

We the People: Aging in the United States

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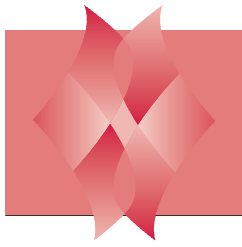
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We the People: Aging in the United States

This report provides a portrait of the social and economic characteristics of the population aged 65 and over in the United States at the national level.¹ It is part of the Census 2000 Special Reports series that presents several demographic, social, and economic characteristics collected from Census 2000. The data contained in this report are based on the sample of households who responded to the Census 2000 long form questionnaire. Estimated population and housing unit totals based on tabulations from only the sample counts may differ from the official 100-percent counts.

A companion brief titled *The 65 Years and Over Population: 2000*, based on the short-form data from

¹ The text of this report discusses data for the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Census 2000, provides more information on this topic.² It presents data on the population 65 years and over for the United States, regions, states, counties, and places of 100,000 or more and highlights comparisons with data from the 1990 census.

In 2000, the 65-and-older population comprised 35.0 million people. Within this group, 18.5 million people or 53 percent were aged 65 to 74, 12.3 million or 35 percent were aged 75 to 84, and 4.2 million or 12 percent were aged 85 and over.

Women outnumbered men in this group: 20.6 million women com-

² Lisa Hetzel and Annetta Smith, 2001, *The 65 Years and Over Population: 2000*, Washington, DC, Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR/01-10, U.S. Census Bureau. This report is available on the U.S. Census Bureau's Internet site at <www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-10.pdf>.

pared with 14.4 million men. The age groups 65 to 74 years and 85 and older each had nearly 2 million more women than men, and the 75-to-84 age group had nearly 3 million more.

People aged 65 and over are referred to as the older population in this report. Although the number of people in this age group increased from 31.2 million people in 1990 to 35.0 million in 2000, their proportion of the total population dropped from 12.5 percent in 1990 to 12.4 percent in 2000.*

* Data in the shaded areas were obtained from: Summary Tape File 3 for 1990 census data, and Summary File 4 and Census 2000 special tabulations for Census 2000 data.

Table 1.
Population 65 and Over by Age and Sex: 2000

(Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)

Age	Population			Percent		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
65 years and over	34,978,972	14,382,370	20,596,602	100.0	100.0	100.0
65 to 74 years	18,501,149	8,355,575	10,145,574	52.9	58.1	49.3
75 to 84 years	12,317,262	4,823,419	7,493,843	35.2	33.5	36.4
85 years and over	4,160,561	1,203,376	2,957,185	11.9	8.4	14.4

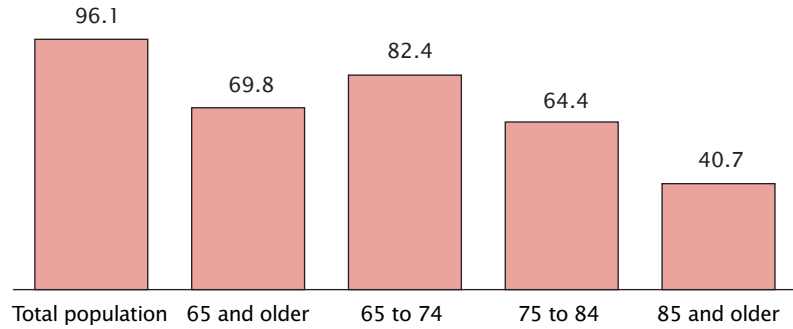
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4.

The sex ratio of the older population was much lower than that of the total population.

- In 2000, the sex ratio for the total population was 96 (or 96 males per 100 females), compared with 70 for people 65 and over.
- The sex ratio dropped steadily with age. The sex ratio for people 65 to 74 years was 82; by age 85 and over, the sex ratio dropped to 41, representing more than 2 women for every man.

Figure 1.
Sex Ratio: 2000

(Males per 100 females. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4.

More than half of the older population was married.³

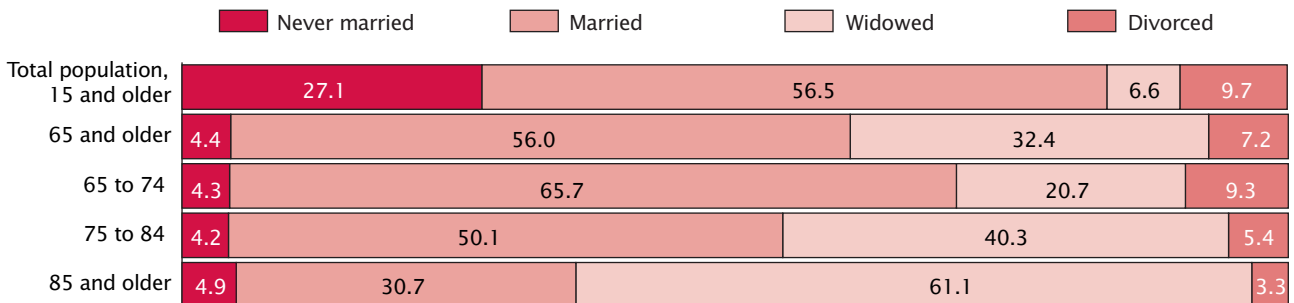
- In 2000, 56 percent of people 65 and over were married, 32 percent were widowed, and 7 percent were divorced. Less than 5 percent had never married.
- The percentage of the older population that was married declined with age. Among those 65 to 74, two-thirds were married, compared with less than one-third for those 85 and over.
- The percentage of the older population that was widowed increased from 21 percent for those 65 to 74, to 40 percent for the age group 75 to 84, and to 61 percent for the 85-and-over population.

A higher percentage of older men than older women were married: 75 percent compared with 43 percent. Forty-five percent of older women, compared with 14 percent of older men, were widowed.

³ Married includes spouse present and spouse absent.

Figure 2.
Marital Status: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

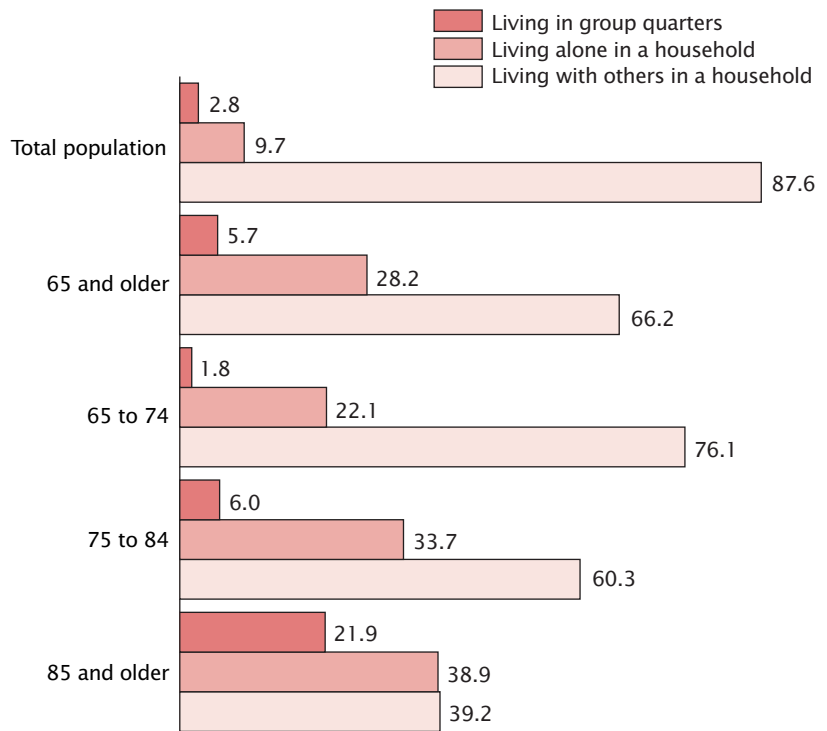
Twenty-eight percent of people 65 and over lived alone, compared with 10 percent of the total population.

- In 2000, 28 percent of the population 65 and over lived alone in households. This percentage varied by age, from 22 percent for the 65-to-74 year old group to 39 percent for those 85 and over.
- About 6 percent of the 65-and-over population lived in group quarters. About 2 percent of people 65 to 74 lived in group quarters, compared with 22 percent for people 85 and over.

Approximately 7.5 million older women lived alone, compared with 2.4 million older men.

Figure 3.
Living Arrangements: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

Ten percent of people 65 and over were foreign born.

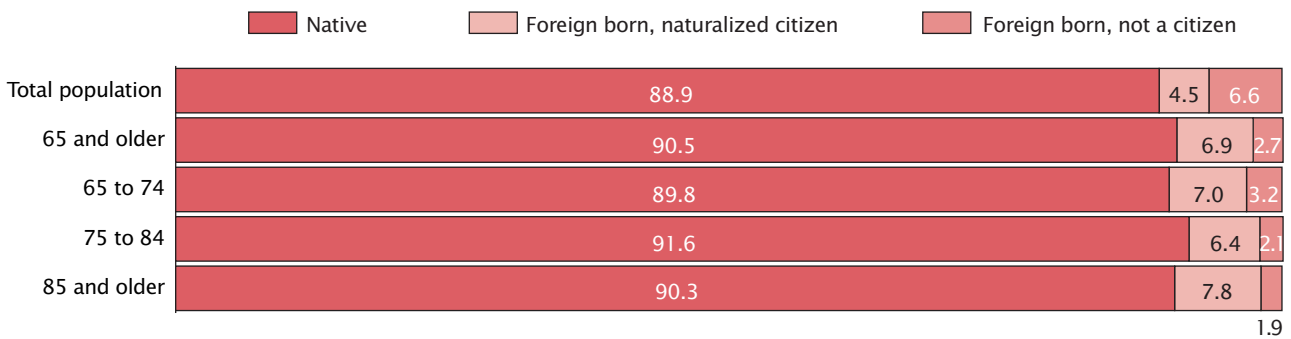
- About 11 percent of the total population and 10 percent of those 65 and over were foreign born.
- Seven percent of the older population were foreign-born naturalized U.S. citizens, compared with 5 percent of the total population.
- A majority of the foreign-born older population in each age group had become naturalized citizens by 2000.

The majority of the foreign-born older population (62 percent) entered the United States prior to 1970.

Figure 4.

Nativity and Citizenship Status: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

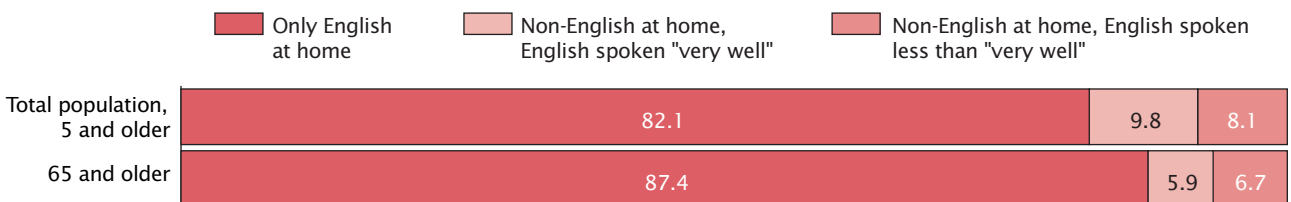
A higher percentage of the older population than the total population 5 and older spoke only English at home.

- In 2000, 13 percent of the older population spoke a language other than English at home, compared with 18 percent for the total population 5 and older.
- Six percent of the older population spoke a language other than English at home and also spoke English very well, compared with 10 percent for the total population 5 and older.

Figure 5.

Language Spoken at Home and English-Speaking Ability: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



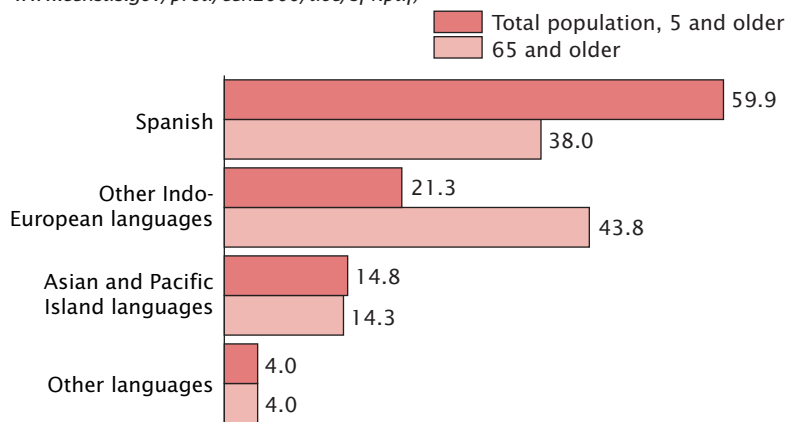
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4.

Of the people who spoke a language other than English at home, Indo-European languages other than Spanish were the most prominently used by people 65 and older.

Figure 6.

Type of Language Other than English Spoken at Home: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4.

- Of those who spoke a language other than English at home, 38 percent of the older population and 60 percent of the total population 5 and older spoke Spanish.
- Other Indo-European languages were spoken by 44 percent of the older population who spoke a language other than English at home, compared with 21 percent of the total population 5 and older.
- Fourteen percent of older people and 15 percent of the total population 5 and older who spoke a language other than English at home spoke Asian and Pacific Island languages.

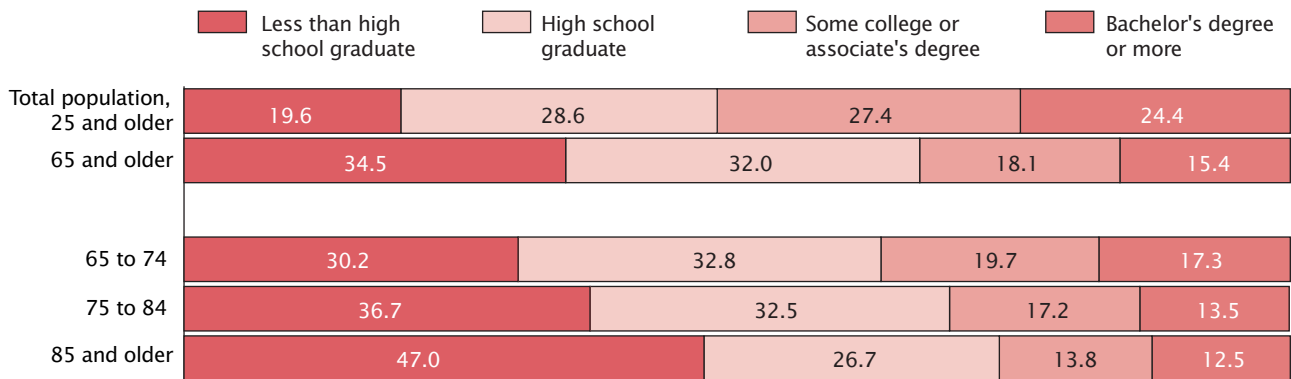
In 2000, nearly two-thirds of the population 65 and over had completed high school or had more education.

- Among the older population, high school completion rates varied by age group. In 2000, 70 percent of people 65 to 74 had completed high school or more education, compared with 63 percent of those 75 to 84 and 53 percent of those 85 and over.
- Eighteen percent of the older population had some college or an associate's degree, and 15 percent had completed a bachelor's degree or more education.
- The percentage of the older population with a bachelor's degree or more varied by age: 17 percent of people 65 to 74 had a bachelor's degree, compared with 14 percent of the 75-to-84 year old population and 13 percent of those 85 and over.
- Nearly half (47 percent) of people 85 and over had not completed high school.

A higher percentage of older men than older women had a bachelor's degree or more. The rates for those 65 to 74 were 23 percent for men and 13 percent for women. For the age group 85 and over, the difference was much smaller: 16 percent for men and 11 percent for women.

Figure 7.
Educational Attainment: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



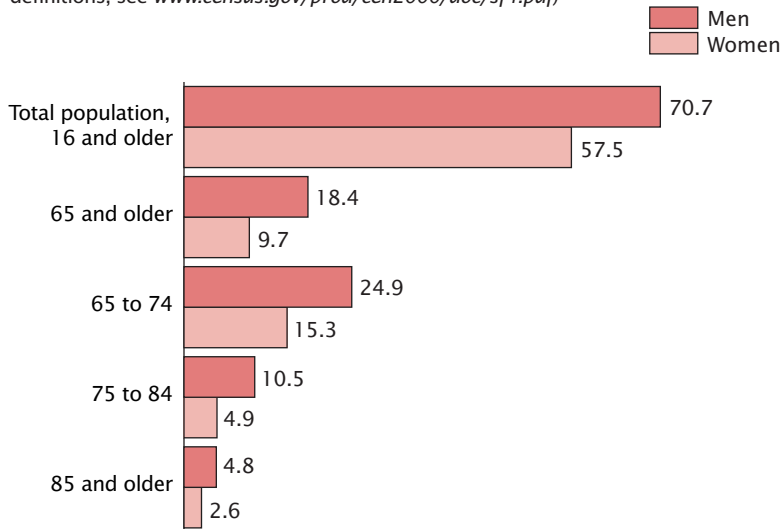
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

The percentages of older men and older women in the labor force decreased steadily with age.

Figure 8.

Labor Force Participation Rate by Sex: 2000

(Percent of specified population that is in the labor force. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

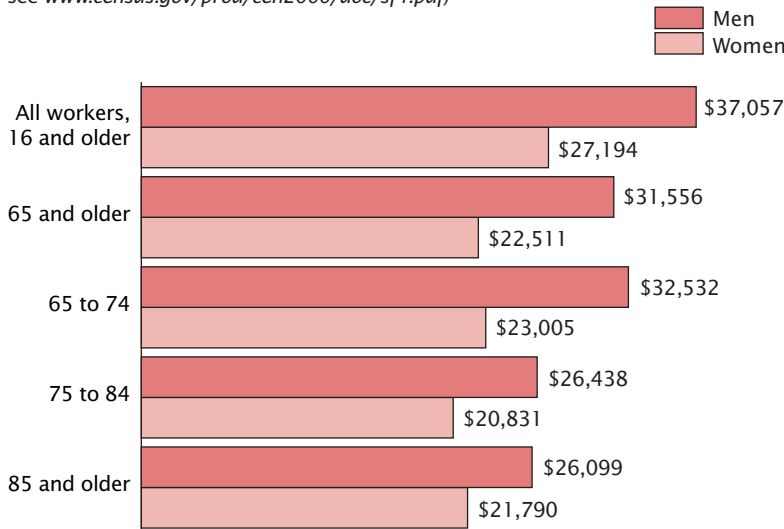
- Among the total population 16 and over, 71 percent of men and 58 percent of women were in the labor force. In contrast, the percentages of men and women 65 and over in the labor force were 18 percent and 10 percent, respectively.
- Both men and women in the 65-to-74 age group were more likely than those in older age groups to be in the labor force, with participation rates of 25 percent for men and 15 percent for women, compared with 5 percent for men and 3 percent for women 85 and over.

Among older full-time, year-round workers, men aged 65 to 74 had the highest median earnings in 1999.

Figure 9.

Median Earnings by Sex: 1999

(For employed, full-time, year-round workers. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

- The median earnings of full-time, year-round workers 16 and older for both men and women were higher than those of their 65-and-over counterparts.
- In 1999, the median earnings for full-time, year-round workers 65 and older were \$31,600 for men and \$22,500 for women.
- In each age group, older men who worked full-time, year-round had higher median earnings than older women. Women 65 to 74 who worked full-time, year-round earned 71 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts, compared with 79 cents for women 75 to 84 and 83 cents for women 85 and older.

Ninety percent of households with a householder 65 and over received social security income.

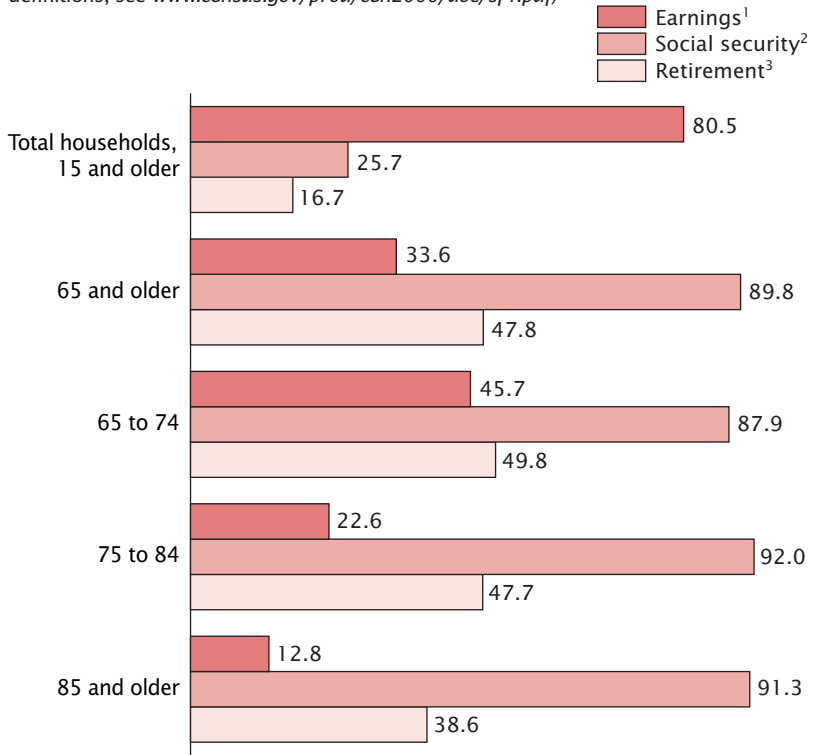
- One out of three households with a householder 65 and over had earnings as a source of income, compared with four out of five of all households.
- Eighty-eight percent of householders 65 to 74 received social security. The proportions rose to 92 percent and 91 percent, respectively, for householders 75 to 84 and 85 and over.
- Less than 50 percent of households with a householder 65 and over received other retirement income.

In 1999, the average annual social security income received by households with householders 65 and over was \$12,300. Another source of income for the older population, retirement income, averaged \$17,900 per year for comparable households who received this type of income.

Figure 10.

Household Income by Selected Source: 1999

(Percent of households classified by age of householder. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



¹ Earnings are defined as the sum of wage or salary income and net income from self-employment. Earnings represent the amount of income received regularly before deductions for personal income taxes, social security, bond purchases, union dues, medicare deductions, etc.

² Social security income includes social security pensions and survivor benefits, permanent disability insurance payments made by the Social Security Administration prior to deductions for medical insurance, and railroad retirement insurance checks from the U.S. government. Medicare reimbursements are not included.

³ Retirement income includes: (1) retirement pensions and survivor benefits from a former employer; labor union; federal, state, or local government; and the U.S. military; (2) income from workers' compensation; disability income from companies or unions; federal, state, or local government; and the U.S. military; (3) periodic receipts from annuities and insurance; and (4) regular income from IRA and KEOGH plans. This category does not include social security income.

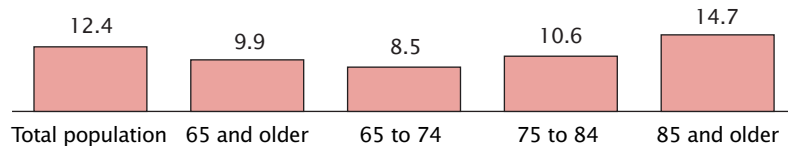
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

The poverty rate of the older population was lower than that of the total population.⁴

Figure 11.

Poverty Rate: 1999

(Percent of specified age group in poverty. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Note: Poverty status was determined for everyone except those in institutions, military group quarters, or college dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

- In 1999, 9.9 percent of the 65-and-over population and 12.4 percent of the total population were in poverty.
- Among the older population, those 85 and over were the most likely to be living below the poverty level (14.7 percent). For people 65 to 74, the poverty rate was 8.5 percent, compared with 10.6 percent for those 75 to 84.

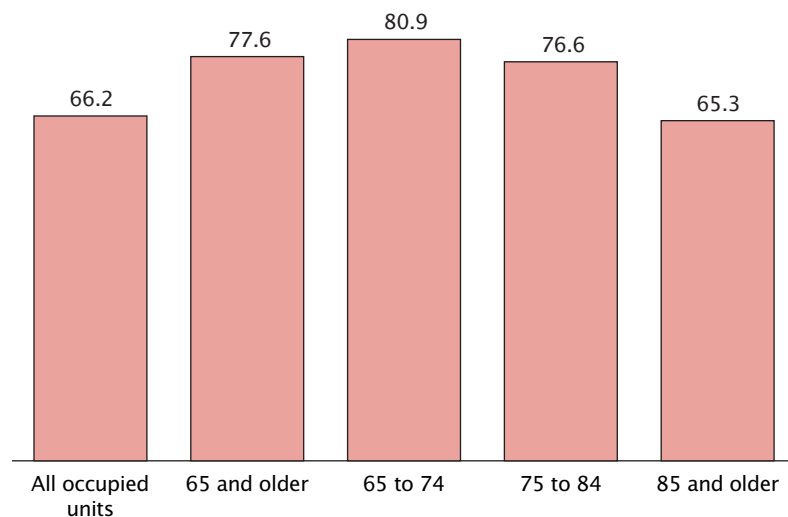
Among people 85 and over, 16.9 percent of women lived below the poverty level in 1999, compared with 9.6 percent of men.

Within occupied units, a higher percentage of householders 65 and over than householders 15 and over owned their homes.

Figure 12.

Homeownership Rate: 2000

(Percentage of occupied housing units classified by age of householder. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4.

- In 2000, in occupied units, 78 percent of householders 65 and over owned a home, compared with 66 percent of householders 15 and over.
- Among the older groups, the percentage owning a home declined with age. In 2000, 81 percent of householders 65 to 74 owned their home, compared with 77 percent for those 75 to 84.
- Householders 85 and over had the lowest homeownership rate among the older population (65 percent), similar to that of all householders (66 percent).

⁴ More information on poverty from Census 2000 is available in Alemayehu Bishaw and John Iceland, 2003, *Poverty: 1999*, Washington, DC, Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR-19. This report is available on the U.S. Census Bureau's Internet site at www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-19.pdf. The official measure of poverty comes from the Current Population Survey. See www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p60-226.pdf.

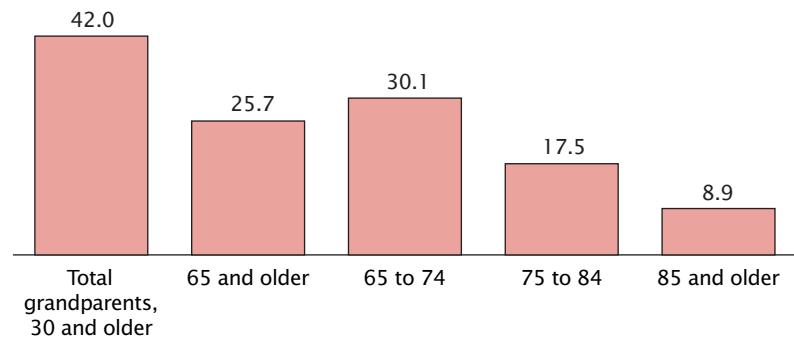
Over one-fourth of grandparents 65 and over living with grandchildren under 18 were caregivers for their grandchildren.

- Grandparents 65 and over were less likely to be caregivers for their grandchildren than the total of grandparents aged 30 and over.
- A higher percentage of grandparents aged 65 to 74 cared for their grandchildren (30 percent) than did grandparents aged 75 to 84 and those 85 and over (18 percent and 9 percent, respectively).

Figure 13.

Grandparents Who Were Caregivers for Their Coresident Grandchildren: 2000

(Percent of grandparents living in households with one or more own grandchildren under 18 years. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)

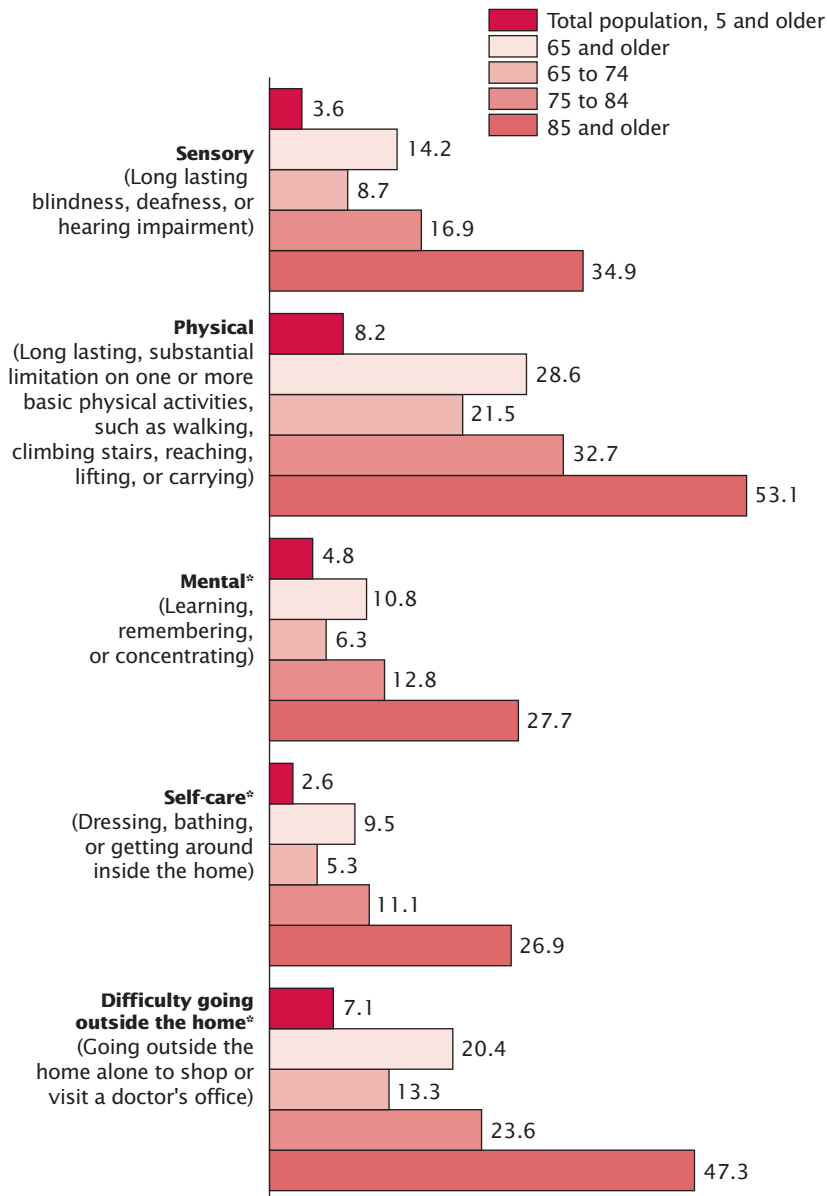


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

Figure 14.

Disabilities by Type: 2000

(Percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



* Due to physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

Among the disabilities reported by the older population in 2000, physical disabilities were the most prevalent.⁵

- For 3 of the 5 disabilities measured by Census 2000, the disability rate of the population 65 and over was at least 3 times the rate of the total population. The population 65 and over reported mental disabilities at twice the rate of the total population.
- The percentage of the older population who reported each type of disability increased with age.
- Forty-seven percent of the population 85 and over reported a disability that caused difficulties going outside the home, compared with 13 percent for people 65 to 74.
- Thirty-five percent of people 85 and over reported a sensory disability and 28 percent reported a mental disability.

Forty-two percent of the population 65 and over reported some type of long-lasting condition or a disability in 2000. Thirty-two percent of people 65 to 74 reported at least one disability, in contrast with 72 percent of people 85 and over.

⁵ More information on disability from Census 2000 is available in Judith Waldrop and Sharon M. Stern, 2003, *Disability: 2000*, Washington, DC, Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR-17. This report is available on the U.S. Census Bureau's Internet site at www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-17.pdf.

ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

The data contained in this report are based on the sample of households that responded to the Census 2000 long form.

Nationally, approximately 1 out of every 6 housing units was included in this sample. As a result, the sample estimates may differ somewhat from the 100-percent figures that would have been obtained if all housing units, people within those housing units, and people living in group quarters had been enumerated using the same questionnaires, instructions, enumerators, and so forth. The sample estimates also differ from the values that would have been obtained from different samples of housing units, and hence of people living in those housing units, and people living in group quarters. The deviation of a sample estimate from the average of all possible samples is called the sampling error.

In addition to the variability that arises from sampling, both sample data and 100-percent data are subject to nonsampling error. Nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the various complex operations used to collect and process data. Such errors may include: not enumerating every household or every person in the sample or the population, failing to obtain all required information from the respondents, obtaining incorrect or inconsistent information, and recording information incorrectly. In addition, errors can occur during the field review of the enumerators' work, during clerical handling of the census questionnaires, or during the electronic processing of the questionnaires.

While it is impossible to completely eliminate error from an operation as large and complex as the decennial census, the Census Bureau attempts to control the sources of such error during the data collection and processing operations. The primary sources of error and the programs instituted to control error in Census 2000 are described in detail in *Summary File 4 Technical Documentation* under Chapter 8, Accuracy of the Data, located at <www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf>.

Nonsampling error may affect the data in two ways: first, errors that are introduced randomly will increase the variability of the data and, therefore, should be reflected in the standard errors; and second, errors that tend to be consistent in one direction will bias both sample and 100-percent data in that direction. For example, if respondents consistently tend to underreport their incomes, then the resulting estimates of households or families by income category will tend to be understated for the higher-income categories and overstated for the lower-income categories. Such biases are not reflected in the standard errors.

All statements in this Census 2000 Special Report have undergone statistical testing and all comparisons are significant at the 90-percent confidence level, unless otherwise noted. The estimates in the table and figures may vary from actual values due to sampling and nonsampling errors. As a result, the estimates used to summarize statistics for one population group may not be statistically different from estimates for another population group. Further information on the

accuracy of the data is located at <www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf>. For further information on the computation and use of standard errors, contact the Decennial Statistical Studies Division at 301-763-4242.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Census 2000 Summary File 3 and Summary File 4 data are available from American FactFinder on the Census Bureau's Web site <factfinder.census.gov>. For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, sampling error, and definitions, also see <www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf> or contact the Customer Services Center at 301-763-INFO (4636).

Information on population and housing topics is presented in the Census 2000 Brief and Census 2000 Special Report series, located on the Census Bureau's Web site at <www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs.html>. These series present information on race, Hispanic origin, age, sex, household type, housing tenure, and social, economic, and housing characteristics, such as ancestry, income, and housing costs.

For more information on age in the United States, visit the U.S. Census Bureau's Internet site at <www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/age.html>.

To find information about the availability of data products, including reports, CD-ROMs, and DVDs, call the Customer Services Center at 301-763-INFO (4636).

