

# The Older Population in the United States: March 2002

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## Population Characteristics

P20-546

This report presents a statistical portrait of selected social and economic characteristics of the civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 55 years and over in the United States, based on the results of the Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey (CPS).<sup>1</sup> These characteristics, which are shown by age and sex, include race and Hispanic origin, marital status, educational attainment, labor force status, income, and poverty status.<sup>2</sup>

### POPULATION SIZE AND COMPOSITION

#### Women outnumber men among older adults.

In 2002, 26.6 million men and 33.0 million women in the civilian noninstitutionalized population

were aged 55 and over, yielding a sex ratio (men per 100 women) of 81.<sup>3</sup> The sex ratio drops steadily with age. In the 55-to-64 age group, the sex ratio was 92, and in the age group 85 years and over, the sex ratio was 46 (see Figure 1).

As a corollary to the declining sex ratios with age, the age distribution of women was older than for men among the population aged 55 and over. For example, 41 percent of women and 47 percent of men were 55 to 64, whereas 7 percent

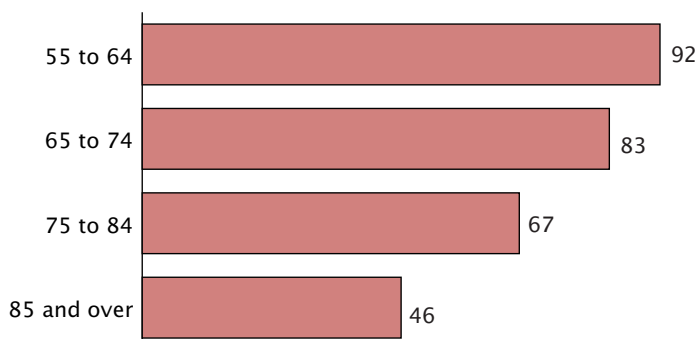
<sup>3</sup> The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual values because of sampling variation or other factors. All comparisons made in this report have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> The data in this report are from the Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey. The population represented (the population universe) is the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. Members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post are included if there is at least one civilian adult living in the household.

<sup>2</sup> For a similar profile of the older population in 1999, see Denise Smith and Hava Tillipman, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P20-532, *The Older Population in the United States: March 1999*, Washington, DC, 2000.

Figure 1.  
**Sex Ratio of People 55 Years and Over by Age: 2002**

(Men per 100 women)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

## Current Population Reports

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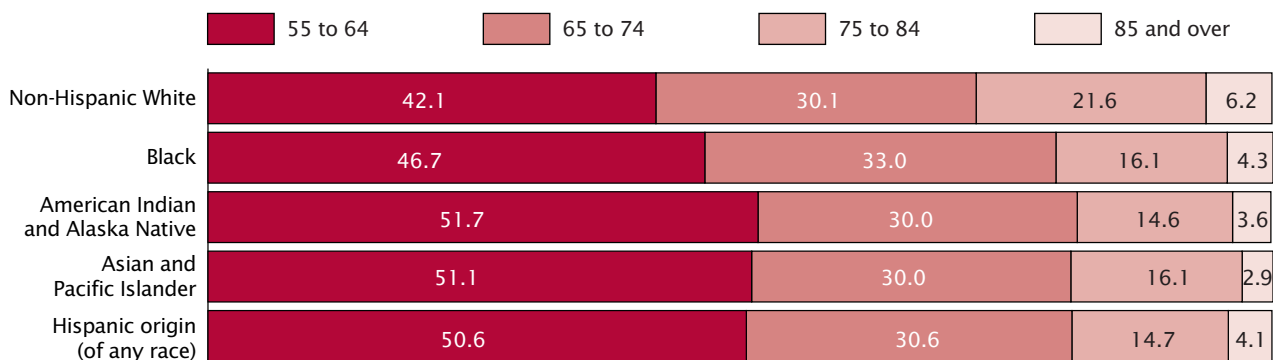
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Figure 2.

**Percent Distribution of People 55 Years and Over by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Age: 2002**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

of women and 4 percent of men were 85 and older.

**Diversity is less evident among the older population than among the younger population.**

Non-Hispanic Whites accounted for 69 percent of the total population in 2002; however, the proportion varied greatly with age — 66 percent of the population under age 55, and 81 percent of those aged 55 and over. The percentage of non-Hispanic Whites increased with age: 79 percent for those 55 to 64, 80 percent for those 65 to 74, 86 percent for those 75 to 84, and 87 percent for those 85 and over.<sup>4</sup>

The age distribution of the older population varied considerably among racial and ethnic groups. Among the groups shown in Figure 2, non-Hispanic Whites had the oldest age distribution in 2002, with 42 percent in the 55-to-64 age group and 6 percent who were aged 85 and over.<sup>5</sup> American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians

<sup>4</sup> Percentage differences for those aged 75 to 84 and those 85 and over were not statistically different.

<sup>5</sup> Percentage differences for the 85 and over age group who were non-Hispanic Whites and American Indians and Alaska Natives are not statistically significant.

and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics<sup>6</sup> had the youngest age distribution, with 51.7 percent, 51.1 percent, and 50.6 percent in the 55-to-64 age group<sup>7</sup> and only 3.6 percent, 2.9 percent, and 4.1 percent in the group aged 85 and over.<sup>8</sup>

**MARITAL STATUS**

**Living arrangements and marital status of the older population differ considerably between men and women as they age.**

In 2002, among people 55 years and over, men were more likely than women to be married and living with their spouse (74 percent and 50 percent, respectively). The pattern intensified for each

<sup>6</sup> People of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Based on the population 55 years and over in the Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 CPS, 2.4 percent of the Black population, 5.3 percent of the American Indian and Alaska Native population, and 2.0 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population were also of Hispanic origin.

<sup>7</sup> Percentage differences for the 55 to 64 year age group who were American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics are not statistically different.

<sup>8</sup> Percentage differences for the 85 and over age group who were American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics are not statistically different.

subgroup within this category, as the corresponding proportions for men and women aged 55 to 64 were 75 percent and 63 percent, respectively; at ages 65 to 84, they were 74 percent and 45 percent, respectively;<sup>9</sup> and at ages 85 and over, they were 58 percent and 12 percent, respectively. Because women have longer life expectancies than men, it is not surprising that 31 percent of women and only 9 percent of men aged 55 and over were widowed. With increasing age, the proportions of women who were widowed rose rapidly: 10 percent of women 55 to 64, 41 percent of women 65 to 84, and 79 percent of women 85 and over (see Figure 3).

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

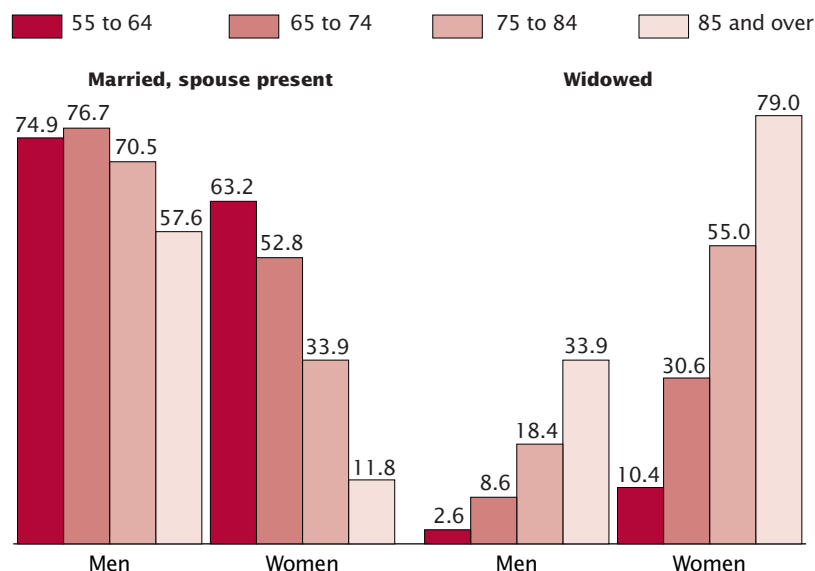
**Among the older population, men are more likely than women to have a bachelor's degree or more education.**

High school completion rates vary among the older population. In 2002, 84 percent of people aged 55 to 64 and 71 percent of those aged 65 to 84 had completed high

<sup>9</sup> Percentage differences for men age 55 to 64 and 65 to 84 are not statistically different.

Figure 3.

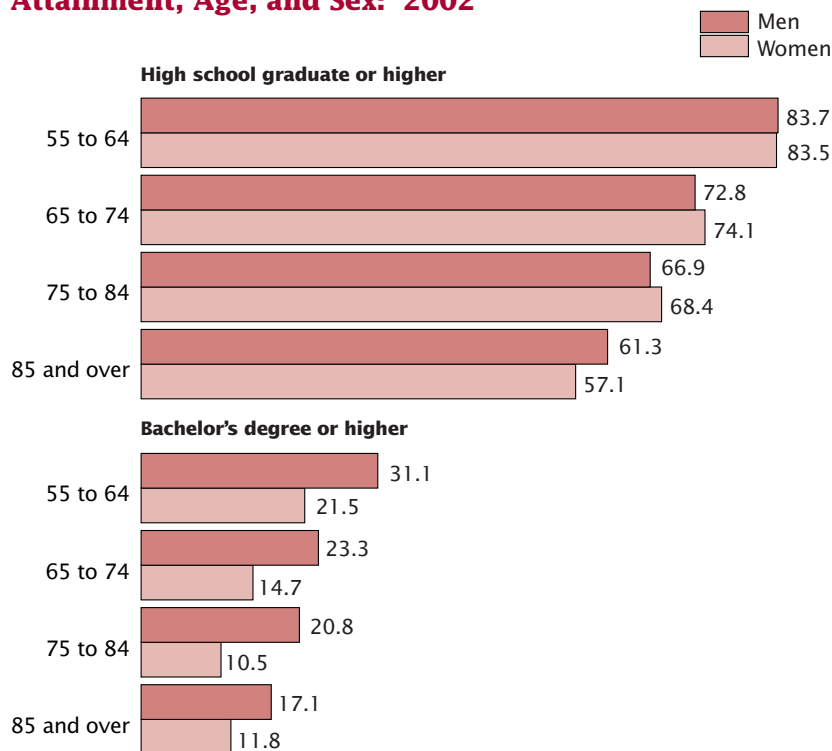
**Percent of People 55 Years and Over Who Were Married With Spouse Present or Widowed by Age and Sex: 2002**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

Figure 4.

**Percent of People 55 Years and Over by Educational Attainment, Age, and Sex: 2002**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

school, compared with only 58 percent of those 85 and over. The percentage of people with less than a ninth grade education also varied. At the older ages, 27 percent of people 85 and over had less than a ninth grade education, compared with only 7 percent of people aged 55 to 64 and 15 percent of people aged 65 to 84.

In most age categories, women and men aged 55 and over were equally likely to be high school graduates.<sup>10</sup> The proportions were 84 percent for both men and women among those 55 to 64; 71 percent and 72 percent, respectively, for those 65 to 84; and 61 percent and 57 percent, respectively, for those aged 85 and over.

Among the older population, however, men were more likely than women to have a bachelor's degree or more education (see Figure 4). The proportions were 31 percent and 22 percent, respectively, among those 55 to 64; 22 percent and 13 percent, respectively, for those 65 to 84; and 17 percent and 12 percent, respectively, for people 85 and over.<sup>11</sup>

**LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION**

**Older men are more likely than older women to be in the civilian labor force.<sup>12</sup>**

Men aged 55 and over were more likely than women to be in the

<sup>10</sup> Percentage differences for men and women in the age group of 55 to 64 were not significantly different.

<sup>11</sup> Percentages for women aged 65 to 84 and 85 and over were not significantly different.

<sup>12</sup> Civilian labor force data shown in this report reflect characteristics of the civilian noninstitutionalized population for March 2002 and are not adjusted for seasonal changes. Official estimates released by the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, may differ from data shown in this report because of differences in when the population controls based on Census 2000 were adopted and their seasonal adjustment of the data.

civilian labor force, and that proportion declined with age for both sexes. In March 2002, 77 percent of men aged 55 to 59 were in the civilian labor force, compared with 63 percent of women (see Figure 5). Among people aged 60 to 64, these proportions were 57 percent for men and 44 percent for women, whereas for people aged 65 and over, they were 18 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Among the people aged 55 and over in the civilian labor force, 3.8 percent were unemployed.

## FAMILY INCOME

**Married-couple households with a householder aged 55 to 64 are more likely to have higher incomes than their older counterparts.<sup>13</sup>**

In 2001, 77 percent of married-couple households with a householder aged 55 to 64 had an income of \$35,000 or more, compared with 49 percent of married-couple households with a householder aged 65 and over (see Figure 6). Married-couple households were more likely to have an income below \$20,000 when the householder was aged 65 and over than when the householder was aged 55 to 64 (20 percent and 10 percent, respectively).

## POVERTY STATUS

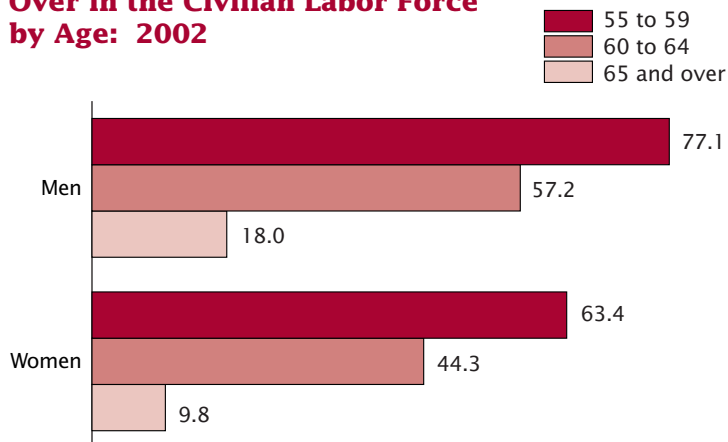
**Among people 55 years and over, those aged 65 and over are most likely to be poor.**

Of the 59.6 million people 55 years and over in 2002, 5.8 million

<sup>13</sup> Throughout the report, references to income and poverty status for families and individuals in 2002 are based on their incomes in calendar year 2001. For a detailed discussion on the definitions of income and poverty, see Bernadette D. Proctor and Joseph Dalaker, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P60-219, *Poverty in the United States: 2001*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2002.

Figure 5.

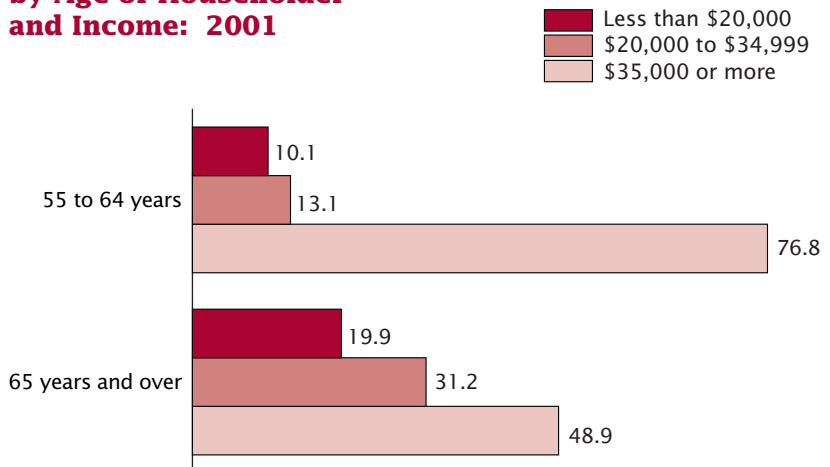
### Percent of Men and Women 55 Years and Over in the Civilian Labor Force by Age: 2002



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

Figure 6.

### Percent of Married-Couple Households by Age of Householder and Income: 2001



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

(9.8 percent) were below the poverty level in 2001. The poverty rate was 9.4 percent for those 55 to 64 and 10.1 percent for those 65 years and over.<sup>14</sup> Older women, in general, had a higher poverty rate than older men—10.3 percent and 8.4 percent for those 55 to 64,

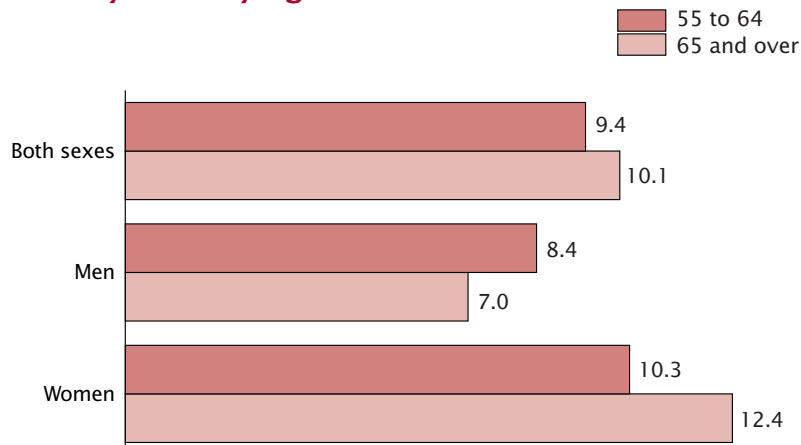
<sup>14</sup> Percentage differences for those aged 55 to 64 and those 65 and over were not statistically significant.

compared with 12.4 percent and 7.0 percent among those 65 and over (see Figure 7).

In 2001, 6.2 percent of the 1.4 million families with a householder aged 55 and over were in poverty. The poverty rate for married-couple families with a householder aged 55 and over was 4.8 percent compared with 14.1 percent of families with a female householder

Figure 7.

### Percent of People 55 Years and Over Below the Poverty Level by Age and Sex: 2001



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

and no husband present, and 10.7 percent of those with a male householder, no wife present.

The poverty rate was higher for families with a householder aged 55 to 64<sup>15</sup> than for families with a householder aged 65 and over: 7.0 percent compared with 5.5 percent. This pattern occurred for each family type: 5.6 percent compared with 4.1 percent for married-couple families; 15.3 percent compared with 13.2 percent for families with a female householder, no husband present; and 14.4 percent compared with 7.4 percent for families with a male householder, no wife present.

#### SOURCE OF THE DATA

The population represented (the population universe) in the Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey is the civilian

<sup>15</sup> Percentage differences for families with a female householder aged 55 to 64 with no husband present are not statistically different from families with a male householder aged 55 to 64, with no wife present or from families with a female householder aged 65 and over, with no husband present.

noninstitutionalized population of the United States. Members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post are included if there is at least one civilian adult living in the household. (Starting in 2001, the Annual Demographic Supplement includes some data collected in February and April.) The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized population in Census 2000).

#### ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

The data in the detailed tables (PPL-167) are from the March 2002 Current Population Survey. Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level. This means the 90-percent confidence interval for the difference between the estimates being com-

pared does not include zero. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports to minimize these errors.

The Current Population Survey weighting procedure uses ratio estimation whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, go to [www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/2002/S&A-02.pdf](http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/2002/S&A-02.pdf) or contact Anessah N. Stephenson of the Census Bureau's Demographic Statistical Methods Division on the Internet at: [dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov](mailto:dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov).

#### MORE INFORMATION

Detailed tabulations are available that provide demographic characteristics by age. The electronic version of these tables is available

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on the Internet at the Census Bureau's Web site ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Once on the site, click on "O," then select "Older (55+) Population Data." Under "CPS March 2002," choose "Detailed Tables."

A paper version of these tables is available as PPL-167 for \$22.10. To receive a paper copy, send your request for "PPL-167, The Older Population in the United States: March 2002," along with a check or money order for \$22.10, payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to U.S. Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call the Statistical Information Staff at 301-763-2422. A copy of these tabulations will be

made available to any existing Current Population Report P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within 3 months of the issue date of this report.

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### **USER COMMENTS**

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of users of its data and reports. If you have

any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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