

KEY FACTS

Unless otherwise noted, older adults refers to those 65 and over.

US Households Are Aging

- Between 2012 and 2022, the population 65 and over increased by 34 percent, growing from 43 to 58 million. Over the same period, the share of households headed by older adults increased from 22 to 27 percent of all US households.
- The number of households headed by a person age 80 and over will more than double between 2021 and 2040 to reach nearly 17 million households. **(Figure 1)**

Most Older Adults Live in Their Own Homes

- In 2021, 80 percent of older adults lived alone or with a spouse. Just over 9 percent lived in the home of another person, most typically an adult child. 1.4 million older adults, representing 2.5 percent of the older population, lived in group quarters such as nursing homes. **(Figure 2)**
- The share of older people living alone increases with age, rising from 25 percent of those aged 65-79 to 41 percent of those 80 and over. Among people living alone, 63 percent of those aged 65-79 and 73 percent of those age 80 and over are women.
- In 2021, 10.9 million older adults lived with at least one adult relative of another generation, an 81 percent increase from 6.0 million in 2006. Among older people aged 65-79, 14 percent of white, 26 percent of Black, 38 percent of Hispanic, 43 percent of Asian, and 23 percent of those of another race or who are multiracial live in multigenerational households. **(Figure 3)**

Older Households Have High Homeownership Rates but Disparities Persist

- The homeownership rate among older adults was 79.1 percent in 2022, down slightly from 80.0 percent in 2019 and a high of 81.1 percent in 2012 and 2004. **(Figure 4)**
- The homeownership gap between older Black and white households exceeded 19 percentage points from 2017 to 2021. Similarly, the gap between older Hispanic and white households has hovered between 17 and 18 percent in these years. At 9.3 percentage points, the homeownership gap between Asian and white older adults is at its lowest since at least 2015.
- 7 million older adult households rent their homes. The rentership rate is particularly high among older Black and Hispanic households, at 37 and 34 percent respectively.

More Adults Live in Multifamily Buildings as They Age

- As of 2021, 74 percent of older households lived in single-family homes, including 87 percent of homeowners and 37 percent of renters.

- 20 percent of older households live in multifamily housing, including 70 percent of renters and 7 percent of homeowners. Older households are more likely to live in multifamily buildings, particularly large buildings, with age. 21 percent of renters between the ages of 65 and 79 live in buildings with at least fifty units, compared to 39 percent of adults 80 or older.
- More than 4 million households reported living in age-restricted housing limited to those age 55 and over. Of these, almost two thirds are renters and one third are owners.

The Older Adult Population Is Increasing Across All Geographies

- The share of older people is growing across all geographies, from rural to large metropolitan areas, increasing by at least 2.7 percentage points in counties of all types. **(Figure 5)**
- Smaller metros and rural communities have higher concentrations of older adults. In 2021, people age 65 and over were 20 percent of the population in counties outside metro areas, compared to 14 percent in the urban cores of large metros. Older rural households tend to have lower incomes, with nearly 40 percent of older households having annual incomes under \$30,000.

Income Inequality Is Increasing

- The overall median household income for older households was \$50,000 in 2022, and incomes fall as people age; the median household income for households aged 50–64 was \$87,800; for households 65–79 it was \$54,900 ; and for households 80 and over it was \$37,100. **(Figure 6)**
- In 2022, older Asian householders possessed the highest median household income at \$57,100, followed by older white (\$53,700), older multiracial (\$48,100), older Hispanic (\$35,400), and older Black (\$34,900) households. Incomes for older Black and Hispanic households are less than 80 percent that of white older adults. **(Figure 7)**
- Homeowners age 62 and over had more than \$12.7 trillion in aggregate home equity in the second quarter of 2023.
- In 2022, older homeowners who are Asian, other races, or multiracial had the highest median home equity at \$270,000. White homeowners had a median of \$251,000 in home equity; for older Hispanic owners it was \$200,000; and it was \$123,000 for Black owners. **(Figure 8)**
- In 2022, the median renter age 65 and over has \$10,100 in net wealth, just 2 percent of that of the median older homeowner. The median net wealth of older renters was \$3,000 for Hispanic households, \$3,900 for Black households, and \$5,100 for Asian households and those who are multi-racial or of another race. Overall, 43 percent of older renters had less than \$1,000 in cash savings. **(Figure 8)**

Mortgage Debt Is Rising

- Between 1989 and 2022, the share of homeowners aged 65–79 with a mortgage on their primary home increased from 24 to 41 percent. The median mortgage debt shot up over 400 percent, from \$21,000 in 1989 to \$110,000.
- Among homeowners age 80 and over, the share with mortgages grew from 3 percent to 31 percent, with median mortgage debt increasing over 750 percent, from \$9,000 to \$79,000.

The Number of Cost-Burdened Older Adults Is at an All-Time High

- Nearly 11.2 million older adult households were cost burdened in 2021, paying 30 percent or more of their income for housing. This is an all-time high and a significant increase from the 9.7 million and 8.8 million recorded in 2016 and 2011. Over half of these households were severely burdened, paying more than 50 percent of their income on housing. (Figure 9 & [Interactive Map](#))
- In 2020, 10 million households headed by someone age 60 or over reported energy insecurity, with nearly 7 million saying that they had forgone food or medicine to pay utility bills.
- Among older households earning less than \$15,000 annually, 80 percent had cost burdens in 2021, most of which were severe. (Figure 10)

More Older Adults Are Unhoused and the Need for Assistance is Growing

- The number of older adults experiencing sheltered homelessness increased by 10,000 between 2019 and 2021 to more than 60,000 individuals.
- Older unhoused people report poorer health than younger adults who are unhoused (Figure 11) as well as poorer health than same-aged, housed people.
- In 2021, the number of renters age 62 and over eligible for rental assistance reached 5.9 million, an increase of almost 50 percent since 2011. Incidences of worst-case housing needs—defined as experiencing a severe rent burden, severely inadequate housing, or both—increased by 60 percent among unassisted older renters with very low incomes, from 1.5 million in 2011 to 2.3 million in 2021. (Figure 12)
- 3.2 percent of white, 6.8 percent of Hispanic, 7.1 percent of Black, and 7.8 percent of multi-racial/another race households lived in inadequate homes in 2021.
- 7.5 percent of older renters lived in inadequate housing compared to 3.1 percent of older homeowners.

Accessible Housing Is Not Always Available

- 16 percent of adults aged 65–79 and 37 percent of those 80 and over report an ambulatory difficulty, but most housing is not accessible; at last measure in 2011, fewer than 4 percent of homes offered three foundational features of accessible housing—single-floor living, no-step entries, and wide hallways and doorways.
- 10 percent of older white householders, 13 percent of older Black householders, and 15 percent of older Hispanic householders report difficulties entering, navigating, and using their homes.

Climate Change Is a Growing Threat

- Black and Hispanic homeowners, owners with lower incomes, and those who own their homes outright are less likely to hold insurance for flood, fire, and other hazards.
- Sixteen severe storms in Florida alone—home to 8.3 percent of the nation’s older population—caused an estimated \$228 billion in property damage from February 2020 through April 2023.

Demand for Care Increases with Age and is out of Reach for Most Older Adults

- While the shares of older adults reporting difficulties increase with age overall, they appear at younger ages for renters, people with low incomes, and people of color. About 41 percent of adults aged 55-59 with annual household incomes under \$15,000 report a difficulty, compared to 10 percent of those earning \$75,000 or more. **(Figure 13)**
- Nearly 70 percent of adults who reach age 65 will at some point require long-term care (LTC) services for an average period of three years, and 20 percent will need care for more than five years.
- In 2021, the median cost of a home health aide was \$27 an hour, and services typically must be purchased in four-hour blocks—resulting in a minimum cost of over \$100 per day.
- Nationally, the median wage for home health workers was \$14.07 per hour in 2021. 43 percent of these workers, mostly women of color and immigrants, relied on public assistance that year.
- Approximately 762,000 assisted living units are home to 623,000 older adults in the US. Annual costs average \$63,000 nationwide but range from \$43,000 to \$98,000.
- Among people living alone 75 and over, only 14 percent could afford a daily visit from a home health aide and only 13 percent could afford the median base price for assisted living in their regions. **(Interactive Map)**
- The cost calculation between daily LTC services and assisted living varies by metro. In some places, more people can afford care at home than in assisted living (such as in Portland, Maine and San Jose, California), while in others the reverse is true (such as Portland, Oregon, and San Diego, California). **(Figure 14)**

The Dual Burden Facing Households with Low and Moderate Incomes

- The final section of the report focuses on households earning more than 50 percent of AMI but with insufficient incomes to afford assisted living. It looks exclusively at people age 75 and over who live alone in 97 metros for which data were available. Using this criteria, 29 percent of households are in the “gap” and are referred to as GAPS households.
- Median incomes for GAPS households are about three quarters of AMI but median incomes differ widely by location. **(Figure 15).**
- GAPS households on average have only 62 percent of the income they would need to afford the median assisted living, but there is wide variation by region. **(Figure 16)**
- Just 8 percent of GAPS households can afford a daily visit from a home health aide. 16 percent cannot afford even a single weekly visit.
- In more than two-thirds of the metros studied, the median incomes of GAPS households were too low to afford the lowest-cost price for assisted living of \$43,000.
- Home equity can fund LTC services for some GAPS households; more than three quarters of GAPS households own their homes, but nearly 28 percent of GAPS homeowners have mortgages.

[Download the full report along with interactive maps and data](#)

MEDIA CONTACT

Kerry Donahue, Director of Communications
(617) 495-7640, kerry_donahue@harvard.edu