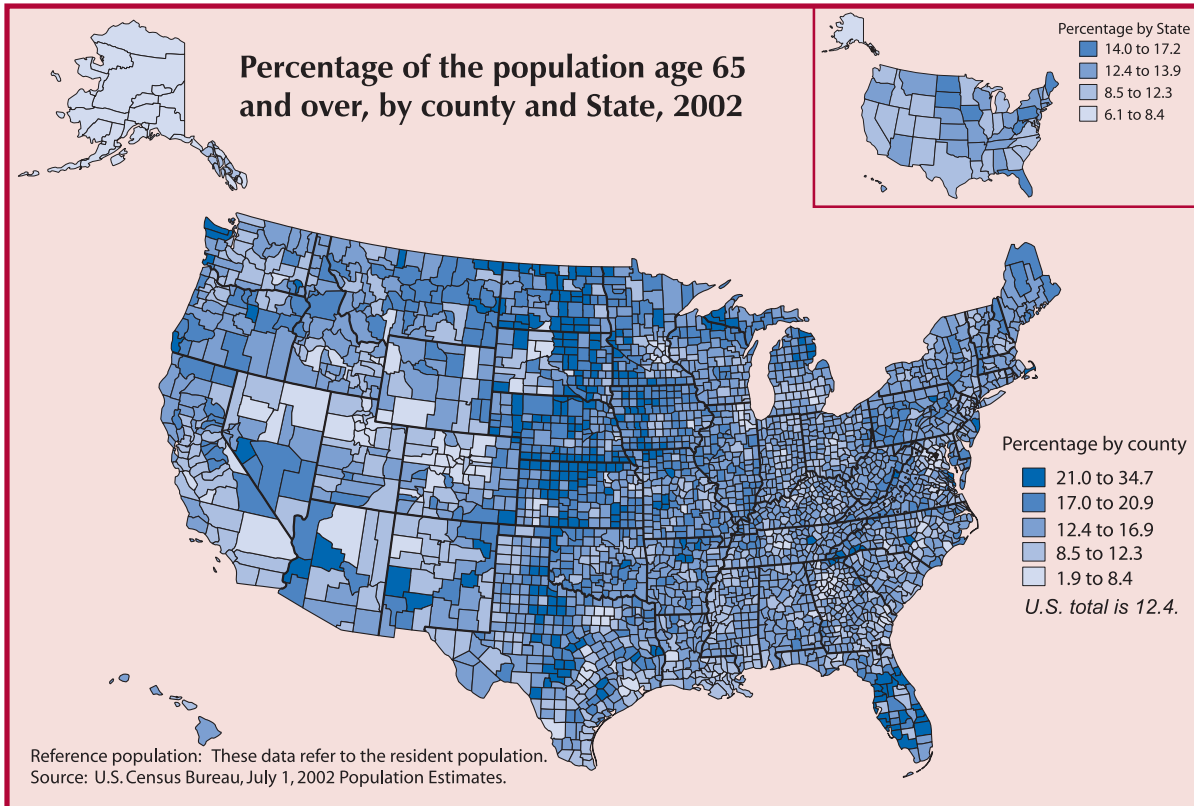


- ◆ In 2003, nearly 36 million people age 65 and over lived in the United States, accounting for just over 12 percent of the total population.<sup>1</sup> Over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the older population grew from 3 million to 35 million. The oldest-old population (those age 85 and over) grew from just over 100,000 in 1900 to 4.2 million in 2000.
- ◆ The Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) will start turning 65 in 2011, and the number of older people will increase dramatically during the 2010-2030 period. The older population in 2030 is projected to be twice as large as their counterparts in 2000, growing from 35 million to 71.5 million and representing nearly 20 percent of the total U.S. population.
- ◆ The growth rate of the older population is projected to slow after 2030, when the last Baby Boomers enter the ranks of the older population. From 2030 onward, the proportion age 65 and over will be relatively stable, at around 20 percent, even though the absolute number of people age 65 and over is projected to continue to grow. The oldest-old population is projected to grow rapidly after 2030, when the Baby Boomers move into this age group.
- ◆ The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the population age 85 and over could grow from 4.2 million in 2000 to nearly 21 million by 2050. Some researchers predict that death rates at older ages will decline more rapidly than is reflected in the U.S. Census Bureau's projections, which could lead to faster growth of this population.<sup>2-4</sup>



## INDICATOR 1

Number of Older Americans continued

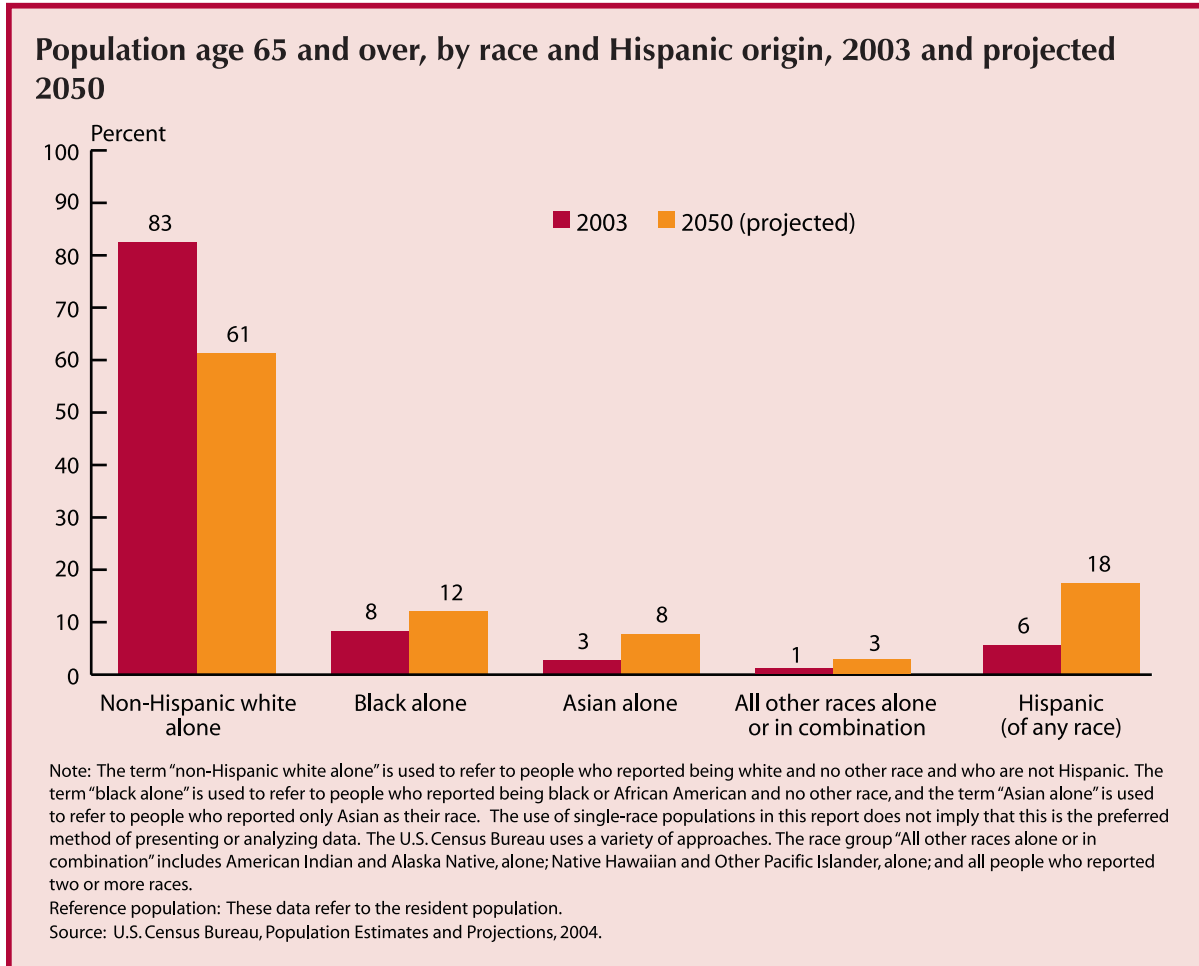


- ◆ The proportion of the population age 65 and over varies by State. This proportion is partly affected by the State fertility and mortality levels and partly by the number of older and younger people who migrate to and from the State. In 2002, Florida had the highest proportion of people age 65 and over, 17 percent. Pennsylvania and West Virginia also had high proportions, over 15 percent.
  - ◆ The proportion of the population age 65 and over varies even more by county. In 2002, 35 percent of McIntosh County, North Dakota, was age 65 and over, the highest proportion in the country. In several Florida counties, the proportion was over 30 percent. At the other end of the spectrum was Chattahoochee County, Georgia, with only 2 percent of its population age 65 and over.
  - ◆ As in most countries of the world, older women outnumber older men in the United States, and the proportion that is female increases with age. In 2003, women accounted for 58 percent of the population age 65 and over and for 69 percent of the population age 85 and over.<sup>1</sup>
  - ◆ The United States is fairly young for a developed country, with just over 12 percent of its population age 65 and over. The older population made up more than 15 percent of the population in most European countries and nearly 19 percent in both Italy and Japan in 2003.
- Data for this indicator's charts and bullets can be found in Tables 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, and 1e on pages 68-71.*

## INDICATOR 2

### Racial and Ethnic Composition

As the older population grows larger, it will also grow more diverse, reflecting the demographic changes in the U.S. population as a whole over the last several decades. By 2050, programs and services for older people will require greater flexibility to meet the needs of a more diverse population.



- ◆ In 2003, non-Hispanic whites accounted for nearly 83 percent of the U.S. older population. Blacks made up just over 8 percent, Asians made up nearly 3 percent, and Hispanics (of any race) accounted for nearly 6 percent of the older population.
- ◆ Projections indicate that by 2050 the composition of the older population will be 61 percent non-Hispanic white, 18 percent Hispanic, 12 percent black, and 8 percent Asian.
- ◆ The older population among all racial and ethnic groups will grow; however, the older

Hispanic population is projected to grow the fastest, from just over 2 million in 2003 to 15 million in 2050, and to be larger than the older black population by 2028. The older Asian population is also projected to experience a large increase. In 2003, nearly 1 million older Asians lived in the United States; by 2050 this population is projected to be almost 7 million.

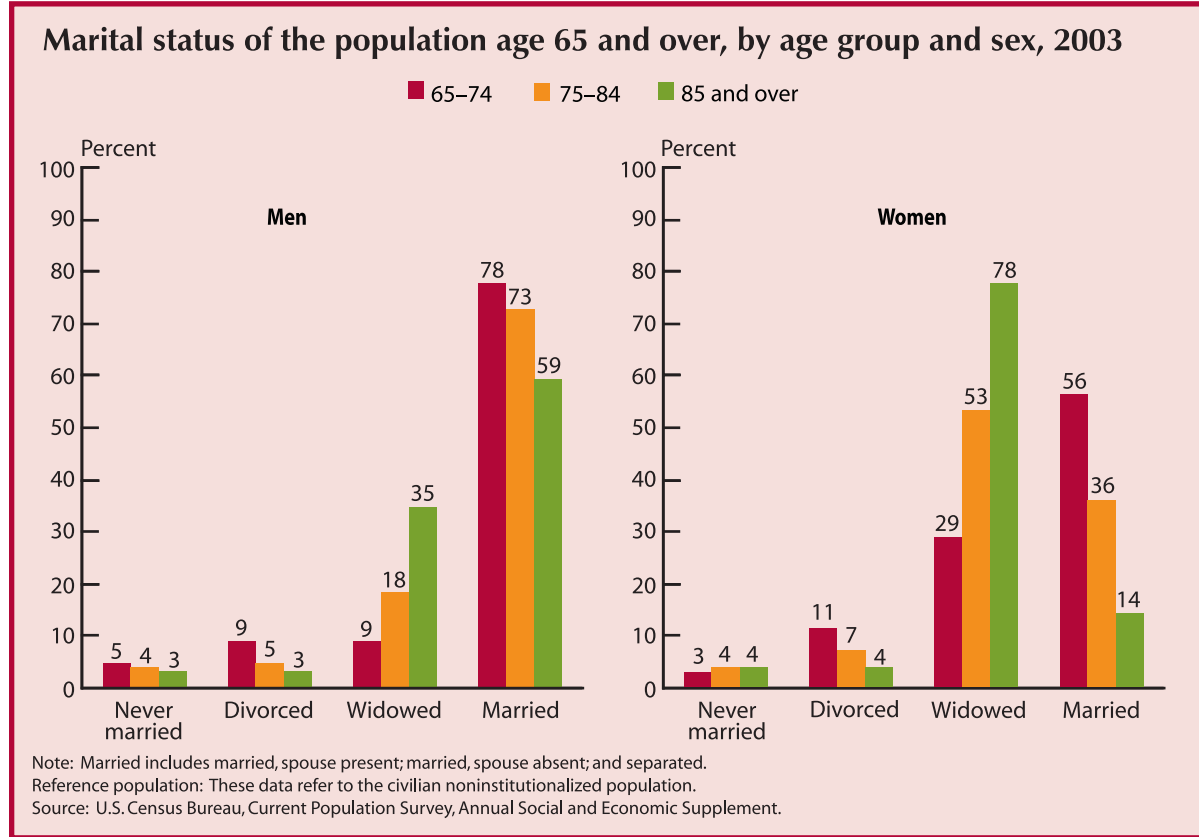
*Data for this indicator's chart and bullets can be found in Table 2 on page 71.*



**INDICATOR 3**

**Marital Status**

Marital status can strongly affect one’s emotional and economic well-being. Among other factors, it influences living arrangements and the availability of caregivers for older Americans with an illness or disability.



- ◆ In 2003, older men were much more likely than older women to be married. Over three-quarters (78 percent) of men age 65-74 were married, compared with over one-half (56 percent) of women in the same age group. The proportion married is lower at older ages: 36 percent of women age 75-84 and 14 percent of women age 85 and over were married. For men, the proportion married also is lower at older ages but not as low as for older women. Even among the oldest old, the majority of men were married (59 percent).

- ◆ Widowhood is more common among older women than older men. Women age 65 and over

were three times as likely as men of the same age to be widowed, 44 percent compared with 14 percent. The proportion widowed is higher at older ages, and the proportion widowed is higher for women than men. In 2003, 78 percent of women age 85 and over were widowed, compared with 35 percent of men.

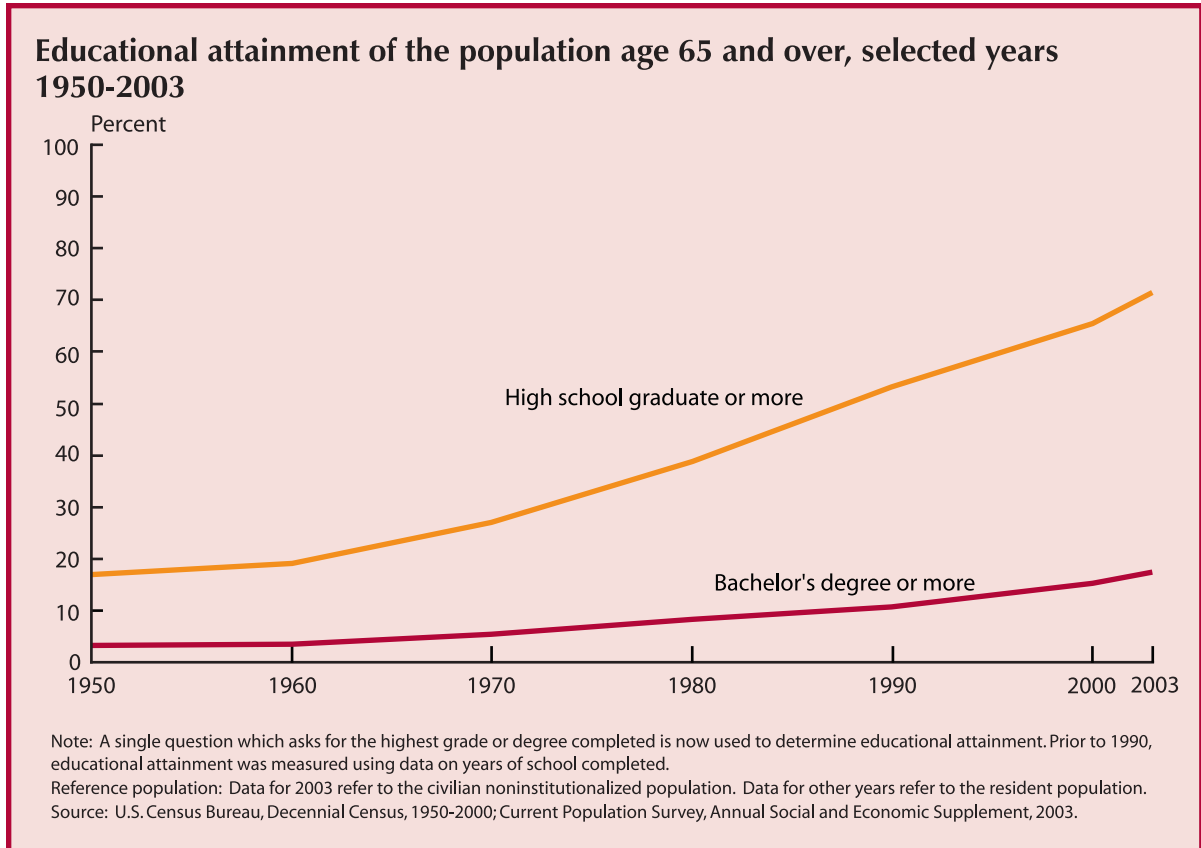
- ◆ Relatively small proportions of older men (7 percent) and women (9 percent) were divorced in 2003. A small proportion of the older population had never married.

*Data for this indicator’s chart and bullets can be found in Table 3 on page 71.*

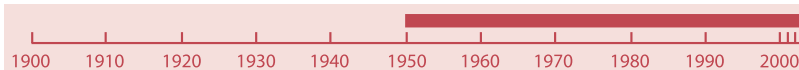
## INDICATOR 4

### Educational Attainment

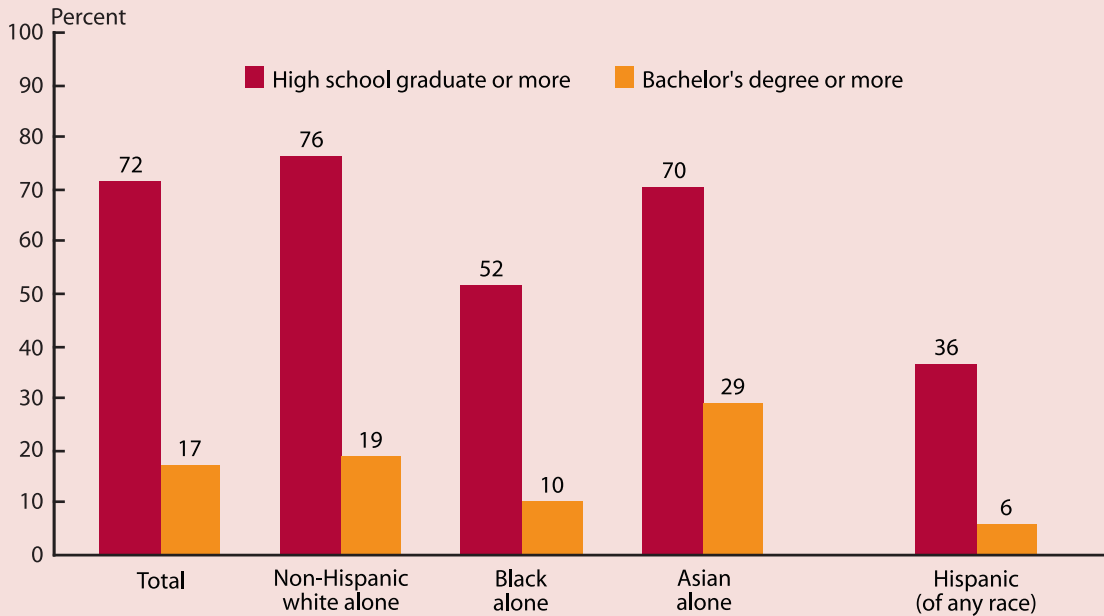
Educational attainment influences socioeconomic status, which in turn plays a role in well-being at older ages. Higher levels of education are usually associated with higher incomes, higher standards of living, and above-average health.



- ◆ In 1950, 17 percent of the older population had graduated from high school, and only 3 percent had at least a Bachelor's degree. By 2003, 72 percent were high school graduates, and 17 percent had at least a Bachelor's degree.
- ◆ In 2003, older men were more likely than older women to have graduated from high school, though not by very much—72 percent compared with 71 percent. Older men also attained at least a Bachelor's degree more often than older women (23 percent compared with 13 percent).<sup>1</sup> The gender gap in completion of a college education will narrow in the future because men and women in younger cohorts are earning college degrees at roughly the same rate.<sup>1</sup>



**Educational attainment of the population age 65 and over, by race and Hispanic origin, 2003**



Note: The term "non-Hispanic white alone" is used to refer to people who reported being white and no other race and who are not Hispanic. The term "black alone" is used to refer to people who reported being black or African American and no other race, and the term "Asian alone" is used to refer to people who reported only Asian as their race. The use of single-race populations in this report does not imply that this is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The U.S. Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches.  
 Reference population: These data refer to the civilian noninstitutionalized population.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

◆ Despite the overall increase in educational attainment among older Americans, substantial educational differences exist among racial and ethnic groups. In 2003, 76 percent of non-Hispanic whites age 65 and over had completed high school. Older Asians also had a high proportion with at least a high school education (70 percent). In contrast, 52 percent of older blacks and 36 percent of older Hispanics had completed high school.

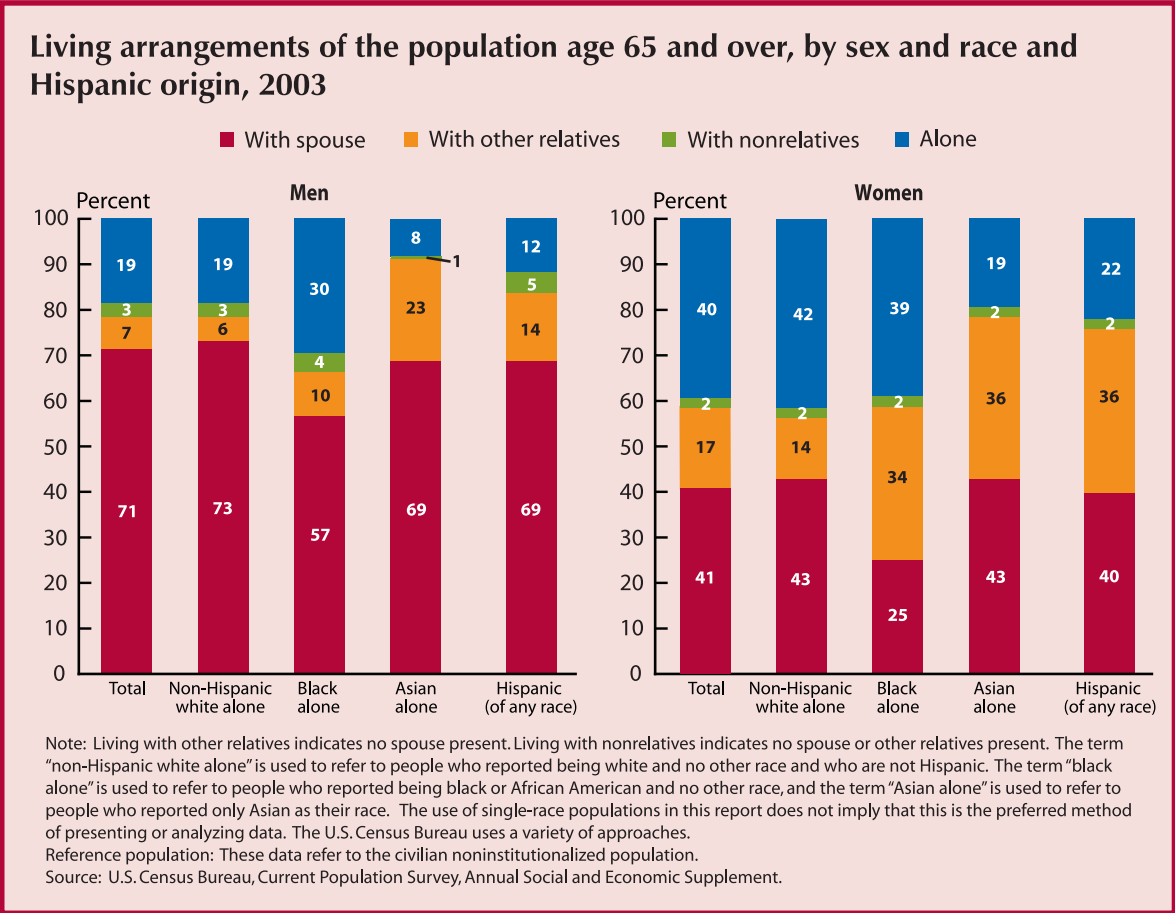
◆ In 2003, older Asians had the highest proportion with at least a Bachelor's degree (29 percent). Almost 20 percent of older non-Hispanic whites had this level of education. The proportions were 10 percent and 6 percent, respectively, for older blacks and Hispanics.

*Data for this indicator's charts and bullets can be found in Tables 4a and 4b on page 72.*

**INDICATOR 5**

**Living Arrangements**

The living arrangements of America’s older population are important indicators because they are linked to income, health status, and the availability of caregivers. Older people who live alone are more likely than older people who live with their spouses to be in poverty.<sup>5</sup>



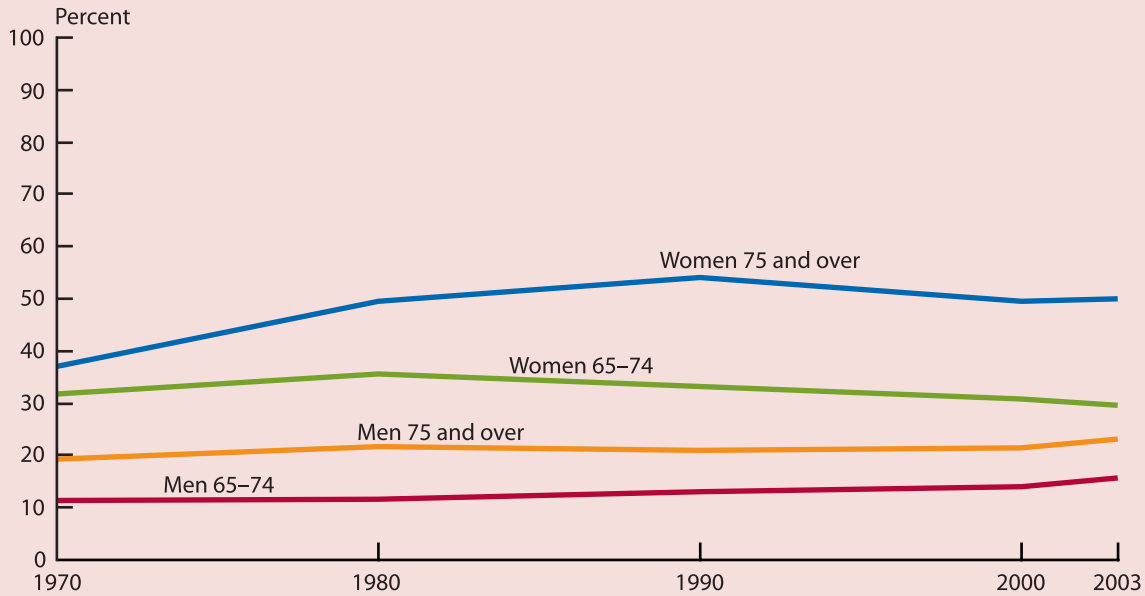
- ◆ Older men were more likely to live with their spouse than were older women. In 2003, 71 percent of older men lived with their spouse while less than half (41 percent) of older women did. In contrast, older women were more than twice as likely as older men to live alone (40 percent and 19 percent, respectively).
- ◆ Living arrangements of older people differed by race and Hispanic origin. Older black, Asian, and Hispanic women were more likely than non-Hispanic white women to live with relatives other than a spouse. For example, in 2003, 36 percent of older Asian and Hispanic women and

34 percent of black women, compared with only 14 percent of older non-Hispanic white women lived with other relatives. Older non-Hispanic white women and black women were more likely than women of other races to live alone (about 40 percent each compared with about 20 percent for older Asian and Hispanic women). Older black men lived alone more than three times as often as older Asian men (30 percent compared with 8 percent). Older Asian men were more likely (23 percent) than men of other races and ethnicities to live with relatives other than a spouse.

The living arrangements data disaggregated by sex and race and Hispanic origin presented in the 2004 printed version of this chartbook were incorrect.



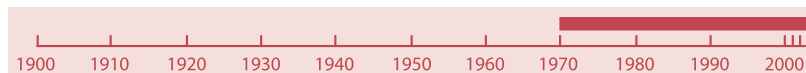
**Population age 65 and over living alone, by age group and sex, selected years 1970-2003**



Reference population: These data refer to the civilian noninstitutionalized population.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

- ◆ As age increases and widowhood rates rise, the percentage of the population living alone increases accordingly. Historically, older women lived alone at much higher rates than older men, but in the last decade, the rates for women have decreased slightly while the rates for men have increased slightly.
- ◆ The percentage of women age 75 and over living alone increased from 37 percent in 1970 to 54 percent in 1990. However, the proportion had decreased slightly by 2003, when around half of women in this age group lived alone. The proportion of men age 75 and over living alone did not increase significantly from 1970 to 1990 or from 1990 to 2003; however, it increased from 19 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 2003.
- ◆ Women age 65-74 were less likely to live alone than women age 75 and over (30 percent and 50 percent, respectively) in 2003. The same was true for men—16 percent compared with 23 percent.
- ◆ Older people who lived alone had higher poverty rates than those who lived with their spouse. In 2002, 16 percent of older men and 21 percent of older women who lived alone lived in poverty. In contrast, the poverty rate for older married men and women did not differ at only 5 percent each.

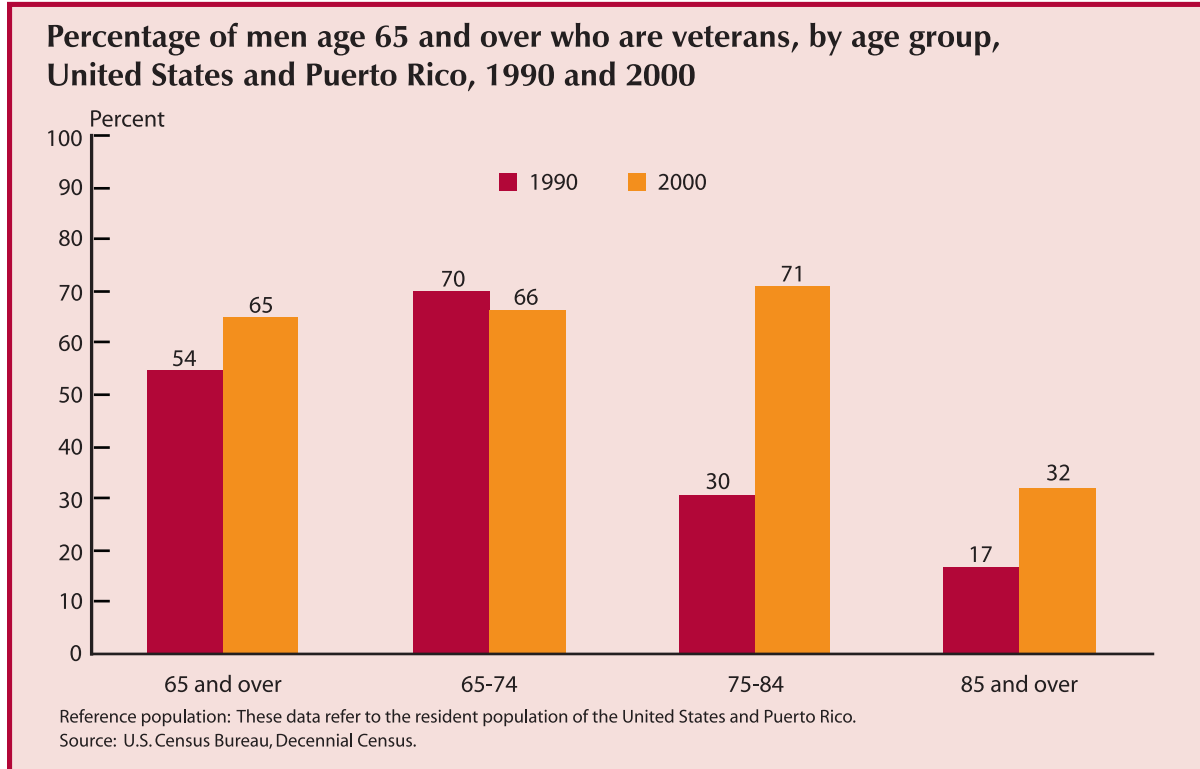
*Data for this indicator's charts and bullets can be found in Tables 5a, 5b, and 7b on pages 73 and 76.*



## INDICATOR 6

### Older Veterans

According to Census 2000, there were 9.8 million veterans age 65 and over in the United States and Puerto Rico, composed mainly of the sizeable World War II, Korean War, and, increasingly, Vietnam era cohorts; two of three men age 65 and over were veterans.



- ◆ Among veterans age 65 and over, more than 95 percent are male. Because of the large Korean War and World War II veteran cohorts, the number of male veterans age 65 and over increased between 1990 and 2000 from 6.9 million to 9.5 million.
- ◆ Older veterans make up an increasing proportion of older males. Between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of males age 65 and over who were veterans went up from 54 percent to 65 percent.
- ◆ Change in the population of male veterans age 85 and over is even more pronounced. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of male veterans age 85 and over increased from 142,000 to

400,000. The proportion of males age 85 and over who were veterans increased from 17 percent to 32 percent.

- ◆ Projections from the Department of Veterans Affairs indicate slight declines in the number of all veterans age 65 and over during the first decade of this century. However, after 2010, there is a projected increase, as the large Vietnam era cohort ages. In contrast, the number age 85 and over is expected to increase steadily and dramatically during this first decade, to a peak of nearly 1.4 million in 2012.

*Data for this indicator's chart and bullets can be found in Tables 6a and 6b on page 74.*

