

A PROFILE OF OLDER AMERICANS



1999



The Older Population*

■ The older population—persons 65 years or older—numbered 34.4 million in 1998. They represented 12.7% of the U.S. population, about one in every eight Americans. The number of older Americans increased by 3.2 million or 10.1% since 1990, compared to an increase of 8.1% for the under-65 population.

■ In 1998, there were 20.2 million older women and 14.2 million older men, or a sex ratio of 143 women for every 100 men. The sex ratio increases with age, ranging from 118 for the 65-69 group to a high of 241 for persons 85 and older.

■ Since 1900, the percentage of Americans 65+ has more than tripled (4.1% in 1900 to 12.7% in 1998). In absolute terms, the number has increased eleven fold from 3.1 million to 34.4 million.

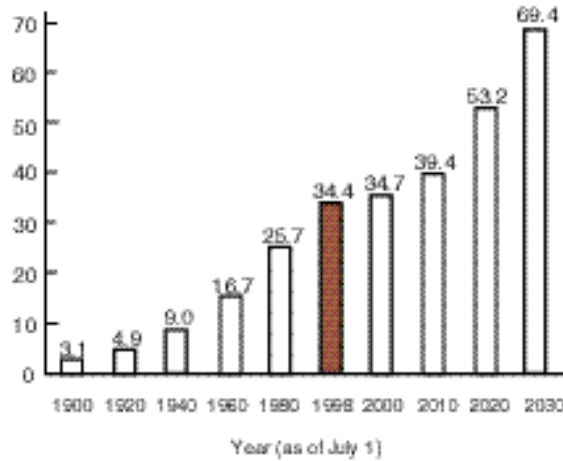
■ The older population itself is getting older. In 1998 the 65-74 age group (18.4 million) was eight times larger than in 1900, but the 75-84 group (12.0 million) was 16 times larger and the 85+ group (4.0 million) was 33 times larger.

■ In 1997, persons reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 17.6 years (19.0 years for females and 15.8 years for males).

■ A child born in 1997 could expect to live 76.5 years, about 29 years longer than a child born in 1900. The major part of this increase occurred because of reduced death rates for children and young adults. Life expectancy at age 65 increased by only 2.4 years between 1900 and 1960, but has increased by 3.3 years since 1960.

■ Almost 1.9 million persons celebrated their 65th birthday in 1998 (5,190 per day). In the same year, about 1.75 million persons 65 or older died, resulting in a net increase of about 145,000 (396 per day).

FIGURE 1
NUMBER OF PERSONS 65 +: 1900 to 2030



Note: Increments in years on horizontal scale are uneven.

Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census

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.

■ By 2030, there will be about 70 million older persons, more than twice their number in 1998. People 65+ are projected to represent almost 13% of the population in the year 2000 but will be 20% by 2030.

■ Minority populations are projected to represent 25% of the elderly population in 2030, up from 16% in 1998. Between 1998 and 2030, the white** population 65+ is projected to increase by 79% compared with 220% for older minorities, including Hispanics (341%) and African-Americans** (130%), American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts** (150%), and Asians and Pacific Islanders** (323%).

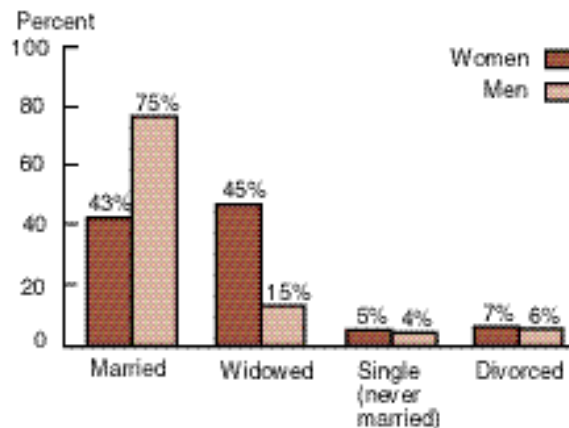
Marital Status

■ In 1998, older men were much more likely to be married than were older women—75% of men, 43% of women (Figure 2).

■ Almost half of all older women in 1998 were widows (45%). There were four times as many widows (8.4 million) as widowers (2.0 million).

■ Although divorced older persons represented only 7% of all older persons in 1998, their numbers (2.1 million) had increased five times as fast as the older population as a whole since 1990 (2.8 times for men, 7.4 times for women).

FIGURE 2
MARITAL STATUS OF PERSONS 65 +: 1998



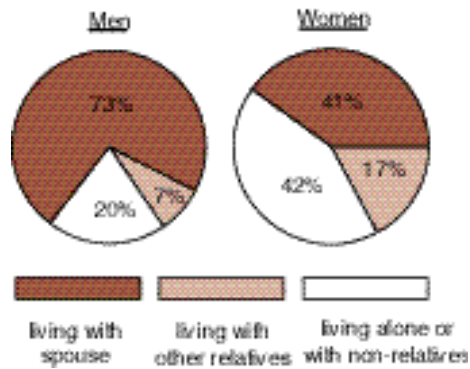
Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census

Living Arrangements

■ The majority (67%) of older noninstitutionalized persons lived in a family setting in 1998. Approximately 10.8 million or 80% of older men, and 10.7 million or 58% of older women, lived in families (Figure 3). The proportion living in a family setting decreased with age. Only 45% of those 85+ years old lived in family settings. About 13% of older persons (7% of men, 17% of women) were not living with a spouse but were living with children, siblings, or other relatives. An additional 3% of men and 2% of women, or 718,000 older persons, lived with non-relatives.

■ About 31% (9.9 million) of all noninstitutionalized older persons in 1998 lived alone (7.6 million women, 2.3 million men). They represented 41% of older women and 17% of older men. Living alone correlates with advanced age. Among women aged 85 and over, for example, three of every five lived alone.

FIGURE 3
LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF PERSONS
65+:1998



Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census

■ While a small number (1.43 million) and percentage (4.2%) of the 65+ population lived in nursing homes in 1996, the percentage increases dramatically with age, ranging from 1.1% for persons 65-74 years to 4.2% for persons 75-84 years and 19.8% for persons 85+.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

■ In 1998, 15.7% of persons 65+ were minorities—8.0% were African Americans,** 2.1% were Asian or Pacific Islander,** and less than 1% were American Indian or Native Alaskan.** Persons of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) represented 5.1% of the older population.

■ Only 7.2% of minority race and Hispanic populations were 65+ in 1998 (8.4% of African Americans**, 7.5% of Asians and Pacific Islanders**, 7.2% of American Indians and native Alaskans**, 5.8% of Hispanics), compared with 14.8% of whites**.

Geographic Distribution

■ In 1998, about half (52%) of persons 65+ lived in nine states. California had over 3.5 million and Florida had 2.7, while New York had 2.4 million. Texas and Pennsylvania had almost 2 million each and Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and New Jersey each had over 1 million (Figure 4).

■ Persons 65+ constituted 14.0% or more of the total population in 11 states in 1998 (Figure 4): Florida (18.3%); Pennsylvania (15.9%); Rhode Island (15.6%); West Virginia (15.2%); Iowa (15.1%); North Dakota (14.4%); Connecticut, Arkansas and South Dakota (14.3% each); Maine (14.1%) and Massachusetts (14.0%).

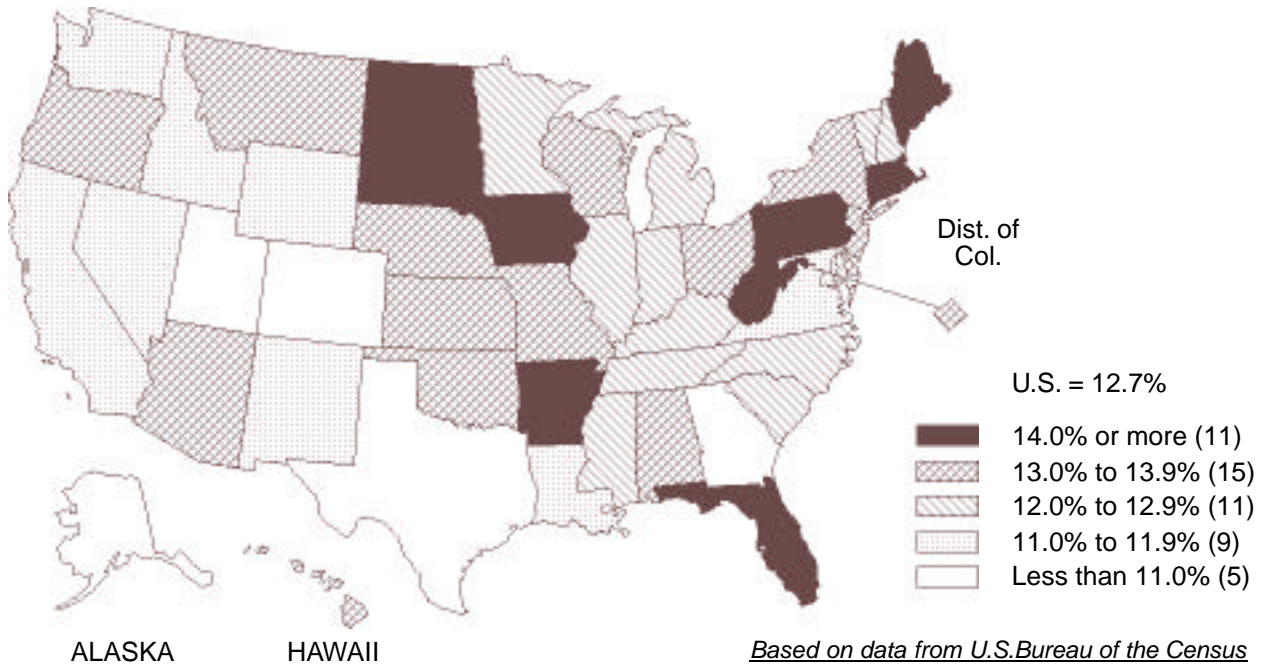
■ In sixteen states, the 65+ population increased by 15.0% or more between 1990 and 1998 (Figure 5): Nevada (55%); Alaska (49%); Arizona (29%); Hawaii (27%); Utah (22%); Colorado and New Mexico (21%); Delaware (19%); North Carolina and South Carolina (18%); Wyoming (17%); Texas (16%); and California, Florida and Georgia (15%).

■ The ten jurisdictions with the highest poverty rates for the elderly over the period 1995-1997 were: the District of Columbia (20.6%); Arkansas (17.1%); Mississippi (16.6%); Louisiana (16.3%); Texas (15.8%); New Mexico (15.7%); South Carolina (15.6%); Georgia (14.0%); West Virginia (13.9%); and Tennessee (13.7%).

■ Persons 65+ were slightly less likely to live in metropolitan areas in 1998 than younger persons (77% of the elderly, 81% of persons under 65). About 28% of older persons lived in central cities, and 49% lived in suburbs.

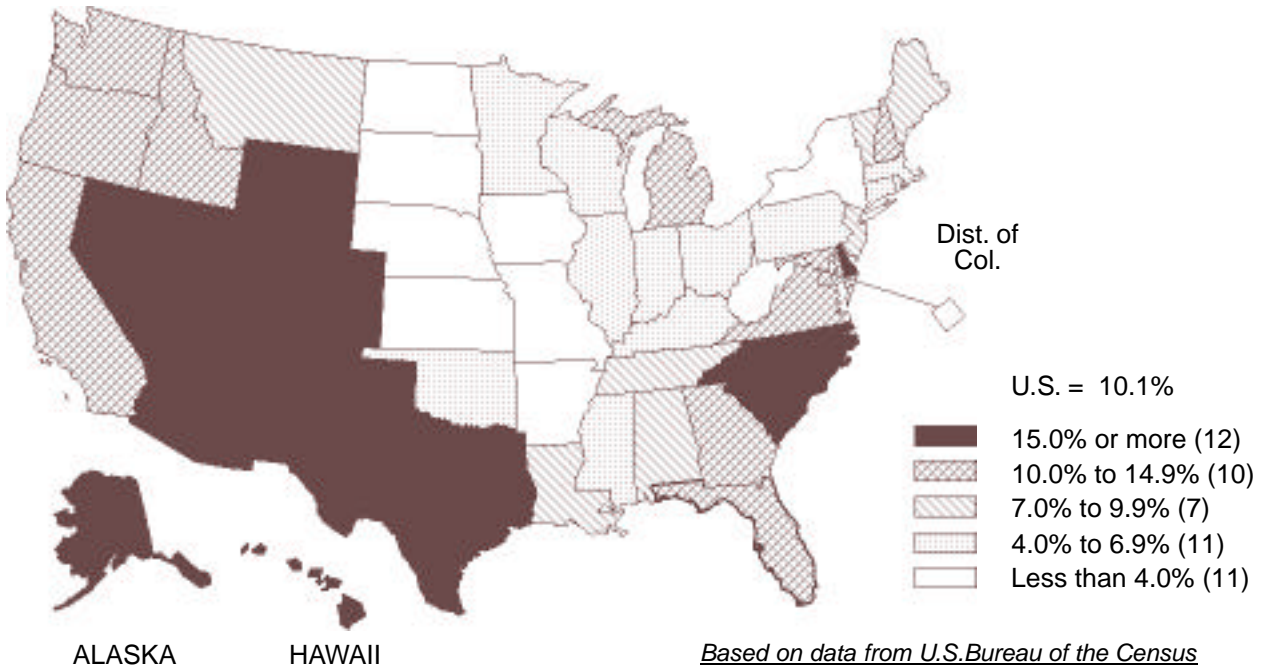
■ The elderly are less likely to change residence than other age groups. In 1997 only 5% of persons 65+ had moved since 1996 (compared to 18% of persons under 65). A large majority of the elderly who moved (81%) had moved to another home in the same state.

FIGURE 4
PERSONS 65+ AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION: 1998



*Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census
 See: <http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/5age9890.txt>*

FIGURE 5
PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN POPULATION 65+ : 1990 TO 1998



*Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census
 Source: same as that for Figure 4*

FIGURE 6
THE 65+ POPULATION BY STATE: 1998

State	Number (000's)	Percent	Percent	Percent
		of all ages	increase	below poverty level***
Number of Persons	1998	1998	1990-98	1995-97
U.S., total	34,401,132	12.7	10.1	10.6
Alabama	568,352	13.1	9.0	12.9
Alaska	33,556	5.5	49.4	5.3
Arizona	617,538	13.2	28.5	10.3
Arkansas	363,232	14.3	3.9	17.1
California	3,614,632	11.1	15.3	8.4
Colorado	401,784	10.1	21.4	7.4
Connecticut	469,112	14.3	5.3	5.7
Delaware	96,326	13.0	19.2	9.2
District of Columbia	72,710	13.9	-5.7	20.6
Florida	2,734,145	18.3	15.2	10.4
Georgia	755,092	9.9	15.4	14.0
Hawaii	158,306	13.3	26.6	9.3
Idaho	139,126	11.3	14.4	8.6
Illinois	1,495,969	12.4	4.3	9.0
Indiana	739,587	12.5	6.1	7.0
Iowa	431,018	15.1	1.0	7.4
Kansas	354,113	13.5	3.3	9.8
Kentucky	492,856	12.5	5.7	12.6
Louisiana	503,750	11.5	7.5	16.3
Maine	174,832	14.1	7.0	11.8
Maryland	591,545	11.5	14.2	8.9
Massachusetts	860,604	14.0	5.3	9.7
Michigan	1,223,040	12.5	10.2	8.5
Minnesota	583,097	12.3	6.4	9.8
Mississippi	336,311	12.2	5.1	16.6
Missouri	745,387	13.7	3.9	8.8
Montana	117,038	13.3	9.8	9.7
Nebraska	228,735	13.8	2.5	10.8
Nevada	200,335	11.5	55.1	8.0
New Hampshire	142,298	12.0	13.6	7.7
New Jersey	1,105,816	13.6	7.3	9.9
New Mexico	198,038	11.4	21.3	15.7
New York	2,423,797	13.3	3.3	12.4
North Carolina	946,753	12.5	17.5	12.5
North Dakota	91,976	14.4	1.0	10.4
Ohio	1,500,851	13.4	6.5	8.9
Oklahoma	448,388	13.4	5.7	12.7
Oregon	432,718	13.2	10.3	6.0
Pennsylvania	1,904,312	15.9	4.1	9.9
Rhode Island	154,327	15.6	2.7	12.9
South Carolina	468,406	12.2	18.1	15.6
South Dakota	105,742	14.3	3.3	12.2
Tennessee	679,212	12.5	9.7	13.7
Texas	1,999,751	10.1	16.3	15.8
Utah	184,098	8.8	22.1	4.8
Vermont	72,573	12.3	9.7	8.7
Virginia	766,976	11.3	15.2	11.3
Washington	651,970	11.5	13.1	7.3
West Virginia	274,689	15.2	2.3	13.9
Wisconsin	690,786	13.2	5.9	7.4
Wyoming	55,527	11.5	17.4	10.1

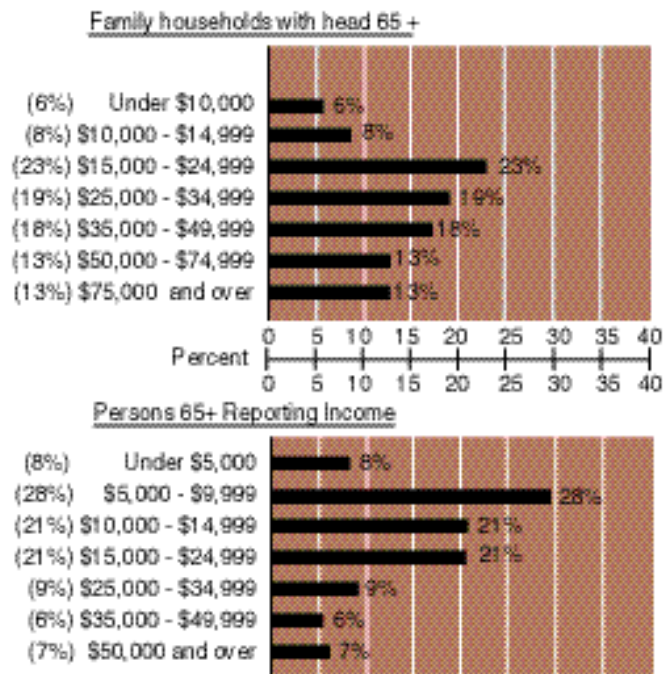
Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census-Source is the same as that of figure 4

Income

■ The median income of older persons in 1998 was \$18,166 for males and \$10,054 for females. Real median income grew by slightly more for women (+2.8%) than men (+0.7%) since 1997.

■ Households containing families headed by persons 65+ reported a median income in 1998 of \$31,568 (\$32,398 for Whites, \$22,102 for African-Americans, and \$21,935 for Hispanics). Approximately one of every seven (13.7%) family households with an elderly head had incomes less than \$15,000 and 44.6% had incomes of \$35,000 or more (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY INCOME:1998*



\$31,568 median for 11.5 million family households 65 +

\$13,768 median for 31.7 million persons 65 + reporting income

*Based on data from Current Population Reports,
"Consumer Income," P60-200 Issued September 1999
by the U.S. Bureau of the Census*

■ For all older persons reporting income in 1998 (31.7 million), 36% reported less than \$10,000. Only 22% reported \$25,000 or more. The median income reported was \$13,768.

■ The major sources of income as reported by the Social Security Administration for older persons in 1996 were Social Security (reported by 91% of older persons), income from assets (reported by 63%), public and private pensions (reported by 43%), earnings (reported by 21%), and public assistance (6%).

■ In 1996, Social Security benefits accounted for 40% of the aggregate income of the older population. The bulk of the remainder consisted of earnings (20%), assets (18%), and pensions (18%).

■ The median net worth (assets minus liabilities) of older households (\$86,300), including those 75+ years (\$77,700), was well above the U.S. average (\$37,600) in 1993. Net worth was below \$10,000 for 16% of older households but was above \$250,000 for 17%.

Poverty

■ About 3.4 million elderly persons were below the poverty level*** in 1998. The poverty rate for persons 65+ was 10.5%, no change from 1997 and the same as the rate for persons 18-64. Another 2.1 million or 6.3% of the elderly were classified as “near-poor” (income between the poverty level and 125% of this level). In total, one of every six (16.8%) older persons was poor or near-poor in 1998.

■ One of every eleven (8.9%) elderly Whites was poor in 1998, compared to 26.4% of elderly African Americans and 21.0% of elderly Hispanics. Higher than average poverty rates among older persons correlated with living in central cities (13.8%), rural areas (12.5%), and the South (12.0%).

■ Older women had a higher poverty rate (12.8%) than older men (7.2%) in 1998. Older persons living alone or with non-relatives were much more likely to be poor (21.0%) than were older persons living in families (6.4%). The highest poverty rates were experienced by older African-American women living alone, one-half of whom (49.3%) were poor in 1998.

Housing

■ Of the 20.9 million households headed by older persons in 1997, 79% were owners and 21% were renters. The median family income of older homeowners was \$20,280. The median family income of renters was \$10,867.

■ About 50% of homes owned by older persons in 1997 were built prior to 1960 (33% for younger owners) and 6% had physical problems.

■ In 1997, 37% of older homeowners spent more than one-fourth of their income on housing expenses, as compared to 30% of homeowners under the age of 65. The median value of homes owned by older persons was \$89,294 as compared to a median value of \$98,815 for all owned homes. About 77% of older homeowners in 1997 owned their homes free and clear.

Employment

■ About 3.7 million older Americans (12%) were in the labor force (working or actively seeking work) in 1998, including 2.2 million men (16%) and 1.6 million women (8%). They constituted 2.8% of the U.S. labor force. About 3.2% of them were unemployed.

■ Labor force participation of older men decreased steadily from 2 of 3 in 1900 to 15.8% in 1985, and has stayed at 16%-17% since then. The participation rate for older females rose slightly from 1 of 12 in 1900 to 10.8% in 1956, fell to 7.3% in 1985, and has been around 8%-9% since 1988.

■ Just over half (54%) of the workers over 65 in 1998 were employed part-time: 48% of men and 62% of women.

■ About 860,000 or 23% of older workers in 1998 were self-employed, compared to 7% for younger workers. Over two-thirds of them (71%) were men.

Education

■ The educational level of the older population is increasing. Between 1970 and 1998, the percentage who had completed high school rose from 28% to 67%. About 15% in 1998 had a bachelor's degree or more.

■ The percentage who had completed high school varied considerably by race and ethnic origin among older persons in 1998: 69% of Whites, 43% of African-Americans, and 30% of Hispanics.

Health and Health Care

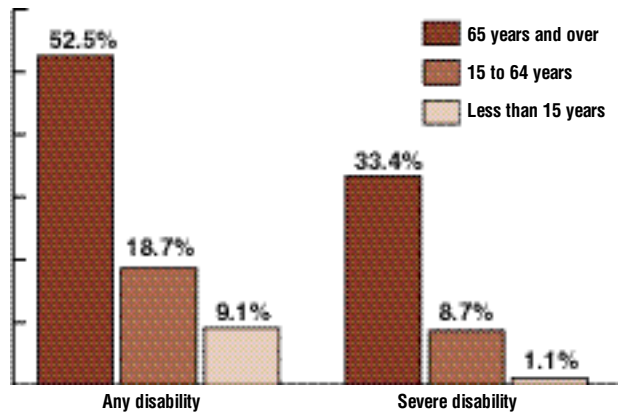
■ In 1996, 27.0% of older persons assessed their health as fair or poor (compared to 9.2% for all persons). There was little difference between the sexes on this measure, but older African-Americans (41.6%) and older Hispanics (35.1%) were much more likely to rate their health as fair or poor than were older Whites (26%).

■ Limitations on activity because of chronic conditions increase with age. In 1996, over one-third (36.3%) of older persons reported they were limited by chronic conditions. Among all elderly, 10.5% were unable to carry on a major activity. In contrast, only 10.3% the total population were limited in their activities, and only 3.5% had a major restriction.

■ In 1994-95, more than half of the older population (52.5%) reported having one or more disabilities. One-third had at least one severe disability. Over 4.4 million (14%) had difficulty in carrying out activities of daily living (ADLs) and 6.5 million (21%) reported difficulties with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). The percentages with disabilities increase sharply with age (Figure 8). Disability takes a much heavier toll on the very old. Almost three-fourths (71.5%) of those age 80+ report at least one disability. Better than half (53.5%) had one or more severe disabilities. The percentage having difficulty with ADLs (27.5%) and IADLs (40.4%) is about double that of the 65+ population in total. [ADLs include bathing, dressing, eating, and getting around the house. IADLs include preparing meals, shopping, managing money, using the telephone, doing housework, and taking medications.]

FIGURE 8

PERCENT WITH DISABILITIES, BY AGE: 1994-95



Source for Figure 8 and for the accompanying data on disabilities, including the definition of disability, is Current Population Reports, "Americans with Disabilities: 1994-95," P70-61, August 1997.

■ Most older persons have at least one chronic condition and many have multiple conditions. The most frequently occurring conditions per 100 elderly in 1995 were: arthritis (49), hypertension (40), heart disease (31), hearing impairments (28), orthopedic impairments (18), cataracts (16), sinusitis (15), and diabetes (13).

■ Older people accounted for 36% of all hospital stays and 49% of all days of care in hospitals in 1997. The average length of a hospital stay was 6.8 days for older people, compared to only 5.5 days for people under 65. The average length of stay for older people has decreased 5.3 days since 1964. Older persons averaged more contacts with doctors in 1997 than did persons under 65 (11.7 contacts vs. 4.9 contacts).

■ In 1997, older consumers averaged \$2,855 in out-of-pocket health care expenditures, a 35% increase since 1990. In contrast, those under age 65 spent considerably less, averaging \$1,576 in out-of-pocket costs - up 31% from 1990. Older Americans spend 12% of their total expenditures on health, three times the proportion spent by younger consumers. Health costs incurred on average by older consumers in 1997 consist of \$1,523 (53%) for insurance, \$637 (22%) for drugs, \$564 for medical services, and \$130 (5%) for medical supplies.

Footnotes:

* Principal sources of data for the profile are the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the National Center of Health Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

** Excludes persons of Hispanic origin.

*** Calculated on the basis of the official poverty definitions for the years 1995-1997.

A Profile of Older Americans: 1999 was prepared by the Program Resource Department, AARP, and 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. The 1999 edition was updated by Alfred Duncker and Saadia Greenberg, AoA, reviewed by Ed Evans of AARP, with production by Felo Madrid, AARP.

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