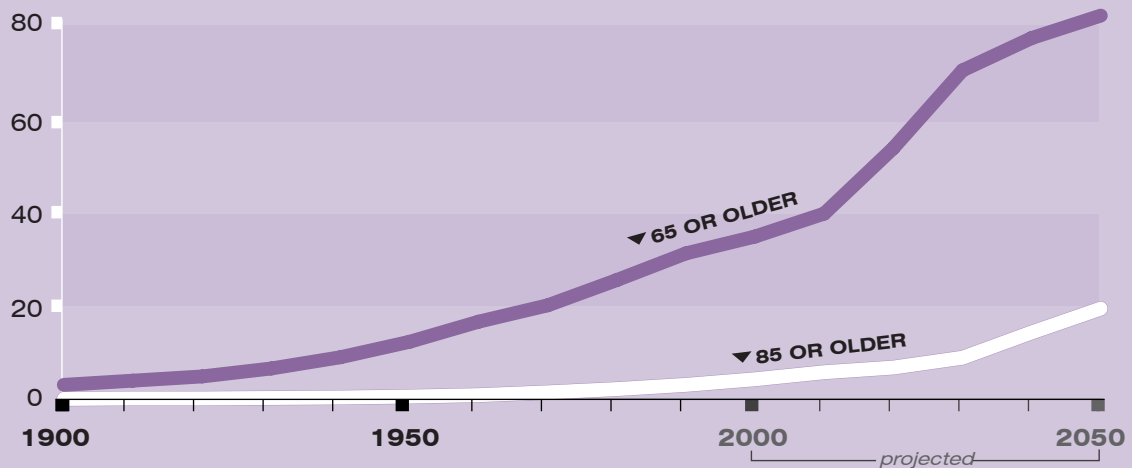


Population

Number of Older Americans

The growth of the population age 65 and older has affected every aspect of our society, presenting challenges as well as opportunities to policymakers, families, businesses, and health care providers.

Total number of persons age 65 or older, by age group, 1900 to 2050, in millions

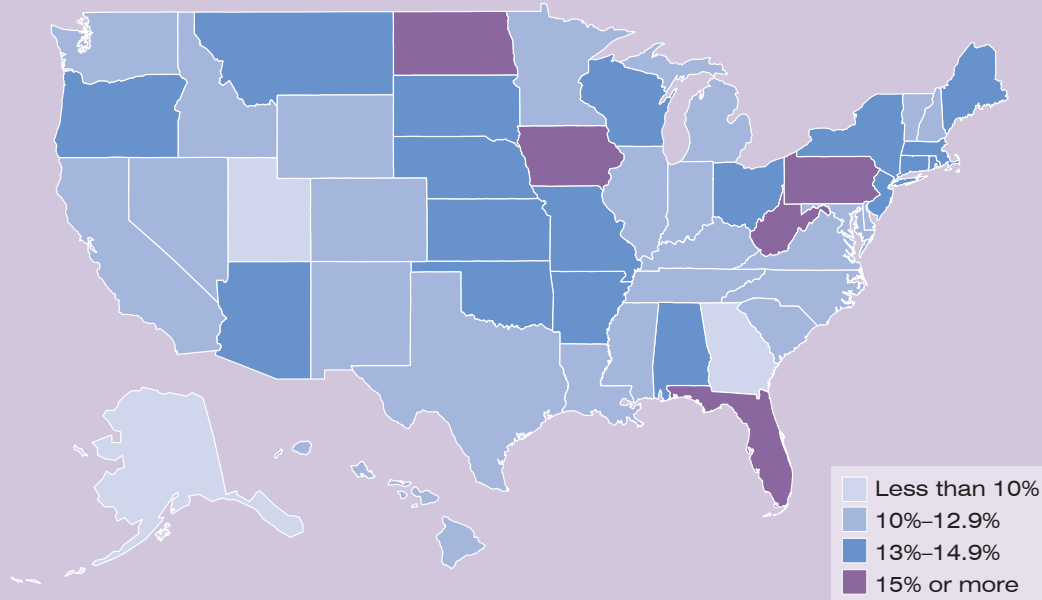


Note: Data for the years 2000 to 2050 are middle-series projections of the population. Reference population: These data refer to the resident population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census Data and Population Projections.

- In 2000, there are an estimated 35 million people age 65 or older in the United States, accounting for almost 13 percent of the total population. The number of older Americans has increased more than ten-fold since 1900, when there were 3 million people age 65 or older (4 percent of the total population). Despite the growth of the older population, the United States is a relatively young country when compared with other developed nations. In many industrialized countries, older persons account for 15 percent or more of the total population.
- In 2011, the “baby boom” generation will begin to turn 65, and by 2030, it is projected that one in five people will be age 65 or older. The size of the older population is projected to double over the next 30 years, growing to 70 million by 2030.
- As in most countries of the world, there are more older women than older men in the United States, and the proportion of the population that is female increases with age. In 2000, women are estimated to account for 58 percent of the population age 65 and older and 70 percent of the population age 85 and older.²
- The population age 85 and older is currently the fastest growing segment of the older population. In 2000, an estimated 2 percent of the population is age 85 and older. By 2050, the percentage in this age group is projected to increase to almost 5 percent of the U.S. population. The size of this age group is especially important for the future of our health care system, because these individuals tend to be in poorer health and require more services than the younger old.
- Projections by the U.S. Census Bureau suggest that the population age 85 and older could grow from about 4 million in 2000 to 19 million by 2050. Some researchers predict that death rates at older ages will decline more rapidly than reflected in the Census Bureau’s projections, which could result in faster growth of this population.³

Percentage of the population age 65 and older, by state, 2000



Note: Data for the year 2000 are middle-series projections of the population.
 Reference population: These data refer to the resident population.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Projections.

- The proportion of the population age 65 and older varies among states. This proportion is partly affected by the state mortality rate and the number of older persons who migrate to a state. It is also affected by the number of younger persons who move to other states. In 2000, the states with the highest proportions of older persons are Florida, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and North Dakota.
- There are about 65,000 people age 100 or older in 2000, and the number of cen-

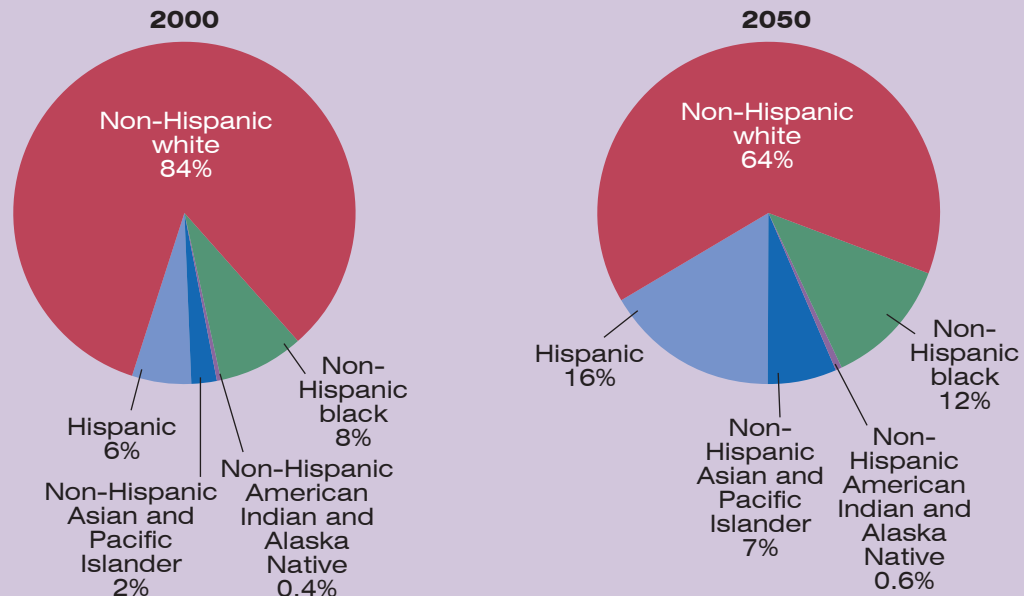
tenarians is projected to grow quickly so that there may be as many as 381,000 by 2030.⁴ Research on the demographics of centenarians, along with clinical, biomedical, and genetic measures, may provide clues to the factors associated with their exceptional longevity.

Data for this indicator can be found in Tables 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d on pages 56 to 58.

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 past century. Over the next 50 years, programs and services for the older population will require greater flexibility to meet the demands of a diverse and changing population.

Projected distribution of the population age 65 and older, by race and Hispanic origin, 2000 and 2050



Note: Data are middle-series projections of the population. Hispanics may be of any race.
Reference Population: These data refer to the resident population.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Projections.

■ In 2000, an estimated 84 percent of people age 65 or older are non-Hispanic white, 8 percent are non-Hispanic black, 2 percent are non-Hispanic Asian and Pacific Islander, and less than 1 percent are non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaska Native. Hispanic persons are estimated to make up 6 percent of the older population. By 2050, the percentage of the older population that is non-Hispanic white is expected to decline from 84 percent to 64 percent. Hispanic persons are projected to account for 16 percent of the older population; 12 percent of the population is projected to be

non-Hispanic black; and 7 percent of the population is projected to be non-Hispanic Asian and Pacific Islander.

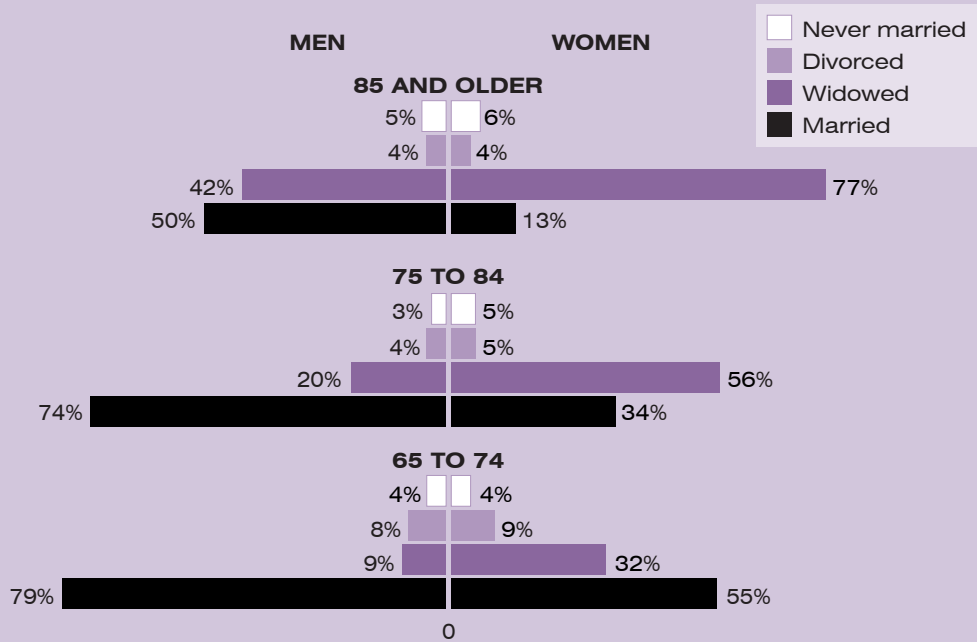
■ Although the older populations will increase among all racial and ethnic groups, the Hispanic older population is projected to grow the fastest, from about 2 million in 2000 to over 13 million by 2050. In fact, by 2028, the Hispanic population age 65 and older is projected to outnumber the non-Hispanic black population in that age group.⁵

Data for this indicator can be found in Tables 2a and 2b on page 59.

Marital Status

Marital status can strongly affect a person’s emotional and economic well-being by influencing living arrangements and availability of caregivers among older Americans with an illness or disability.

Marital status of the population age 65 and older, by age group and sex, 1998



Reference population: These data refer to the civilian noninstitutional population.
 Source: March Current Population Survey.

- In 1998, 79 percent of men ages 65 to 74 were married, compared with 55 percent of women in the same age group. Among persons age 85 or older, about 50 percent of men were married, compared with only 13 percent of women.
- Older women are much more likely to be widowed than are older men due to a combination of factors, including sex differences in life expectancy, the tendency for women to marry men who are slightly older, and higher remarriage rates for

older widowed men than widowed women.⁶ In 1998, about 77 percent of women age 85 or older were widowed, compared with 42 percent of men.

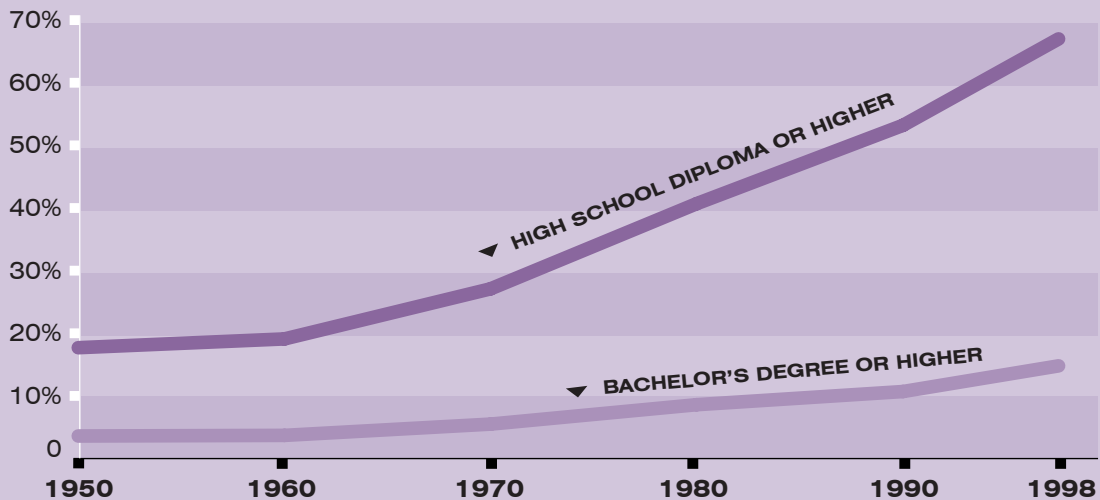
- In 1998, about 7 percent of the older population was divorced, and only a small percentage of the older population had never married (4 percent of men and 5 percent of women).

Data for this indicator can be found in Table 3 on page 60.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment influences socioeconomic status, and thus can play 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 status among older Americans.

Percentage of the population age 65 and older with high school diploma or higher and bachelor's degree or higher, 1950 to 1998

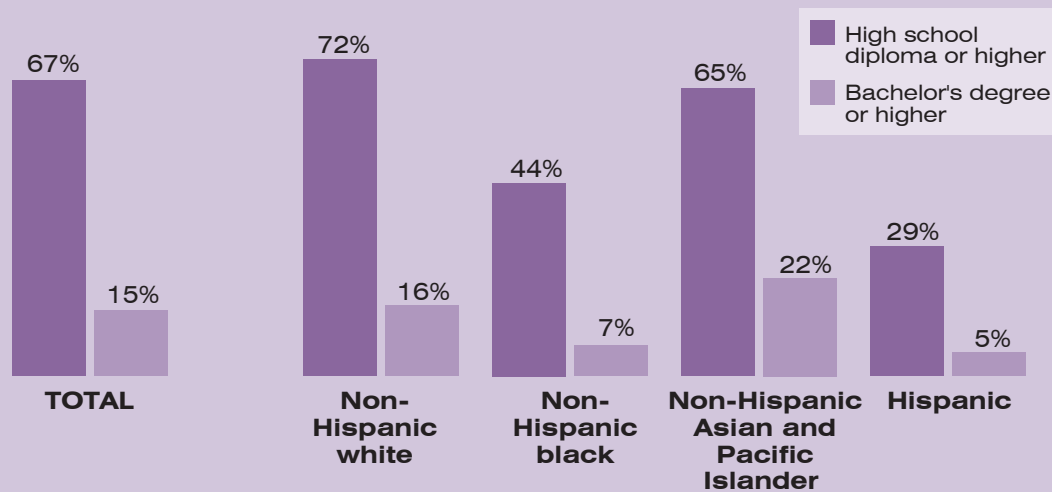


Reference population: Data for 1980 and 1998 refer to the civilian noninstitutional population. Data for other years refer to the resident population.

Source: Population Census volumes 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1990; and March Current Population Survey, 1980 and 1998.

- In 1950, only 18 percent of America's older population had finished high school. By 1998, about 67 percent of people age 65 or older had completed high school. The percentage of older Americans with at least a bachelor's degree increased from 4 percent in 1950 to almost 15 percent in 1998.
- In 1998, about 20 percent of older men had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 11 percent of older women. About two-thirds of both men and women had finished high school.⁷

Percentage of the population age 65 and older with a high school diploma or higher and bachelor's degree or higher, by race and Hispanic origin, 1998



Note: Hispanics may be of any race.

Reference Population: These data refer to the civilian noninstitutional population.

Source: March Current Population Survey.

■ Despite the overall increase in educational attainment among older Americans, there are still substantial educational differences among racial and ethnic groups. In 1998, about 72 percent of the non-Hispanic white population age 65 and older had finished high school, compared with 65 percent of the non-Hispanic Asian and Pacific Islander older population, 44 percent of the non-Hispanic black older

population, and 29 percent of the Hispanic older population.

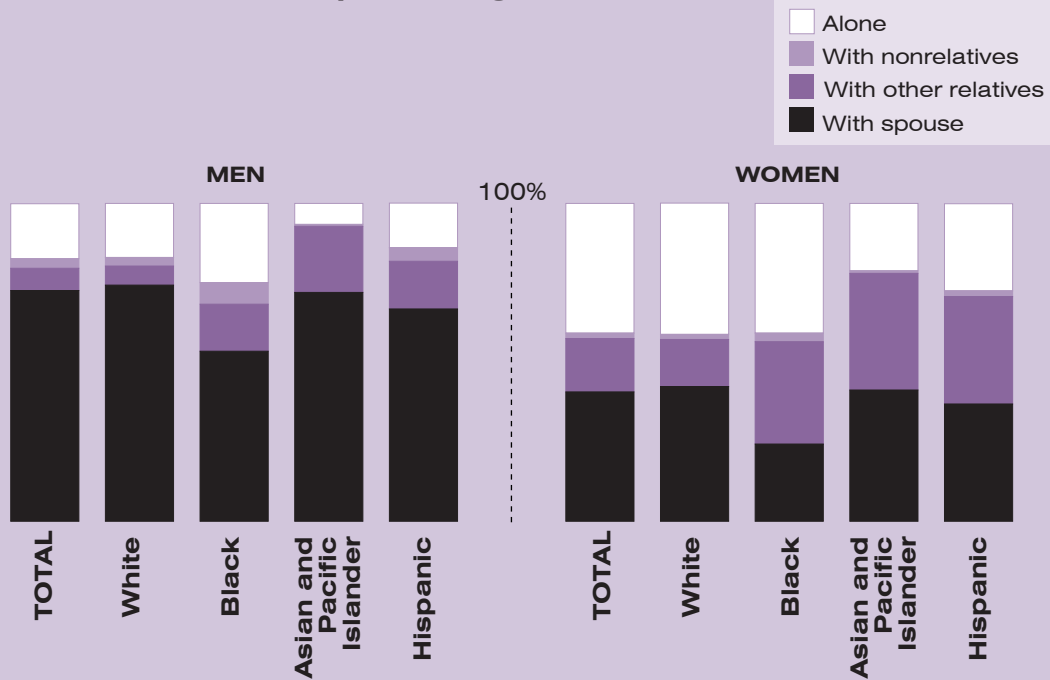
■ In 1998, 16 percent of non-Hispanic white older Americans had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 22 percent of older non-Hispanic Asian and Pacific Islanders.

Data for this indicator can be found in Tables 4a and 4b on page 61.

Living Arrangements

Like marital status, the living arrangements of America's older population are important because they are closely linked to income, health status, and the availability of caregivers. Older persons who live alone are more likely to be in poverty and experience health problems, compared with older persons who reside with a spouse or relative.⁸

Living arrangements of the population age 65 and older, by sex and race and Hispanic origin, 1998



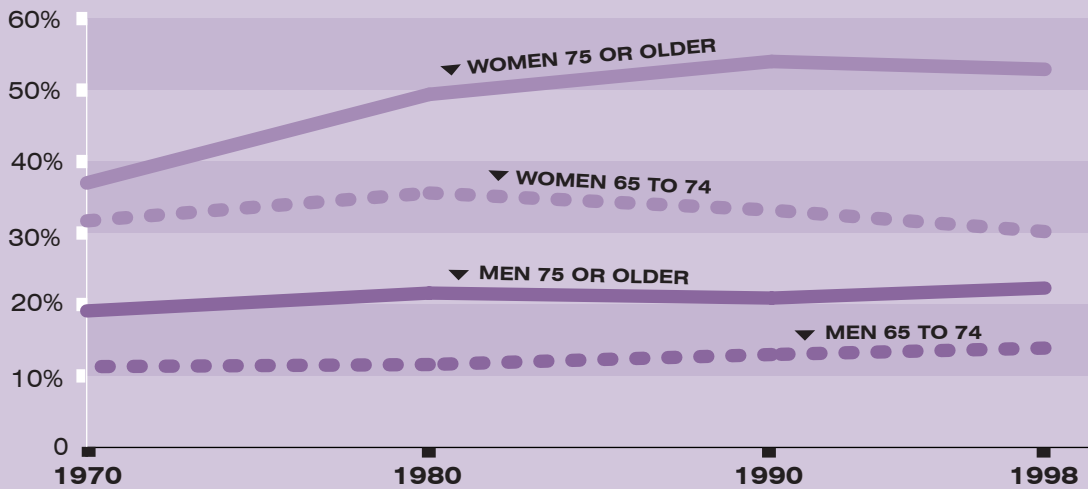
Note: Hispanics may be of any race.

Reference population: These data refer to the civilian noninstitutional population.

Source: March Current Population Survey.

- In 1998, 73 percent of older men lived with their spouses, 7 percent lived with other relatives, 3 percent lived with nonrelatives, and 17 percent lived alone.
- Older women are more likely to live alone than are older men. In 1998, older women were as likely to live with a spouse as they were to live alone, about 41 percent each. Approximately 17 percent of older women lived with other relatives and 2 percent lived with nonrelatives.
- Living arrangements among older women also vary by race and Hispanic origin. In 1998, about 41 percent of older white and older black women lived alone, compared with 27 percent of older Hispanic women and 21 percent of older Asian and Pacific Islander women. While 15 percent of older white women lived with other relatives, approximately one third of older black, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic women lived with other relatives.

Percentage of the population age 65 and older living alone, by age group and sex, 1970 to 1998



Reference population: These data refer to the civilian noninstitutional population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Reports, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1994," P20-484, and March 1998 (Update), P20-514.

- The percentage of women age 75 or older who live alone increased from 37 percent in 1970 to 53 percent in 1998. The percentage of women ages 65 to 74 who live alone has fluctuated over time, from 32 percent in 1970, to 36 percent in 1980, to 30 percent in 1998.
- Poverty rates are higher for older women who live alone than they are for older

women who live with a spouse. In 1998, about 19 percent of white older women who lived alone were in poverty and approximately half of older black and Hispanic women who lived alone were in poverty.⁹

Data for this indicator can be found in Tables 5a and 5b on page 62.