

The Role of Social and Health-Related Characteristics in Determining Survivorship Among the U.S. Oldest Old

Hiram Beltrán-Sánchez
Jennifer Ailshire

Presented at the Living to 100 Symposium
Orlando, Fla.
January 5-7, 2011

Copyright 2011 by the Society of Actuaries.

All rights reserved by the Society of Actuaries. Permission is granted to make brief excerpts for a published review. Permission is also granted to make limited numbers of copies of items in this monograph for personal, internal, classroom or other instructional use, on condition that the foregoing copyright notice is used so as to give reasonable notice of the Society's copyright. This consent for free limited copying without prior consent of the Society does not extend to making copies for general distribution, for advertising or promotional purposes, for inclusion in new collective works or for resale.

Abstract

Despite increasing numbers of people reaching old age, little is known about the social, behavioral and health-related factors that play an important role in determining survivorship into oldest-old age (85 and older) among those who have survived to old age (65 and older). In this paper, we address the question of how socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, health status and health behaviors are associated with oldest-old mortality and survivorship among people who have survived to old age. We use data from the 1990-91 National Health Interview Survey's Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Supplement and the mortality follow-up through 2002. Our results indicate that activity limitation and exercise status, in combination with education, play an important role in survival into old age (between 65 and 85) but have a smaller effect on survival among the oldest-old population (85 and older).