Disability Status: Residents of Massachusetts, Aged 65 and Over

Bernard A. Steinman
University of Massachusetts Boston, bernard.steinman@umb.edu

Hayley Gravette
University of Massachusetts Boston, hayley.gravette001@umb.edu

Jiyoung Lyu
University of Massachusetts Boston, jiyoung.lyu001@umb.edu

Jan Mutchler
University of Massachusetts Boston, jan.mutchler@umb.edu

Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging, University of Massachusetts Boston

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.umb.edu/demographyofaging

Part of the Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons, Disability Law Commons, Elder Law Commons, Family, Life Course, and Society Commons, Health Policy Commons, and the Social Policy Commons

Recommended Citation
http://scholarworks.umb.edu/demographyofaging/4

This Fact Sheet is brought to you for free and open access by the Gerontology Institute at ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact libraryuasc@umb.edu.
Anyone at any age can acquire disabilities that could restrict their ability to live independently in their communities, but disability is more likely among older women. The rate of disability is slightly higher for women (13.7%) than for men (12.2%) among all adults. Among adults aged 75 and older, more than 48% of women and about 45% of men experience disabilities. In general, greater proportions of older women than men experience disabilities due to their comparatively longer life expectancies.
Older adults are also more likely to experience multiple disabilities than younger adults. In Massachusetts, more than 18% of persons aged 65 and older have two or more disabilities (Figure 2). This is compared to only 4% among younger adults. The presence of multiple disabilities—for instance, a sensory disability in conjunction with ambulatory disability—is likely to compound the difficulties that older adults have with self-care activities and remaining active, independent members of their communities.

Women are more likely than older men to report most specific types of disability, with hearing disability being the single exception (Figure 3). For both genders, the most common type of disability reported by older adults was ambulatory disability (mobility difficulties, such as walking up a flight of stairs). Nearly 1 in 4 women (24%) and 17% of older men reported this type of disability. Of particular concern is the percentage of older people who report independent living disability (doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping). More than 18% of older women and 11% of older men in Massachusetts reported difficulty with these types of activities.