

Aging in America: Effect on the Male-Female Ratio

The failure of men to become actively engaged in the health care system takes a toll at early ages, but the trend accelerates as men near retirement. It is expected that men will enter Medicare in poorer health than women, creating an unequal burden on the health care system. The effect of poor health habits, adverse socialization, and lack of access to health care is reflected in higher mortality among aging men and the male-female ratio in later years. This leaves older women more likely to live in poverty and alone, and to rely on public assistance.

Of the 12.1 million older persons living alone, 69% are women, and 36% of older women are widows.

U.S. Administration on Aging

The U.S. Administration on Aging found that of the 12.1 million older persons living alone, 69% are women.³ Other data reflect on the poor health of aging men and the effect it has on spouses and loved ones:

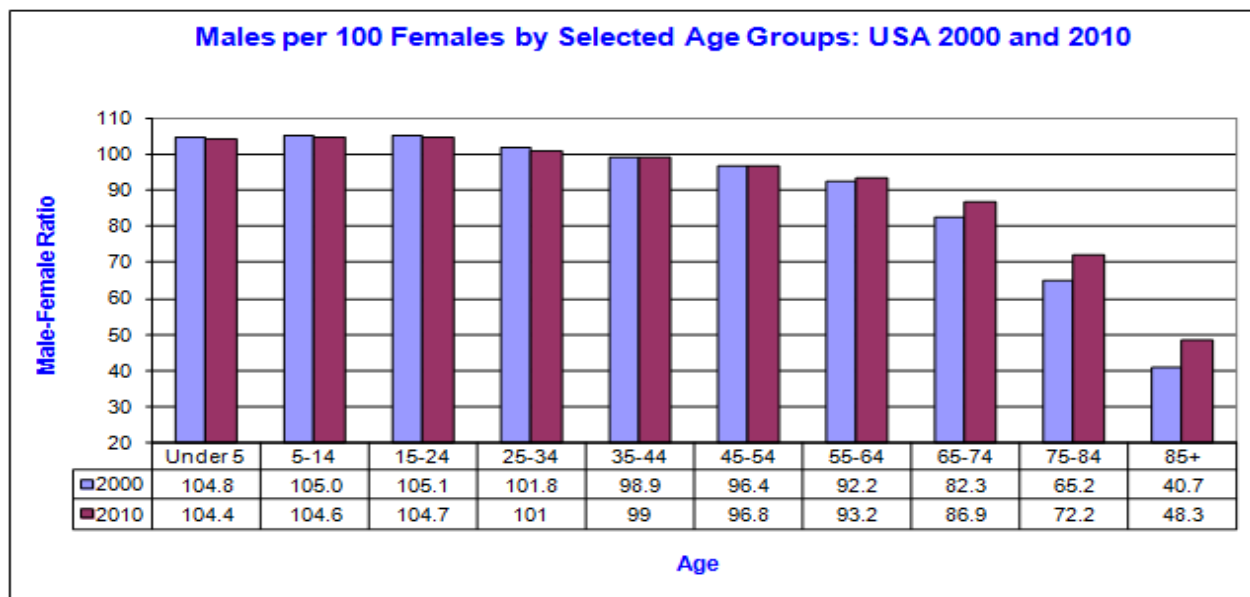
- Compared with men, older women are more than two times as likely to be living alone...almost half of older women age 75+ live alone. (U.S. Administration on Aging)
- In 2012, older women had a much higher poverty rate (11%) than older men. (6.6%) (U.S. Administration on Aging)
- Older men are much more likely to be married than older women. Over 70% of older men were married compared with 45% of women. In 2013, 36% of older women were widows. (U.S. Administration on Aging)

- 115 males are conceived for every 100 females
- Male births outnumber female births, 105 to 100
- More newborn males die than females, 5 to 4
- Teenage boys die at 2x the rate of girls

The Weaker Sex, New York Times Magazine, March 16, 2003

Declining Sex Ratio After 60¹

The increase in life expectancy over the past several decades has been dramatic, but life expectancy has been increasing at different rates for the genders, and we need to determine why. Males outnumber females at birth 105 – 100, but by age 35, there are more women than men and this trend accelerates with age. Since mortality at every age is generally higher for males, the sex ratio naturally declines with age. By age 85 there are over twice as many surviving women as men. Between 2000 and 2010, there was a noteworthy increase in the sex ratios for the population aged 60 and older. This change results from a greater increase in the male population for these age groups. A narrowing of the mortality gap between older men and women in part accounts for this difference.²



¹ U.S. Census Bureau. *Age and Sex Composition: 2010*. 2010 Census Briefs. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf>

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *National Education and Resource Center on Women and Retirement Planning*. Administration for Community Living. 2006. Available at: http://www.acl.gov/NewsRoom/Publications/docs/Women_Retirement_Planning.pdf

³ U.S. Administration on Aging. *Profile on Older Americans*. 2012. Available at: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2013/10.aspx