

Older americans living longer, but becoming more obese

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Government report on seniors also found more working women, higher housing costs.

(HealthDay) -- Older Americans are living longer, healthier lives than in past generations, according to new government research. However, rising obesity rates and high housing costs could take a toll on these gains in longevity, the report found.

For the report, the U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics researchers looked at 37 indicators of well-being to assess how older Americans are faring as they age. Broad categories included population, economics, [health status](#), [health risks](#) and behaviors, and health care. The researchers also examined seniors' end-of-life care.

Obesity is a rising concern in this age group. In 2009 to 2010, 38 percent of people aged 65 and older were obese, the report found. In contrast, only 22 percent were obese between 1988 and 1994. And by 2009, obesity affected 29 percent of people aged 75 and older.

Another pressing issue facing older Americans is the steadily rising cost of housing. In 1985, about 30 percent of [households](#) with people aged 65 or older spent more than 30 percent of their [income](#) on housing and utilities. By 2009, the proportion of

older people with such high housing costs reached 40 percent.

On a different note, older women now have a greater presence in the U.S. workforce. The number of women between ages 62 and 64 with jobs outside their homes jumped from 29 percent in 1963 to 45 percent in 2011. Although 17 percent of women aged 65 to 69 years had jobs in 1963, by 2011, 27 percent were employed.

And the percentage of working women aged 70 and older increased from 6 percent in 1963 to 8 percent in 2011. The researchers suggested that more [older women](#) may be working not only out of financial necessity, but also for more [intellectual stimulation](#), social contact and the sense of satisfaction they get from their jobs.

Poverty among older Americans has declined since 1974. Between 1974 and 2010, the proportion of older people with incomes below the [poverty line](#) fell from 15 percent to 9 percent. That cutoff was an annual income of less than \$10,458 in 2010.

Seniors living on low incomes -- ranging between \$10,458 and \$20,916 -- also fell from 35 percent to 26 percent during that time period.

Meanwhile, the proportion of seniors with high incomes (\$41,832 and above in 2010) increased from 18 percent to 31 percent during the study period.

In other findings, more Americans are using hospice care in the last 30 days of their life. The percentage of older people who receive this specialized care increased from 19 percent in 1999 to 43 percent in 2009. Fewer older Americans died in hospitals, the report also found. The percentage of seniors who died at home increased from 15 percent in 1999 to 24 percent in 2009. Meanwhile, the percentage of older people who died in the hospital fell from 49 percent to 32 percent.

In 2010, seniors aged 65 and over accounted for 13 percent of the total U.S. population, but researchers predict that by 2030, they will make up nearly 20 percent of the population.

The 15 U.S. agencies represented in the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics include the Administration on Aging, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Veterans Affairs, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, National Center for Health Statistics, National Institute on Aging, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (Department of Health and Human Services), Social Security Administration and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

More information:

To view the Older Americans 2012 report, visit AgingStats.gov.

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