

Inequalities in aging and the implications for younger generations

November 7 2013

As the over-65 population grows to about one in five Americans, it is important to recognize that older persons are not a homogeneous bloc of "seniors." A new report from the US2010 Project emphasizes that seniors are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of their schooling, employment status, income, gender, race/ethnicity, place of birth and age.

All of these factors affect older [family members](#)' ability to provide a safety net to the younger generation, as well as their need to rely on the family safety net themselves.

"Diversity among the elderly is not simply variation—separate but equal—but rather variation that results in inequalities," said report co-author Judith Seltzer, director of the California Center for Population Research at UCLA and a professor of sociology in the UCLA College of Letters and Science. "And these inequalities have implications for the social and [economic](#) well-being of each generation."

The longevity of today's [older adults](#) offers greater opportunities for meaningful interactions with children and grandchildren. In recent years, as they have made significant gains in their own economic well-being, older adults' financial help and caregiving has been important in helping their adult children and grandchildren get launched and weather economic crises.

Yet the strength of these ties has been tested by changes in the structure

and composition of families caused by high rates of cohabitation, child-bearing outside of marriage and divorce. And the rates of disruption are higher for poorer families, so older parents with the fewest resources to share are most likely to be called on for help.

Key points:

- The [elderly population](#) is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Hispanics are projected to make up 20 percent of those over the age of 65 in 2050.
- Compared to younger adults, the elderly are less likely to be poor, but gender and race differences are great among the elderly. In old age, minority men are much more likely to be poor than white women.
- Immigrants have fewer social and economic resources available in the United States than the native born. Hispanic [elderly](#) report that many of their health and economic needs remain unmet even when they receive assistance from family members.
- Even among those who are economically disadvantaged, however, grandparents are an important source of support for their grandchildren. Almost one-third of grandmothers who live with a grandchild bear primary responsibility for the child. This pattern is especially pronounced for African American grandmothers.

More information: www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/Data/Report/report11062013.pdf

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

Citation: Inequalities in aging and the implications for younger generations (2013, November 7)

retrieved 6 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-11-inequalities-aging-implications-younger.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.