Creating an Aging-Friendly Snohomish County
Series III. Demographics of the Aging Population

Published April 2012
Acknowledgements

Snohomish Health District, Healthy Communities & Assessment
Wendy Burchill-Blaisdell, BS, Assessment Specialist
Mark Serafin, MA, MS, Statistician
Carrie McLachlan, MPA, Manager, Healthy Communities & Assessment

Assessment acknowledges:
➢ The Senior Consortium of Snohomish County for their guidance and consultation.
   Susie Starrfield, Chair, Supervisor Snohomish County Long Term Care and Aging.
➢ Gary Goldbaum, MD, MPH, Health Officer for his assistance in reviewing this report.

For more information on this report or other data, contact:
425.339.8618 | healthstats@snohd.org | www.snohd.org
Snohomish Health District | 3020 Rucker Ave. Suite 206 | Everett, WA 98201
Executive Summary

Population Growth
The population of Snohomish County increased by 107,311 between 2000 and 2010, a growth rate of 17.7%. This represented 12.9% of Washington State’s growth during this period.

The county’s population 50 years and older increased by 52.2% between 2000 and 2010; people 50 years and older will constitute one-third of the county’s population by 2015.

Snohomish County’s population 65 years and older increased from 9.1% of the total population in 2000 to 10.3% in 2010.

Race
As a whole, the county’s racial make-up has changed dramatically. Non-Hispanic Whites decreased from 83.4% in 2000 to 74.3% in 2010. Hispanics were the fastest-growing racial group in the county, increasing 124.7% between 2000 and 2010. Hispanics accounted for one-third of the county’s population increase during this period. The Asian population increased by 80.6% between 2000 and 2010 and was responsible for one-quarter (26.1%) of the county’s population growth during this period.

While overall population growth in the county is occurring primarily among non-Whites, most of the growth of the older adult population is occurring among Whites. Overall growth in the White population was 4.9% between 2000 and 2010, but the White population 50 and older increased by 43.5% during this period. More than one-third of Whites were 50 years or older in 2010.

Living Arrangements
One in five Snohomish County households included a person 65 years or older. However, people 65 years and older were more likely to live alone or in group quarters than those younger than 65, who were more likely to live with family or with unrelated persons. One-quarter of people 65 and older lived alone in 2010. Females 65 and older made up 22.3% of all single-persons households but represented only 5.8% of the population. Only 21.9% of people between 65 and 84 were renting their homes, but this increased to 43.4% among those 85 and older.

“Beautiful young people are accidents of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art.” ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

Overall population growth in the county is occurring primarily among non-Whites, but most of the growth of the older adult population is occurring among Whites.
Finances

Although the estimated median household income in Snohomish County during 2010 was $63,188, households headed by someone 65 years or older had substantially lower incomes than the county average, with a median income of $39,356. However, because older adults tend to have more assets, this difference in incomes does not necessarily imply financial hardship. As of December 2010, 67,895 Snohomish County adults age 65 or older received Social Security benefits, totaling approximately $84 million per month. Among Snohomish County households headed by a person 65 years or older, 90% received Social Security income.

Estimated living expenses for healthy older adults in Snohomish County ranged from $18,240 for a single person who owns their home to $39,360 for a couple with a mortgage. Social Security benefits alone are generally insufficient for retirement, but more than one in five older adults in Washington has no other source of income. Among adults 65 years and older, 6.1% had incomes below the Federal Poverty Level and 15.0% had incomes below 150% of the Federal Poverty Threshold, compared to the overall county average of 9.9% and 16.0% respectively.

“Aging-friendly communities are those that support the needs and desires of older adults. An aging-friendly community: ¹

- addresses basic needs,
- promotes social and civic engagement,
- optimizes physical and mental health and well being, and
- maximizes independence for the frail and disabled.

¹ AdvantAge Initiative; www.vmsny.org/advantage/whatis.html

“...includes old age as well as youth and maturity. The beauty of the morning and the radiance of noon are good, but it would be a very silly person who drew the curtains and turned on the light in order to shut out the tranquility of the evening.”

~ W. Somerset Maugham
Creating an Aging-Friendly Snohomish County

Increasing life expectancy in the United States and the aging of the baby-boomer generation together are creating a rapid expansion in the proportion of people who are 65 years and older. Between 2010 and 2030, Snohomish County’s population age 65 years and older is expected to increase 160% and will constitute 20% of the county’s total population. This increase will pose significant social and health challenges. “Few Americans realize their country is in the middle of a demographic revolution. This revolution will affect every person and every institution in our society. Its impact will be at least as powerful as any economic and social movements of the past... age is no longer a barrier to life, but rather an opportunity for new experience” (1).

As baby boomers grow older, the overwhelming majority want to remain in their own homes and communities. In fact, people 65-85 are the least likely of any age group to move. The rapidly growing number of people who are “aging in place” will present new opportunities and challenges to local communities. Communities must become more livable for older adults, or “aging-friendly.” In practical terms, an aging-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities (2). An example of this would be a community that takes into account the needs of older adults with limited mobility when planning pedestrian walkways and transportation options. Additional characteristics of aging-friendly communities are listed in the Appendix.

Aging-friendly communities build their capacity to support the health, well being, and independence of all their elders, including older people at risk for disease and disability and the disabled or frail elderly.
- AdvantAge Initiative

To understand the aging population of Snohomish County, the Health Statistics and Assessment Program at the Snohomish Health District in collaboration with the Senior Consortium of Snohomish County* is conducting an assessment of the aging population in the county.

This assessment is intended to help define local priorities by describing the health of the population and group disparities, and by identifying gaps in the capacity of social services to meet the needs of the population. Information will be drawn from population-based data bases and health surveys, focus groups with older adults, and key informant interviews with community leaders. When combined, these data sources will identify major concerns of older adults and the community service agencies that support them, and will support efforts to create aging-friendly communities in Snohomish County.

The results will be published in a series of reports entitled “Creating an Aging-Friendly Snohomish County.” The series will include:
- **Report I (published 2011):** Voices from the Community - focus group findings from county residents 50 and older. The report identified concerns of the aging population, suggestions for the community, and barriers to creating an aging-friendly community.
- **Report II (published 2011):** Voices from the Community - key informant information collected from leaders in the county representing various agencies providing services to the aging population. The report identified services provided, unmet needs, and barriers to creating an aging-friendly community.
- **Report III (published 2012):** Demographics of the population aged 50 and older. The report will include growth projections of the population of older adults and other demographics.
- **Report IV (expected 2012):** Population-based health and access data. It will include information about the prevalence and incidence of diseases affecting the older population, health-related behaviors, use of preventive services, and information about health insurance and barriers to care.

* The Senior Consortium of Snohomish County is a collaboration of businesses, government agencies, non-profit organizations, volunteers and citizens dedicated to the education, communication and facilitation of change for an aging-friendly community in Snohomish County now and for the future.
Methods

Various ages have been used to define the older population. The most common is 65 and older as that is when most individuals qualify for Medicare and other benefits. The Older American Act of 1965 uses 60 years and older, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) uses 50, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention use various ages, including 50 and older. In addition, many health preventive screenings are recommended beginning at age 50, and prevention activities and planning for the future become more real for individuals at this age. For this assessment, the aging population is defined as persons 50 and older. However, much of the data in this report compares those 65 and older to those younger than 65 because the data are only reported by those age groups.

This report presents 2010 demographic data from the US Census Bureau. The Census produced two data products for 2010 – the results of the 2010 Census (which includes all households in the United States) and the American Community Survey (which includes a sample of households). Because it includes all households, results from the Census (population counts and race descriptions) are assumed to be accurate and do not have associated margins of errors (i.e., confidence intervals).

Results from the American Community Survey do have associated margins of error, because it represents a sample of households. The margins of error presented in this report represent 90% confidence intervals, meaning that there is a 90% certainty that the actual population value the survey seeks to measure is included in the range of the confidence interval. These confidence intervals were provided by the Census Bureau.
Series III: Demographics of the Aging Population

Snohomish County is located on the eastern shore of Puget Sound, just north of King County and the Seattle metropolitan area. Covering 2,089 square miles, it is the 13th largest county in total land area in Washington (3). Sixty-eight percent of the county’s land area is forest land, 18% is rural, 9% is urban/city, and 5% is agricultural. The county has twenty incorporated cities, the largest of which is Everett. In 2010, Snohomish County had a population of 713,335 (4). Snohomish County was the third most populous county in Washington State and constituted 10.6% of the state’s population (5). Its population density was 341.5 people per square mile (4).

Between 2000 and 2010, the population of Snohomish County increased by 107,311, or 17.7% (5). This was the tenth highest county growth rate in Washington State and higher than the statewide average of 14.1%. However, between 2000 and 2010 Snohomish County gained the second greatest number of new residents in the state, accounting for 12.9% of the state’s total growth. Natural increase (the difference between births and deaths) accounted for 8.0% of the county’s growth and in-migration the remaining 9.7% (6).

The population age 50 and older is growing older. The median age for the county in 2010 was 37.1 years, a considerable increase from the median age of 34.7 in 2000 (7, 8). Compared with an overall growth rate of 17.7% for the county, the population age 50 and older increased 52.2% between 2000 and 2010. Most of this growth occurred in the 50 to 64 age range, which increased 64.8% and grew from 14.1% of the population in 2000 to 19.3% in 2010. This increase reflects the aging of the baby boom generation. The population age 65 and older grew by 32.7% during this same period and increased from 9.1% of the population in 2000 to 10.3% in 2010.
The population pyramids show the aging of Snohomish County’s population (7, 8). The aging of the baby boom generation can be seen as the high percentages in the 30-39 and 40-49 year old age groups in the graph on the left (year 2000) which moved into the 40-49 and 50-59 year old age groups on the right (year 2010). In addition, the proportion of people between 60 and 69 increased from 5.7% in 2000 to 8.7% in 2010. At the same time, the proportion of children younger than 10 years old fell from 15.0% of the population in 2000 to 13.2% in 2010.
Population Projections

The proportion of Snohomish County’s population that is 65 and older will continue to increase into the immediate future. By 2030 this age group is predicted to increase approximately 160%, until it is one-fifth of the county’s population, or approximately 194,000 people (9).

An additional 17.2% of the population is projected to be between the ages of 50 and 64. Approximately 357,000 people will be age 50 or older in 2030. People 50 and older will constitute one-third of the county’s population by 2015.

“...The boomers’ biggest impact will be on eliminating the term ‘retirement’ and inventing a new stage of life...the new career arc.”

~ Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Figure 3. Projected Proportion of Population Age 50 and Older, Snohomish County, 2000-2030
**Regional Variation**

For geographic comparison purposes, Snohomish County is divided into ten Health Planning Areas (HPAs). The HPAs allow health planners to identify parts of the county that experience an increased burden of disease or risk factors for disease and to more effectively target intervention programs. The HPAs are designed to differ socioeconomically (e.g., the percent of the population living below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level) because many health indicators are associated with socioeconomic status.

The proportion of people who were 50 and older varied by Health Planning Area. The View Corridor (Woodway, Edmonds and Mukilteo) had the greatest proportion of older adults in its population, with more than 40% of people there being age 50 and above. The View Corridor contained 15.4% of the county’s population of older adults, although it accounted for only 10.2% of the county’s overall population. The Arlington-Stanwood HPA had the second-highest proportion of older adults at 34.1%. The Lake Stevens and South Everett HPAs had the lowest proportions of older adults, with less than 25% of their populations being age 50 and above. The other HPAs had populations 50 and older that were near the county average of 30.0%.

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing.” ~George Bernard
Race
Snohomish County’s population consisted primarily of non-Hispanic whites, who made up nearly three-quarters of the county’s population (74.3%) in 2010 (10). This was lower than in 2000, when the proportion of non-Hispanic whites was 83.4% (11). The next two largest racial groups in the county were Hispanics and Asians, followed by multi-racial residents and people who defined their race as “other,” blacks, American Indians, and Pacific Islanders.

Figure 4. Race Distribution
Snohomish County, 2010
Most of the county’s growth between 2000 and 2010 was among non-whites (10, 11). All non-white racial groups except American Indians increased as a proportion of the total population between 2000 and 2010. While the white population increased by 4.9% during this period, the non-white population grew by 82.0%. The fastest growth occurred among Hispanics, who accounted for 33.2% of the county’s population growth from 2000 through 2010. Pacific Islanders were the second-fastest growing population, but this increase accounted for only 1.3% of the county’s growth. Asians, Blacks, and people of multiple races or who classified themselves as belonging to an “other” race represented 26.1%, 7.0%, and 8.7% of the county’s population increase, respectively. The county’s American Indian population did not grow as fast as others, and declined slightly from 1.3% of the population in 2000 to 1.2% in 2010.
Snohomish County consists of a stable but aging population of non-Hispanic whites and growing, younger non-white populations. While overall growth in the county is occurring primarily among non-whites, whites are driving the growth of the older population. Whites made up 74.3% of the county’s total population in 2010, but they were 85.6% of people age 50 and older and 88.1% of those 65 and older (12).

The overall growth rate for non-Hispanic whites was 4.9% between 2000 and 2010, but the population 50 and older increased by 43.5% (12, 13).

Figure 6. Population Age 50 and Older by Race Snohomish County, 2010

- White, 85.6%
- Hispanic, 2.9%
- Asian, 7.4%
- American Indian, 0.9%
- Black, 1.4%
- Pacific Islander, 0.2%
- Multi/Other, 1.5%
More than one-third of non-Hispanic whites were 50 and older in 2010 (12). They had the highest proportions of people between the ages of 50 and 64 and 65 and older. The median age for non-Hispanic whites was 40.6, which was higher than the county average of 37.1 years. The next highest proportion of people 50 and older were among Asians and American Indians, among whom approximately one-quarter were 50 and older (14, 15). In contrast, less than 10% of Hispanics were 50 or older (16).

“If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.”

~ Margaret Mead
Living Arrangements

The majority of Snohomish County residents lived with family, both before and after the age of 65 (17). People younger than 65 were more likely than older adults to live with family or with unrelated persons, while those 65 and older were more likely to live alone or in group quarters such as nursing homes or correctional facilities.

Adults 65 and older made up 30.7% of people living alone although they were only 10.3% of the general population (18). The majority of people younger than 65 living alone were males (55.7%), but among people 65 and older 72.6% of those living alone were female (19). Females 65 and older made up 22.3% of all single-person households but were only 5.8% of the total population.

Most of the people younger than 65 living in group quarters were in a correctional facility (48.3%) or in military quarters (19.2%) (20). Among people 65 and older living in group quarters, most were in nursing homes (59.8%) or group homes for adults (18.0%).
Households
During 2010 the population of Snohomish County lived in 268,325 separate households (21), of which 67.9% consisted of families (i.e., related persons living together). Of the remaining households, the majority were single-person households, which constituted 24.3% of all households. The remaining 7.7% of households consisted of non-related people living together. The average household size was 2.6 people (4).

Older adults headed 17.3% of households, but 20.0% of households contained at least one person age 65 or older (18). A child under the age of 18 was present in 35.2% of households (22). 3.4% of households consisted of three or more generations living together (23). Nearly 5% (4.9%) of people age 65 and older (+/- 1.4%) lived with grandchildren, and about 700 of them (1.0%, +/- 0.6%) were responsible for taking care of a grandchild (24).

Tenure
One-third of households were renter occupied (25). The proportion of households that were renter occupied varied by household type and the age of the householder. For all age groups, non-family households were most likely to be renting (26). The highest proportion of renters was among non-family households headed by person younger than 35, and the lowest proportion of renters was among family households headed by someone 65 or older. However, among older adult householders the proportion who were renting increased with age (25) - among households headed by people between 65 and 74, 20.0% were renters, while among householders 85 and older 43.4% were renting.

The overall median gross monthly rent during 2010 was $1,024 (+/- $29) (24). For renters age 65 and older the median gross rent was significantly lower, at $863 (+/- $89) per month. However, among renters age 65 and older, 59.1% paid more than 30% of their monthly household income in rent, compared to 48.8% (+/- 3.0%) for the county as a whole. This seeming contradiction is due to the lower average incomes of people 65 and older.
**Marital Status**

Among Snohomish County’s population 15 years and older, 52.5% (+/- 1.2%) were married in 2010 (24). People age 65 and older were somewhat more likely than average to be married. They were much more likely to be widowed than average, an inevitable result of the aging process. Only 1.9% (+/- 1.0%) of people 65 and older had never been married, compared with a county average of 29.2% (+/- 0.8%).

![Figure 11. Marital Status* Snohomish County, 2010](image)

*Population age 15 and older

"If all generations of people freely and abundantly give care to others and to our world, we will have an eternal source of love and hope that fulfills the needs of all ages."

~ Rosalynn Carter

**Veteran Status**

Among Snohomish County residents age 18 and older, 10.8%, (+/- 0.6%) had prior military experience (24). However, among people 65 and older, 25.1% (+/- 2.0%) were veterans.
Educational Attainment

Of Snohomish County adults 25 and older, 65.9% (+/- 1.6%) had at least some college education (24). Adults 65 and older were less likely than average to have attended college (55.4% +/- 3.6%). Only 9.7% (+/- 0.8%) county residents had not graduated from high school, although this proportion was slightly higher among the population 65 and older (12.6%, +/- 1.8%).

“Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.”

~ Gilbert K. Chesterton

Figure 12. Educational Attainment*
Snohomish County, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not HS Grad</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Grad</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Population age 25 and older
**Foreign-Born**

14.5% (+/- 0.8%) of Snohomish county residents in 2010 were born in a foreign country (24). The proportion of adults 65 and older who were foreign-born was similar (15.2%, +/- 2.0%). Among older foreign-born older adults, 73.0% (+/- 6.6%) were naturalized U.S. citizens, compared to 46.9% (+/- 3.5%) of all foreign-born people in the county. This is related to older foreign-born adults having longer average residency in the county. Most older foreign-born adults (71.4%, +/- 7.1%) entered the United States before 1990, whereas only 33.1% (+/- 2.7%) of all foreign-born residents of the county entered the country before that date.

**Language Spoken at Home**

Languages other than English were spoken in 18.8% (+/- 1.0%) of Snohomish County households (24). Spanish, Asian, and Pacific Island languages were the most common non-English languages (27). Older adult households were less likely to speak a language other than English (12.2%, +/- 1.5%) (24). In these households, Asian and Pacific Island languages were the most common (28). Spanish was much less likely to be spoken in such households, reflecting the low proportion of older adults among the county’s Hispanic population (see above). 8.8% of county residents (+/- 0.7%) spoke English less than “very well” (24). A similar proportion of older adults (8.2%, +/- 1.1%) spoke English less than “very well.”

**Figure 13. Languages Other than English Spoken at Home**

*Snohomish County, 2010*
**Employment**

During 2010, 68.9% (+/- 1.0%) of Snohomish County’s population 16 and older was in the labor force (24). Of these, 11.4% (+/- 0.8%) were unemployed. Not surprisingly, given Social Security and Medicare rules, only 17.2% of residents 65 and older were in the labor force. Of these older adults, 12.1% (+/- 4.8%) were unemployed.

**Income**

The estimated median household income in Snohomish County during 2010 was $63,188 (+/- $2,639) (29). Household income increased with the age of the head of the household (the “householder”) through age 64, but median income for householders 65 and older was substantially lower than the county median. However, this lack of income is generally offset by the greater assets of this age group. Many older adults own their homes without a mortgage and have savings or investments with which to supplement their incomes. Their lower incomes do not necessarily imply financial hardship.

> “Why can't we build orphanages next to homes for the elderly? If someone were sitting in a rocker, it wouldn't be long before a kid will be in his lap.”

~ Cloris Leachman

---

**Figure 14. Median Household Income by Age**

Snohomish County, 2010
Income, Continued

The majority of households in Snohomish County (83.3%, +/- 0.9%) had income from job earnings in 2010 (24). In contrast, only one-third of households headed by a person 65 or older (34.5%, +/- 3.1%) had earnings income, from householders working past age 65 and/or working people younger than 65 in the household. The estimated annual average earnings in households headed by someone 65 or older ($45,010, +/- $6,044) were significantly lower than overall average household earnings ($75,098, +/- $1,520). However, over half of households headed by a person 65 and older (54.5%, +/- 3.4%) had some form of retirement income, which averaged $22,043 ( +/- $1,900) annually.

Approximately one-fifth of all households (21.8%, +/- 1.0%) had income from Social Security, which corresponds with the one-fifth of households that contained a person 65 or older. Among households headed by a person 65 or older, 91.3% ( +/- 1.9%) had Social Security income.

The average income from Social Security in such households was $18,575 ( +/- $586). As of December 2010, 67,895 people age 65 and older were receiving Social Security retirement benefits in Snohomish County, totaling approximately $84 million per month (30, 31).

Among older adult households, 6.8% ( +/- 1.7%) received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, with an average annual benefit of $8,431 ( +/- $1,643) (24). The Basic Food Program (i.e., Food Stamps) served 7.7% of older adult households. Between July of 2009 and June of 2010, 5,333 adults age 65 and older received Basic Food Program benefits in Snohomish County (32). Only 3.3% ( +/- 1.1%) of older adult households received cash public assistance. The average annual amount of such assistance was $3,256 ( +/- $1,847).

Figure 15. Household Income by Source
Snohomish County, 2010
The Elder Index - Cost of Living

The Elder Economic Security Standard Index (the Elder Index) was created by the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Wider Opportunities for Women (33). It is a measure of the income required for older adults to maintain their independence in the community and meet their daily costs of living, including affordable and appropriate housing and health care. The Elder Index promotes a measure of income that respects the autonomy goals of older adults, rather than being a measure of poverty. This leads to it being much higher than other commonly used benchmarks. The Elder Index provides a better understanding of the cost of living in a community and can help policy makers better plan supports and services that will help older adults age in place with economic security.

The Elder Index describes the annual income required by older adults in each of six scenarios. The living costs for single persons and married couples are estimated in each of three housing situations – owning a home without a mortgage, renting, or owning a home with a mortgage. It includes costs for housing, food, transportation, health care and miscellaneous expenses. The estimates presented here assume that the older adults are in good health. Separate estimates are available for those requiring varying levels of long-term care.

In Snohomish County, the income required for older adults in good health ranged from $18,240 a year for a single person who owns his or her home to $39,360 for a couple with a mortgage. In all the scenarios, the cost of living exceeds the average annual Social Security Benefit received by older adults in Snohomish County. The average Social Security benefit for a couple owning their own home ($24,227) was closest to the Index, providing 90% of the income required. However, for a single person with a mortgage, the average Social Security benefit ($14,890) represented less than half (48.6%) of their required income. This shows that Social Security benefits alone are insufficient for retirement, although more than one in five older adults in Washington has no other source of income (34).
The Elder Index, Continued

The estimated costs of living are much higher than the Federal Poverty Thresholds in all scenarios. For a single person age 65 or older, the poverty threshold is $10,458, only 57.3% of the Elder Index for someone who owns their home. For an older adult couple with a mortgage, the threshold ($13,180) is only a third (33.5%) of what the Elder Index suggests is required. These discrepancies are due to the federal poverty thresholds being determined solely by food costs, while the Elder Index is a more comprehensive measure of what is required to live independently.

Figure 16.
Elder Economic Security Standard Index Snohomish County, 2010

“Age is no barrier. It’s a limitation you put on your mind.”
~ Jackie Joyner-Kersee
Poverty

The proportion of people age 65 and older living below 150% of the poverty level (15.0%, +/- 2.5%) was similar to the overall county average of 16.0% (+/- 1.3%). 9.9% (+/- 1.1%) of Snohomish County residents had incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Thresholds during 2010 (24). People age 65 and older were significantly less likely to be at this level of poverty (5.7%, +/- 1.3%), but they were more likely than average to have incomes that fell between 100% and 149% of the poverty level. This is due primarily to Social Security benefits, which averaged 142.4% of the poverty threshold for a single person in Snohomish County and thus were sufficient to keep an older adult out of poverty. A study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that between 2000 and 2002 an estimated 251,000 older adults in Washington State were lifted above the poverty level by Social Security benefits (35).

Summary

The aging of Snohomish County’s population is an unavoidable fact. It is happening now, as shown by the increase in the population 50 and older between 2000 and 2010. The size of the older adult population will keep growing through 2030. If Snohomish County is to create an aging-friendly environment for the growing population of older adults, work must begin now. Such planning needs to ensure that older adults have adequate financial and other resources to live healthy, independent lives. In a period of declining resources, this will present a challenge to social service agencies and the elderly themselves.

Figure 17. Poverty Status by Age Group
Snohomish County, 2010

![Bar chart showing poverty status by age group in Snohomish County, 2010.](image-url)
References


"Age is of no importance unless you are cheese." ~ Billie Burke