A Statistical Profile of Older Americans Aged 65+

**Did You Know?**
- The older population (65+) numbered 37.3 million in 2006, an increase of 3.4 million or 10% since 1996.
- The number of Americans aged 45-64 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades – increased by 39% during this decade.
- Since 1900, the percentage of Americans 65+ has tripled (from 4.1% in 1900 to 12.4% in 2006), and the number has increased twelve times (from 3.1 million to 37.3 million).
- About one in every eight, or 12.4 percent, of the population is an older American.
- Over 2.2 million persons celebrated their 65th birthday in 2006.
- Older women outnumber older men at 21.6 million older women to 15.7 million older men.
- The 85+ population numbered 5.3 million in 2006 and is projected to increase to 8.9 million in 2030.
- In 2004, persons reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 18.7 years (20.0 years for females and 17.1 years for males).
- In 2006, 19.0% of persons 65+ were minorities—8.3% were African-Americans.* Persons of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) represented 6.4% of the older population. About 3.1% were Asian or Pacific Islander,* and less than 1% were American Indian or Native Alaskan.*

**Living Arrangements**
- Older men were much more likely to be married than older women—72% of men, 42% of women in 2006. 43% of all older women in 2006 were widows.
- About 30 percent (10.7 million) noninstitutionalized older persons live alone (7.8 million women, 2.9 million men).
- Half of older women age 75+ live alone.
- Over 670,000 grandparents aged 65 or over in 2006 maintained households in which grandchildren were present and had primary responsibility for these grandchildren.
- A relatively small number (1.62 million) and percentage (4.4%) of the 65+ population lived in nursing homes in 2006, the percentage increased dramatically with age, ranging from 1.3% for persons 65-74 years to 4.4% for persons 75-84 years and 15.4% for persons 85+.
**Income and Poverty**

- The median income of older persons in 2006 was $23,500 for males and $13,603 for females. From 2005 to 2006, median income of all households headed by older people rose by 3.4%.
- The major sources of income as reported by the Social Security Administration for older persons in 2005 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 2005, Social Security benefits accounted for 37% of the aggregate income of the older population. The bulk of the remainder consisted of earnings (28%), asset income (13%), and pensions (19%).
- About 3.4 million elderly persons (9.4%) were below the poverty level in 2006. This change in the poverty rate was a statistically significant decrease from the poverty rate in 2005 (10.1%). Another 2.2 million or 6.2% of the elderly were classified as "near-poor" (income between the poverty level and 125% of this level).
- Older women had a higher poverty rate (11.5%) than older men (6.6%) in 2006. Older persons living alone were much more likely to be poor (16.9%) than were older persons living with families (5.6%).

**Health and Chronic Conditions**

- In 2006, 39% of noninstitutionalized older persons assessed their health as excellent or very good (compared to 65.1% 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 of elderly in 2004-2005 were:
  - hypertension (48%),
  - diagnosed arthritis (47%),
  - all types of heart disease (29%),
  - any cancer (20%),
  - diabetes (16%), and
  - sinusitis (14%).