

There are surprising, and not so surprising differences among men as they age. A 2008 government report provides valuable insight into what lies ahead. More TV?view more info...

Average life expectancy continues to increase and today's older Americans enjoy better health and financial security than any previous generation. However, rates of gain are inconsistent between the genders and across age brackets, income levels and racial and ethnic groups. Some critical disparities also exist between older Americans and older people in other industrialized countries. These and other trends are reported in *Older Americans 2008: Key Indicators of Well-Being*, a unique, comprehensive look at aging in the United States from the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics.

Highlights from *Older Americans 2008* include:

Population – The demographics of aging in the United States continue to change dramatically, as the baby boomers accelerate growth in the percentage and numbers of older people and other important parameters change.

- In 2006, an estimated 37 million people in the United States—12 percent of the population—were 65 and older. Projections forecast that by 2030, approximately 71.5 million people will be 65 and older, representing nearly 20 percent of the total U.S. population.
- In 1965, 24 percent of older adults had graduated from high school, and 5 percent had bachelor's degrees. By 2007, 76 percent were high school graduates, and 19 percent had at least a bachelor's degree. Substantial educational differences exist among racial and ethnic groups. Eighty-one percent of non-Hispanic whites age 65 and older had finished high school in 2007, compared with 72, 58 and 42 percent, respectively, of older Asians, blacks and Hispanics.

Economics – More older people enjoy increased prosperity than any previous generation, with an increase in higher incomes and a decrease in the proportion of older people with low incomes and in poverty. However, major inequalities continue to exist for older blacks and for people without high school diplomas, who report smaller economic gains and fewer financial resources.

- Income generally rose between 1974 and 2006. The proportion of older people with incomes below the poverty line went from 15 percent to 9 percent; those categorized with low income dropped from 35 percent to 26 percent; those with high incomes increased from 18 percent to 29 percent.
- Median net worth for households headed by whites age 65 and older was six times that of older black households, although the gap has slightly narrowed since 2003.
- More older people, especially women, continued to work past age 55.

Additional Findings

- Life expectancy in the U.S. is lower than that of many high-income countries, such as Canada, France, Sweden and Japan. For example, in 2003, women age 65 in Japan could expect to live 3.2 years more on average than women in the United States, with the difference among men at 1.2 years. In the early 1980s, U.S. women age 65 had one of the highest average life expectancies in the world, but over the next two decades, the life expectancies of older women in many countries surpassed that of women in the United States.
- The prevalence of certain conditions differs by sex and by race and ethnicity. Women reported higher levels of arthritis than men did, while men reported higher levels of heart disease and cancer. Non-Hispanic blacks reported higher levels of hypertension and diabetes than did non-Hispanic whites. Hispanics reported higher levels of diabetes than did non-Hispanic whites.
- Use of Time. The proportion of leisure time that older Americans spent socializing and communicating—such as visiting friends or attending social events—declines by age, from 13 percent in those ages 55 to 64 to 10 percent for those 75 and over. The proportion of leisure time devoted to sports, exercise, recreation and travel also declines with age. On an average day, most Americans age 65 and older spent at least half of their leisure time watching television. Americans age 75 and older spent a higher proportion of their leisure time reading, relaxing and thinking than did those ages 55 to 64.
- Health Literacy. Among older Americans, the average level of health literacy—the extent to which people can obtain, process and understand basic health information and services—was lower than that of any other age group, and it continued to decrease with age. Thirty-nine percent of people age 75 and over had below basic health literacy, compared with 23 percent of people ages 65 to 74 and 13 percent of people ages 50 to 64.

For the complete report, go here:

http://www.agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/Main_Site/Data/Data_2008.aspx

Several of the issues in this report are of special interest to menover50.com, and we shall explore them during 2008.