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Federal report details health, economic status of older Americans

Today's older Americans enjoy longer lives and better physical function than did previous generations, although, for some, an increased burden in housing costs and rising obesity may compromise these gains, according to a comprehensive federal look at aging. The report, *Older Americans 2012: Key Indicators of Well-Being*, tracks trends at regular intervals to see how older people are faring as the U.S. population grows older.

In 2010, 40 million people age 65 and over accounted for 13 percent of the total population in the United States. In 2030, the number and proportion of older Americans is expected to grow significantly—to 72 million, representing nearly 20 percent of the population said the report, by the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics.

Older Americans 2012, the sixth report prepared by the Forum since 2000, provides an updated and accessible compendium of indicators, drawn from official statistics about the well-being of Americans primarily age 65 and older. The 176-page report provides a broad description of areas of well-being that are improving for older Americans and those that are not. Thirty-seven key indicators are categorized into five broad areas—population, economics, health status, health risks and behaviors, and health care. This year's report also includes a special feature on the end of life.

Highlights of *Older Americans 2012* include:

- Increased labor force participation by older women – Participation of older women in the labor force has increased significantly over the past 40 years. In 1963, 29 percent of women aged 62-64 worked outside the home; in 2011, that had increased to 45 percent.

In 1963, 17 percent of women aged 65-69 were in the labor force; in 2011, that had increased to 27 percent. For women 70 and older, 6 percent worked in 1963, increasing to 8 percent in 2011. Some older Americans work out of economic necessity. Others may be attracted by the social contact, intellectual challenges or sense of value that work often provides.

- Declines in poverty, increases in income since 1974 – Older Americans are in better economic shape now than they were in 1974. Between 1974 and 2010, the proportion of older people with income below the poverty thresholds (less than \$10,458 in 2010 for a person 65 and older) fell from 15 percent to 9 percent. The percentage with low income (between \$10,458 and \$20,916 in 2010 for people 65 and older) dropped from 35 percent to 26 percent. There were also notable gains in income over the period, as the proportion of people 65 and older with high income (\$41,832 and above in 2010) rose from 18 percent to 31 percent.
- Increased housing problems –The most significant issue by far is housing cost burden, which has been steadily increasing over time. In 1985, about 30 percent of households with householders or spouses age 65 and over spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing and utilities. By 2009, the proportion of older people with high housing cost burden reached 40 percent. For some multigenerational households, crowded housing is also fairly prevalent.
- Rising rates of obesity – Obesity, a major cause of preventable disease and premature death, is increasing among older people. In 2009-2010, 38 percent of people age 65 and over were obese, compared with 22 percent in 1988-1994. In 2009-2010, 44 percent of people age 65-74 were obese, as were 29 percent of those age 75 and older.
- More use of hospice –The percentage of older people who received hospice care in the last 30 days of life increased from 19 percent in 1999 to 43 percent in 2009. The percentage of older Americans who died in hospitals dropped from 49 percent in 1999 to 32 percent in 2009. The percentage who died at home increased from 15 percent in 1999 to 24 percent in 2009. In 2009, there were notable differences in the use of hospice services at the end of life among people of different race and ethnicity groups.

Older Americans 2012: Key Indicators of Well-Being is available online at <http://www.agingstats.gov>.

The Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics was established in 1986 to improve the quality and utility of federal data on aging. This report assembles data to construct broad indicators of well-being for the older population and to monitor changes in these indicators over time. The effort is designed to inform the public, policy makers, and researchers about important trends in the aging population. The 15 agencies represented in the Forum include the Administration on Aging, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Veterans Affairs, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, National Center for Health Statistics,

National Institute on Aging, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (Department of Health and Human Services), Social Security Administration and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Older Americans 2012: Key Indicators of Well-Being is available online at <http://www.agingstats.gov> and in limited quantities in print. Supporting data for each indicator, including complete tables, PowerPoint slides and source descriptions, can be found on the Forum's website. Single printed copies of Older Americans 2012: Key Indicators of Well-Being are available at no charge through the National Center for Health Statistics while supplies last. Requests may be made by calling 1-866-441-6247 or by sending an e-mail to nchsquery@cdc.gov. For multiple print copies, call 301-458-4460 or send an e-mail request to agingforum@cdc.gov.

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The following individuals are available to comment on the report:

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