

A Profile of Older Americans: 2016



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

HIGHLIGHTS*

- Over the past 10 years, the population 65 and over increased from 36.6 million in 2005 to 47.8 million in 2015 (a 30% increase) and is projected to more than double to 98 million in 2060.
- Between 2005 and 2015 the population age 60 and over increased 34% from 49.8 million to 66.8 million.
- The 85+ population is projected to triple from 6.3 million in 2015 to 14.6 million in 2040.
- Racial and ethnic minority populations have increased from 6.7 million in 2005 (18% of the older adult population) to 10.6 million in 2015 (22% of older adults) and are projected to increase to 21.1 million in 2030 (28% of older adults).
- The number of Americans aged 45-64 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades – increased by 14.9% between 2005 and 2015.
- About one in every seven, or 14.9%, of the population is an older American.
- Persons reaching age 65 have an average life expectancy of an additional 19.4 years (20.6 years for females and 18 years for males).
- There were 76,974 persons aged 100 or more in 2015 (0.2% of the total 65+ population).
- Older women outnumber older men at 26.7 million older women to 21.1 million older men.
- In 2015, 22% of persons 65+ were members of racial or ethnic minority populations--9% were African-Americans (not Hispanic), 4% were Asian or Pacific Islander (not Hispanic), 0.5% were Native American (not Hispanic), 0.1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, (not Hispanic), and 0.7% of persons 65+ identified themselves as being of two or more races. Persons of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) represented 8% of the older population.
- Older men were much more likely to be married than older women---70% of men, 45% of women. In 2016, 34% older women were widows.
- About 29% (13.6 million) of noninstitutionalized older persons live alone (9.3 million women, 4.3 million men).
- Almost half of older women (46%) age 75+ live alone.
- The median income of older persons in 2015 was \$31,372 for males and \$18,250 for females. Median money income (after adjusting for inflation) of all households headed by older people increased by 4.3% (which was statistically significant) between 2014 and 2015. Households containing families headed by persons 65+ reported a median income in 2015 of \$57,360.
- The major sources of income as reported by older persons in 2014 were Social Security (reported by 84% of older persons), income from assets (reported by 62%), earnings (reported by 29%), private pensions (reported by 37%), and government employee pensions (reported by 16%).
- Social Security constituted 90% or more of the income received by 33% of beneficiaries in 2014 (21% of married couples and 43% of non-married beneficiaries).
- Over 4.2 million older adults (8.8%) were below the poverty level in 2015. This poverty rate is statistically different from the poverty rate in 2014 (10.0%). In 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau also released a new Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) which takes into account regional variations in living costs, non-cash benefits received, and non-discretionary expenditures but does not replace the official poverty measure. In 2015, the SPM shows a poverty level for older persons of 13.7% (almost 5 percentage points higher than the official rate of 8.8%). This increase is mainly due to including medical out-of-pocket expenses in the poverty calculations.

*Principal sources of data for the Profile are the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for 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.