

A Profile of Older Americans: 2006



Administration on Aging
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Table of Contents

Highlights	1
The Older Population	2
Future Growth	3
Figure 1: Number of Persons 65+, 1900 - 2030 (numbers in millions)	
Marital Status	4
Figure 2: Marital Status of Persons 65+ - 2005	
Living Arrangements	5
Figure 3: Living Arrangements of Persons 65+: 2005	
Racial and Ethnic Composition	6
Geographic Distribution	6
Figure 4: Persons 65+ as Percentage of Total Population by State: 2005 (US Map)	
Figure 5: Percentage Increase in Population 65+ by State: 1995 to 2005 (US Map)	
Figure 6: The 65+ Population by State: 2005 (table)	
Income	10
Figure 7: Percent Distribution by Income: 2005	
Poverty	11
Housing	11
Employment	12
Education	12
Health and Health Care	12
Health Insurance Coverage	13
Figure 8: Sources of Health Insurance Coverage: 2005	
Disability and Activity Limitations	14
Figure 9: Percent of Persons with Limitations in Activities of Daily Living by Age Group: 2004	
Special Topic: Health Literacy	15
Figure 10: Percentage of Adult in each Health Literacy Level, by age: 2003	
Caregiving	16
Notes	16

Highlights *

- The older population (65+) numbered 36.8 million in 2005, an increase of 3.2 million or 9.4% since 1995.
- The number of Americans aged 45-64 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades – increased by 40% during this decade.
- About one in every eight, or 12.4 percent, of the population is an older American.
- Persons reaching age 65 have an average life expectancy of an additional 18.4 years (19.8 years for females and 16.8 years for males).
- Older women outnumber older men at 21.4 million older women to 15.4 million older men.
- In 2005, 18.5% of persons 65+ were minorities--8.3% were African-Americans.** Persons of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) represented 6.2% of the older population. About 3.1% of the elderly were Asian or Pacific Islander,** and less than 1% were American Indian or Native Alaskan.** In addition, 0.6% of persons 65+ identified themselves as being of two or more races.**
- Older men were much more likely to be married than older women--72% of men vs. 42% of women (Figure 2). 43% older women in 2005 were widows.
- About 30 percent (10.6 million) of noninstitutionalized older persons live alone (7.7 million women, 2.9 million men).
- Half of older women age 75+ live alone.
- About 445,000 grandparents aged 65 or more had the primary responsibility for their grandchildren who lived with them.
- The population 65 and over will increase from 35 million in 2000 to 40 million in 2010 (a 15% increase) and then to 55 million in 2020 (a 36% increase for that decade).
- The 85+ population is projected to increase from 4.2 million in 2000 to 6.1 million in 2010 (a 40% increase) and then to 7.3 million in 2020 (a 44% increase for that decade).
- Members of minority groups are projected to increase from 5.7 million in 2000 (16.4% of the elderly population) to 8.1 million in 2010 (20.1% of the elderly) and then to 12.9 million in 2020 (23.6% of the elderly).
- The median income of older persons in 2005 was \$21,784 for males and \$12,495 for females. Median money income of all households headed by older people (after adjusting for inflation) rose by 2.8% from 2004 to 2005. Family households headed by older people reported a median income in 2005 of \$37,765.
- Major sources of income for older people were: Social Security (reported by 89 percent of older persons), income from assets (reported by 55 percent), private pensions (reported by 29 percent), government employee pensions (reported by 14 percent), and earnings (reported by 24 percent).
- Social Security constituted 90% or more of the income received by 34% of all Social Security beneficiaries (21% of married couples and 43% of non-married beneficiaries).
- About 3.6 million elderly persons (10.1%) were below the poverty level in 2005 which was not statistically significant from the poverty rate in 2004.
- About 11% (3.7 million) of older Medicare enrollees received personal care from a paid or unpaid source in 1999.

*Principal sources of data for the Profile are the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the National Center on Health Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Profile incorporates the latest data available but not all items are updated on an annual basis.

The Older Population

The older population--persons 65 years or older--numbered 36.8 million in 2005 (the most recent year for which data are available). They represented 12.4% of the U.S. population, about one in every eight Americans. The number of older Americans increased by 3.2 million or 9.4% since 1995, compared to an increase of 13.3% for the under-65 population. However, the number of Americans aged 45-64 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades – increased by 40% during this period.

In 2005, there were 21.4 million older women and 15.4 million older men, or a sex ratio of 139 women for every 100 men. The female to male sex ratio increases with age, ranging from 115 for the 65-69 age group to a high of 218 for persons 85 and over.

Since 1900, the percentage of Americans 65+ has tripled (from 4.1% in 1900 to 12.4% in 2004), and the number has increased almost twelve times (from 3.1 million to 36.3 million). The older population itself is getting older. In 2005, the 65-74 age group (18.6 million) was over 8.5 times larger than in 1900, but the 75-84 group (13.1 million) was 17 times larger and the 85+ group (5.1 million) was 42 times larger.

In 2003, persons reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 18.4 years (19.8 years for females and 16.8 years for males).

A child born in 2004 could expect to live 77.9 years, about 30 years longer than a child born in 1900. Much of this increase occurred because of reduced death rates for children and young adults. However, the period of 1983-2003 also has seen reduced death rates for the population aged 65-84, especially for men – by 29.4% for men aged 65-74 and by 22.3% for men aged 75-84. Life expectancy at age 65 increased by only 2.5 years between 1900 and 1960, but has increased by 4.3 years from 1960 to 2004.

Over 2.0 million persons celebrated their 65th birthday in 2005. In the same year, about 1.8 million persons 65 or older died. Census estimates showed an annual net increase of almost 500,000 in the number of persons 65 and over.

There were 70,104 persons aged 100 or more in 2005 (0.19% of the total population). This is a 88% increase from the 1990 figure of 37,306.

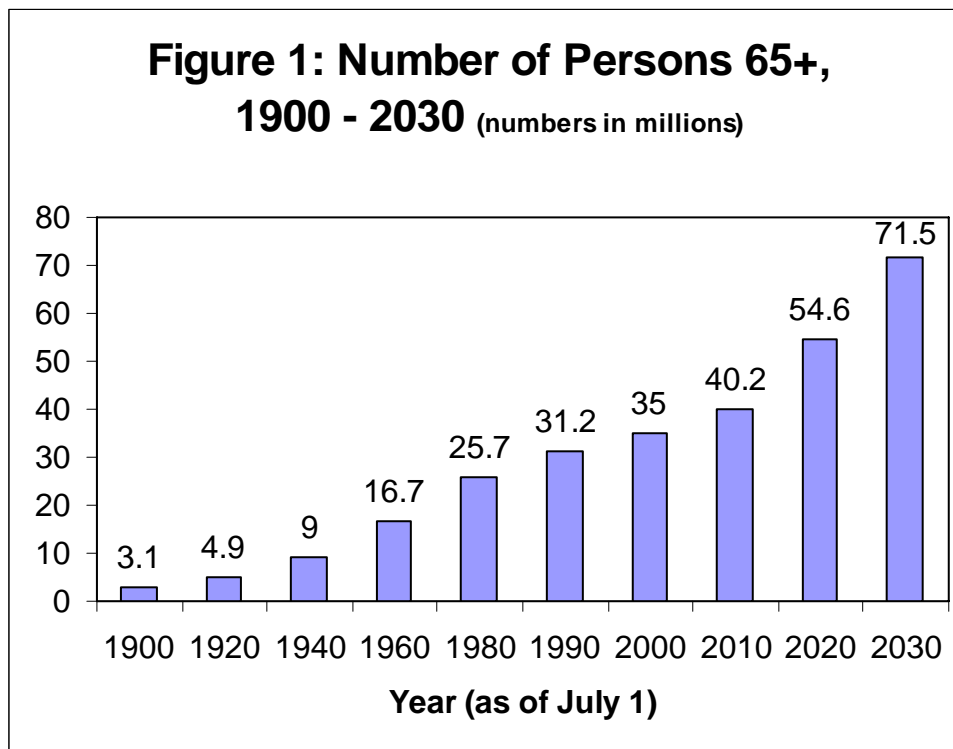
(Data for this section were compiled primarily from Internet releases of the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics).

Future Growth

The older population will continue to grow significantly in the future (see Figure 1). This growth slowed somewhat during the 1990's because of the relatively small number of babies born during the Great Depression of the 1930's. But the older population will burgeon between the years 2010 and 2030 when the "baby boom" generation reaches age 65.

The population 65 and over will increase from 35 million in 2000 to 40 million in 2010 (a 15% increase) and then to 55 million in 2020 (a 36% increase for that decade). By 2030, there will be about 71.5 million older persons, almost twice their number in 2005. People 65+ represented 12.4% of the population in the year 2005 but are expected to grow to be 20% of the population by 2030. The 85+ population is projected to increase from 4.2 million in 2000 to 6.1 million in 2010 (40%) and then to 7.3 million in 2020 (44% for that decade).

Minority populations are projected to increase from 5.7 million in 2000 (16.4% of the elderly population) to 8.1 million in 2010 (20.1% of the elderly) and then to 12.9 million in 2020 (23.6% of the elderly). Between 2004 and 2030, the white** population 65+ is projected to increase by 74% compared with 183% for older minorities, including Hispanics (254%), African-Americans** (147%), American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts** (143%), and Asians and Pacific Islanders** (208%).



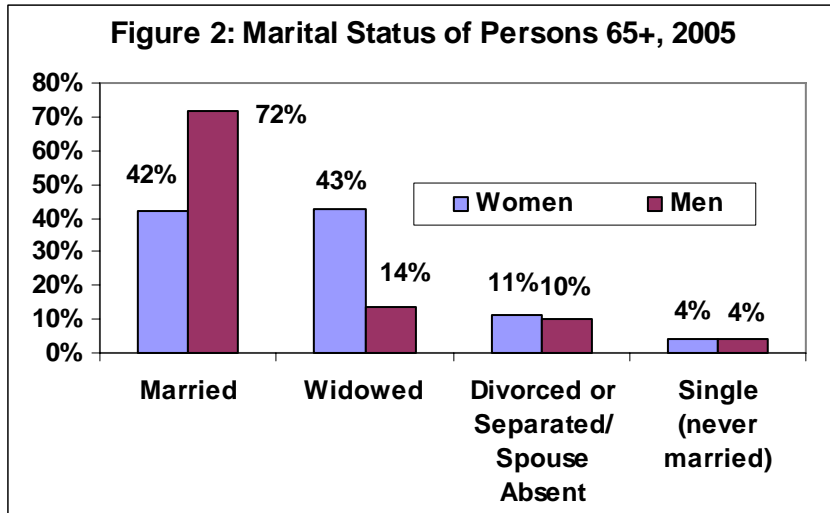
Note: Increments in years are uneven.

(Sources: Projections of the Population by Age are taken from the January 2004 Census Internet Release. Historical data are taken from "65+ in the United States," Current Population Reports, Special Studies, P23-190 Data for 2000 are from the 2000 Census and 2005 data are taken from the Census estimates for 2005.)

Marital Status

In 2005, older men were much more likely to be married than older women--72% of men, 42% of women (Figure 2). Almost half of all older women in 2005 were widows (43%). There were over four times as many widows (8.6 million) as widowers (2.1 million).

Divorced and separated (including married/spouse absent) older persons represented only 10.8% of all older persons in 2005. However, this percentage has increased since 1980, when approximately 5.3% of the older population were divorced or separated/spouse absent.



(Based on Internet releases of data from the 2005 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the U.S. Bureau of the Census)

Living Arrangements

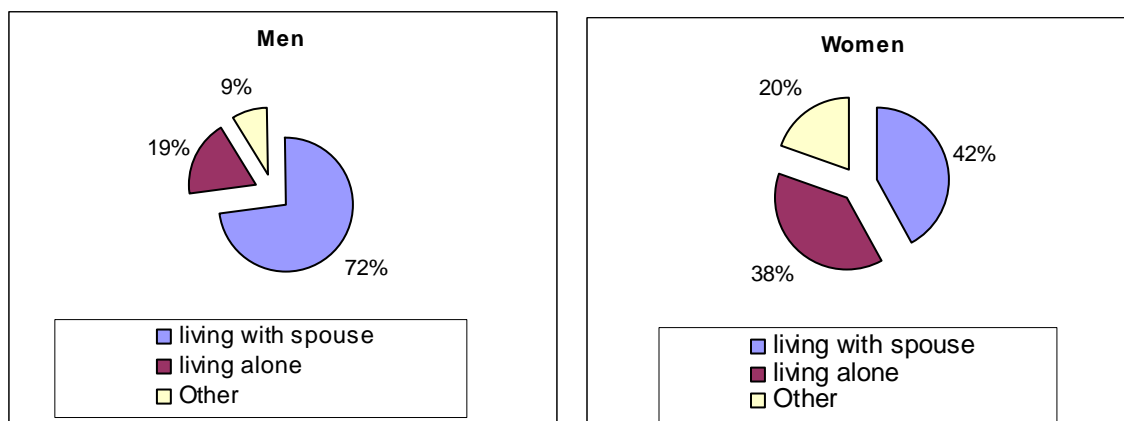
Over half (54.8%) the older noninstitutionalized persons lived with their spouse in 2005. Approximately 10.9 million or 71.7% of older men, and 8.4 million or 42.0% of older women, lived with their spouse (Figure 3). The proportion living with their spouse decreased with age, especially for women. Only 30.2% of women 75+ years old lived with a spouse.

About 30.1% (10.6 million) of all noninstitutionalized older persons in 2005 lived alone (7.7 million women, 2.9 million men). They represented 38.4% of older women and 19.2% of older men. The proportion living alone increases with advanced age. Among women aged 75 and over, for example, half (47.7%) lived alone.

More than 685,000 grandparents aged 65 or over maintained households in which grandchildren were present in 2005. (Another 218,000 elderly were spouses of such people.) In addition, 660,000 grandparents over 65 years lived in parent-maintained households in which their grandchildren were present. A total of about 1.57 million older people lived in household with a grandchild present in the house. About 445,000 of these grandparents over 65 years old were the persons with primary responsibility for their grandchildren who lived with them.

While a relatively small number (1.56 million) and percentage (4.5%) of the 65+ population lived in nursing homes in 2000, the percentage increases dramatically with age, ranging from 1.1% for persons 65-74 years to 4.7% for persons 75-84 years and 18.2% for persons 85+. In addition, approximately 5% of the elderly lived in self-described senior housing of various types, many of which have supportive services available to their residents.

Figure 3: Living Arrangements of Persons 65+, 2005



(Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census including the 2005 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement and the 2005 American Community Survey. See: March 2005 Current Population Survey Internet releases, Detailed Tables. and "The 65 Years and Over Population: 2000, Census 2000 Brief, October, 2001" as well as other Census 2000 data and unpublished data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.)

Racial and Ethnic Composition

In 2005, 18.5% of persons 65+ were minorities--8.3% were African-Americans.** Persons of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) represented 6.2% of the older population. About 3.1 were Asian or Pacific Islander,** and less than 1% were American Indian or Native Alaskan.** In addition, 0.6% of persons 65+ identified themselves as being of two or more races.

Only 7.0% of minority race and Hispanic populations were 65+ in 2005 (8.4% of African-Americans,** 8.8% of Asians and Pacific Islanders,** 7.5% of American Indians and Native Alaskans,** 5.4% of Hispanics), compared with 15.1% of non-Hispanic whites.**

(Data for this section were compiled from Internet releases of the Census 2005 Population Estimates).

Geographic Distribution

The proportion of older persons in the population varies considerably by state with some states experiencing much greater growth in their older populations (Figures 4 and 5). In 2005, about half (51.6%) of persons 65+ lived in nine states. California had 3.9 million; Florida 3.0 million; New York 2.5 million; Texas 2.3 million; and Pennsylvania 1.9 million, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and New Jersey each had well over 1 million (Figure 6).

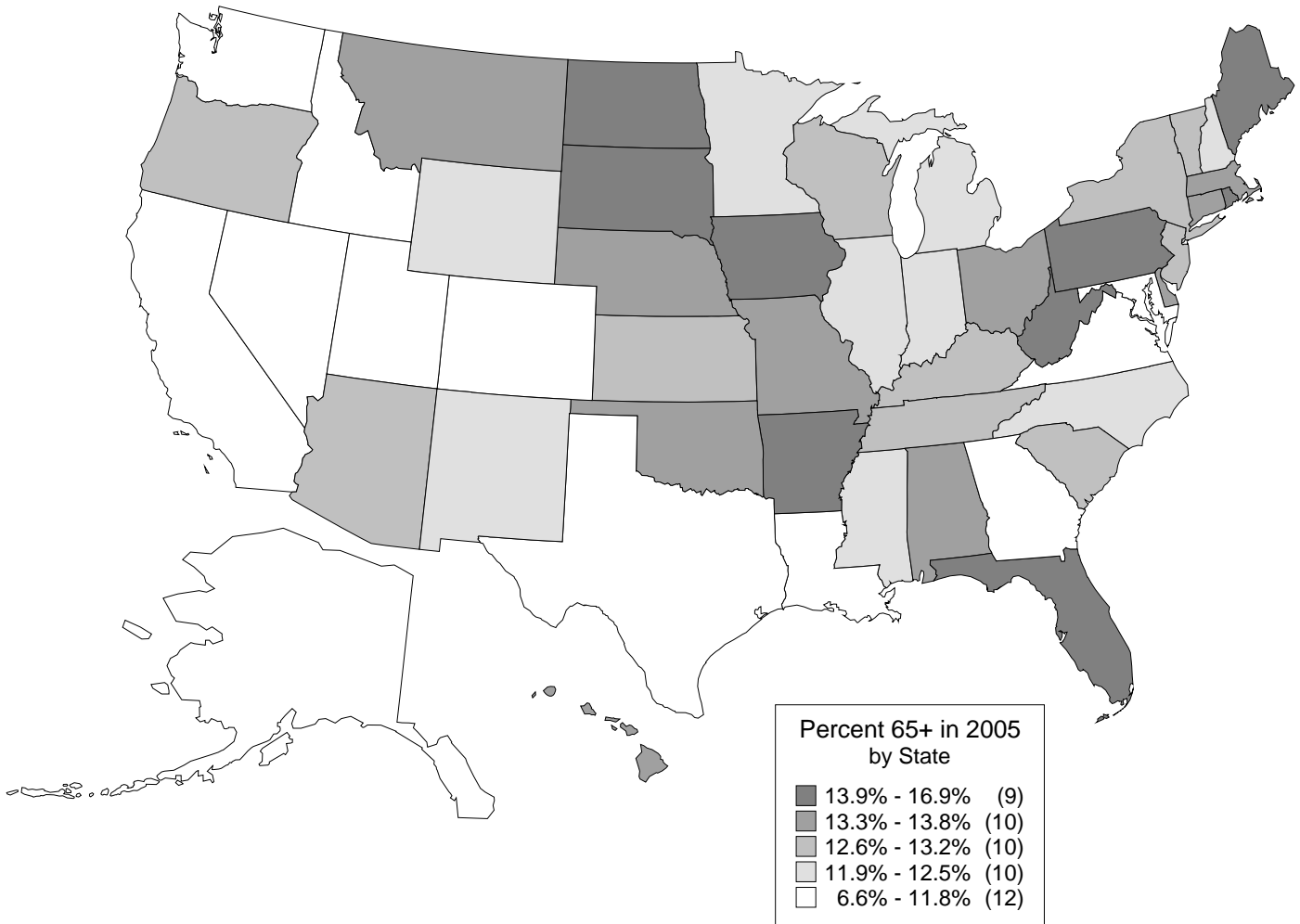
Person 65+ constituted approximately 14% or more of the total population in 8 states in 2005 (Figure 6): Florida (16.8%); West Virginia (15.3%); Pennsylvania (15.2%); North Dakota (14.7%); Iowa (14.7%); Maine (14.6); South Dakota (14.2); and Rhode Island (13.9%). In ten states, the 65+ population increased by 20% or more between 1995 and 2005 (Figure 6): Nevada (56.6%); Alaska (47.5%); Arizona (31.4%); New Mexico (26.5%); Utah (24.1%); Colorado (23.3%); Delaware (22.9%); Idaho (22.8%); Georgia (20.8%) and South Carolina (20.6%). The ten jurisdictions with the highest poverty rates for elderly during 2005 were the District of Columbia (17.6%); Mississippi (15.7%); Louisiana (15.6%); Arkansas (14.5%); North Dakota (14.1%); Kentucky (13.5%); Tennessee (13.1%); Alabama (13.1%); Georgia (13.0%); and New York (12.8%).

Most persons 65+ lived in metropolitan areas in 2005 (79.8%). About 50% of older persons lived in the suburbs, 29% lived in central cities, and 20% lived in nonmetropolitan areas.

The elderly are less likely to change residence than other age groups. From 2004 to 2005 only 4.2% of older persons moved as opposed to 13.4% of the under 65 population. Most older movers (51.6%) stayed in the same county and 72.1% remained in the same state. Only 25.5% (of the movers) moved out-of-state.

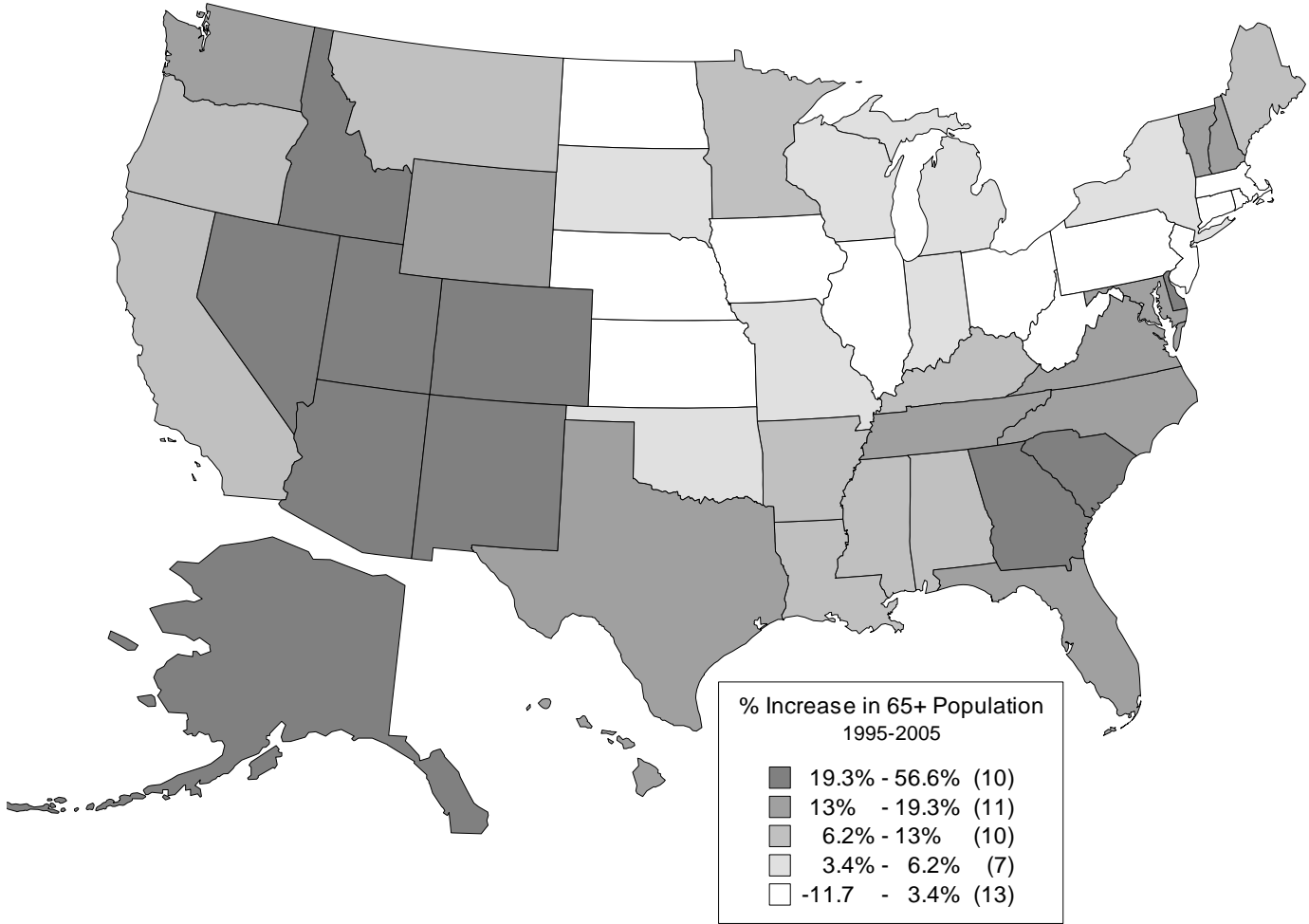
(Data for this section and for Figure 4 were compiled primarily from the Census Population Estimates for 2005 as well as other Internet releases of the U.S. Bureau of the Census including tables from the March 2005 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement)

Figure 4: Persons 65+ as a Percentage of Total Population, 2005



(Source: 2005 Population Estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census)

Figure 5: Percentage Increase in Population 65+, 1995 to 2005



(Source: 1995 and 2005 Population Estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census)

Figure 6: The 65+ Population by State: 2005

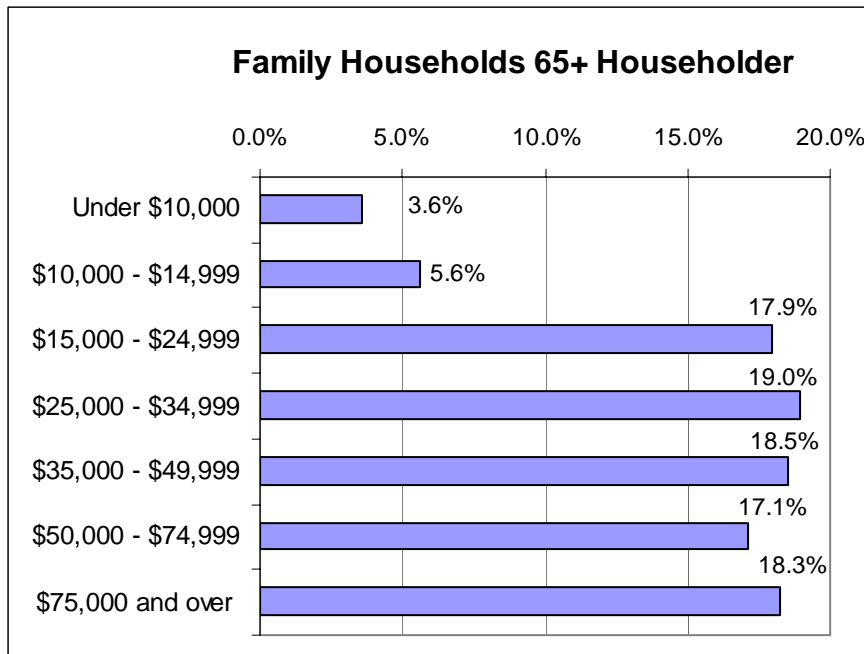
Numbers	Number of Persons	Percent of All Ages	Percent Increase from 1995 to 2005	Percent Below Poverty 2005
US Total (50 States + DC)	36,790,113	12.4%	9.4%	10.1%
Alabama	603,733	13.2%	8.4%	13.1%
Alaska	44,026	6.6%	47.5%	9.1%
Arizona	758,181	12.8%	31.4%	8.1%
Arkansas	384,450	13.8%	6.2%	14.5%
California	3,868,574	10.7%	11.9%	8.2%
Colorado	465,096	10.0%	23.3%	8.6%
Connecticut	474,150	13.5%	1.5%	7.5%
Delaware	112,214	13.3%	22.9%	7.5%
District of Columbia	67,208	12.2%	-11.6%	17.6%
Florida	2,993,160	16.8%	13.9%	10.3%
Georgia	870,422	9.6%	20.8%	13.0%
Hawaii	174,538	13.7%	16.8%	9.3%
Idaho	163,917	11.5%	22.8%	8.7%
Illinois	1,530,074	12.0%	2.2%	8.7%
Indiana	777,506	12.4%	5.7%	8.0%
Iowa	435,220	14.7%	0.2%	8.0%
Kansas	357,005	13.0%	0.5%	7.9%
Kentucky	525,764	12.6%	7.7%	13.5%
Louisiana	531,581	11.8%	7.4%	15.6%
Maine	192,664	14.6%	11.5%	11.0%
Maryland	644,560	11.5%	13.0%	7.9%
Massachusetts	852,826	13.3%	-0.6%	10.0%
Michigan	1,258,494	12.4%	4.6%	8.6%
Minnesota	623,241	12.1%	8.3%	8.4%
Mississippi	358,393	12.3%	7.6%	15.7%
Missouri	773,171	13.3%	4.0%	9.1%
Montana	128,834	13.8%	12.3%	9.1%
Nebraska	233,550	13.3%	1.9%	8.7%
Nevada	273,136	11.3%	56.6%	8.3%
New Hampshire	163,105	12.5%	18.4%	6.9%
New Jersey	1,129,356	13.0%	3.4%	8.7%
New Mexico	234,902	12.2%	26.5%	12.5%
New York	2,515,064	13.1%	4.0%	12.8%
North Carolina	1,054,098	12.1%	16.4%	12.1%
North Dakota	93,650	14.7%	0.0%	14.1%
Ohio	1,529,430	13.3%	2.2%	8.4%
Oklahoma	468,968	13.2%	5.6%	11.2%
Oregon	469,906	12.9%	10.2%	7.9%
Pennsylvania	1,892,847	15.2%	-1.0%	9.0%
Rhode Island	149,775	13.9%	-3.7%	7.8%
South Carolina	534,980	12.6%	20.6%	11.5%
South Dakota	110,530	14.2%	4.7%	12.5%
Tennessee	749,951	12.6%	13.3%	13.1%
Texas	2,271,845	9.9%	19.3%	12.7%
Utah	216,021	8.7%	24.1%	6.5%
Vermont	81,982	13.2%	15.9%	10.0%
Virginia	865,103	11.4%	17.4%	9.8%
Washington	720,874	11.5%	14.1%	8.7%
West Virginia	278,368	15.3%	0.2%	11.6%
Wisconsin	721,633	13.0%	5.3%	7.7%
Wyoming	62,037	12.2%	16.8%	8.0%
Puerto Rico	489,819	12.5%		44.3%

(Source: Population data is from Census Bureau Population Estimates. Poverty data is from the 2005 American Community Survey.)

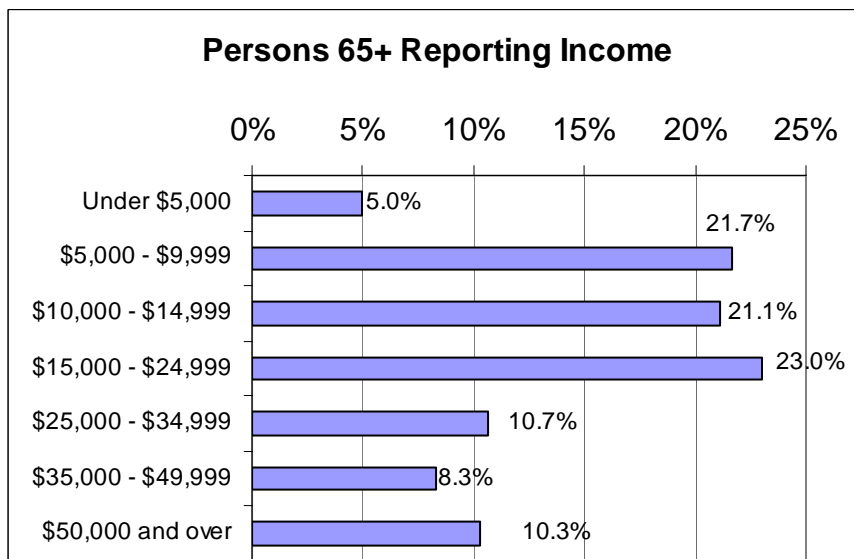
Income

The median income of older persons in 2005 was \$21,784 for males and \$12,495 for females. Median money income of all households headed by older people rose by 2.8% from 2004 to 2005. Households containing families headed by persons 65+ reported a median income in 2005 of \$37,765 (\$39,402 for non-Hispanic Whites, \$27,270 for African-Americans, \$49,163 for Asians, and \$26,681 for Hispanics). About one of every ten (9.2%) family households with an elderly householder had incomes less than \$15,000 and 53.9% had incomes of \$35,000 or more (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Percent Distribution by Income: 2005*



\$37,765 median for 12.2 million family households 65+



\$15,696 median for 34.4 million persons 65+ reporting income

For all older persons reporting income in 2005 (34.4 million), 26.7% reported less than \$10,000. Only 29.3% reported \$25,000 or more. The median income reported was \$15,696.

The major sources of income as reported by older persons in 2004 were Social Security (reported by 89% of older persons), income from assets (reported by 55%), private pensions (reported by 29%), government employee pensions (reported by 14%), and earnings (reported by 24%). In 2004, Social Security benefits accounted for 39% of the aggregate income of the older population. The bulk of the remainder consisted of earnings (26%), asset income (13%), and pensions (19%). Social Security constituted 90% or more of the income received by 34% of beneficiaries (21% of married couples and 43% of non-married beneficiaries).

(Based on data from Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005" P60-231, issued August, 2006 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, related Census detailed tables on the Census Bureau web site, and from Fast Facts and Figures About Social Security, 2005 Social Security Administration)

Poverty

About 3.6 million elderly persons (10.1%) were below the poverty level in 2005. This poverty rate was not statistically significant from the poverty rate in 2004. The historic lowest level of 9.7% was reached in 1999. Another 2.3 million or 6.6% of the elderly were classified as "near-poor" (income between the poverty level and 125% of this level).

One of every twelve (7.9%) elderly Whites** was poor in 2005, compared to 23.2% of elderly African-Americans, 12.6% of Asians, and 19.9% of elderly Hispanics. Higher than average poverty rates were found in 2004 for older persons were found among those who lived in principal cities (12.7%), outside metropolitan areas (i.e. rural areas) (11.9%), and in the South (12.0%).

Older women had a higher poverty rate (12.3%) than older men (7.3%) in 2005. Older persons living alone were much more likely to be poor (19.1%) than were older persons living with families (5.6%). The highest poverty rates were experienced among Hispanic women (45.9%) and also by older Black women (36.7%) who lived alone.

(Based on data from Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005," P60-231, issued August, 2006, by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and related Census detailed tables on the Census Bureau web site)

Housing

Of the 2.2 million households headed by older persons in 2005, 80% were owners and 20% were renters. The median family income of older homeowners was \$26,899. The median family income of older renters was \$13,377. In 2005, 48% of older householders spent more than one-fourth of their income on housing costs - 43% for owners and 82% for renters - as compared to 37% of all householders.

For homes of older householders in 2005, the median construction year was 1966 (it was 1974 for all householders) and 4.7% of the homes had physical problems. In 2005, the median value of homes owned by older persons was \$143,697 (with a median purchase price of \$38,182) compared to a median home value of \$165,344 for all homeowners. About 68% of older homeowners in 2005 owned their homes free and clear.

(Source: "Amer. Housing Survey for the United States in 2005, Current Housing Reports" H150/05)

Employment

In 2005, 5.3 million (15.1 %) Americans age 65 and over were in the labor force (working or actively seeking work), including 3.0 million men (19.8%) and 2.3 million women (11.5%). They constituted 3.5% of the U.S. labor force. About 3.5% were unemployed. Labor force participation of men 65+ decreased steadily from 2 of 3 in 1900 to 15.8% in 1985, and has stayed at 16%-18% since then. The participation rate for women 65+ rose slightly from 1 of 12 in 1900 to 10.8% in 1956, fell to 7.3% in 1985, and has been around 8%-10% since 1988.

(Source: Current Population Survey, labor force statistics. See: Bureau of Labor Statistics web-site: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>)

Education

The educational level of the older population is increasing. Between 1970 and 2005, the percentage who had completed high school rose from 28% to 74%. Almost 19% in 2005 had a bachelor's degree or more. The percentage who had completed high school varied considerably by race and ethnic origin in 2005: 79% of Whites**, 66% of Asians and Pacific Islanders, 54% of African-Americans, and 40% of Hispanics. The increase in educational levels is also evident within these groups. In 1970, only 30% of older Whites and 9% of older African-Americans were high school graduates.

(Source: Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2005 and related tables on the Census Bureau web site)

Health and Health Care

In 2005, 38.3% of noninstitutionalized older persons assessed their health as excellent or very good (compared to 66.8% for persons aged 18-64). There was little difference between the sexes on this measure, but African-Americans** (22.8%), older American Indians/Alaska Natives (24.2%) and older Hispanics (28.4%) were less likely to rate their health as excellent or good than were older Whites** (40.9%) or older Asians (34.9%).† Most older persons have at least one chronic condition and many have multiple conditions. Among the most frequently occurring conditions older persons in 2004-2005 were: hypertension (48%), diagnosed arthritis (47%), all types of heart disease (29%), any cancer (20%), diabetes (16%), and sinusitis (14%).

Almost 60% reported in 2005 that they received an influenza vaccination during the past 12 months and 56% reported that they had ever received a pneumococcal vaccination. About 24% (of persons 60+) report height/weight combinations that place them among the obese. Over 25% of persons aged 65-74 and 17% of persons 75+ report that they engage in regular leisure-time physical activity. Only 9% reported that they are current smokers and only 4% reported excessive alcohol consumption. Only 2.6% reported that they had experienced psychological distress during the past 30 days.

In 2004, over 13.2 million persons aged 65 and older were discharged from short stay hospitals. This is a rate of 3,629 for every 10,000 persons aged 65+ which is over two and one half times the comparable rate for persons of all ages (which was 1,384 per 10,000). The average length of stay for persons aged 65+ was 5.6 days; the comparable rate for persons of all ages was 4.8 days. The average length of stay for older people has decreased by 5 days since 1980. Older persons averaged more office visits with doctors

in 2003-4: 6.1 office visits for those aged 65-74 and 7.6 office visits for persons over 75 while persons aged 45-65 averaged only 3.7 office visits during that year. Over 96% of older persons reported that they did have a usual place to go for medical care and only 2.4% said that they failed to obtain needed medical care during the previous 12 months due to financial barriers.

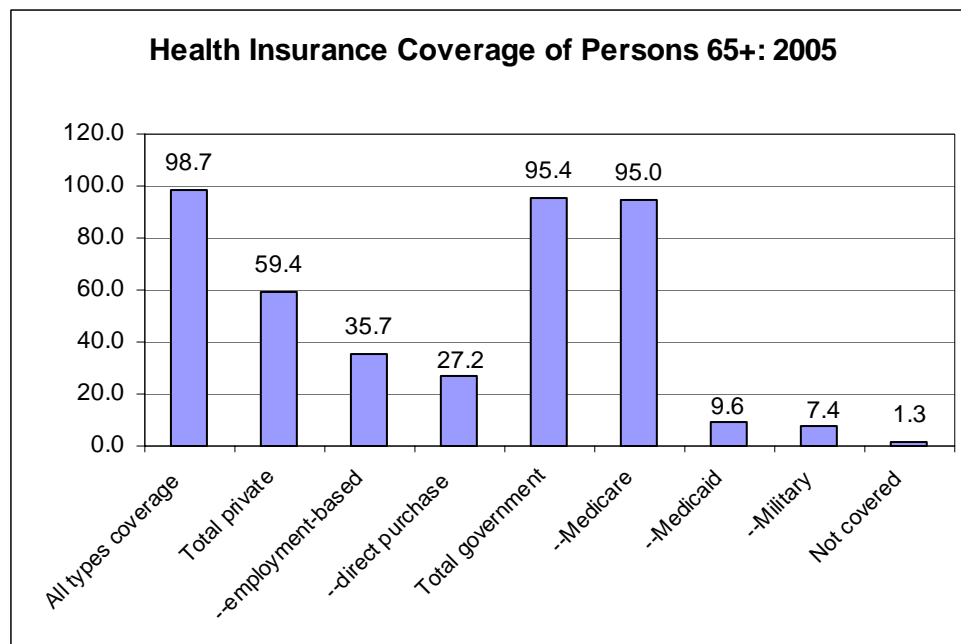
In 2004, older consumers averaged \$4193 in out-of-pocket health care expenditures, an increase of 58% since 1994. In contrast, the total population spent considerably less, averaging \$2,664 in out-of-pocket costs. Older Americans spent 12.8% of their total expenditures on health, more than twice the proportion spent by all consumers (5.7%). Health costs incurred on average by older consumers in 2004 consisted of \$2,307 (55%) for insurance, \$977 (23%) for drugs, \$769 (18%) for medical services, and \$140 (3%) for medical supplies.

(Sources: Data releases from the web sites of the National Center for Health Statistics (including the Data Warehouse on Trends in Health and Aging); from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and from the Bureau of Labor Statistics web site)

Health Insurance Coverage

In 2005, almost all (95%) non-institutionalized persons 65+ were covered by Medicare. Medicare covers mostly acute care services and requires beneficiaries to pay part of the cost, leaving about half of health spending to be covered by other sources. About 59% had some type of private health insurance. Over 7% had military-based health insurance and 9% of the non-institutionalized elderly were covered by Medicaid. Only 1% did not have coverage of some kind. About 87% of non-institutionalized Medicare beneficiaries in 2004 had some type of supplementary coverage. However, among Medicare beneficiaries residing in nursing homes, almost 58% were covered by Medicaid in 2001.

Figure 8:



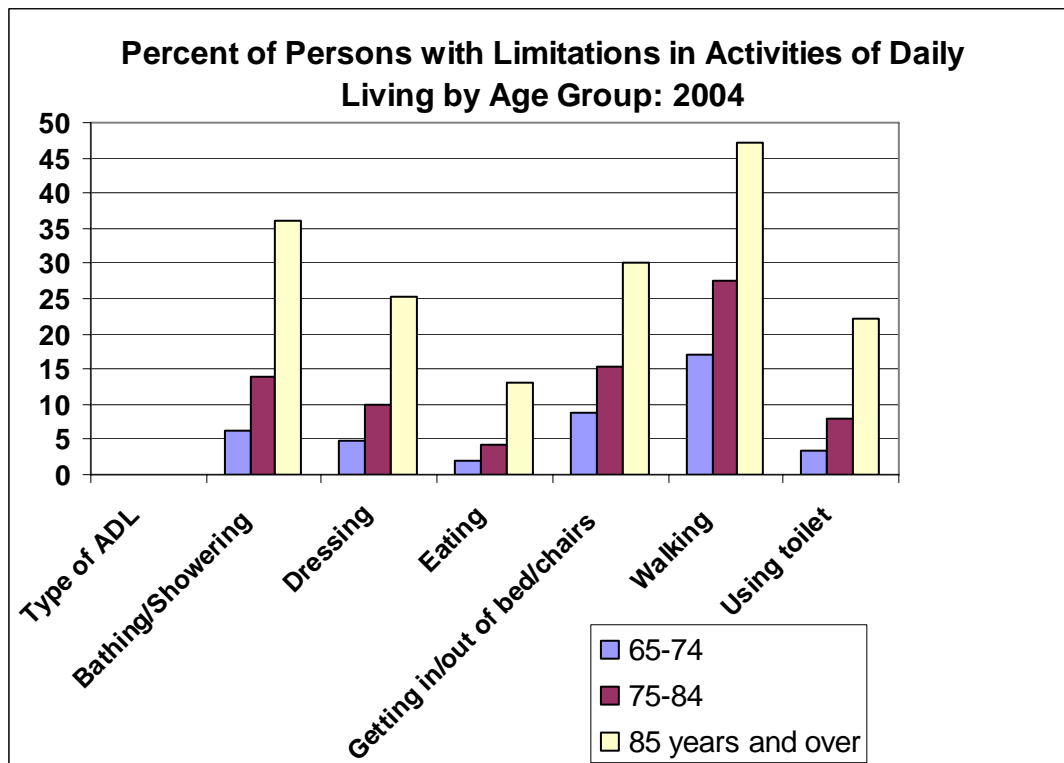
Note: Figure 8 data is for the non-institutionalized elderly. A person can be represented in more than one category. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Based on Detailed Tables on Health Insurance Coverage, U.S. Bureau of the Census web site. Medicare beneficiary data is from the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey)

Disability and Activity Limitations

In 2002, 52% of older persons reported that they had some type of disability (sensory disability, physical disability, or mental disability). Some of these disabilities may be relatively minor but others cause people to require assistance to meet important personal needs. Almost 37% of older persons reported a severe disability and 16% reported that they needed some type of assistance as a result. Reported disability increases with age. 57% of persons over 80 reported a severe disability and 30% of the over 80 population reported that they needed assistance. There is a strong relationship between disability status and reported health status. Among those 65+ with a severe disability, 66% reported their health as fair or poor. Among the 65+ persons who reported no disability, only 10.5% reported their health as fair or poor. Presence of a severe disability is also associated with lower income levels and educational attainment.

In another study which focused on the ability to perform specific activities of daily living (ADLs), over 27.1% of community-resident Medicare beneficiaries over age 65 in 2004 had difficulty in performing one or more ADLs and an additional 13.7% reported difficulties with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). By contrast, 91.3% of institutionalized Medicare beneficiaries had difficulties with one or more ADLs and 76.5% of them had difficulty with three or more ADLs. [ADLs include bathing, dressing, eating, and getting around the house. IADLs include preparing meals, shopping, managing money, using the telephone, doing housework, and taking medication.] Limitations on activities because of chronic conditions increase with age. As shown in Figure 9 (from another survey), the rate of limitations on activities among persons 85 and older are much higher than those for persons 65-74.

Figure 9:



It should be noted that (except where noted) the figures above are taken from surveys of the noninstitutionalized elderly. Although nursing homes are being increasingly used for short-stay post-

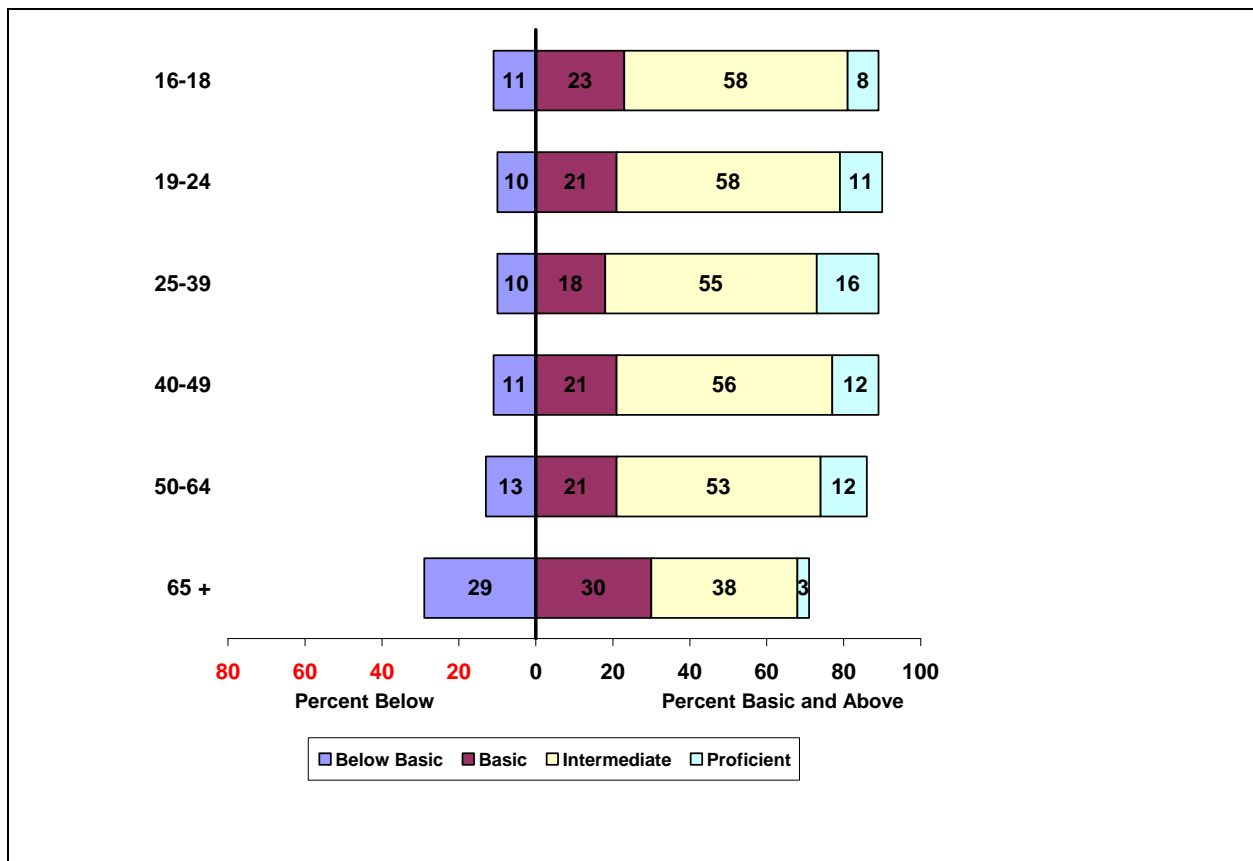
acute care, about 1.6 million elderly are in nursing homes (about half are age 85 and over). These individuals often have high needs for care with their ADLs and/or have severe cognitive impairment, due to Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

(Sources: Americans with Disabilities: 2002, May 2006, P70-107 and other Internet releases of the Census Bureau and the National Center on Health Statistics, including the NCHS Data Warehouse on Trends in Health and Aging)

Special Topic: Health Literacy

Older adults have more chronic conditions, hospital admissions, doctor and ER visits, and expenditures for prescription drugs than younger age groups. Therefore, health literacy, i.e., the ability of individuals to understand basic health information, is critical to the ability of older persons to maintain good health. However, older adults have disproportionately lower health literacy than younger adults. In a recent national survey, the elderly had an average health literacy score within the basic health literacy performance level, while the averages for all other age groups fall into the intermediate performance group. As shown in Figure 10, older adults were also far more likely to have below basic (29%) or basic (30%) health literacy than any other age group.

Figure 10: Percentage of Adult in each Health Literacy Level, by age: 2003



(Source: The Health Literacy of America's Adults: Results From the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NCES 2006-483). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.)

Caregiving

About 11% (3.7 million) of older Medicare enrollees received personal care from a paid or unpaid source in 1999. Almost all community resident older persons with chronic disabilities receive either informal care (from family or friends) or formal care (from service provider agencies). Over 90% of these older persons with chronic disabilities received informal care and/or formal care; and about two thirds received only informal care. About 9 % of this chronically disabled group received only formal services.

(Source: National Long Term Care Survey, 1999)

Notes:

*Principal sources of data for the Profile are the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the National Center on Health Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Profile incorporates the latest data available but not all items are updated on an annual basis.

**Excludes persons of Hispanic origin.

A Profile of Older Americans: 2006 was prepared by the Administration on Aging (AoA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The annual Profile of Older Americans was originally developed and researched by Donald G. Fowles, AoA. Saadia Greenberg, AoA, developed the 2006 edition. Jennifer Klocinski, AoA, contributed the section on health literacy.

AoA serves as an advocate for the elderly within the federal government and is working to encourage and coordinate a responsive system of family and community based services throughout the nation. AoA helps states develop comprehensive service systems which are administer by 56 State and Territorial Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 226 Native American and Hawaiian organizations, and more than 29,000 local service providers.