

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS iBILL-BD GiLL-B0.00(OI-1QF)11( THE OLDER P)11(OI-1QP)11(U)2LA

There is a need to go beyond the descriptive statistics on living arrangements to investigate the factors that influence one's living arrangements and explore the impact those different living arrangements have on older people's lives. Hermalin (1997) suggests the need to "distinguish between the *form* and *function* of familial arrangements, and not infer the content from the structure". In other words, objective measures of living arrangements should not be used to hypothesize about subjective measures of well-being or quality of relationships between co-resident family members.

As population ageing increases in both developed and developing countries, issues surrounding support and care of older persons are receiving more attention. The living arrangements of the older population can have an influence on the demand for formal and informal support systems. Given the competing demands for scarce resources, examination of the factors influencing the living arrangements and social support systems of the older population can aid policy makers trying to address the needs of the older population. While there are several areas that warrant future research when discussing the living arrangements of the older population and their well-being, the present paper will focus on three areas: (a) changing family structure; (b) familial resource transfers; and (c) older people's preference in terms of living arrangements and care.

#### CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURE

Changing family structures will have an impact on the well-being of the older population now and into the future. Changing family structures also influence the need for formal support systems. There are several alternative forms of family and generational structure that are shaped by changes in marital status, fertility, mortality and migration. Much of the research has focused on the *traditional* paths through the life course (e.g., marriage, bearing children and widowhood) and has not considered the alternative pathways and their consequences on living arrangements and well-being in later life.

Declines in fertility, often quite rapid, now characterize most developing countries. Research on and microsimulation of kin availability suggests that tomorrow's elderly will have fewer children upon whom to rely, though this may be offset by increased joint survival of spouses (Kinsella, 1996). In the Republic of Korea, for example, Lee and Palloni (1992) have shown that, although declining fertility results in an increase in the proportion of Korean women with no surviving son, increased male longevity means that the proportion of elderly widows also will decline (i.e., their husbands will live longer). Thus, from the older women's viewpoint, family status may not deteriorate significantly in the coming years. From society's per 8(i)4.3a92(1)-8.(i)3.2e,3(



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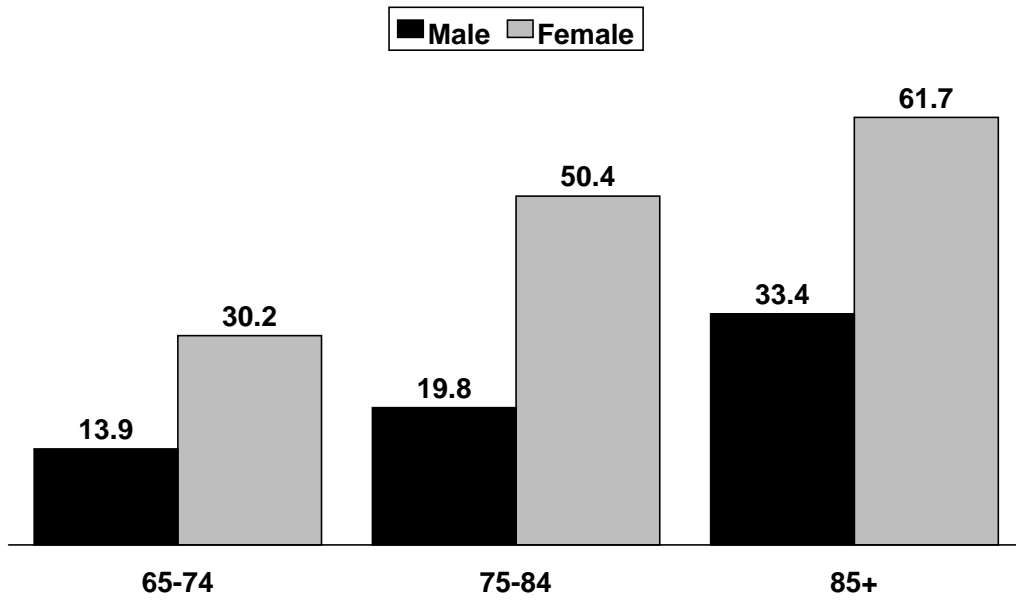
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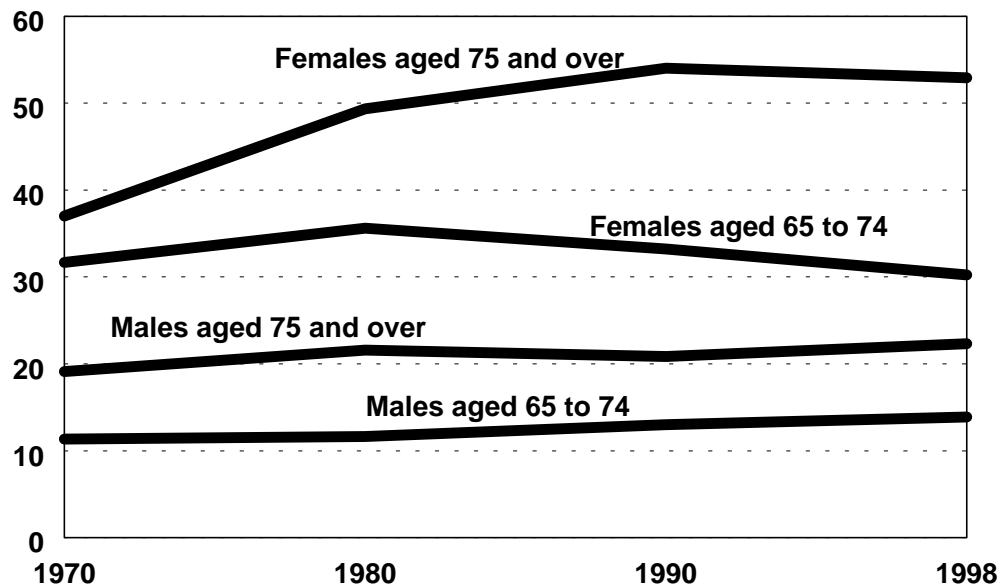
Figure I. Percentage of United States population in older ages living alone, by sex: March 1998



Source: United States Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey*, March 1998.



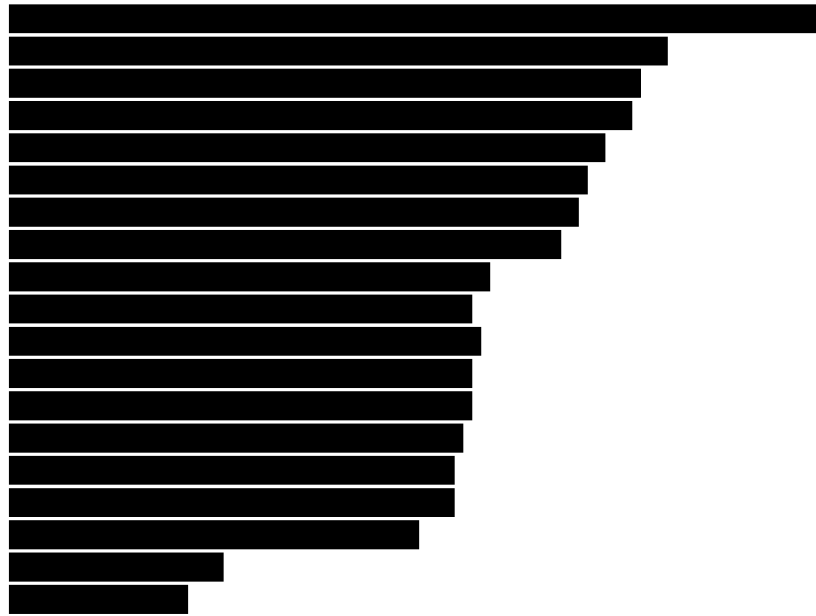
Figure II. Percentage of United States population aged 65 and over living alone, by age and sex: 1970-1998



Source: United States Bureau of the Census, CPS reports, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements*, March 1994 (pp. 20-484) and March 1998 (Update) (pp. 20-514).



**Figure IV. Percentage of the older population in residential care: circa 1991**



*Source:* OECD (1996).