



LESSON PLANS ON AGING ISSUES:

Creative Ways to Meet Social Studies Standards

Participation in Government

USING DEMOGRAPHICS TO PREDICT THE FUTURE

Ithaca College Gerontology Institute
www.ithaca.edu/aging/schools

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Participation in Government

Using Demographics to Predict the Future

Introduction

This one-period lesson begins with a discussion of U.S. demographics – the fact that the percentage of the U.S. population over 65 will greatly increase over the next 30 years. This shift is driven by two factors: 1) increased longevity in the U.S. and 2) the baby boom generation beginning to reach “senior status”. The teacher discusses this demographic shift briefly with students, distributes graphs with detailed data, and then arranges the students in groups to think about the impact on society of an aging population – in terms of politics, housing and popular culture. A video of a teacher implementing this lesson is available by contacting the Ithaca Gerontology Institute at 607-274-1965 or aging@ithaca.edu.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the demographic shift that will occur in the U.S. over the next 30 years
- Practice interpreting data from graphs
- Work together to predict how this shift will affect our society

Key Terms

chronic conditions, demographics, dependency ratio, long term care, mean age, median age, Medicare, older adult, percentage increase, projections, Social Security

Materials

Handout: Set of charts with demographic data

Handout: Group assignment predicting the future

Lesson Steps

1. Ask the students how old they will be in 2030. How old will their parents be? What will life be like? Discuss the “baby boom” generation (people born between 1946 and 1964). Why is it often called “the trend generation”?
2. What are some of the effects on society as this generation reaches retirement age? Briefly discuss the importance of Social Security and Medicare issues in the U.S. over the next 50 years.
3. Distribute the demographic packet and the prediction assignment worksheet. Arrange the students in groups and assign two topics from the assignment to each group.
4. After 20 minutes have each group report on their conclusions. Discuss. Compare the conclusions of different groups.

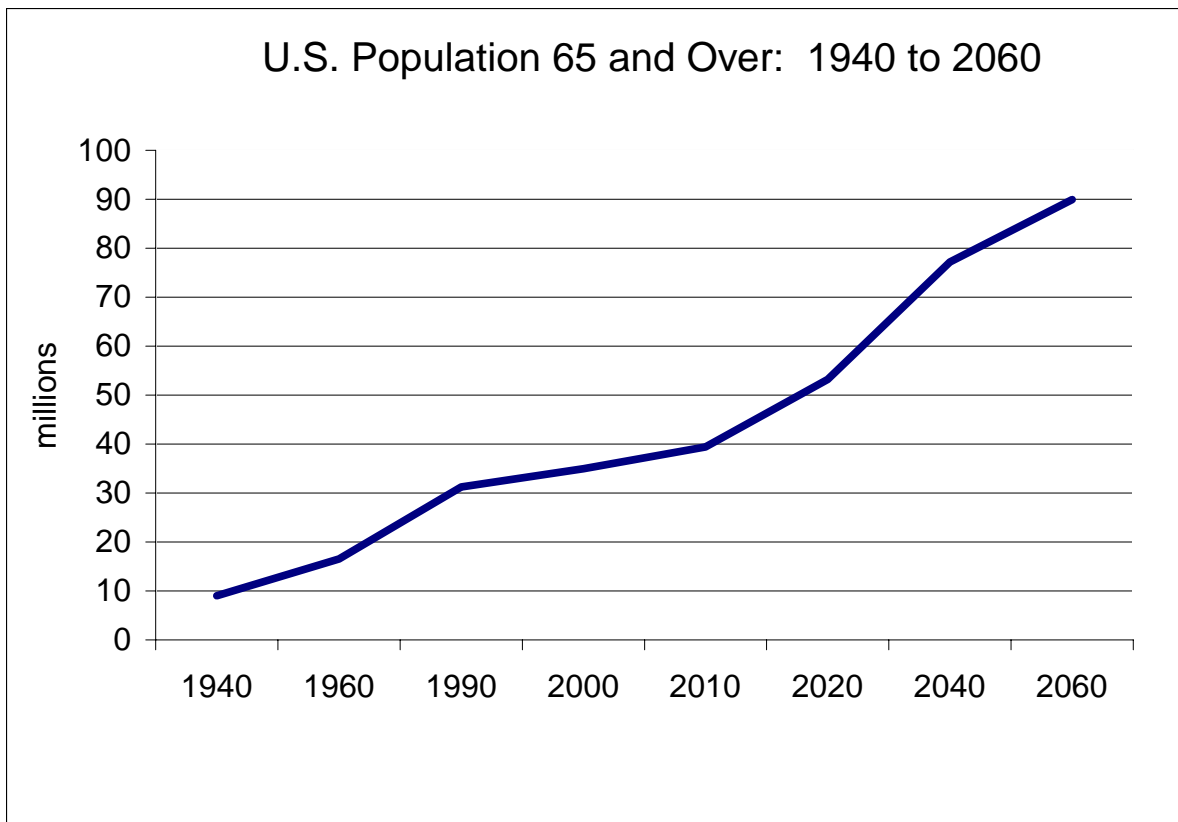
Adapted from a lesson written by Suzanne Johnson, social studies teacher at Vestal High School in Vestal, NY

Extension Activities

1. Research the current and projected characteristics of older people in more detail. Write a paper or report to the class. Start with the websites of the U.S. Census Bureau and the Population Reference Bureau.
2. Read Alfred Toffler's book, *Future Shock*, published in 1971. Which of his predictions are coming true? In what cases does he seem to have been wrong? Write a paper or report orally to the class.
3. Read other futurologists. What are they predicting? Write a paper or report orally to the class.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

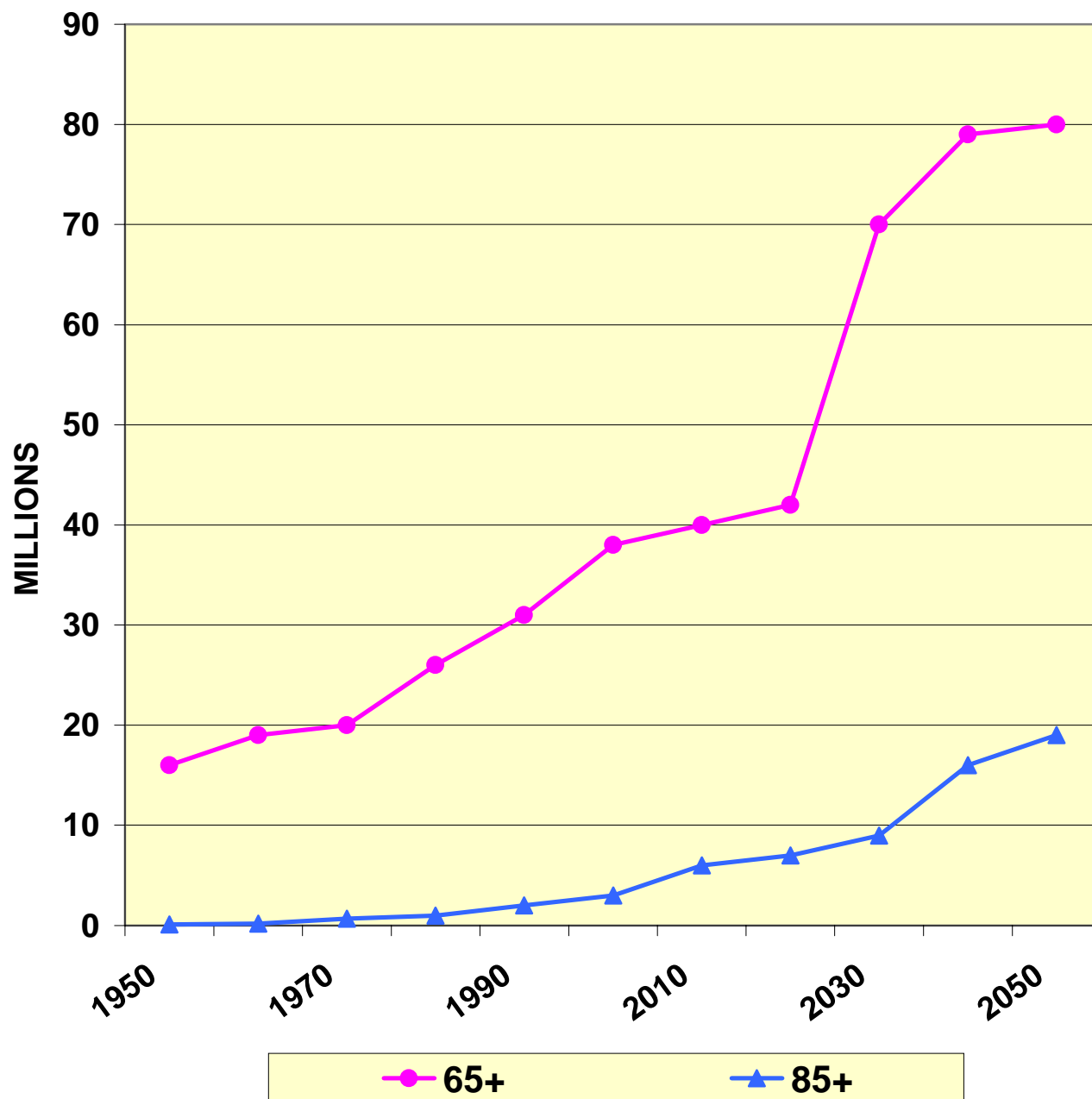
Using Demographics to Predict the Future



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

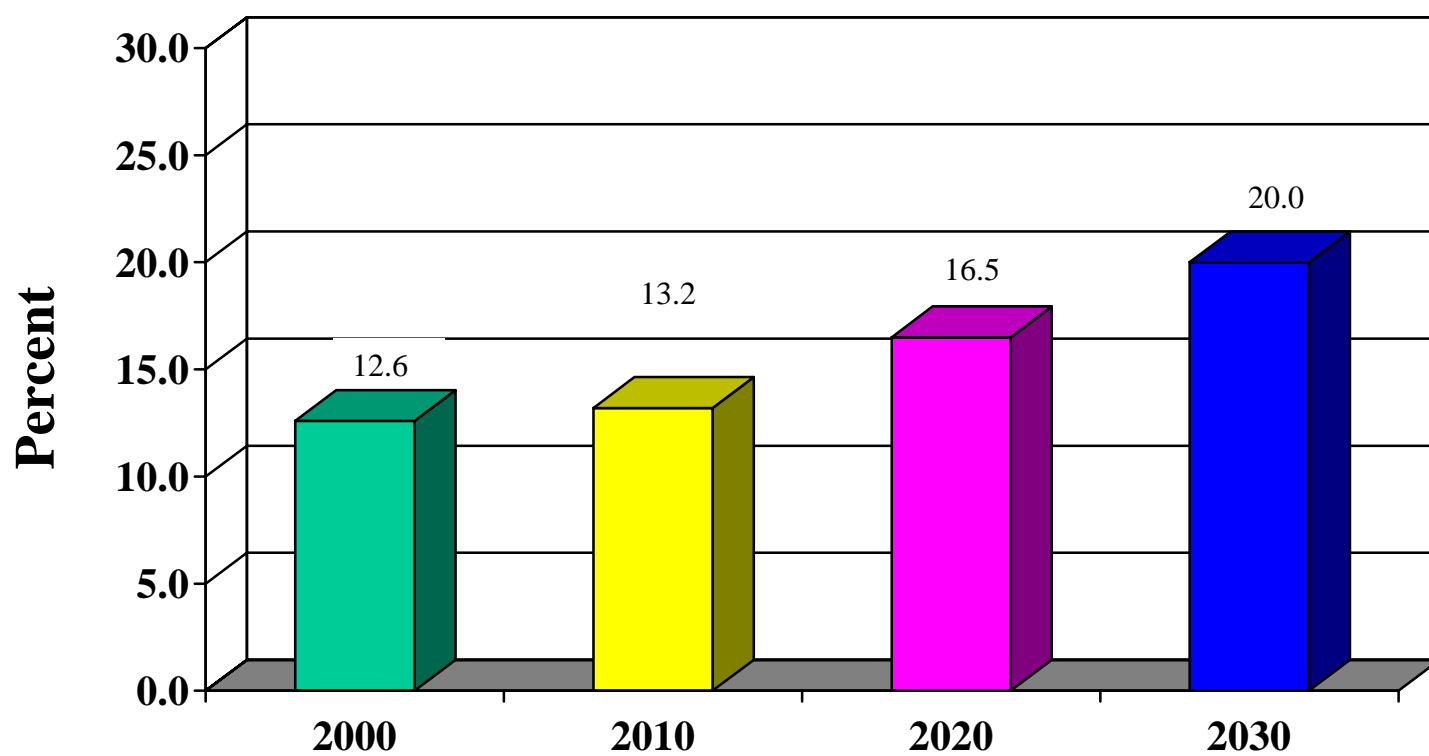
Growth of Older Population

Actual and Projected 65+ and 85+ Years of Age



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Percent of U.S. Population 65+ Years of Age



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

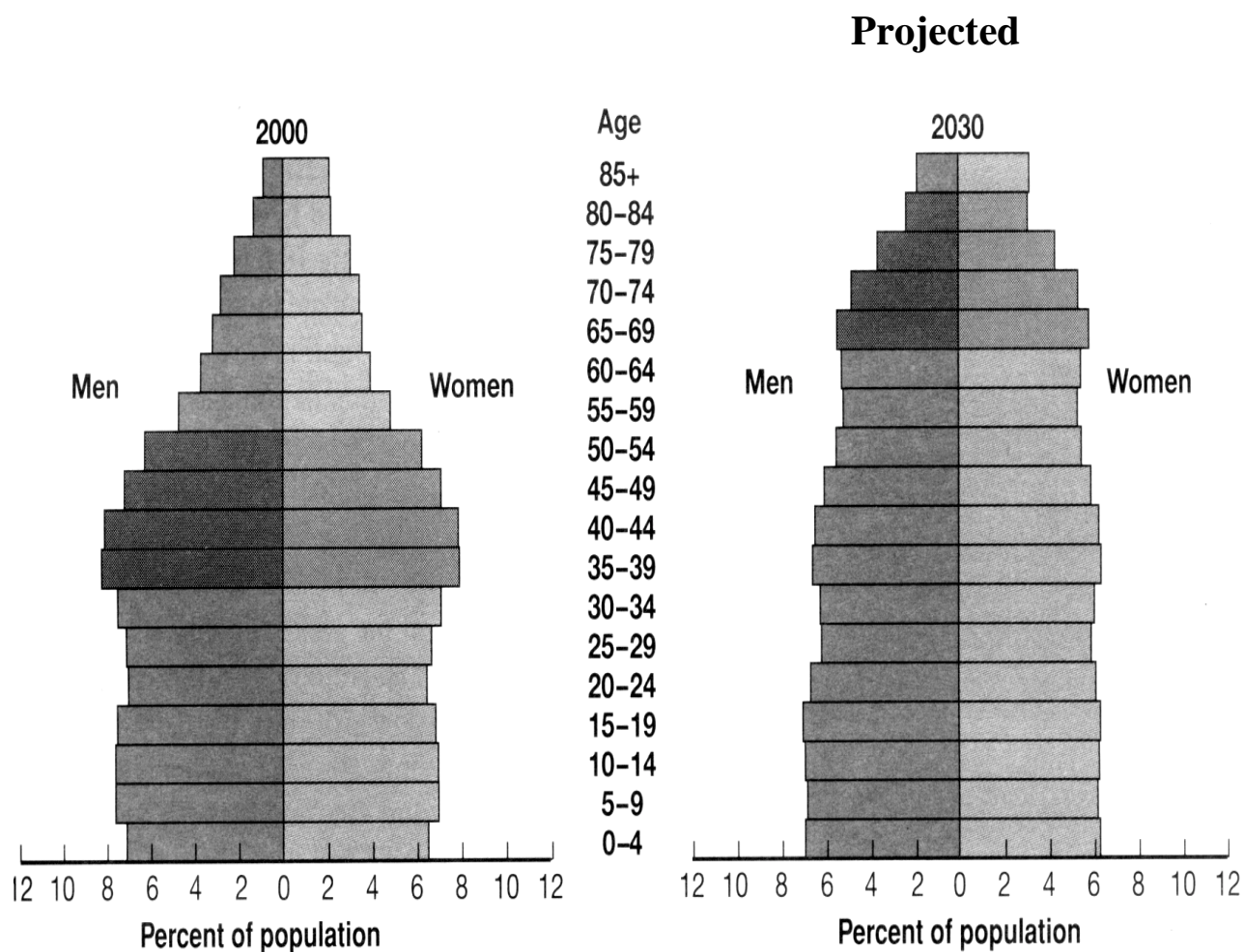
Changes in Longevity Over Time

Year	Life Expectancy at Birth	At 65
	<u>M / F</u>	<u>M / F</u>
1890	47.9/50.7	11.5/12.2
1950	65.5/71.0	13.0/15.8
1960	66.8/73.2	13.0/15.8
1998	73.6/79.4	15.9/19.2

Active Life Expectancy at 65: M = 12 more years
F = 13.5 more years

Source: *Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-Being*

Population Pyramid of the U.S. in 2000 and 2030

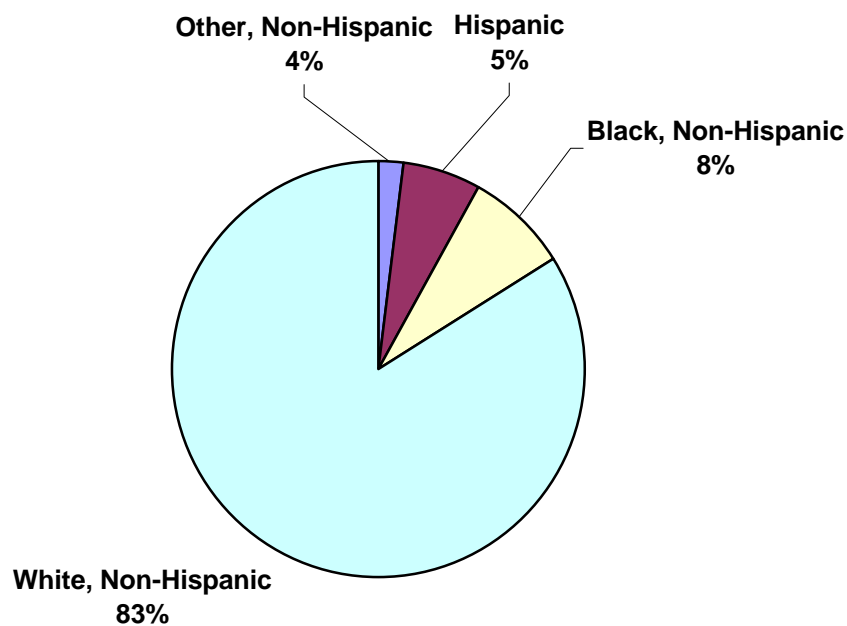


Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

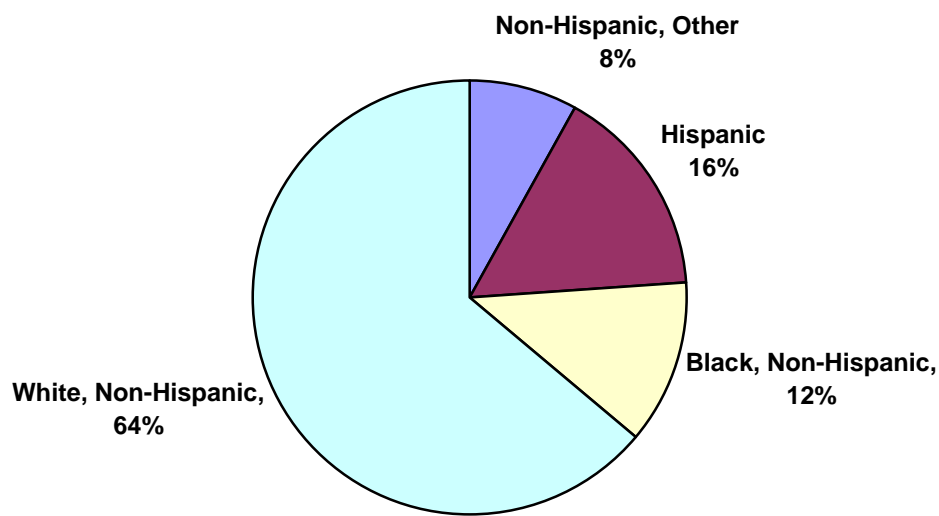
Elderly Americans by Race and Ethnicity

Population Age 65+: 2000 and 2050

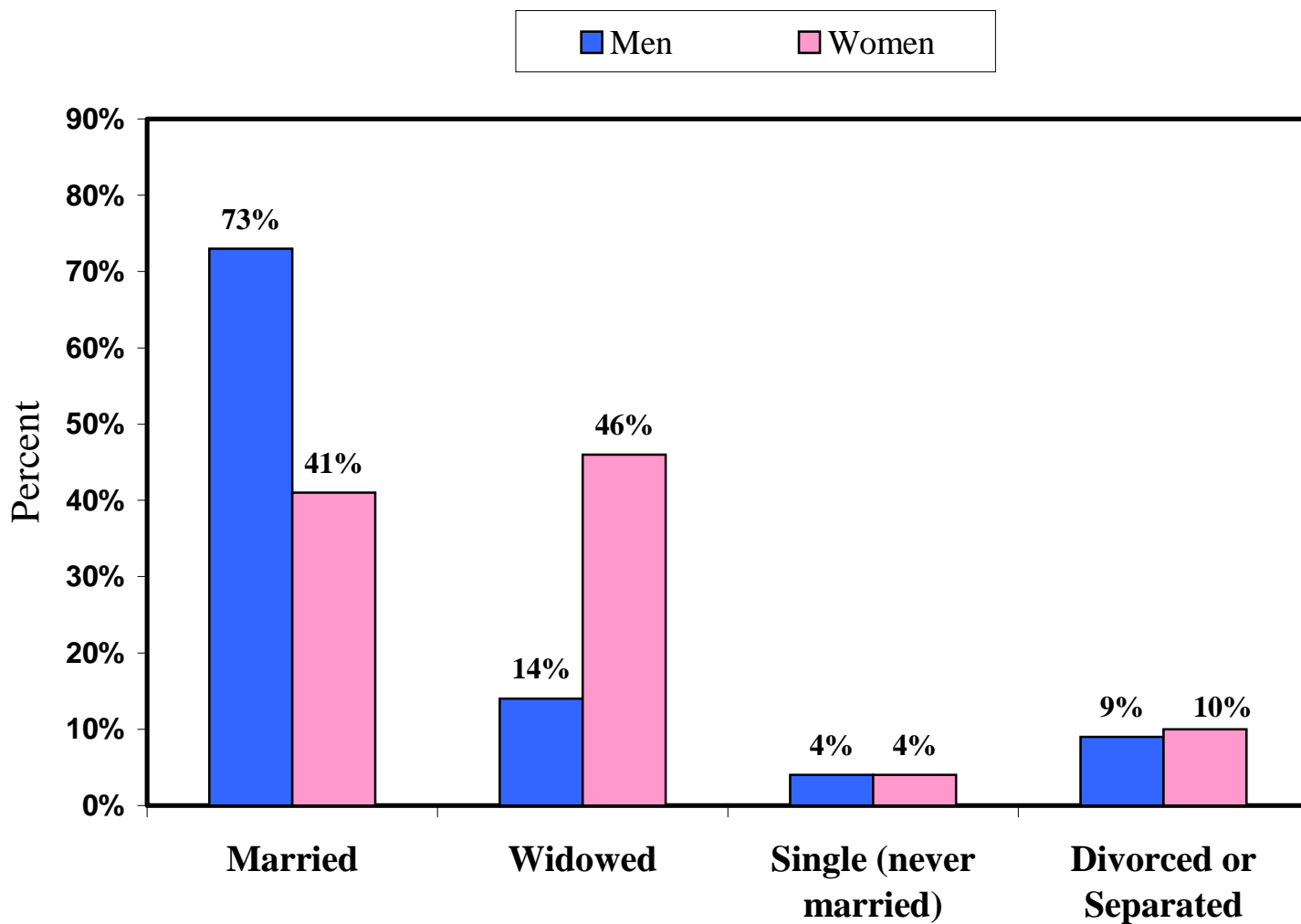
2000



2050

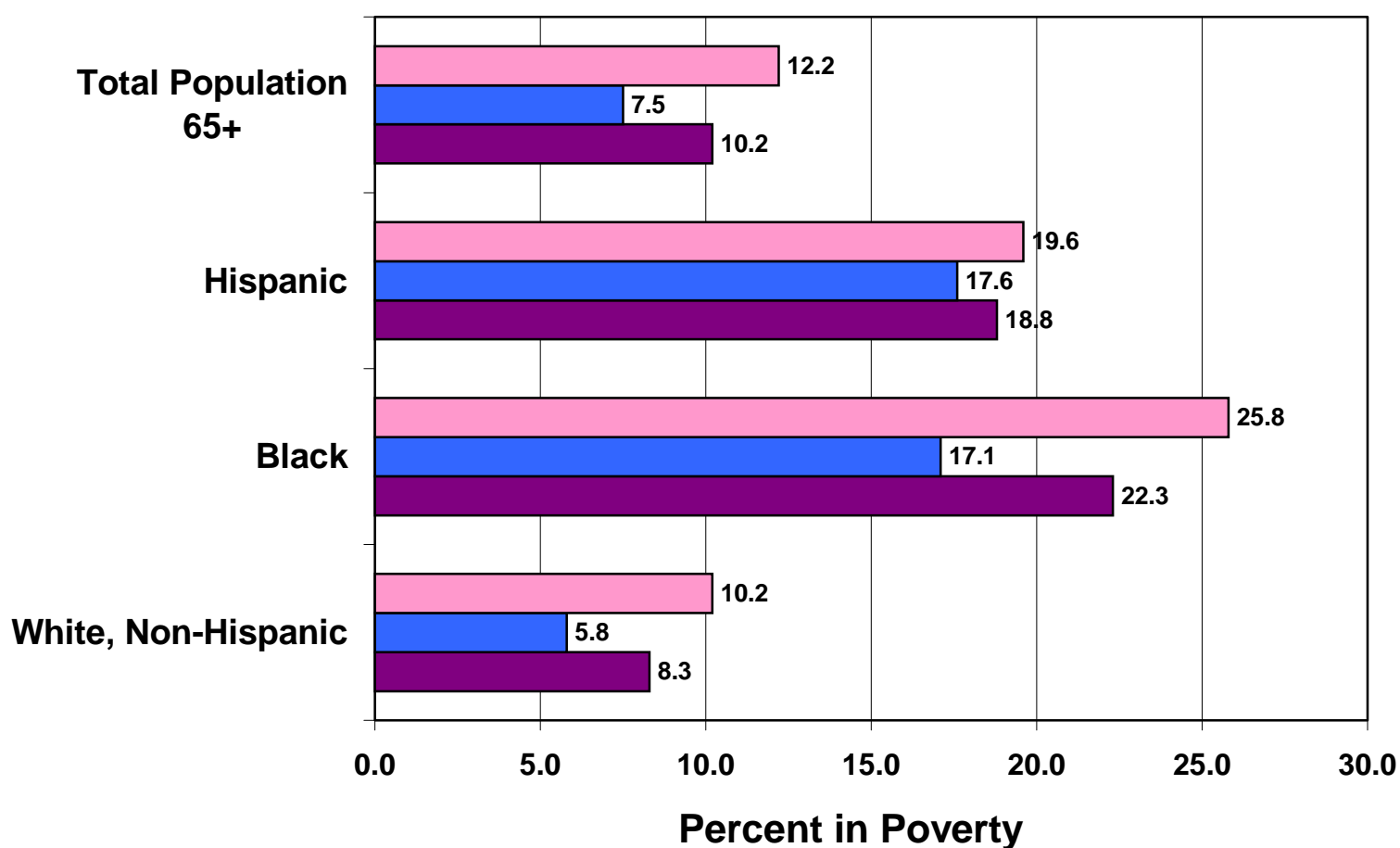


Current Marital Status of Persons 65+ 2001



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

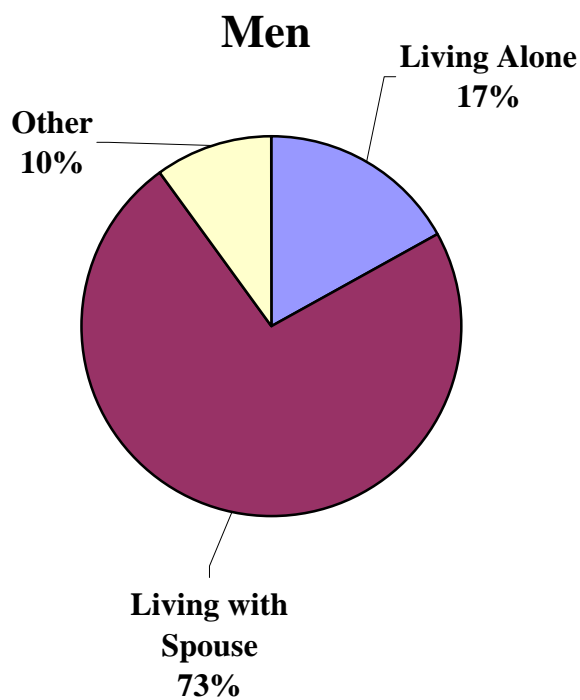
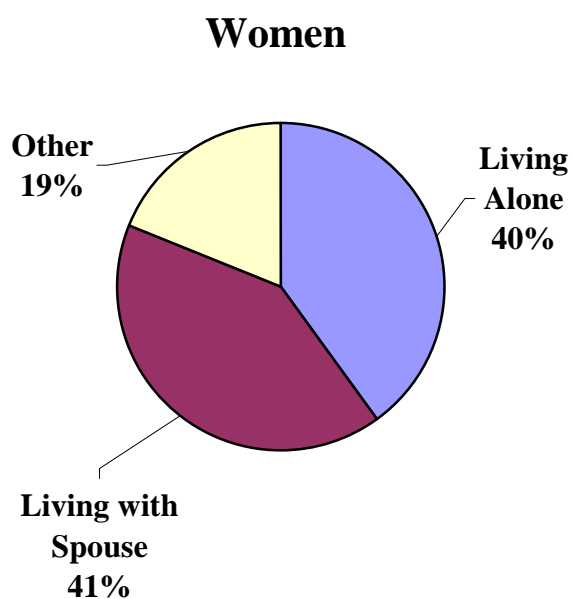
Poverty Rates Among Persons 65+ 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

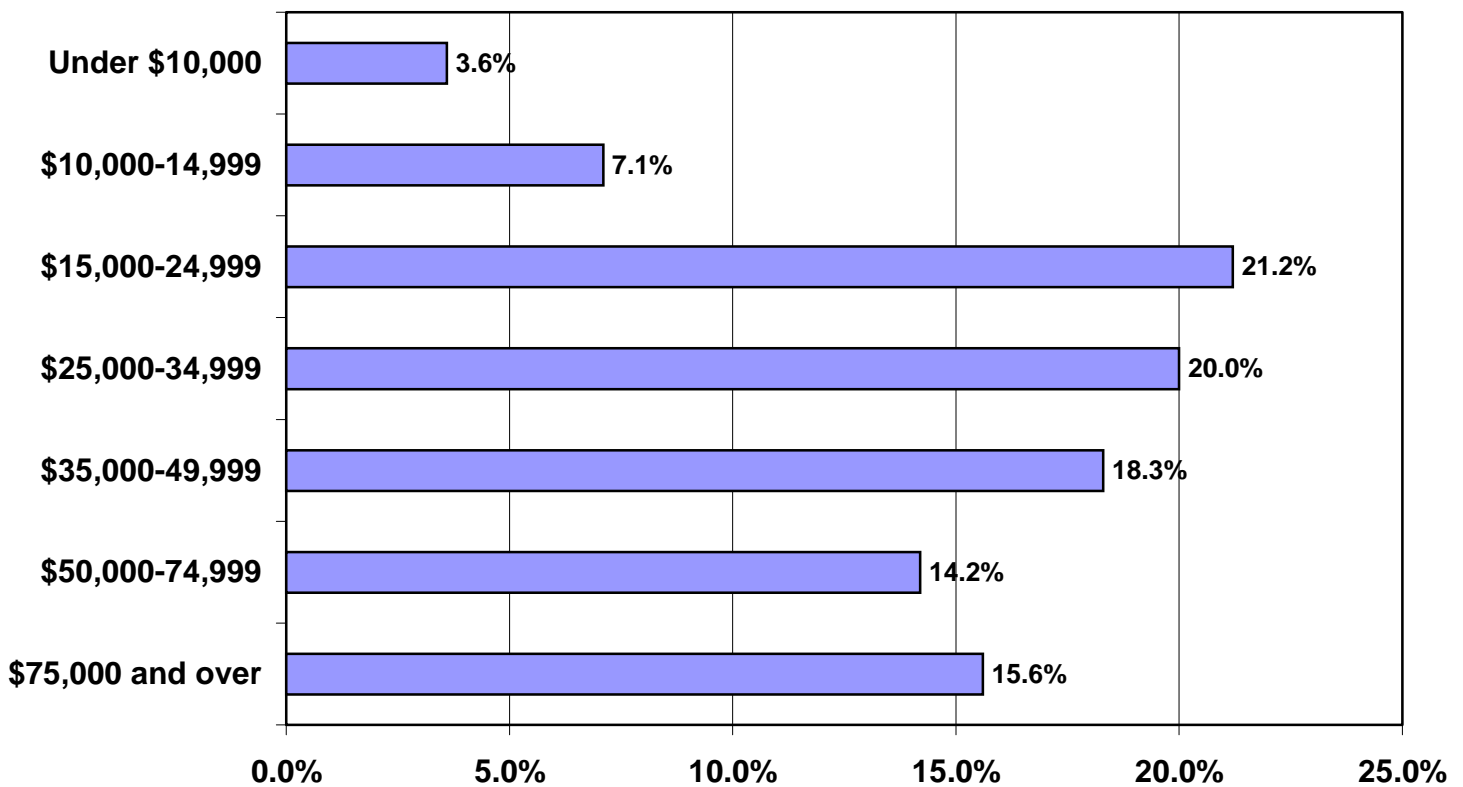
Living Arrangements for Females and Males 65+

2000



Source: *A Profile of Older Americans: 2002*, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services

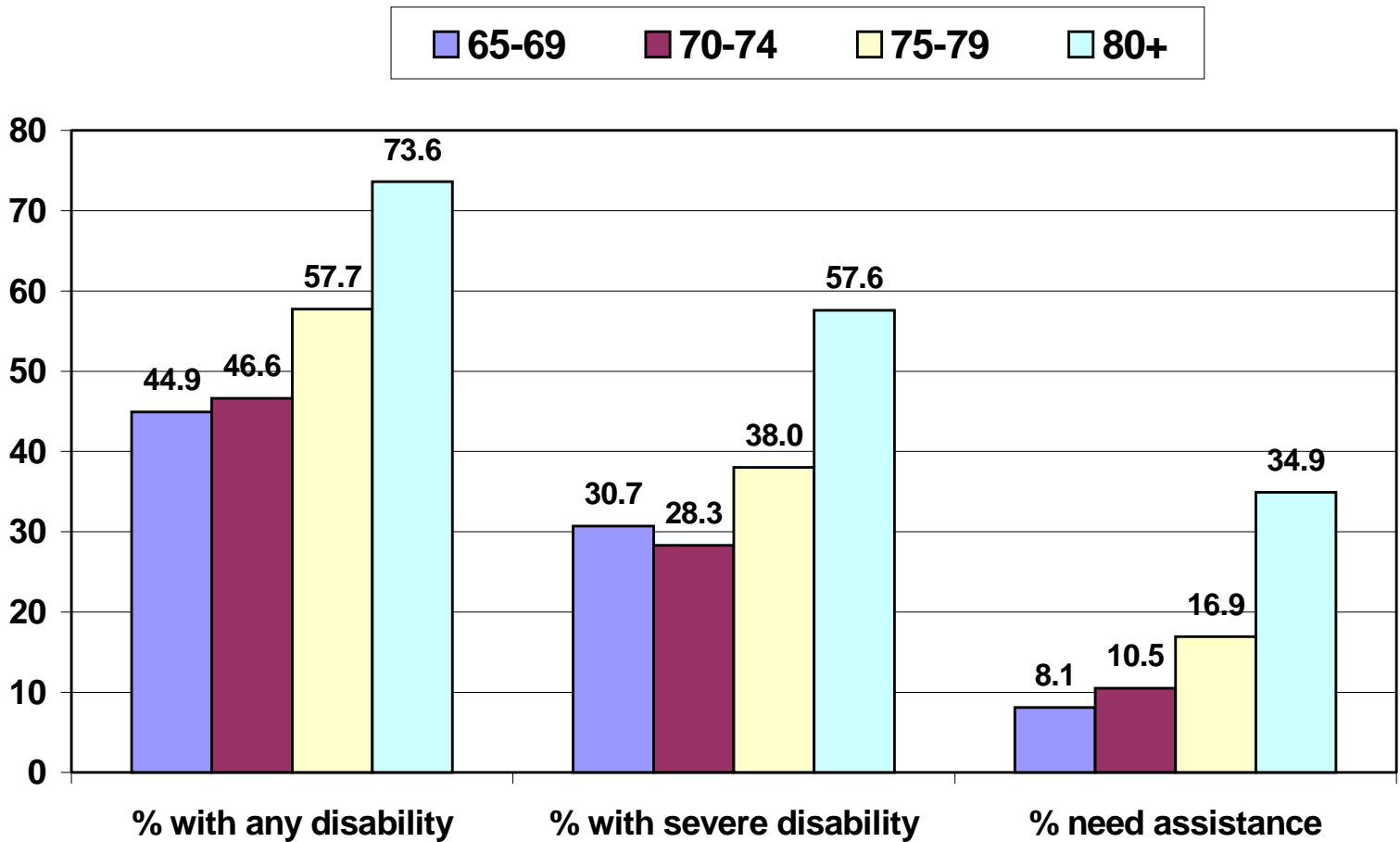
Percent Distribution by Household Income 65+ Person as Head of Household 2001



Source: *A Profile of Older Americans: 2002*, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services.

Percent with Disabilities by Age

1997



Source: *A Profile of Older Americans: 2002*, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services.

Group Activity: Predict the Future!!

Use the statistical information in the demographic charts to hypothesize about the impact of an aging population on each of the following. Be thorough!

IMPACT ON LIFE

SOCIAL SECURITY:

MEDICARE:

HEALTH CARE (JOBS, CONCERNS):

RECREATION:

HOUSING/LIVING ARRANGEMENTS/COMPANIONSHIP:

FASHION:

ENTERTAINMENT:

FOOD:

OCCUPATION:

TRANSPORTATION/MOBILITY:

POLITICAL ACTIVITY:

After doing this exercise, discuss what you might do as a young person that could help when you become older?