

The Return of the Multi-Generational Family Household

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A Social & Demographic Trends Report

Summary of Findings

This report documents major changes in family household living arrangements that have unfolded over the past three decades and accelerated during the Great Recession. Its principal focus is on the revival since 1980 of the multi-generational family household. It also chronicles a range of recent trends in the living arrangements of older adults, and it explores the correlation between living alone at an older age and various life experiences, including health, happiness and depression.

The report is based on the Pew Research Center's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data as well as our own public opinion surveys. For details on our methodology, see page 2. Key findings:

Multi-Generational Family Households

- In 2008, an estimated 49 million Americans, or 16% of the total U.S. population, lived in a family household that contained at least two adult generations or a grandparent and at least one other generation. In 1980, this figure was just 28 million, or 12% of the population.
- This 33% increase since 1980 in the share of all Americans living in such households represents a sharp trend reversal. From 1940 to 1980, the share of Americans living in such households had *declined* by more than half (from 25% in 1940 to 12% in 1980).
- The growth since 1980 in these multi-generational households is partly the result of demographic and cultural shifts, including the rising share of immigrants in the population and the rising median age of first marriage of all adults.
- But at a time of high unemployment and a rising foreclosures, the number of households in which multiple generations of the same family double up under the same roof has spiked significantly. Our report finds that from 2007 to 2008, the number of Americans living in a multi-generational family household grew by 2.6 million.
- This trend has affected adults of all ages, especially the elderly and the young. For example, about one in five adults ages 25 to 34 now live in a multi-generational household. So do one-in-five adults ages 65 and older.

Living Arrangements of Older Adults

- After rising steeply for nearly a century, the share of adults ages 65 and older who live alone flattened out around 1990 and has since declined a bit. It currently stands at 27%—up from 6% in 1900.
- Older adults who live alone are less healthy and they more often feel sad or depressed than their counterparts who live with a spouse or with others. These correlations stand up even after controlling for demographic factors such as gender, race, age, income and education.

About the Data

Data used in the report come from two complementary sources: First, the trends on Americans' living arrangements come from Decennial Census data from 1900 to 2000 and the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys (ACS) in 2006, 2007 and 2008, provided by the Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series (IPUMS). See Appendix A for more detailed information. Second, we use a recent Pew Research Center survey on aging, which provides information about attitudes and life of older Americans.

Survey results for this report are from a telephone survey conducted with a nationally representative sample of 2,969 adults living in the continental United States. A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples were used to cover all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. In addition, oversamples of adults 65 and older as well as blacks and Hispanics were obtained. A total of 2,417 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline telephone and 552 from those contacted on their cellular phone. The data are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the continental United States.

- Interviews were conducted Feb. 23-March 23, 2009.

- There were 2,969 interviews, including 1,332 with respondents 65 or older.

- The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.6 percentage points for results based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level.

Survey interviews were conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International.

Terminology

Here are descriptions of the household types analyzed in this report:

One-generation household

Households that consist of only one generation; for example, a married or cohabiting couple, a single person, siblings or roommates. These households can be made up of families or non-families.

Two-generation family household

Households that include a parent or parents and their child or children under age 25 (including stepchildren).

Multi-generational family household

The following family households are included in this category:

- Two generations: parents (or in-laws) and adult children ages 25 and older (or children-in-law); either generation can “head” the household
- Three generations: parents (or in-laws), adult children (and spouse or children-in-law), grandchildren
- “Skipped” generation: grandparents and grandchildren, without parents (including step-generation)
- More than three generations

For more details, see Appendix A.

About the Report

This report is organized into three chapters. Chapter 1 explores the recent rise in multi-generational family households. Chapter 2 describes changes over time in the living arrangements of older adults. Chapter 3 explores the differences in experiences and attitudes between older adults who live alone and those who live with others.

Note on terminology: All race groups include only non-Hispanics; e.g., whites include only non-Hispanic whites, blacks include only non-Hispanic blacks. Hispanics are of any race. Asians include Pacific Islanders.

I. Multi-Generational Family Households

The multi-generational American family household is staging a comeback—driven in part by the job losses and home foreclosures of recent years but more so by demographic changes that have been gathering steam for decades.

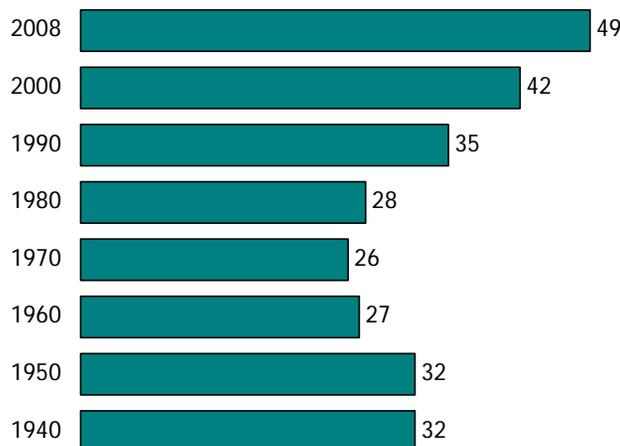
As of 2008, a record 49 million Americans, or 16.1% of the total U.S. population, lived in a family household that contained at least two adult generations or a grandparent and at least one other generation, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of census data.¹

This represents a significant trend reversal. Starting right after World War II, the extended family household fell out of favor with the American public. In 1940, about a quarter of the population lived in one; by 1980, just 12% did. A range of demographic factors likely contributed to this decline, among them the rapid growth of the nuclear-family-centered suburbs; the decline in the share of immigrants in the population; and the sharp rise in the health and economic well-being of adults ages 65 and older.

Since bottoming out around 1980, however, the multi-generational family household has mounted a comeback. The reversal has taken place among all major demographic groups, and it, too, appears to be the result of a mix of social and economic forces.

U.S. Population Living in Multi-Generational Family Households, 1940-2008

(Millions)

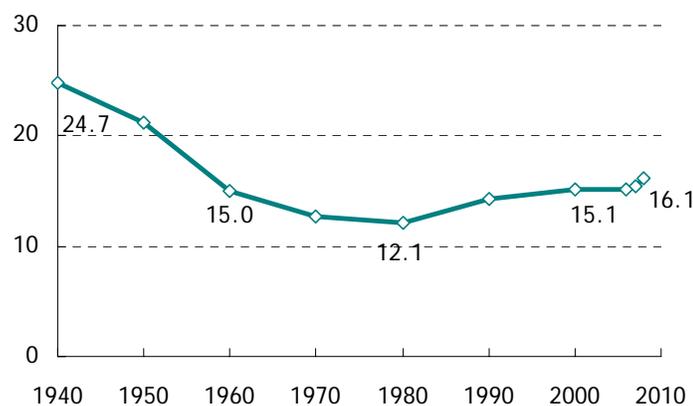


Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the U.S. Decennial Census data, 1940-2000, and 2006, 2007, 2008 American Community Surveys, based on Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) samples.

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Share of U.S. Population Living in Multi-Generational Family Households, 1940-2008

(%)



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the U.S. Decennial Census data, 1940-2000, and 2006, 2007, 2008 American Community Surveys, based on IPUMS samples.

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¹ Of the 49 million, 23.2 million are in family households with two adult generations (with the youngest adults ages 25 or older); 23.1 million are in households with three or more generations; and 2.8 million are in a household with a grandparent and grandchild. For more about these categories, see Appendix A.

One is the change in the median age of first marriage. The typical man now marries for the first time at age 28 and the typical women at age 26. For both genders, this is about five years older than it was in 1970. One byproduct of this cultural shift is that there are more unmarried 20-somethings in the population, many of whom consider their childhood home to be an attractive living situation, especially when a bad economy makes it difficult for them to find jobs or launch careers.²

Another factor has been the big wave of immigration, dominated by Latin Americans and Asians, which began around 1970. Like their European counterparts from earlier centuries, these modern immigrants are far more inclined than native-born Americans to live in multi-generational family households.³

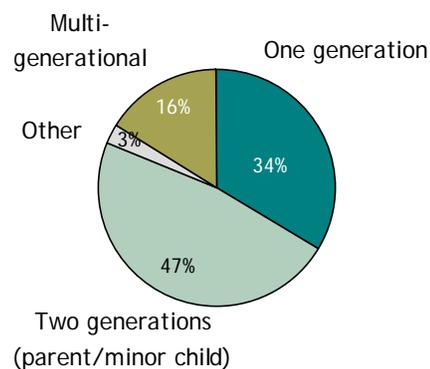
However, the trend reversal has also played out among native-born Americans. And for all groups, the move into multi-generational family households has accelerated during the Great Recession that began at the end of 2007. The Pew Research analysis of census data finds that in 2008,⁴ 2.6 million more Americans were living in such a household than had been doing so in 2007.

Who lives in multi-generational households? While the phenomenon has grown more prevalent in recent years among virtually all major demographic groups, the incidence levels vary considerably by age, race, ethnicity and gender. A rundown:

Older Adults

Older adults were once by far the likeliest of any age group to live in a multi-generational family household. Back in 1900, fully 57% of adults ages 65 and older

Share of Population in Various Generational Household Types, 2008

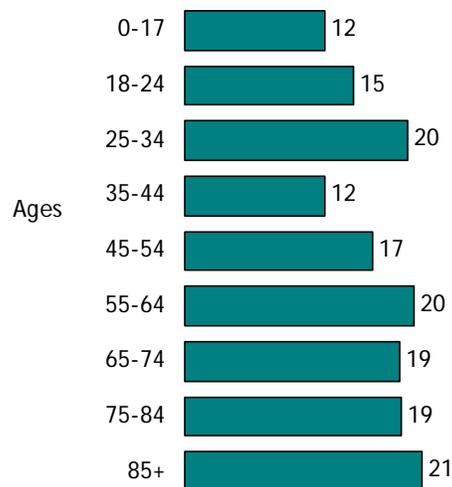


Note: "Other" refers to living in group quarters.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2008 American Community Survey (IPUMS). Based on total U.S. population of 304 million.

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Share of Population Living in a Multi-Generational Family Household, by Age (%)



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2008 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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² See Greg Kaplan, "Boomerang Kids: Labor Market Dynamics and Moving Back Home," Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Working Paper 675 (October 2009).

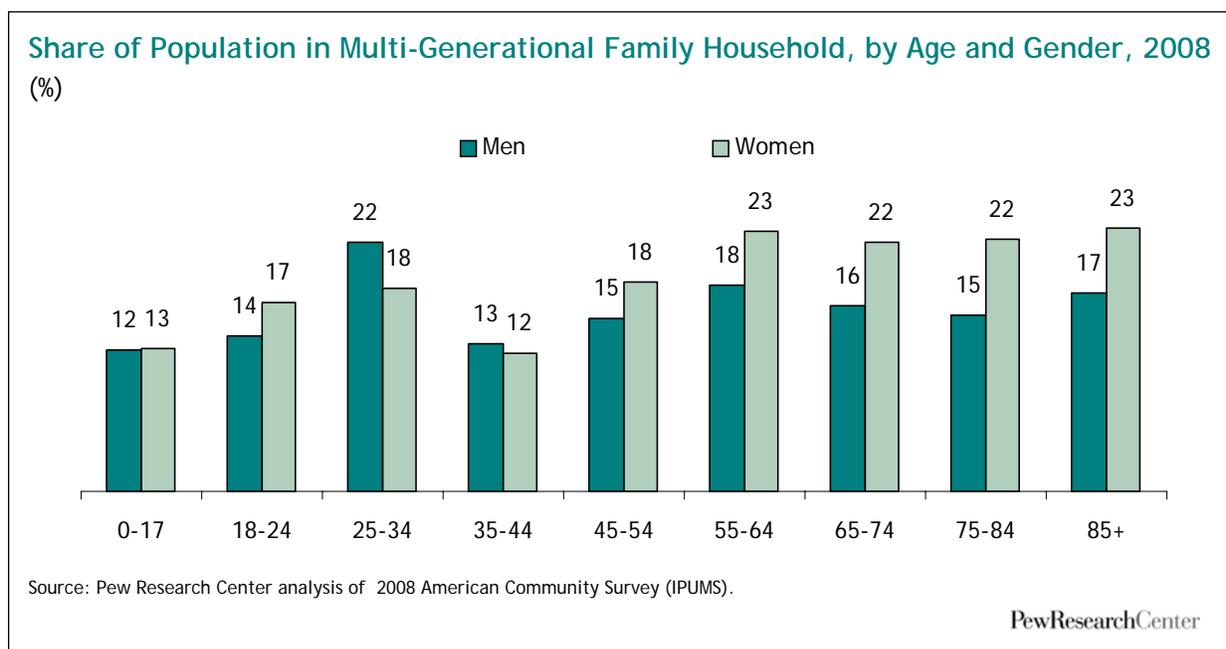
³ Some 18.8% of people living in immigrant households in the U.S. live in a multi-generational family household, compared with 14.2% of people in native-born households, according to a Pew Research analysis of data from the Census Bureau's 2009 Current Population Survey. Interestingly, however, among the nation's two largest immigrant groups by race and ethnicity – Hispanics and Asians – the native-born households of these groups have a slightly higher tendency to be multi-generational families than the foreign-born households.

⁴ 2008 is the most recent year for which data are available from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

did so. But over the course of the 20th century, older adults grew steadily healthier and more prosperous as a result of a range of factors, including the enactment of social safety net programs such as Social Security and Medicare and improvements in medical care.

With these changes came what amounted to a new intergenerational social contract within most families—namely, that older adults who had the health and resources to live independently should do so. By 1980 and 1990, just 17% of those ages 65 and older lived in a multi-generational family household. Since then, however, the trend has reversed course and the share has risen slightly—to 20%.

One possible explanation for the recent trend reversal is an increase in what demographers refer to as “kin availability.” The outsized Baby Boom generation is now passing through late middle age. Compared with earlier generations, it offers its elderly parents about 50% more grown children with whom they can share a household if and when their life circumstances (such as widowhood, declining health or poverty) take them in that direction. Another possible explanation is that cuts to Medicare enacted in 1997 have increased the financial incentives for those who are elderly and infirm to move in with a grown child who is able to take on the role of informal caregiver.⁵



When two adult generations of the same family live under the same roof, the older adult is the head of the household in about three-quarters of all cases, according to the Pew Research analysis of Census data. However, when the parent is 65 or older, the share drops. In 2008, a total of 6.6 million older adults lived in a household

⁵ Engelhardt, Gary V., and Nadia Greenhalgh-Stanley. “Public Long-term Care Insurance and the Housing and Living Arrangements of the Elderly: Evidence from Medicare Home Health Benefits.” Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Retirement Research at Boston College (December 2008).

Orsini, Chiara. Changing the Way the Elderly Live: “Evidence from the Home Health Care Market in the United States.” College Park, MD: University of Maryland (February 2007).

with one or more children. Of this group, 58% were themselves the household head, while in 42% of the cases, their grown child was the household head.

Young Adults

Older adults are not the age group most responsible for the overall trend reversal since 1980. That distinction belongs instead to young adults—especially those ages 25 to 34. In 1980, just 11% of adults in this age group lived in a multi-generational family household. By 2008, 20% did. Among adults 65 and older, the same share—20%—lived in such a household in 2008. However, the rise for this group has been less steep. Back in 1980, 17% lived in a multi-generational family household.

As noted above, the trend toward older median ages for first marriage is a big part of this long-term shift among younger adults. But in recent years, the economy appears to have played a significant role. Just from 2007 to 2008, the share of adults ages 25 to 34 living in such households rose by a full percentage point, from 18.7% to 19.8%.

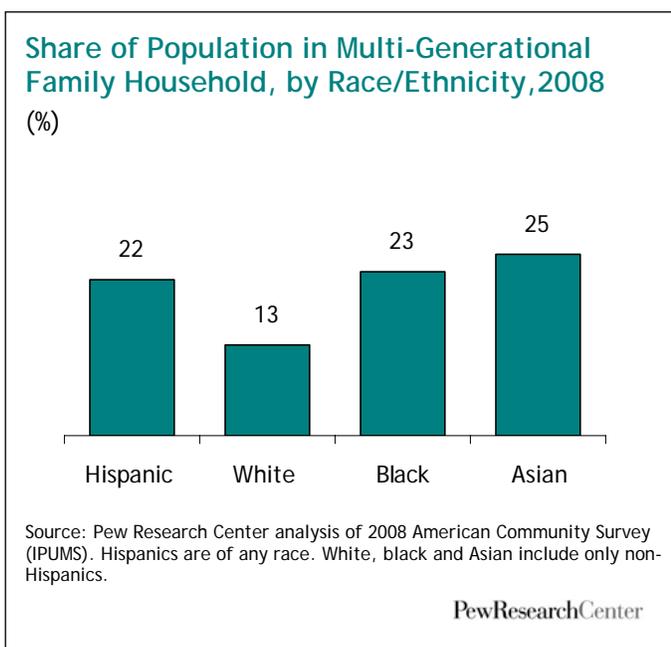
According to a recent Pew Research Center analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, as of 2009 some 37% of 18- to-29-year-olds were either unemployed or out of the workforce, the highest share among this age group in nearly four decades. In addition, a 2009 Pew Research survey found that among 22- to 29-year-olds, one-in-eight say that, because of the recession, they have boomeranged back to live with their parents after being on their own.⁶

Gender

The increase in the share of young adults living with their parents is notable for another reason: its gender profile. The 25-34 age group is the only one in which significantly more men than women are living in a multi-generational family household. Among older age groups, this living arrangement is much more common among women than men. At the later stages of the life cycle, this disparity is partly explained by the fact that women are more likely than men to outlive a spouse, at which point they become more likely candidates to live with a grown child.

Race and Ethnicity

Hispanics (22%), blacks (23%) and Asians (25%) are all significantly more likely than whites (13%) to live in a multi-generational family household.



⁶ See Pew Research Center report, “Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change.” Feb 24, 2010 (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/751/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change>).

The rates of three of these four groups have increased significantly since 1980, with blacks the lone exception. However, the rates of all four groups have gone up from 2006 to 2008—a time when the recession brought on a wave of joblessness and foreclosures.

Types of Multi-Generational Family Households

Of the 49 million Americans living in a multi-generational family household, 47% live in a household made up of two adult generations of the same family (with the youngest adult at least 25 years of age); another 47% live in a household with three or more generations of family members; and 6% are in a “skipped” generation household made up of a grandparent and grandchild, but no parent.

There are significant differences by race and ethnicity in the makeup of these various types of multi-generational family households.

Among whites living in a multi-generational family household, 64% are in a two adult-generation household, 28% are in a three-generation household and 7% are in a skipped-generation household.

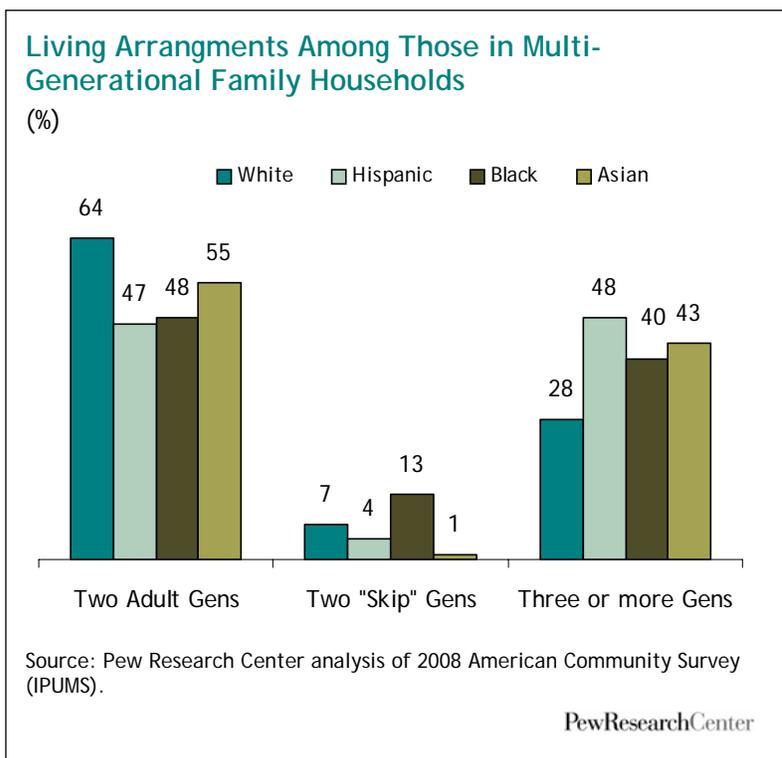
Among Latinos, 48% are in a three-generation household, 47% are in a two-generation household and 4% are in a skipped-generation household.

Among blacks, 48% are in a two-generation household, 40% are in a three-generation household and 13% (the highest share for this category) are in a skipped-generation household.

Among Asians, 55% are in a two-generation household, 43% are in a three-generation household and just 1% are in a skipped-generation household.

Living Alone

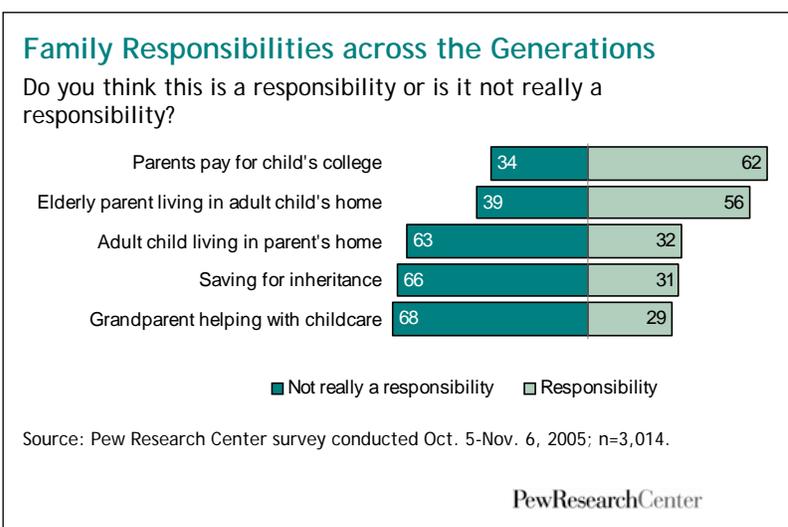
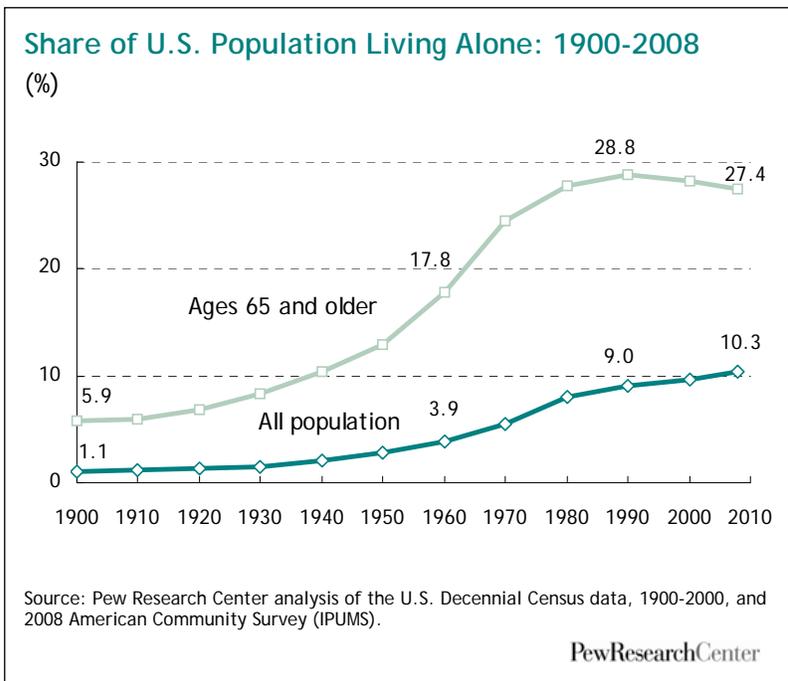
The multi-generational household isn't the only growth sector in the national landscape of living arrangements. There's also been a steady long-term rise over the past century in the polar opposite kind of household—the one made up of just a single person. In 1900, just 1.1% of Americans lived in such a household. By 2008, that share had risen to 10.3%.



Here, too, there are significant variances by age. Among young adults (ages 18 to 24), just 4.6% live in such households, down from a peak of 5.7% in 1980. Among adults ages 65 and older, the numbers are much larger but they have declined from a recent peak. In 1900, just 5.9% of adults in this age category lived alone. That share rose steadily over the course of the last century, eventually peaking at 28.8% in 1990. Since then it has retreated a bit. As of 2008, it stood at 27.4%.

According to a Pew Research Center survey conducted last year, adults ages 65 and older who live alone report they are not in as good health and are more likely to feel sad, depressed or lonely than are older adults who live with another person (be it a spouse or some other family member). Chapters 2 and 3 of this report will explore those findings in greater detail.

Also, a separate Pew Research survey taken in 2005 found that a majority of the public (56%) considers it a “family responsibility” for adult children to take into their home an elderly parent who wants to live with them. A sizable minority—39%—said this isn’t really a family responsibility. Attitudes varied sharply by the age of the respondent. Two-thirds of adults ages 40 and under said it was a family responsibility, compared with just 38% of adults ages 60 and over.⁷



⁷ See Pew Research Center Social & Demographic Trends report, “Baby Boomers Approach Age 60: From the Age of Aquarius to the Age of Responsibility,” Dec. 8, 2005 (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/306/baby-boomers-from-the-age-of-aquarius-to-the-age-of-responsibility>).

II. Living Arrangements of Older Adults

Over the course of the past century, the household living arrangements of older adults have changed more dramatically than those of any other age group. Moreover, on two key fronts, the trends among older adults moved in one direction for many decades, only to flatten out toward the end of the 20th century and reverse course.

As noted in Chapter 1, one such trend reversal has occurred in the share living in multi-generational family households. Among adults ages 65 and older, 19.6% lived in such a household in 2008. This is way down from 57.4% in 1900. But it is up from 16.8% in 1990.

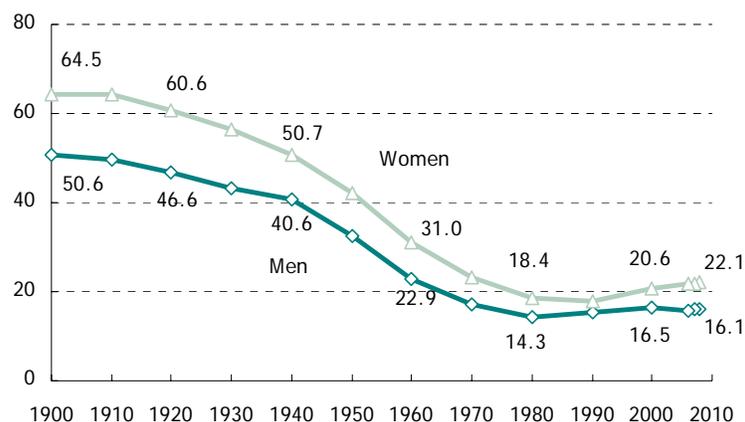
Older women (22.1%) are more likely than older men (16.1%) to live in such a household. This gender gap has persisted for more than a century.

Older and Living Alone

The other trend that reversed course in 1990 is the share of older adults who live alone. As of 2008, some 27.4% did so, down slightly from 28.8% in 1990 but way up from just 5.9% in 1900.

A wide gender gap exists when it comes to living alone in old age. Older women are nearly twice likely as older men to live by themselves—34.4% versus 17.9% in 2008. Nevertheless, this gap is not as wide as it once was. The share of women 65 and older who

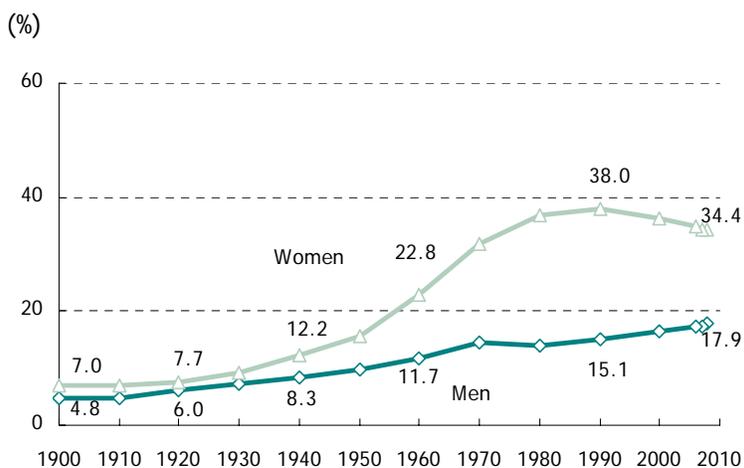
Share of Adults 65 and Older Living in a Multi-Generational Family Household, by Gender, 1900-2008 (%)



Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the U.S. Decennial Census data, 1900-2000, and 2006, 2007, 2008 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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Share of Adults 65 and Older Living Alone, by Gender, 1900-2008 (%)



Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the U.S. Decennial Census data, 1900-2000, and 2006, 2007 and 2008 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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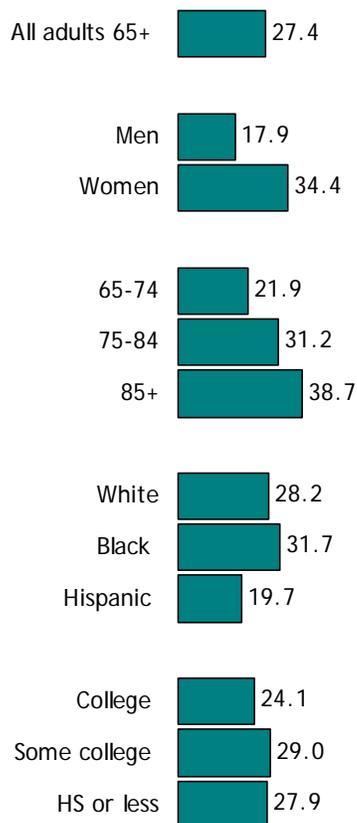
live alone has declined in the past two decades (from a peak of 38% in 1990), while the share of older men living alone has continued its century-long ascent.

There are other significant demographic differences as well. Compared with older whites and blacks, older Hispanic adults are the least likely to live by themselves. About one-in-five Hispanics ages 65 or older (19.7%) live alone, compared with 28.2% of white and 31.7% of black older adults.

Lower education is not associated with a higher rate of living alone among older Americans.

The chance that older adults will live alone increases as they age. Nearly four-in-ten (38.7%) Americans 85 or older live by themselves, compared with only 21.9% of those ages 65 to 74. For the middle group—those ages 75 to 84—about three-in-ten (31.2%) live by themselves.

Older Americans Who Live Alone (%)



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2008 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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Since 1980, the “oldest old”—85 and older—have been more likely to live alone than those ages 65 to 84. Overall, the proportion of the oldest old living alone has grown sharply from 22.3% in 1970 to 36.7% in 1990 and continued rising to 38.7% in 2008. Yet among the younger group (65-84), the share who live alone has declined in the past two decades, from 28.0% in 1990 to 25.6% in 2008.

Many reasons likely contribute to the growing numbers of the oldest old who live alone. Americans are living longer and healthier. Those born in 2006 can expect to live at least into their mid-70s; those born in 1900 could expect to live only into their mid-40s.⁸ Life expectancies at both age 65 and 85 have also increased, particularly among men. Nowadays Americans who live to age 85 are expected to live 6.8 more years (6.1 years for men and 7.2 years for women).⁹ In addition, the oldest group has had a steady decline in the share living with a child, from around 30% in 1970 to 15% in 2000, although there has been a slight increase in the recent decade.

For the group ages 65 to 84, the share living with their spouses has increased since the 1970s, reflecting the fact that both spouses are living longer. A growing share of this age group also lives with one or more adult children (16.7% in 2008 vs. 14.9% in 1990). These changes help

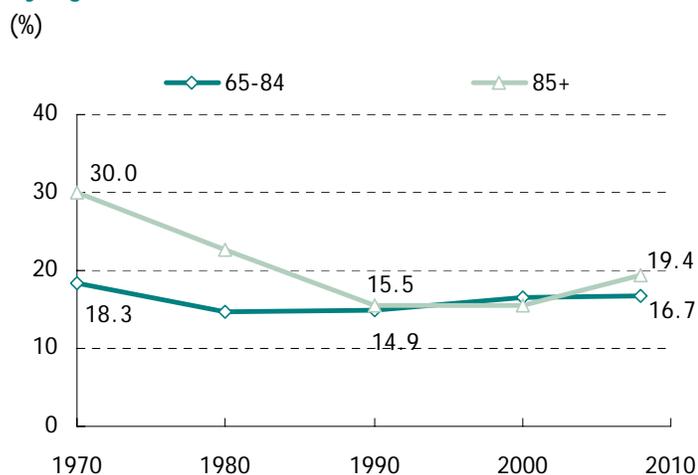
Share of Adults 65 and Older Living Alone, by Age, 1970-2008



Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the U.S. Decennial Census data, 1970-2000 and 2008 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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Share of Adults 65 and Older Living with a Child, by Age, 1970-2008



Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the U.S. Decennial Census data, 1970-2000, and 2008 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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⁸ See the Pew Social & Demographic Trends report, “Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality,” released June 29, 2009 (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/736/getting-old-in-america>).

⁹ See “Older Americans 2008: Key Indicators of Well-Being,” Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 2008).

explain why the share of older adults who live alone has declined in this age group since 1990.

The oldest old are a bit more likely than those ages 65 to 84 to live with their children. This may be because the oldest old are more likely than others to be widowed. Some 19.4% of adults ages 85 and older lived with their children in 2008, compared with 16.7% of those under 85. There is a gender gap in the living arrangements of the oldest old. About one-in-five (21.3%) women in this age group live with a child or children, compared with about one-in-seven (15.4%) of older men.

The proportion of the oldest old who live with their children dropped sharply between 1970 and 1990 (from 30.0% to 15.5%) and stayed at the same level in 2000. In the recent decade, the rate then started to increase to 19.4% in 2008. In contrast, the share of 65- to 84-year-olds living with adult children started to increase in 1990; it has since risen from 14.9% then to 16.7% in 2008.

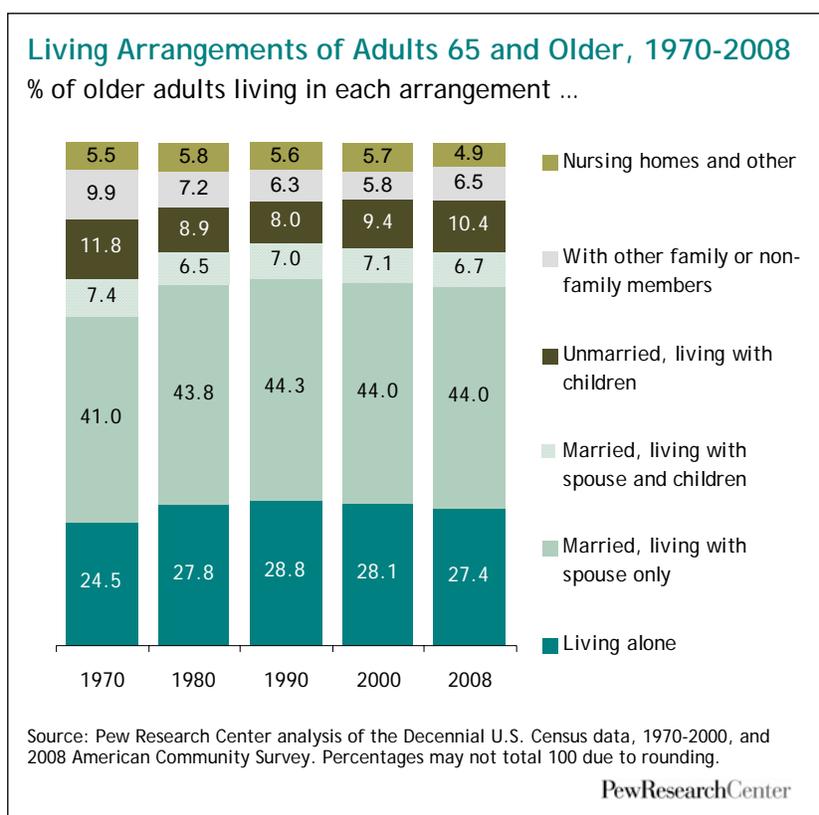
Change and Stability

The past several decades have been a time of stability and change in the living arrangements of older adults.

One metric that has changed very little among adults ages 65 and over is the share who are married. It was 50.7% in 2008. It has hovered around 50% not only for the past four decades, but also for the past century.

At the same time, however, there has been a significant change over time in the demographic profile of older adults who are unmarried. A century ago, eight in ten were widows or widowers; today, just six-in-ten are. A century ago, just 1% of the unmarried elderly were divorced or separated; today, nearly a quarter are.

Since 2000, there has been a slight but nonetheless significant decline in the share of older adults living in nursing homes and other group quarters—to 4.9% in 2008 from 5.7% in 2000.



III. Older Adults Who Live Alone

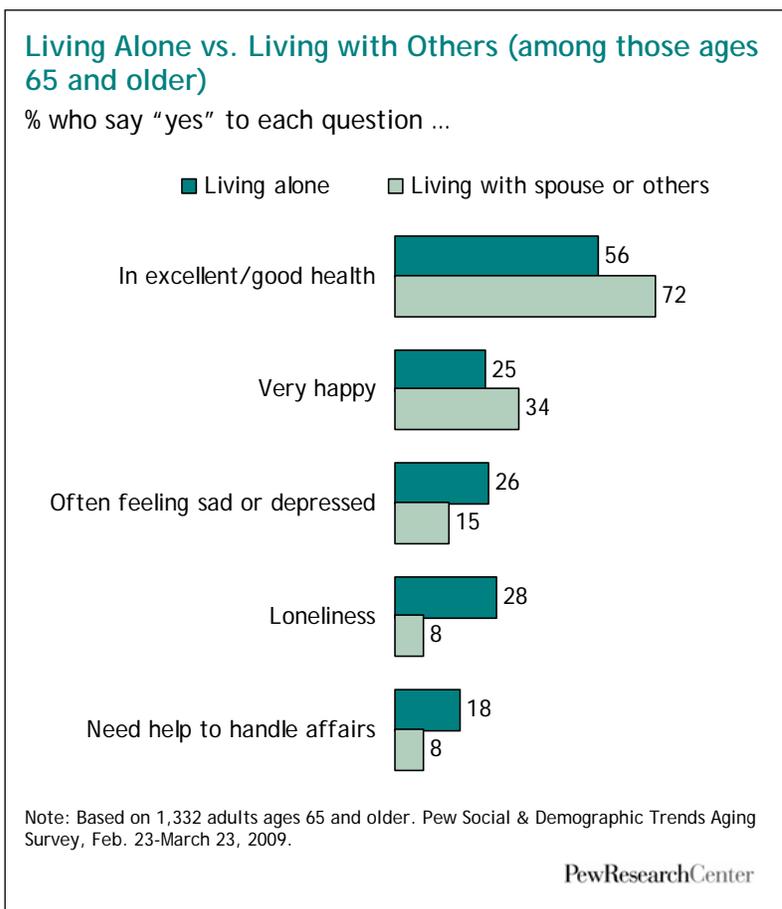
The living arrangements of older Americans are linked to many elements in their lives. Older Americans who live alone are less happy and less healthy, and they more often feel sad or depressed and lonely than their counterparts who live with a spouse or with others¹⁰

A comprehensive 2009 Pew Research survey on aging found that 56% of adults ages 65 and older who live alone rate their health as either “excellent” or “good,” compared with 72% of older folks who live with others (be it a spouse, a child or someone else). Older people who live with a spouse or others are also more likely to report that they are “very happy” than those living alone (34% vs. 25%).

Older adults who live alone are more likely to report that they feel sad or depressed than those who do not live alone (26% vs. 15%). Not surprisingly, they are also more likely than others to experience loneliness. Further, this group of older adults is more in need of help from others. Nearly two-in-ten (18%) of older Americans who live by themselves say that they need help to handle affairs or care for themselves, while fewer than one-in-ten (8%) of those who live with others say they are in need of help.

According to the survey, almost one-in-five (19%) of older Americans who live alone do not have children, while only 8% of those who live with others are childless.

Among older parents, those who live alone are more likely to get help from their adult children than those who do not live alone. A bit over half (53%) of those who live alone say received help from their children with errands or getting to and from appointments in the past 12 months; only one-third of older adults who do not live alone say the same. Older adults who live alone are also more likely than others to get financial assistance or help with paperwork from their children.



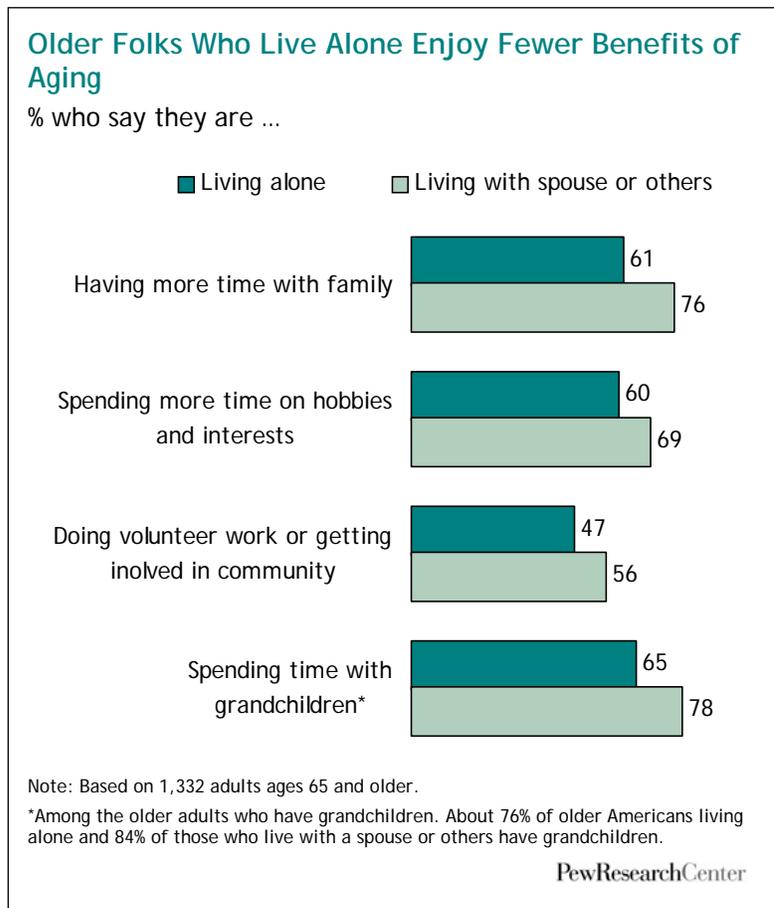
¹⁰ To test whether there is an independent link between living alone and these negative outcomes, we conducted a logistic regression analysis that included the following demographic variables: a respondent’s living arrangement, gender, race, age, family income, education and attendance at religious services. When controlling for all these other factors, the regression models indicate that an older adult’s living arrangement does have an independent impact on health, depression and loneliness, but not on happiness. At the same time, our analysis shows that these outcome measures—poor health, loneliness, depression—often go hand-in-hand.

The Pew Research survey also asked older Americans about a wide range of experiences associated with aging. Compared with adults who live with others, older adults who live by themselves are less likely to enjoy some of the good things about getting older. For example, about six-in-ten older Americans who live alone say that they have more time with their family, compared with 76% of older adults who live with others. Among older Americans who have grandchildren, those who live alone are less likely than those who live with a spouse or others to say they spend time with their grandchildren (65% vs. 78%).

Older adults living by themselves also spend less time on hobbies and interests and are less likely to do volunteer work or get involved in their community than those who do not live alone.

There are no significant differences between the two groups in other areas of life experiences: “not having to work,” “being financially secure,” “having less stress in life,” “getting more respect,” “traveling for pleasure” or “starting a new job or second career.”

What about some of the negative aspects of getting old? As noted earlier, people who live alone are more likely to experience sadness, depression and loneliness. But they are no more likely than other older adults to report other problems, including memory loss, a serious illness, feeling as if they are a burden on others and feeling as if they are not needed by other people.



As the table to the right indicates, the daily activities of older adults are broadly similar no matter what their living arrangements. But there are a few notable differences. Older folks who live with others are more likely to report that they talked with family or friends in the past 24 hours, and they are also more likely to drive a car than those who live by themselves. On the other hand, older people who live by themselves are more likely to say that they prayed in the past 24 hours (81% vs. 73%), although they are no more likely to be religious than the group who live with others, nor do they attend religious services more often.

Many Aspects of Life Are Similar, Whether Living Alone or Not

Daily Activities of Older Adults	<u>Living alone</u> %	<u>Not alone</u> %
Talk with family or friends*	87	93
Drive a car*	57	71
Read a book, magazine or newspaper	80	86
Get some kind of physical exercise	67	73
Watch more than an hour of TV	76	78
Pray*	81	73
Use the internet*	18	35
Spend time on a hobby	42	44
Take any prescription medication*	87	81
Go shopping	42	36
Take a nap	41	39
Have trouble sleeping	26	19
Get into an argument with someone	4	5

Note: n=536 for older adults who live alone and n=792 for older adults who do not live alone.

* indicates that the differences between the two groups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The survey asked older Americans about their overall satisfaction with different aspects of life. Between older folks who live alone and those who do not, only the housing situation stood up: 71% of older Americans who do not live alone say that they are very satisfied with their housing situation, while only 62% of those who live alone say so. Satisfaction with other aspects, including the number of friends they have, their relationship with their children and their personal financial situation, remains similar no matter whether older adults live with others or by themselves.

Different Groups and Different Experiences

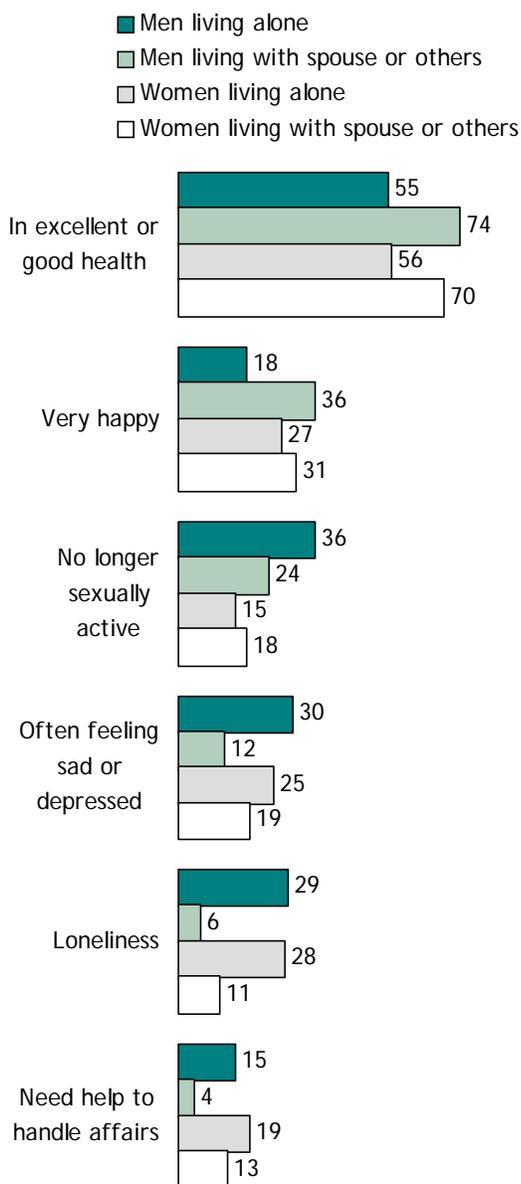
A further look at older adults' life experiences by gender and whether or not they live alone presents some intriguing findings: Older men living by themselves are more likely than other groups to report they often feel sad or depressed (30%). In contrast, older men who live with a spouse or others seem to be the group that benefits the most. They are more likely than older men and women who live by themselves to be "very happy." They are also the group that has the lowest share of experiencing sad feelings or loneliness, and they are least likely to say that they need help to handle things.

However, older women who live with a spouse or others are not happier than their counterparts who live alone. About three-in-ten (31%) of women who are not living alone say they are "very happy," compared with 27% of women who live alone; this difference is not statistically significant.

Older men and women who live with a spouse or others are more likely than those who live alone to say that they are in excellent or good health. Older men who live alone are most likely to say that they are no longer sexually active (36%), followed by older men living with a spouse or others (24%), older women living with spouse or others (18%) and older women living alone (15%).

Life Circumstances of Older Adults, by Gender and Living Arrangement

% who say they are ...



Note: Based on 1,332 adults ages 65 and older. Sample sizes for subgroups are as follows: Men living alone, n=133; men living with spouse or others, n=363; women living alone, n=403; women living with spouse or others, n=429.

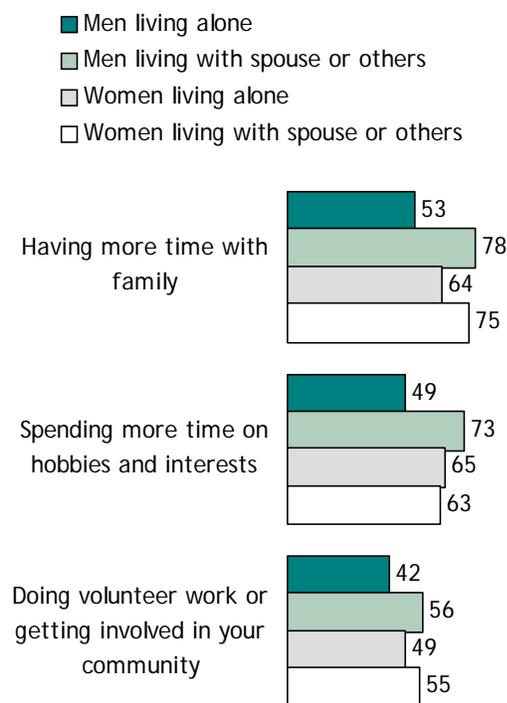
PewResearchCenter

When asked about the good things about getting older, both men and women who live with a spouse or others are more likely than those who live alone to say that they have more time with family as they get older. However, men who live with a spouse or others seem to be more likely than other groups to have more time to enjoy hobbies and interests. More than seven-in-ten older men (73%) say that they spend more time on hobbies and interests as they get older, compared with less than half (49%) of older men living by themselves and over six-in-ten older women regardless of their living situation. In fact, women who live by themselves are more likely than their male counterparts to say that they spend more time on hobbies and interests (65% vs. 49%).

Older men living alone are less likely than those who live with spouse or others to say that they do volunteer work or get involved with their community. But this pattern does not hold for older women: About 55% of older women living with a spouse or others say they do volunteer work, compared with almost half (49%) of older women who live by themselves. The difference is not statistically significant.

Experiences of Older Adults, by Gender and Living Arrangement

% who say they are ...



Note: Based on 1,332 adults ages 65 and older.

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Appendix A. Notes on Terminology and Methodology

Generations. The number of generations in a household is determined by the variable defining the relationship of each person in the household to the head. Each household has a “base” generation determined by the reference person or head of the household. Others in the base generation include the reference person’s spouse, siblings, and siblings-in-law. Generations beyond this base are defined by individual relationships:

1. Base generation: reference person, spouse, sibling, sibling-in-law
2. Children (“-1” generation): child of head, child-in-law
3. Parents (“+1” generation): parent of head, parent-in-law
4. Grandchildren (“-2” generation): grandchild of head
5. Others: great-grandchild of head, grandparent of head

The datasets used for the analysis are from Decennial Censuses of 1900-2000 and the American Community Surveys of 2006-2008¹¹ as provided by the Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series (IPUMS). The IPUMS are compiled by the University of Minnesota Population Center. Documentation is available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/doc.shtml>.

The IPUMS datasets permit determining generational composition for other types of relationships (e.g., aunt-uncle-niece/nephew) and for persons not related to the household head because the dataset identifies parental linkages where possible. So two generations are also present in a household if a person is determined to have a parent based on the IPUMS variables “MOMLOC” and “POPLOC.” If the parent also has a parent, a third generation is present.

The analysis of the living arrangements of the elderly since 1970 also utilizes the IPUMS datasets of the Decennial Censuses and the 2008 American Community Survey. The 1970 Decennial Census sample is a 3% sample of the population derived by concatenating the three 1970 1% Form 1 samples. The 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2008 samples analyzed are 1% samples of the population.

The time series on elderly living alone and with children from 1900 to 1960 were tabulated using the IPUMS online data analysis system. The Census data tabulator is available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/sda/>. Figures for 1900 utilize a 5% sample of the population but otherwise the 1910 to 1960 statistics are based on 1% samples of the population.

¹¹ The 2005 ACS was not analyzed because the survey did not include the entire resident population of the U.S., but only the household population. While this restriction does not limit the estimation of multi-generation households, it does not permit comparisons with the entire population.

Multi-generation Households. For our analyses, multi-generation households are defined as households with at least two generations of adults. The principal type of multi-generation household actually has two generations only—parent(s) and the adult child(ren):

- a. Householder (and spouse), parent (or parent-in-law)
- b. Householder (and spouse), adult child (or child-in-law)

In our analyses, we define adult children as those ages 25 and older rather than ages 18 and older. With this definition, the vast majority of college students living at home are not treated as an adult generation.

The next largest type of multi-generation household is the three-generation household. There are a number of variants on this type, but the major ones differ as to whether the householder is in the middle generation (i.e., a “sandwich” household) or the older generation (i.e., a “grandparent” household):

- a. Householder (and spouse), parent (or parent-in-law), child (or child-in-law)
- b. Householder (and spouse), child (or child-in-law), grandchild

Note that in these households, the children do not have to be adults.

The only type of multi-generation household we define that does not necessarily include two adult generations is what might be called the “skipped” generation household. In these households, a grandchild is present but the grandchild’s parental generation is not present in the household (i.e., it is “skipped”). These multi-generational family households can be of two types:

- a. Householder (and spouse), grandchild
- b. Householder (and spouse), grandparent

Most households are not multi-generation households; they are single-generation households (the householder and possibly a spouse) or two-generation, adult-minor child households. In the early years of the 20th century, there were twice as many of these two-generation households as one-generation households. This pattern began to change in 1930 as one-generation households increased in prevalence. By 1970, there were roughly equal numbers of the two households. In 2008, there were 70% more one-generation than two-generation households.

Appendix B. Detailed Tables

Table 1. Percent of Population in Multi-Generational Households by Age Groups and Gender:1900-2008

Year	All Ages	Under 18*	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	65-74	75-84	85+	25-29	30-34
Both Sexes:													
2008	16.1	12.5	15.1	19.8	12.5	16.8	20.5	19.6	19.2	19.4	21.2	24.6	14.7
2007	15.4	11.8	14.3	18.7	11.6	16.3	20.0	19.2	19.1	18.8	20.8	23.2	13.9
2006	15.2	11.6	14.1	18.2	11.4	16.0	19.9	19.2	19.4	18.6	20.1	22.7	13.5
2000	15.1	12.3	14.6	15.8	11.1	16.6	22.4	18.9	20.2	17.4	17.9	19.4	12.4
1990	14.3	10.3	14.0	15.2	9.4	18.7	24.1	16.8	17.8	14.6	17.7	19.2	11.3
1980	12.1	9.1	10.8	11.0	8.6	16.6	19.0	16.8	15.4	17.1	25.5	13.5	8.2
1970	12.7	9.7	10.3	11.6	11.6	15.6	15.6	20.7	17.9	17.9	33.8	11.6	11.6
1960	15.0	11.2	12.8	14.1	12.9	17.5	21.2	27.4	24.4	31.8	41.4	15.8	12.5
1950	21.1	15.8	20.2	21.0	17.3	22.9	30.0	37.5	34.5	42.2	54.8	23.6	18.2
1940	24.7	17.4	25.7	27.7	18.3	25.6	37.3	45.8	43.1	50.4	62.7	32.3	22.7
1930	23.0	16.1	24.7	25.5	16.9	24.7	38.4	49.7	46.9	55.3	63.8	29.7	20.9
1920	22.9	15.2	25.7	25.7	16.7	25.9	42.3	53.5	50.9	58.5	65.0	30.0	20.9
1910	22.8	15.5	24.1	25.4	17.0	26.0	43.4	56.9	53.9	62.6	72.8	29.0	21.2
1900	23.7	16.2	26.6	27.3	17.3	27.4	45.3	57.4	55.9	60.1	66.8	31.8	22.0
Males:													
2008	15.3	n.a.	13.6	21.8	12.9	15.2	18.0	16.1	16.3	15.5	17.4	26.8	16.3
2007	14.5	n.a.	13.2	20.4	11.9	14.6	17.5	15.9	16.3	15.1	16.6	25.3	15.1
2006	14.3	n.a.	12.8	19.9	11.8	14.3	17.4	15.9	16.3	15.0	16.0	25.0	14.7
2000	14.4	n.a.	13.5	17.6	11.5	14.4	19.5	16.5	17.6	14.9	15.5	21.6	13.9
1990	13.8	n.a.	13.3	17.8	9.6	15.4	21.9	15.3	16.6	12.7	15.0	22.6	13.2
1980	11.5	n.a.	10.5	12.5	8.2	14.1	17.4	14.3	14.0	13.4	21.5	15.7	9.0
1970	11.9	n.a.	9.7	12.9	12.9	13.9	13.9	17.2	15.4	15.4	29.7	12.9	12.9
1960	14.1	n.a.	12.4	15.7	12.5	15.4	18.5	22.9	20.6	26.6	36.4	18.3	13.3
1950	20.1	n.a.	20.3	22.9	16.6	19.4	26.0	32.5	30.0	36.4	50.8	26.3	19.3
1940	23.9	n.a.	26.5	30.6	17.9	21.1	32.8	40.6	38.5	44.5	56.6	36.6	24.1
1930	22.0	n.a.	25.4	27.7	16.2	20.0	32.8	43.1	40.8	48.2	54.9	33.1	22.0
1920	21.8	n.a.	26.0	27.3	15.8	20.3	36.1	46.6	44.8	50.4	56.7	32.6	21.4
1910	21.4	n.a.	23.7	25.9	16.0	20.1	36.4	49.7	46.8	55.2	67.9	29.8	21.3
1900	22.5	n.a.	26.9	28.4	16.1	21.2	38.1	50.6	49.0	53.5	59.2	33.7	22.4
Females:													
2008	16.9	n.a.	16.6	17.8	12.1	18.4	22.8	22.1	21.8	22.1	23.0	22.3	13.1
2007	16.2	n.a.	15.5	16.9	11.3	18.0	22.4	21.7	21.6	21.3	22.8	20.9	12.6
2006	16.0	n.a.	15.5	16.4	11.0	17.6	22.2	21.6	21.9	21.1	21.9	20.4	12.3
2000	15.8	n.a.	15.7	13.9	10.6	18.6	25.0	20.6	22.3	19.1	18.9	17.1	10.9
1990	14.7	n.a.	14.6	12.6	9.3	21.9	26.1	17.8	18.8	15.7	18.7	15.9	9.4
1980	12.8	n.a.	11.1	9.4	9.1	18.9	20.3	18.4	16.5	19.2	27.3	11.3	7.4
1970	13.5	n.a.	11.0	10.4	10.4	17.2	17.2	23.2	19.9	19.9	36.2	10.4	10.4
1960	15.8	n.a.	13.3	12.6	13.3	19.6	23.7	31.0	27.7	35.8	44.6	13.5	11.8
1950	22.2	n.a.	20.1	19.2	17.9	26.4	34.2	42.0	38.7	47.2	57.7	21.1	17.3
1940	25.6	n.a.	24.8	24.9	18.8	30.4	42.1	50.7	47.7	55.8	67.7	28.1	21.4
1930	23.9	n.a.	23.9	23.3	17.6	29.7	44.5	56.3	53.1	62.1	70.4	26.4	19.8
1920	24.2	n.a.	25.4	24.1	17.7	32.5	49.4	60.6	57.6	66.2	71.8	27.3	20.3
1910	24.3	n.a.	24.5	24.9	18.1	32.7	51.1	64.1	61.2	69.5	76.8	28.1	21.1
1900	24.9	n.a.	26.2	26.0	18.5	34.4	52.8	64.5	63.0	66.8	73.0	29.7	21.6

Notes: Based on Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) samples for 1900-2000 Censuses and 2006, 2007, 2008 American Community Surveys.

See text for definitions. * both sexes combined for ages under 18.

**Table 2. Percent of Population in Multi-Generational Households,
by Race-Hispanic Origin: 1900-2008**

Year	Total	Hispanic Origin	Not Hispanic Origin				
			White	Black	Amer. Indian*	Asian**	2 or more
2008	16.1	22.0	12.7	23.1	25.6	25.4	17.5
2007	15.4	21.2	12.1	22.1	23.7	25.0	16.0
2006	15.2	20.4	11.9	22.3	22.8	24.5	16.0
2000	15.1	23.2	11.3	24.3	21.5	26.2	16.2
1990	14.3	20.3	11.4	26.1	18.8	22.8	x
1980	12.1	16.1	10.1	22.5	17.7	19.7	x
1970	12.7	16.0	11.2	22.4	20.5	17.6	x
1960	15.0	17.0	13.6	24.7	23.7	19.1	x
1950	21.1	23.9	20.2	28.7	30.9	22.6	x
1940	24.7	24.2	24.4	27.8	27.4	15.7	x
1930	23.0	23.7	22.8	24.9	27.0	8.3	x
1920	22.9	20.6	23.1	21.8	27.7	10.1	x
1910	22.8	21.7	22.9	22.9	22.9	5.5	x
1900	23.7	22.8	23.7	23.9	(d)	10.9	x

Notes: Based on Integrated Public-Use Micordata Series (IPUMS) samples for 1900-2000 Censuses and 2006, 2007, 2008 American Community Surveys

See text for definitions. Race groups are single-race or major race plus some other race in 2000-2008.

* includes Alaska Natives; ** includes Pacific Islanders.

x -- group not defined in census; (d) Deficient data.

**Table 3. Population in Multi-Generational Households
by Race-Hispanic Origin: 1900-2008**

(in thousands)

Year	Total	Not Hispanic Origin					
		Hispanic Origin	White	Black	Amer. Indian*	Asian**	2 or more
2008	49,044	10,320	25,217	8,507	514	3,507	848
2007	46,476	9,600	24,009	8,123	481	3,418	718
2006	45,391	9,026	23,650	8,148	470	3,303	648
2000	42,426	8,172	22,073	8,265	456	2,817	569
1990	35,400	4,435	21,371	7,614	348	1,593	x
1980	27,537	2,382	18,266	5,900	255	710	x
1970	25,799	1,425	18,956	4,987	147	264	x
1960	26,845	984	20,887	4,642	124	168	x
1950	32,161	782	26,866	4,334	96	71	x
1940	32,252	518	28,104	3,509	86	35	x
1930	28,205	522	24,626	2,948	85	24	x
1920	24,323	265	21,674	2,279	65	40	x
1910	21,062	176	18,526	2,282	62	16	x
1900	18,252	126	15,981	2,127	(d)	16	x

Notes: Based on Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) samples for 1900-2000 Censuses and 2006, 2007, 2008 American. See text for definitions. Race groups are single-race or major race plus some other race in 2000-2008.

* includes Alaska Natives; ** includes Pacific Islanders.

x -- group not defined in census; (d) Deficient data.

Table 4. Total Population by Race-Hispanic Origin: 1900-2008

(in thousands)

Year	Total	Hispanic Origin		Not Hispanic Origin			
		White	Black	Amer. Indian*	Asian**	2 or more	
2008	304,060	46,822	199,078	36,829	2,008	13,786	4,839
2007	301,621	45,379	198,701	36,674	2,027	13,653	4,476
2006	299,398	44,299	198,250	36,490	2,058	13,477	4,054
2000	281,422	35,204	195,362	34,004	2,123	10,769	3,516
1990	248,108	21,837	188,013	29,188	1,851	6,977	x
1980	226,862	14,775	180,554	26,278	1,438	3,597	x
1970	202,963	8,877	169,492	22,231	718	1,503	x
1960	179,293	5,794	153,136	18,765	522	880	x
1950	152,206	3,268	133,161	15,112	310	312	x
1940	130,344	2,140	115,029	12,638	313	225	x
1930	122,850	2,206	108,206	11,837	313	287	x
1920	106,032	1,287	93,644	10,469	234	399	x
1910	92,350	813	81,029	9,952	273	283	x
1900	77,057	551	67,432	8,916	13	146	x

Notes: Based on Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) samples for 1900-2000 Censuses and 2006, 2007, 2008 American. See text for definitions. Race groups are single-race or major race plus some other race in 2000-2008.

* includes Alaska Natives; ** includes Pacific Islanders.

x -- group not defined in census