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Statistical Brief

Housing Arrangements of the Elderly

About 1 in 4 owner householders and less than 1 in 6 renter householders were elderly in 1987.

There were 58 million homeowners in the United States in 1987; about 15 million of them were 65 years or older. Of the 33 million householders who rented their homes, 5 million were elderly. The data in this Brief cover those elderly who owned or rented their living quarters. Elderly persons living with a householder younger than 65 or living in an institution were excluded.

Seventy-five percent of elderly householders owned the home in which they lived.

The proportion for younger Americans was 61 percent. The elderly were most likely to be owners in the South (8 out of 10) and least likely in the Northeast (2 out of 3). Elderly owners were somewhat less likely to live in metropolitan areas than younger owners. However, among elderly owners, most lived in metropolitan areas; only 27 percent did not.

Elderly owners spent only half as much for housing as did younger owners.

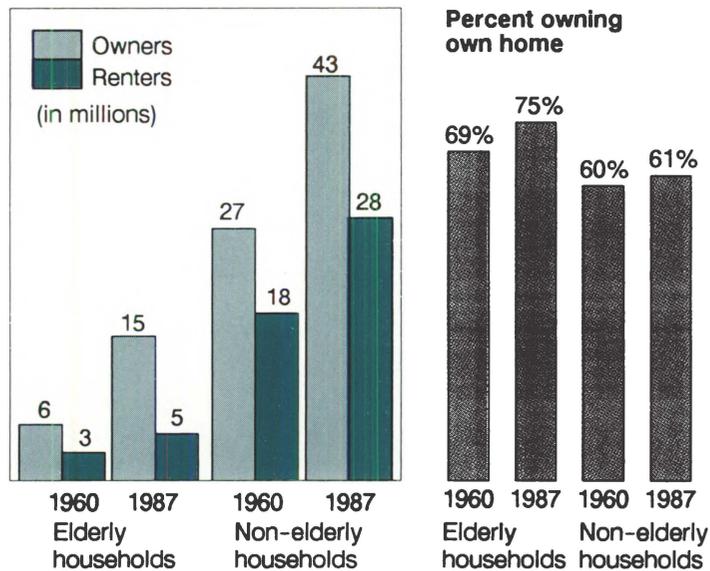
However, the elderly spent a slightly higher percentage of their income for housing than did younger owners—19 percent versus 18 percent. Because more than 4 of 5 older owners had no mortgage, the median monthly housing cost for elderly owners was \$213. Seven in 10 younger owners had a mortgage; this boosted their median cost to \$480. Among the 2.5 million elderly households with a mortgage, the median cost was \$445. Lower taxes also reduced

elderly owners' costs. About 56 percent of elderly owners and 44 percent of younger owners paid less than \$600 per year in real estate taxes. Housing costs for owners include mortgage payments, real estate taxes, utilities, fuels, property insurance, garbage and trash collection, and other charges, such as condominium fees, owed on the property.

More than 1 in 4 elderly renters spent at least half of their income on housing.

Elderly renters generally had lower median monthly housing costs

The proportion of householders owning their own homes has grown more rapidly among the elderly.



than younger renters — \$306 versus \$412. The median income of elderly renters was about half that of younger renters, however, so they spent a median of 36 percent of their income on housing, compared with 28 percent for younger renters. Four in 10 elderly renters received some form of housing assistance, either from the government, such as rent control or public or subsidized housing, or from landlords who voluntarily charged lower rents. About 1 in 10 renters 65 or older paid no cash rent.

Women living alone made up over 1 in 3 elderly households.

Of the elderly women living alone, 8 in 10 were widows. Among younger households, lone women accounted for only 9 percent of the total. The proportions of households with men living alone differed little by age — 10 percent of younger versus 9 percent of elderly.

The elderly who lived alone were more likely to be poor than the elderly who lived with family members; about 25 percent of the women and 19 percent of the men fell below the poverty line. Among families with an elderly householder only about 7 percent were poor.

Most elderly owners have lived in their homes more than 17 years.

Most older owners have no mortgage because they have lived in the home long enough to pay off the loan — 2 in 5 bought their units before 1960. Also, the older the mortgage, the more likely it was to have a shorter term. Approximately 2 of 3 existing first mortgages in 1971 were for less than 28 years, while in 1960, about the

same proportion had terms of less than 23 years.

About half of elderly owners paid less than \$20,000 for their homes.

More than 4 in 10 younger owners paid at least \$40,000 for their homes. By 1987, the value of properties owned by the elderly had increased to a median of \$59,000, while homes occupied by younger owners increased to a median value of \$71,000. Part of the difference in current value is due to the age and size of the buildings: 43 percent of elderly owners have homes built before 1950, but only 25 percent of younger owners do. About 21 percent of the elderly had four or fewer rooms in their homes, but only 11 percent of younger owners' homes were that small.

The housing data in the Brief are from the 1987 American Housing Survey, the 1960 Census of Housing, and the 1960 and 1971 Residential Finance Surveys. The poverty rates are from the 1987 Current Population Survey.

For information on housing characteristics of the elderly:

See —

The American Housing Survey for the United States in 1987, H150-87, December 1989. (For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. For telephone orders, call (202) 783-3238.)

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