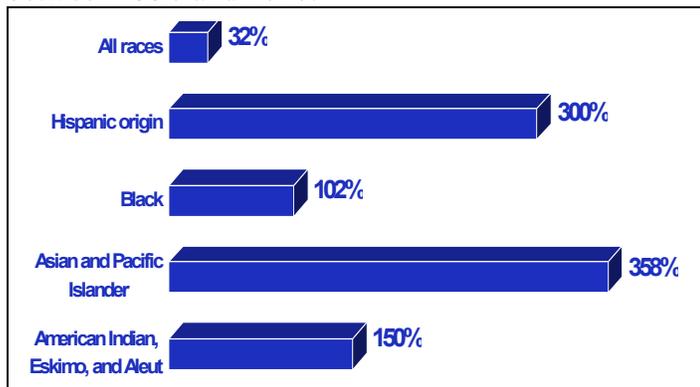




Serving our Hispanic American Elders

The Hispanic American population is living longer, growing older, and becoming more diverse. The older Hispanic population is one of the fastest growing groups in the nation. In 1990, 5.1 percent of the Hispanic population was age 65 or older. Demographers expect that this number will reach 14.1 percent by 2020. These changing demographics have begun to result in an increase in culturally appropriate programs and services responsive to the diverse needs of older Hispanic American adults and their families.

The Hispanic elderly population will be the second most rapidly growing segment between 1990 and 2020:



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1993). U.S. Population Estimates, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin.

Diversity of Hispanic Elders

The racial and ethnic diversity of the Hispanic American population is exemplified by its many distinct ethnic groups. The members of these groups have unique languages, cultures and religions: and are diverse in terms of education levels and socioeconomic status. Among Hispanic elders living in the United States, nearly 49 percent are of Mexican descent, 15 percent are of Cuban descent, 12 percent are of Puerto Rican descent, and 25 percent are other Hispanic heritage.

Health and Chronic Illnesses

The leading disease-related causes of death for Hispanic Americans include heart disease, cancer, HIV infection, cerebrovascular diseases, pneumonia, influenza, and diabetes. While the Medicare program covers vaccinations to prevent pneumonia, annually only 15 percent of Hispanic Americans age 65 or older have received a vaccination. AoA is working to end health disparities among older members of racial and ethnic minority populations as part of the Department of Health and Human Services initiative, "Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health 2010." In 2000, AoA awarded a demonstration grant to the Latino Education Project, Inc. of Corpus Christi, Texas to develop culturally sensitive community-based health promotion and disease prevention programs and to educate older Latinos in the Coastal Bend area of South Texas about the impact and prevention of cardiovascular disease and late on-set diabetes. The Latino Education Project will also:

- Identify culturally appropriate prevention activities;

- Encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyles which acknowledge and integrate appropriate cultural practices and diets; and
- Increase access to medical and health interventions.

Hispanic Americans and Family Caregiving

Twenty-seven percent of Hispanic American households provide informal caregiving to a friend or relative. The typical Hispanic caregiver is a 40 year old female. More than half of all Hispanic caregivers also has a child age 18 and younger living at home.

Older Hispanic Americans and Poverty

Many older Hispanic American adults are immigrants with limited English language skills, who worked in low-paying jobs that did not provide retirement benefits. This contributed to 24 percent of Hispanic elders living below the poverty level, more than double the rate of older white, non-Hispanic adults who live in poverty.

Education

On average, older Hispanic American adults have less formal education than the older American population overall. Nearly 60 percent of Hispanic elders have less than a ninth grade education compared to 19.4 percent of older adults nation wide. Sixteen percent have a high school diploma compared to almost 34 percent of elders nationwide. Three percent of Hispanic elders have a bachelor's degree compared to almost 9 percent nationwide.

AoA Encourages Hispanic American Communities to Get Involved

Hispanic communities are encouraged to take a lead role and actively participate in developing state and local plans that affect Hispanic elders. Groups that represent Hispanic elders, their families and service providers are invited to voice concerns and needs during the public hearing process. Under Section 297(8) of the Older Americans Act, state agencies must show their effectiveness in reaching older individuals with the greatest economic and social need, paying particular attention to low-income minority individuals. The State agency will ask people and organizations that know of the needs and concerns of low-income minority older individuals to share their concerns and experiences during the public hearing process.

Working in close partnership with its sister agencies in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the AoA is the official Federal agency dedicated to policy development, planning and the delivery of supportive home and community-based services to older persons and their caregivers. The AoA works through the national aging network of 56 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 233 Tribal and Native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations, and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers. For more information about the AoA, please contact:



U.S. Administration on Aging
 Department of Health and Human Services
 330 Independence Avenue, S.W.
 Washington, DC 20201

Phone: (202) 401-4541
 Fax: (202) 357-3560
 e-mail: aoainfo@aoa.gov
 Web: www.aoa.gov