

Old. Age - National conference on aging

some facts
about
OUR
AGING
POPULATION



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This brief collection of basic facts has been prepared to supplement the document entitled Programs for an Aging Population, issued by the Working Committee on the Aging of the Federal Security Agency under date of March 17, 1950.

It has been impossible, of course, to include all the relevant data in these few pages. The attempt has been made, however, to select a few major facts of widest interest and application. It should be borne in mind that some of these data are estimates of varying degrees of reliability, and many of them will need to be revised later -- especially after the Seventeenth Decennial Census of Population becomes available. It should be noted also that many of the figures are rounded without being adjusted to group totals.

Although some of the tables use the age group "65 years and over," it is not intended to define the older population at any one definite age cut-off. Where space limitations precluded the presentation of wide range of age groups, however, the use of age 65 was adopted.

This presentation is as revealing for what we cannot present as for what we can present. There are many things we ought to know about our aging population on which no information is available. These gaps in our knowledge constitute one of the difficulties remaining to be overcome if we are to face our situation intelligently.

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OUR POPULATION IS AGING

Older people constitute the most rapidly growing portion of our population.

Since 1900 the total population of the United States has doubled. The number of persons 65 years and over has meanwhile almost quadrupled.

In 1900, four in every 100 Americans were 65 years and older; today the proportion is almost 8 in every 100.

Today, there are about 11½ million persons aged 65 and over in the population. The Bureau of Census has estimated that by 1960 this group will number almost 15 million and by 1975, almost 20 million.

Economic opportunity, high standards of living, and a good margin of births over deaths have been conducive to population growth in the United States. At the same time, the declining death rate has made for huge increases in our population.

Table 1. - TOTAL POPULATION, AND POPULATION 65 YEARS AND OVER:
UNITED STATES, SPECIFIED YEARS

Year	Total Population		Population 65 and over		Population 65 and over as per cent of total
	Number	1900=100	Number	1900=100	
1900	75,994,575	100	3,080,498	100	4.1
1910	91,972,266	121	3,949,524	128	4.3
1920	105,710,620	139	4,933,215	160	4.7
1930	122,775,046	161	6,633,805	215	5.4
1940	131,669,275	173	9,019,314	292	6.8
1949 (estimate)	148,720,000	195	11,270,000	365	7.6

Source: Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population, Vol. II, part 1, table 8; and Current Population Reports, Population Estimates, Series P-25, No. 39, table 1. Estimate for July 1949 excludes armed forces overseas. Ratios computed by Federal Security Agency.

MORE OF US ARE OLDER

As the older population increased its proportion, other age-groups inevitably shifted their relative proportions.

The big increase in the last 50 years in the relative number of older persons has been accompanied by significant changes in the proportion of other age groups in the population. Increased length of life as a result of better living conditions and gains in the control of infectious diseases are reflected in relatively more people not only in old age but in middle age as well. There are relatively fewer children. The proportion of young adults, comprising a large part of the economically productive age groups, has remained about the same.

Table 2. - AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION: UNITED STATES, SPECIFIED YEARS

Year	Total	Under 20	20-44	45-64	65 and over
1900	100.0	44.3	37.7	13.7	4.1
1910	100.0	41.9	39.0	14.6	4.3
1920	100.0	40.7	38.4	16.1	4.7
1930	100.0	38.8	38.3	17.4	5.4
1940	100.0	34.4	38.9	19.8	6.8
1949 (estimate)	100.0	34.3	37.5	20.6	7.6

Source: Same as table 1.

OLDER WOMEN OUTNUMBER OLDER MEN

During the past half-century, men 65 years and over have ceased to outnumber women of that age.

There are somewhat more boy babies born than girl babies, but the male superiority in numbers disappears in later life because of the higher mortality of adult males. The longer life expectancy of women shows up particularly in old age. Today there are about 90 men 65 years and over for every 100 women.

In 1900, men outnumbered women in that age group. The shift toward the distaff side among the elders has been going on for 50 years or more, the result primarily of a more rapid decline in female mortality than in male mortality, and to some extent of changes in immigration.

Table 3. - NUMBERS OF MEN AND WOMEN, 65 YEARS AND OVER: UNITED STATES, SPECIFIED YEARS

Year	Men 65 years and over	Women 65 years and over	Men per 100 women 65 years and over
1900	1,555,418	1,525,080	102.0
1910	1,985,976	1,963,548	101.1
1920	2,483,071	2,450,144	101.3
1930	3,325,211	3,308,594	100.5
1940	4,406,120	4,613,194	95.5
1949 (estimate)	5,344,000	5,926,000	90.2

Source: Same as table 1.

MORE AMERICANS LIVE IN CITIES

In the past half century, the United States has changed from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban nation.

More and more of us, old as well as young, live in cities and towns. The shift from a rural economy has been particularly hard on older people because cities provide a less favorable environment for them. There are fewer job opportunities for the aged and homes are smaller.

At the same time, the development of household appliances has reduced the number and burdensomeness of house and farm chores, and consequently the usefulness about the house of older relatives.

Households now have fewer people in them than in the past. In 1900, the average number of persons in the population per household was 4.76; in 1910, 4.54; in 1920, 4.34; in 1930, 4.11; in 1940, 3.78; and by 1949, the number is estimated to have decreased to 3½ persons per household.

Table 4. - URBAN-RURAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL POPULATION AND OF THE POPULATION 65 YEARS AND OVER: UNITED STATES, SPECIFIED YEARS

Year	Total	Urban	Rural	
			Nonfarm	Farm
		Total Population		
1900	100.0	39.7	*	*
1910	100.0	45.7	*	*
1920	100.0	51.2	19.1	29.7
1930	100.0	56.2	19.3	24.6
1940	100.0	56.5	20.5	22.9
1949 (estimate)	100.0	58.8	22.3	19.0
		Population 65 years and over		
1910	100.0	42.9	*	*
1920	100.0	47.4	24.5	28.1
1930	100.0	53.1	23.5	23.4
1940	100.0	56.2	21.8	22.0
1949 (estimate)	100.0	59.5	22.0	18.5

*Not available.

Source: Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population, Vol. II, part 1, tables 1, 3, 7, 9; and Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, Series P-20, No. 26, table 4. Estimates for April 1949 refer to civilian population only.

SONE STATES HAVE MORE OLDER PERSONS THAN OTHERS

In 1948, the number of persons 65 years old and over varied from 5 per 100 in New Mexico to 10 per 100 in New Hampshire.

New England and the West North Central States tended to have the highest ratios in the country, the South the lowest.

State differences in the proportion of older persons in the population reflect differences in birth and death rates and in the net balance of interstate migration. Generally speaking, States with a high birth-rate and therefore with a relatively large number of children are inclined to have relatively fewer aged persons. States with more people leaving to live in other States than are moving in, also tend to have a low ratio of older persons.

Above-average ratios of older persons, on the other hand, are to be found in States with low birth rates or with a net gain in migration.

TABLE 5.—ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION AND POPULATION 65 YEARS AND OVER,
BY STATE: UNITED STATES, JULY 1, 1948

DIVISION AND STATE	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION 65 YEARS AND OVER	
		NUMBER	AS PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION
TOTAL	146,113,000	10,940,000	7.5
NEW ENGLAND:			
MAINE	898,000	88,000	9.6
NEW HAMPSHIRE	523,000	53,000	10.1
VERMONT	363,000	35,000	9.6
MASSACHUSETTS	4,638,000	425,000	9.2
RHODE ISLAND	745,000	60,000	8.1
CONNECTICUT	1,989,000	163,000	8.2
MIDDLE ATLANTIC:			
NEW YORK	14,231,000	1,104,000	7.8
NEW JERSEY	4,768,000	349,000	7.3
PENNSYLVANIA	10,478,000	790,000	7.5
EAST NORTH CENTRAL:			
OHIO	7,842,000	661,000	8.4
INDIANA	3,917,000	345,000	8.8
ILLINOIS	8,348,000	662,000	7.9
MICHIGAN	6,216,000	423,000	6.8
WISCONSIN	3,300,000	281,000	8.5
WEST NORTH CENTRAL:			
MINNESOTA	2,934,000	247,000	8.4
IOWA	2,612,000	255,000	9.8
MISSOURI	3,892,000	363,000	9.3
NORTH DAKOTA	582,000	45,000	7.7
SOUTH DAKOTA	611,000	50,000	8.2
NEBRASKA	1,283,000	117,000	9.1
KANSAS	1,895,000	184,000	9.7
SOUTH ATLANTIC:			
DELAWARE	300,000	23,000	7.7
MARYLAND	2,155,000	147,000	6.8
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	863,000	57,000	6.6
VIRGINIA	3,051,000	182,000	6.0
WEST VIRGINIA	1,911,000	115,000	6.0
NORTH CAROLINA	3,798,000	187,000	4.9
SOUTH CAROLINA	1,982,000	94,000	4.7
GEORGIA	3,167,000	183,000	5.8
FLORIDA	2,430,000	178,000	7.3
EAST SOUTH CENTRAL:			
KENTUCKY	2,856,000	199,000	7.0
TENNESSEE	3,179,000	203,000	6.4
ALABAMA	2,901,000	156,000	5.4
MISSISSIPPI	2,114,000	119,000	5.6
WEST SOUTH CENTRAL:			
ARKANSAS	1,927,000	133,000	6.9
LOUISIANA	2,591,000	141,000	5.4
OKLAHOMA	2,295,000	163,000	7.1
TEXAS	7,371,000	451,000	6.1
MOUNTAIN:			
MONTANA	511,000	42,000	8.2
IDaho	586,000	42,000	7.2
WYOMING	285,000	17,000	6.0
COLORADO	1,199,000	101,000	8.4
NEW MEXICO	571,000	27,000	4.7
ARIZONA	704,000	37,000	5.3
UTAH	670,000	39,000	5.8
NEVADA	164,000	11,000	6.7
PACIFIC:			
WASHINGTON	2,463,000	209,000	8.5
OREGON	1,639,000	143,000	8.7
CALIFORNIA	10,354,000	841,000	8.1

SOURCES: Estimated total population from Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Population Estimates, Series P-25, No. 26; estimated population 65 years old and over, from same series, No. 27. Total population includes armed forces stationed in each State and excludes armed forces overseas.

WIDOWS OVER 65 OUTNUMBER WIDOWERS

Two out of three MEN 65 years and over are married; but the majority of WOMEN in this age group are widowed.

The difference between the sexes in this respect is due largely to the fact that married women tend to outlive their husbands, and that most men are married to women several years younger than themselves.

The proportions of the married, widowed, divorced, and single among men and women 65 years and over have not changed significantly in the past half-century.

Table 6. - DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS 65 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER,
BY MARITAL STATUS: UNITED STATES, SPECIFIED YEARS

Sex and marital status	1900	1920	1940	1949 (estimate)
MALES	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Married	67.1	64.7	63.8	66.3
Widowed	26.4	26.9	25.1	23.8
Divorced	.5	.7	1.3	1.7
Single	5.7	7.3	9.8	8.3
Not reported	.3	.3	-	-
FEMALES	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Married	34.2	33.9	34.3	36.6
Widowed	59.3	58.4	55.6	54.4
Divorced	.3	.4	.7	1.0
Single	6.0	7.1	9.3	8.1
Not reported	.2	.3	-	-

Source: Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population, Vol. IV, part 1, table 5; Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, Series P-20, No. 26, table 2.

Note: It should be borne in mind that these statistics refer to status at the date of enumeration; thus, for example, the figures do not show what percent have ever been divorced or widowed, but they show the proportions in a divorced status or in a widowed status at the time the information was obtained.

MOST OLDER PEOPLE LIVE IN FAMILIES

Very few persons 65 years and over live in institutions.

Most older people live in households. About four-fifths of them live in families, with related persons. Only about 1 in 23 lives in quasi-households (institutions, hotels, large rooming houses, etc.)

Table 7. - ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS OF PERSONS 65 YEARS AND OVER, BY SEX: UNITED STATES, APRIL 1949

Type of household, and household relationships	Total	Men	Women
Total in population	100.0	100.0	100.0
In households	95.7	94.0	97.2
In quasi-households (institutions, etc.)	4.3	6.0	2.8
IN HOUSEHOLDS:	(95.7)	(94.0)	(97.2)
In families (living with related persons)	78.4	81.5	75.7
Not in families (alone or with nonrelatives)	17.3	12.5	21.5
IN FAMILIES:	(78.4)	(81.5)	(75.7)
Married and living with spouse	50.6	67.6	35.2
Other marital status	27.9	13.9	40.5
MARRIED AND LIVING WITH SPOUSE:	(50.6)	(67.6)	(35.2)
Family comprises couple only	26.3	35.1	18.3
Other relatives present	24.3	32.4	16.9

Source: Estimated by Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, from Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, Series P-20, No. 26, and unpublished Bureau of the Census data.

Definitions: The terms household, quasi-household and family are used in this table as defined in 1949 by the Bureau of the Census. A household includes all of the persons who occupy a house, an apartment or other group of rooms, or a room that constitutes a dwelling unit. It includes the related family members and also the unrelated persons, if any, such as lodgers, maids or hired hands who share the dwelling unit. A person living alone or a group of unrelated persons sharing the same living accommodations as partners is counted as a household. A quasi-household is a dwelling place occupied as an institution, transient hotel, a large rooming house, a school, a vessel or a military, labor or trailer camp. A family is a group of 2 or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing together. (Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, Series P-20, No. 26.)

Note on Institutional Population: In 1940, the latest year for which there is information, 221,965 persons 65 and over lived in institutions, as follows: home for aged, infirm, or needy, 125,830; mental institutions, 87,974; prison or jail, 4,868; other and not reported, 3,493.

OLDER PEOPLE HAVE LOW INCOMES

In 1948, about 3½ million of the 11 million persons 65 years of age and over in the United States had no money income of their own during the year. Of the 7½ million with some money income, almost one-third had incomes of less than \$500.

The 3½ million with no money income consisted of about 600,000 men and about 3 million women. About one-half of the women with no income of their own were married and living with a husband who may have had some income.

More than 6 out of 10 of those 65 and over with money income had income of less than \$1,000. Only about one-fifth had incomes of \$2,000 or more; and one-tenth had incomes of \$3,000 or more.

The median income for men 65 years and over with income was about \$1,000. This compares with about \$3,000 for men with income in the age-group 35-44, about \$2,800 for men with income in the age-group 45-54, and about \$2,400 for men with income in the age-group 55-64.

Table 8. - ESTIMATED DISTRIBUTION OF MEN AND WOMEN 65 YEARS AND OVER,
BY ANNUAL MONEY INCOME: UNITED STATES, 1948
(in thousands)

Money income	Total	Men	Women
Number of persons*	10,977	5,205	5,772
With no income	3,487	568	2,919
With income	7,490	4,637	2,853
Percent of those with income	100.0	100.0	100.0
Loss	.2	.3	.1
\$1-499	28.8	23.2	43.4
500-999	30.5	26.6	36.1
1,000-1,499	13.1	14.3	9.4
1,500-1,999	7.1	8.2	4.5
2,000-2,499	6.4	8.4	2.5
2,500-2,999	3.8	5.4	1.1
3,000-3,999	4.8	6.5	1.5
4,000-4,999	2.0	2.6	.4
5,000-5,999	1.2	1.6	.3
6,000-9,999	1.3	1.6	.5
10,000 and over	.9	1.2	.2

*Estimated noninstitutional population, April 1949.

Source: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Consumer Income, Series P-60, No. 6, table 12. Total column based on unpublished data of the Bureau of the Census.

EMPLOYMENT IS THE MAJOR INCOME SOURCE

Among those aged 65 years and over, as among other adults in the population, employment constitutes the most significant source of income.

In December 1949, about one-third of the 11½ million persons 65 years and over were in receipt of earnings either as earners or as wives of earners. Social insurance and related benefits, including benefits under the veterans' program, were received by about one-fourth of the aged, among whom were 17% in receipt of old-age and survivors insurance benefits. On the old-age assistance rolls were about 24%.

Very little is known about the number of aged persons with income from other sources, i.e., insurance annuities, private retirement systems, investments and other types of savings, contributions from friends or relatives, etc. There is only scanty information, also, on the extent to which income is received from more than one source. Surveys indicate that generally speaking, the larger the aged person's income, the larger the number of sources from which it is derived.

Table 9. - ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PERSONS 65 YEARS AND OVER RECEIVING INCOME FROM SPECIFIED SOURCES: UNITED STATES, DECEMBER 1949*
(in millions)

Source of income	Total	Men	Women
Employment	3.8	2.4	1.4
Earners	2.9	2.4	.5
Wives of earners	.9	-	.9
Social insurance and related programs:			
Old-age and survivors insurance	1.9	1.1	.8
Railroad retirement	.3	.2	.1
Federal civil-service retirement	.1	.1	**
Veterans' program	.3	.1	.1
Others ***	.4	.1	.3
Old-age assistance	2.7	1.3	1.4

* Some persons received income from more than one of the sources listed.

** Less than 50,000.

*** Federal retirement programs other than civil service; State and local government retirement programs; wives of male beneficiaries of programs other than old-age and survivors insurance.

Source: Estimated by Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, from various data. See Social Security Bulletin, June 1950, pp. 15-16.

MANY OLDER WORKERS LEAVE THE LABOR FORCE

The long-time trend in the relative number of workers among older persons has been downward.

Between 1900 and 1940 the proportion of men 65 years of age and over in the labor force dropped from almost two-thirds to less than one-half. It has risen somewhat since 1940 because of full or nearly full employment in the war and post-war years, and at the present time is about 45%.

Unemployment tends to be less severe a problem among older workers than in the labor force as a whole, in part because older workers who find it difficult to obtain work tend to drop out of the labor force.

In the second quarter of 1950, for instance, unemployed men workers 65 years and over comprised 4.5% of the men in that age group in the labor force, as compared with a ratio of about 5% in the male labor force as a whole.

Table 10. - PERCENT OF PERSONS 45 YEARS AND OVER IN THE LABOR FORCE:
UNITED STATES, SELECTED PERIODS, 1890-1950

Age and sex	1950* (April)	1940 (April)	1930 (April)	1920 (January)	1900 (June)	1890 (June)
MALES						
45 years and over	78.5	77.7	82.5	83.2	84.3	86.7
45-54	94.6	92.7	93.8	93.5	92.8	93.9
55-64	85.1	84.6	86.5	86.3	86.1	89.0
65 years and over	45.0	42.2	54.0	55.6	63.2	68.2
FEMALES						
45 years and over	26.2	16.3	15.4	14.3	12.3	11.1
45-54	36.9	22.4	19.7	17.9	14.2	12.5
55-64	27.3	16.6	15.3	14.3	12.6	11.5
65 years and over	9.5	6.0	7.3	7.3	8.3	7.6

* 1950 data not entirely comparable with data for earlier periods.

Prepared by Bureau of Labor Statistics; 1890-1940 data from John S. Durand, The Labor Force in the United States, 1890-1960; 1950 data from Bureau of the Census.

MANY OLDER PEOPLE ARE SELF-EMPLOYED

Farmers and other self-employed bulk large among older workers.

The most striking aspect of the older working force is the above-average representation of farmers, proprietors and other self-employed individuals. Almost half the men workers 65 years and over in April 1950 worked for themselves, as compared with 1 in 5 in the total male working force:

	<u>14 years and over</u>	<u>65 years and over</u>
Total	100%	100%
Wage or salary workers	76	54
Self-employed	22	45
Unpaid family workers	2	1

One in every 4 men workers 65 years of age and over in April 1948 was a farmer, as compared with 1 in 10 in the male working population as a whole. Older workers were also relatively more frequent among managers, officials and in the service occupations. They had a lower than average representation, on the other hand, in the industrial, clerical and sales occupation. These differences reflect differences in job demands on pace and strength, as well as differences among occupational groups in hiring and retirement practices.

Table 11. - ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED MALES
14 YEARS AND OVER, AND 65 YEARS AND OVER,
BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS: UNITED STATES, APRIL 1948

Occupation	14 years and over	65 years and over
Total	100	100
Professional and semi-professional workers	6	6
Farmers and farm managers	11	26
Proprietors, managers, officials, except farm	13	15
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	12	7
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	19	13
Operators and kindred workers	21	9
Service workers	6	11
Farm laborers and foremen	4	5
Laborers, except farm and mine	8	8

Source: Unpublished estimates from Bureau of the Census, derived from a sample survey.

OLDER PEOPLE HAVE HAD LESS SCHOOLING

More than 1 in 5 persons 65 and over have had less than 5 years schooling; almost three-fourths have had 8 years or less.

In 1947, the total number of persons 25 years and over was about 82½ million, of which more than 10½ million were 65 years and over. About 10% of the total group, and more than 20% of the older group, had less than 5 years schooling, compared with 4% of those aged 25 to 29.

Younger adults have had more schooling than older adults, reflecting our expansion of educational facilities, and our increased emphasis on schooling in recent decades. Adults in the age group 25-29 have a median of 12 years of schooling in contrast with those 65 and over who have a median of less than 8 years.

Table 12. - ESTIMATED DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER,
BY YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED: UNITED STATES, 1947

Years of school completed	Total 25 and over	Age	
		25 to 29	65 and over
Median school years completed	(9.0)	(12.0)	(7.7)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Elementary school:			
Less than 5 years*	10.4	4.2	21.7
5 and 6 years	8.8	4.7	13.8
7 and 8 years	30.3	16.6	36.9
High school:			
1 to 3 years	16.3	22.7	7.8
4 years	20.5	36.4	9.8
College:			
1 to 3 years	6.7	9.1	3.5
4 years or more	5.4	5.5	3.3
Not reported	1.6	0.8	3.2

* Includes persons reporting no school years completed.

Source: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, Series P-20, No. 15, table 1.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF LIFE INCREASES

The average life span has increased, but these gains do not indicate that old people now live much longer than they did a half-century ago.

The average lifetime at birth increased from less than 50 years in 1901 to more than 67 years in 1948. At age 40, however, the average remaining lifetime was about 28 in 1901, and increased to about 32 years in 1948. At age 65, the comparable figures are 11.9 and 13.4 remaining years. The gap continues to close until at age 85 there is practically no difference (4.0 and 3.9 years).

In other words, more people survive to older ages than formerly, but having arrived at upper ages, they do not thereafter survive much longer than they did a half-century ago.

Table 13. - AVERAGE REMAINING LIFETIME AT SPECIFIED AGES:
DEATH-REGISTRATION STATES, 1901; AND UNITED STATES, 1948

Age	Years remaining					
	1901	1948				
		Total	White males	White females	Nonwhite males	Nonwhite females
At birth	49.2	67.2	65.5	71.0	58.1	62.5
1 year	55.2	68.4	66.8	71.9	60.2	64.2
5 years	55.0	64.9	63.2	68.3	56.9	60.8
10 years	51.1	60.1	58.4	63.5	52.1	56.1
15 years	46.8	55.2	53.6	58.6	47.4	51.3
20 years	42.8	50.6	49.0	53.8	42.9	46.8
25 years	39.1	46.0	44.4	49.0	38.7	42.5
30 years	35.5	41.3	39.8	44.3	34.6	38.3
35 years	31.9	36.8	35.2	39.6	30.5	34.2
40 years	28.3	32.3	30.7	35.0	26.8	30.3
45 years	24.8	28.0	26.5	30.5	23.3	26.7
50 years	21.3	24.0	22.4	26.2	20.1	23.4
55 years	17.9	20.2	18.8	22.0	17.5	20.5
60 years	14.8	16.6	15.4	18.1	15.2	17.8
65 years	11.9	13.4	12.4	14.4	13.1	15.7
70 years	9.3	10.6	9.8	11.2	11.5	14.5
75 years	7.1	8.1	7.5	8.3	10.3	13.2
80 years	5.3	5.9	5.4	5.8	9.2	11.9
85 years	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.7	7.6	10.3

Source: Federal Security Agency, Public Health Service, National Office of Vital Statistics.

CHRONIC DISEASE REMAINS THE #1 KILLER OF OLDER PEOPLE

Chronic diseases are the leading causes of death in the older age groups.

In 1900, they were also the leading killers of persons 65 years and over. Then as now, heart disease headed the list. Cancer was the second leading cause of death in 1948, but the third in 1940 and the fifth in 1900.

**Table 14. - PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FIVE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH
FOR PERSONS 65 YEARS AND OVER, BY AGE:
DEATH-REGISTRATION STATES,* 1900 AND 1948**

Year and cause of death	65 years and over	65-74 years	75-84 years	85 years and over
<u>1948</u>				
All causes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Diseases of the heart	41.3	40.7	42.0	41.4
Cancer and other malignant tumors	13.6	16.7	12.5	7.4
Intracranial lesions of vascular origin	12.4	11.7	13.3	12.0
Nephritis	6.8	6.0	7.4	7.8
Accidents (excluding motor-vehicle)	3.5	2.5	3.8	6.1
All other causes	22.4	22.5	21.1	25.3
<u>1900</u>				
All causes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Diseases of the heart	14.8	17.0	14.2	8.6
Intracranial lesions of vascular origin	14.6	14.7	15.5	11.6
Pneumonia (all forms) and influenza	12.2	12.3	12.4	11.1
Nephritis	6.9	8.5	6.3	3.3
Cancer and other malignant tumors	5.6	7.5	4.4	2.4
All other causes	45.8	40.1	47.2	63.0

*Death-registration States: 1900, 10 States and the District of Columbia; 1948, continental United States.

Source: Federal Security Agency, Public Health Service, National Office of Vital Statistics.

OLDER PEOPLE HAVE MORE ILLNESS

Illness is no respecter of age, but older people are subject to more illness than others in the population.

The difference in the relative amount of sickness among age groups is particularly evident in the chronic illnesses. Data from the National Health Survey suggest that the incidence of chronic illness among persons 65 years and over is likely to be about three times as high as in the general population.

Table 15. - ACUTE AND CHRONIC DISABLING ILLNESSES,* PER 1,000 PERSONS,
BY AGE: 83 CITIES, 1935-36
(2,152,740 white persons and 198,211 Negroes)

Age	Disabling illnesses per 1,000 persons					
	All illnesses	Acute illnesses	Chronic illnesses			
			All	Disabling for less than 12 months	Disabling for 12 months	
					All	Non-institutional
All ages	171	123	48	36	12	11
Under 15	214	198	16	13	3	2
15-24	131	109	22	18	5	4
25-64	153	96	57	44	13	12
65 and over	279	102	177	114	63	62

* Represents all illnesses disabling for 7 days or more, and all hospital cases, confinements, and fatal cases.

Source: Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, Medical Care and Costs in Relation to Family Income, 2d ed., table 48. Based on National Health Survey data.

facts



There are almost 11 1/2 million persons aged 65 and over in the United States, almost 8% of the total population.



Since 1900 the total United States population has doubled. The number of persons aged 65 and over, however, has almost quadrupled. By 1960 this group will number almost 15,000,000, and by 1975 almost 20,000,000.



There are 90 men for every 100 women in this age group.



Almost 3 million persons aged 65 and over are employed. Almost half of men workers in this age group are self-employed, as compared with 1 in 5 in the total male working population.



About 3 1/2 million of those 65 years and over have no money income. Of those with money income, more than half have incomes of less than \$1,000; almost one-third have incomes of less than \$500.



Not even 1 in 25 of those aged 65 and over live in institutions.

