



Just the Facts...about Older Workers in Utah

Labor Force Profile

By Lecia Parks Langston, Economist

Population

- In 2011, older Americans—those 65 years and older—represented 13 percent of the U.S. population. In Utah, this group comprised 9 percent of the population.
- In the U.S. there are 131 older women for every 100 older men. In Utah, the ratio measures 119 older women for every 100 older men.
- Older U.S. women make up almost 15 percent of the female population compared to Utah where older women make up 10 percent of the population.
- Men 65 and older make up 12 percent of the male population in the United States compared to Utah where older men make up 8 percent of the population.
- Since 1900, the share of Americans 65 years and older has tripled from 4.1 percent to 13.2 percent in 2011.
- Nationally, individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 comprise 12 percent of the population. In Utah, they show an 9-percent share of the population.
- Baby boomers will be responsible for the next population boom—in seniors. The older population will expand rapidly between 2010 and 2030 as the U.S. baby boom generation reaches and surpasses 65.
- The U.S. population 65 and over is expected to increase by 39 percent between 2010 and 2020 and by 30 percent between 2020 and 2030.
- By 2030, the older population is expected to measure 80 percent more than the number in that age group during 2010. By 2030, older Americans should account for about one-fifth of the U.S. population.
- In 2011, over one-half of the 65-plus population lived in only six states—California, Florida, Texas, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.
- States with the highest shares of older populations include Florida (18 percent), Maine (16 percent), West Virginia (16 percent), Pennsylvania (16 percent), Montana (15 percent), Iowa (15 percent), Vermont (15 percent), Hawaii (15 percent), and Delaware (15 percent).
- Alaska shows the lowest share 65-plus population at 8 percent. Utah ranks second-lowest with 9 percent 65 and older.
- States with rapidly growing senior populations between 2000 and 2010 included Alaska (up 54 percent), Nevada (up 48 percent), Idaho (up 33 percent), Colorado (up 32 percent), Arizona (up 32 percent), Georgia (up 31 percent) and Utah (up 31 percent).

Demographic Characteristics

- In the U.S. during 2011, men 65 and older were much more likely to be married than comparably aged women (72 percent of men compared to 43 percent of women). Women are much more likely to be widowed.
- In Utah, roughly 80 percent of 65-plus men were married compared to 54 percent of 65-plus women.
- Roughly 40 percent of older U.S. women in 2011 were widows. There were over four times as many widows as widowers. In Utah, 31 percent of women 65 and older were widowed.
- Divorced persons 65 and older represented about 12 percent of older persons in 2011—up from 5 percent in 1980. Similarly, 11 percent of Utah's older population was divorced in 2008.
- In 2011, 7.1 million U.S. grandparents lived in households with their grandchildren. Roughly 2.7 million of those grandparents were responsible for their grandchildren under the age of 18 (39 percent).
- In Utah during 2011, almost 61,000 grandparents lived with their grandchildren. More than 18,000 of those grandparents (30 percent) were responsible for their live-in grandchildren under the age of 18.
- Roughly 2 percent of the U.S. 65-plus population in 2010 lived in institutional settings such as nursing homes.
- Non-Hispanic whites accounted for nearly 80 percent of the 65-and-older population in the U.S in 2011. Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics account for 9 percent, 4 percent, and 7 percent, respectively.
- During 2011, non-Hispanic whites accounted for more than 92 percent of the 65-and-older population in Utah. Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics account for 0.2 percent, 1.5 percent, and 4 percent, respectively.
- Education among older Americans has increased dramatically. In 1970, only 28 percent of the 65-plus-population had completed high school compared to 79 percent in 2011. In 2011, 22 percent of this age group had a bachelor's degree or higher.
- In Utah during 2011, 89 percent of older men and women had completed high school. In addition, 26 percent of the state's 65 and older population had at least a bachelor's degree.
- Average life expectancy at birth has risen from 47 years in 1900 to 79 in 2011.

Income and Poverty

- In the national 65 and older age group, 92 percent reported Social Security income, 48 percent reported income from pensions, and 34 percent reported earnings (2011).
- In Utah's 65 and older age group, 92 percent reported Social Security income, 54 percent reported income from pensions, and 36 percent reported earnings (2011).
- In 2010, Social Security benefits accounted for 37 percent of the total income of the older population.
- In the United States, the 2011 median household income where the householder is 65 or older measured \$35,100 compared \$50,500 for all households.
- In the Utah, the 2011 median household income where the householder is 65 or older measured \$39,900 compared \$55,900 for all households.

- Nationally, about 9.3 percent of the over-65 population was below the poverty level in 2011 compared to 16 percent of the total population.
- In Utah, about 5.3 percent of the over-65 population was below the poverty level in 2011 compared to 14 percent of the total population.
- U.S. older women had a higher poverty rate (11 percent) than older men (7 percent) in 2011.
- In 2011, Utah women 65-and-over also showed higher poverty rates (7 percent) than did comparably aged men (3 percent).
- Older persons living alone (2010) were much more likely to be poor (17 percent) than those living with families (4 percent).
- The highest poverty rates were experienced among older Hispanic women who lived alone (42 percent) and older Asian men who lived alone (33 percent).
- Households maintained by older people have net worth higher than that of all other households except for those maintained by 55-64 year-olds, who held similar levels.⁴

Employment

- In 2011, over 16 percent of Americans 65-years and older were in the labor force. They constituted nearly 4 percent of the U.S. labor force.
- In Utah during 2011, roughly 17 percent of the 65-plus population was in the labor force. They constitute nearly 3 percent of the Utah labor force.
- In 2011, 7.3 percent of older Americans were unemployed compared to 10.3 percent of the total labor force.
- Labor force participation rates of older men have fallen dramatically since 1950 when they registered 46 percent. Today, only 21 percent of 65-plus men are in the labor force.
- After decreasing between the 1950s and the 1980s, labor force participation for older Americans plateaued during the first half of the 1990s. However, during the last decade, labor force participation has been gradually rising—especially among those between the ages of 65 and 69.
- As older workers continue to work, they are more likely to work part-time. About 10 percent of men aged 55-64 work part-time compared to almost half of employed men over 70.

Other

- In many important respects, people nearing 65 today are at least as financially prepared for retirement as the same age group was 10 or 20 years ago. Incomes, education, and net worth are all up for the current age group heading towards retirement.
- Pension coverage for women has increased over the past decade. The percentage of women without a pension decreased from 48 percent in 1994 to 37 percent in 2004. The percentage of men without pensions has remained steady at about 25 percent.
- Women receive lower retirement benefits than men.
- About 80 percent of those 65 years and older have at least one chronic health condition and 50 percent have at least two.
- Disability among the older population is declining. Studies over the past two decades have revealed substantial declines in the rates of disability and functional limitation.