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The historic rise of living alone and fall of boarders in the United States: 1850–2010

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Abstract

While living alone has risen to historic highs in the United States, the prevalence of living with roommates, boarders and other nonrelatives has fallen. This historic transformation in living arrangements reflects a growing prevalence across the 20th century for adults, notably the young and unmarried, to live apart from family members and outside of boarding houses. Thus, the rise of living alone is directly linked with the decline of roommates and boarders in the United States. To explore this relationship, we use Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples (IPUMS) of decennial census data for 1850–2000 (Ruggles et al. 2010), and 2010 Census data. We use multinomial logistic regression to examine the changing risks of living alone, with relatives, or with nonrelatives only since 1850.

Introduction

Over the last 150 years, the United States has witnessed seismic changes in living arrangements. In conjunction with changes in family and fertility behavior, living alone has grown from virtually nonexistent to a common living arrangement today, while boarding has fallen precipitously. In 1850, just 74,000 adults in the United States lived alone, representing less than 1 percent of the population. Today that number has risen to 31 million people, over one quarter of all U.S. households (Kreider and Vespa 2014). In contrast, the number of boarders—people living with roommates or renting a room in another’s household—peaked in 1930 at 4.6 million and fell by about two thirds to 1.1 million in 2005 (Scopilliti and O’Connell 2008).

During the 19th century, boarding was commonplace and a culturally acceptable practice. One reason for this was that surges of “foreign immigrants and rural migrants into American cities overwhelmed the available housing facilities” (Modell and Hareven 1973: 477). The housing shortage acted in concert with colonial-era norms about the role of the family to make boarding a normative living arrangement. By taking in boarders, a family was seen to exert a civilizing and moralizing influence on young adults who would otherwise be exposed to what were then viewed as the indecencies and social decay of urban life (Modell and Hareven 1973).

Boarding was often an intermediary step between young adults’ family of origin’s household and establishing their own household (Modell and Hareven 1973). In a study of Boston neighborhoods circa 1880, 37 percent of boarders were between 20 and 29 years old, and 27.5 percent were between 30 and 39 years old (see also, Scopilliti and O’Connell 2008). Widows and single women commonly made up their ranks. Indeed, estimates from 1900 show that 38 percent of working single women lived away from their families as boarders, often in the homes of their employer (Goldin 1980).

By the 1930s, boarding began to decline in the United States in large part because the Great Depression and Second World War “interrupted the flow of both foreign and domestic migrants to cities. A sharp decline in demand for urban housing thus followed sharply a changed supply situation, for in the prosperity of the 1920s urban housing construction began to catch up with demand, which had outrun it for many decades” (Modell and Hareven 1973: 476).

At the same time, rising living standards allowed adults to maintain separate residences (Angel and Tienda 1982; Pampel 1983), which most likely contributed to a decline in boarders and rise in living alone. Indeed, increased economic opportunities for young adults encouraged them to live independently of their family, because the rise of wage labor divorced their occupation from agricultural labor or the family business (Ruggles 2007). This was especially true for women whose lives revolved around household production under control of their fathers, husbands, or sons (Shammas, Salmon and

Dahlin 1987). Thus, factors that facilitated the rise of living alone, such as increases in the living standard and delays in marriage, also contributed to the decline of boarding, along with shifts in the composition of the population that resulted from factors like the decline in immigration.

Plan of Analysis

To explore changes in the prevalence of living alone or as a boarder, we use the Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples (IPUMS) of decennial census data for 1850–2000 (Ruggles et al. 1997), and 2010 Census data.¹ Data from 1850 through 1960 are from the 1-percent samples, the 1970 1-percent Form 2 state sample, and the 1980–2000 are from the 5-percent samples.²

We use a sample of adults 18 and over to look at three living arrangements from 1850 to 2010. These include people who (1) live alone, that is in a household with no one else; (2) live only with nonrelatives, such as boarders or roommates (hereafter boarders); or (3) live with at least one relative, e.g., parents, children, spouse, grandchild or other relatives.³ In order to include all adults, we expanded the “boarder” category to include those who live only with nonrelatives. Later in the paper, we discuss who is included in this category over time and how it changes.

For individual-level characteristics, we use age, race, and sex. Age is divided into 4 groups: 15 to 34, 35 to 64, 65 to 74, and 75 and over. Race is broadly defined as White, Black, and Other, because of historical changes in race definitions. We also include region of residence, and control for time period. We group years into 4 periods: 1850 to 1880; 1900 to 1930; 1940 to 1970; and 1980 to 2010. These distinctions are based on changes in the proportion of the adult population living alone, and changes in coding of the relationship categories in 1900.

Part I. Descriptive statistics

¹ Data for 1890 are not available and so are not included. Most of the 1890 Census schedules were destroyed in a fire in the basement of the Department of Commerce in 1921. For a history of the 1890 Census, see Blake (1996).

² See the IPUMS website for a full description of the samples <<http://usa.ipums.org/usa>>

³ The term boarders encompasses a variety of relationship categories as used in the decennial census over the years, including friend, visitor, roommate, housemate, boarder, companion of the family, lodger, tenant, servant, domestic employee, nondomestic employee, non-inmate, unmarried partner and other nonrelative.

When considering such a wide sweep of history, descriptive statistics provide an overall context for the changes we are exploring. We show changes in the proportion of adults 18 and over who were living alone, with nonrelatives only, or with family members between 1850 and 2010.⁴ We show these trends separately for men and women, because the acceptability of living outside the family home before marriage differs by sex, and for young adults and older adults. Living alone increased for younger adults during the latter half of the 20th century when the age at marriage also increased. The introduction of the Social Security system, which enabled older women to continue living on their own rather than moving in with family, may also be linked to living alone for older age groups (McGarry and Schoeni 2000).

Figure 1 illustrates changes in the percentages of adults aged 18 and over who live alone, live with relatives (and sometimes with nonrelatives as well) or only with nonrelatives.⁵ Throughout 1850-2010, the majority of adults live with at least one relative. However, this declines beginning after 1970, from roughly 90 percent to about 75 percent in 2010. A low percentage of adults lived alone in 1850 through 1930 (less than 5 percent), but this increased dramatically to about 14 percent in 2010. The percentage of adults living only with nonrelatives was quite stable at about 10-11 percent from 1850 through 1910. It decreased to a low of 3 percent in 1970, and then returned to about 11 percent in 2010.

The small increase in the proportion living with family during the 1950s and 1960s reflects the historically high marriage rates that followed the Second World War, when the age at first marriage was at its youngest point in the United States since 1850 (US Census Bureau 2014). But the presence of the baby boom cohort as children living in their parents' homes is only part of the interaction between

⁴ Those living with nonrelatives only are adults in households where no one is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Since only the relationship to the householder was collected, other household members may be related to one another, but we do not have that information.

⁵ Although we have used samples of decennial data, they are very large. Given these large sample sizes, differences of 1 percent or more are statistically significant.

adults living alone and living with nonrelatives. Trends in Figure 1 suggest that boarding and living alone are interconnected, the former declining as the latter increased. Figure 2 illustrates the same trend separately for men and women. When comparing the two, we see that a higher percentage of men lived with nonrelatives only from 1850 through 1930, while a higher percentage of women lived alone from 1960 through 2010.

To illustrate trends by age and sex, we include graphs for each of the four age groups (Figures 3 through 6).⁶ For the youngest adults (18 to 34), the patterns do not differ radically between men and women, although before 1940 the levels for living alone are higher for men and the levels for living with relatives are higher for women. Patterns for men and women aged 35 to 64 are also quite similar to each other. However, this is not the case for adults aged 65 and over.

For those aged 65 to 74, patterns for men and women diverge starting in about 1940, after which women saw a large increase in living alone, with a corresponding decrease in living with relatives. This corresponds to increases in life expectancy for women, which were not matched by men, so married women were more likely to spend some years widowed (National Center for Health Statistics 2013). In addition, after Social Security was instituted in 1935, more widowed women were afforded the means to remain on their own rather than needing to move in with family. The decrease from 1980 to 2010 in the proportion of women aged 65 to 74 who lived alone corresponds to a decrease in the gap in life expectancy between men and women (National Center for Health Statistics 2013).

Patterns for men and women aged 75 and over are starkly different. While both men and women show an increase in the percentage living alone, the increase is much larger for women. By 1980, 48 percent of women aged 75 and over lived alone, which increased to 52 percent in 1990 before decreasing to 46 percent in 2010. The corresponding percentage for men of the same age was close to 20 percent from 1970 through 2010. A related pattern in women's living arrangements for this age

⁶ Tables with the underlying data for the graphs are available upon request.

group is the fact that a higher proportion of women 75 and over lived alone in 1990 (52 percent) than lived with a relative (45 percent). However, this switched in 2010, when 46 percent lived alone, while 52 percent lived with a relative. This is likely related to the presence of a husband in the household, given decreases in the gap in life expectancy between men and women. While the gap was 6.8 years in 1990, it was 4.8 years in 2010, translating into more husbands who were still living with their wives (National Center for Health Statistics 2013). The trends also illustrate how living alone is a widespread experience among older women today.

This descriptive look at whether adults lived alone, with relatives, or only with nonrelatives over time shows a decline in living with nonrelatives, and then an increase in recent decades. It is useful to keep in mind that categories are shifting beneath these data. The measurement of the relationship of household members has changed over time, as has the meaning and interpretation of particular answer categories. Changes we see may be as much about what is actually being measured as about any real changes in living arrangements.

Over time, the Census Bureau has changed the response categories available for respondents on the question that asks how household members are related to the person who owns or rents the home (i.e., the householder). Some examples of responses coded in the 1900 data include: friend, partner, relative of partner, housemate/roommate, concubine, mistress, visitor, companion, family of companion, roomer, boarder, lodger, servant, housekeeper, maid, cook, and nurse. The inclusion of particular answer categories does not necessarily mean that the same types of individuals were being recorded in that category over time. Those who were reported as 'boarders' in 1900 are likely quite different than those reported as 'roomer/boarder' in 2010. Boarding houses are a concept that was far more common in 1900 than it is today.

To get a clearer sense of shifts in who is included in the adults living with nonrelatives only, we look specifically at this category. Figure 7 shows the distribution of adults who live in households where

the householder has no relative present. Given the changing categories over time, we have created several larger groups of categories in order to illustrate a couple of major shifts over time. The category labeled 'boarder' includes: housemate/roommate, roomer, boarder, lodger, partner/roommate, and foster children. The category labeled 'employee' includes: servant, housekeeper, maid, cook, nurse, other probable domestic employee, and employees. The exact categories included vary depending on the year, since not all categories existed for each year. 'Unmarried partner' was introduced as an answer category in 1990. Householders who had an unmarried partner are counted in this category in the figure. All other adults, including householders, are counted in the 'other nonrelative' category.

Several large shifts are visible across time in Figure 7: the decline in the boarder category, decline in the employee category, and an increase in unmarried partners. The majority of the adults who lived only with nonrelatives in 2010 were unmarried partners: 62 percent. Of course, this is partly an artifact of the definition of 'related.' Some people may consider their partner to be related to them; some couples that likely would have been married in the past now live together without being married. If unmarried partners were included in the definition of 'related,' then we would see less of a decline in the proportion of adults living with relatives in recent decades.

Part II: Multinomial Logistic Regression

To look at competing risks for adults to live in one of these three living arrangements, we ran multinomial regression models for adults 18 and over (see Table 1). We estimated the risk of living with relatives versus living alone (Model 1), as well as the risk of living with only nonrelatives versus living alone (Model 2). We also show the risks of living with relatives versus living with nonrelatives only (Model 3). We controlled for sex, race, age and region. Our main variable of interest is time. We omitted the 1980-2010 time period, and compare earlier time periods to it.

The control variables function as expected, showing that men were less likely than women to live alone than with relatives or nonrelatives only—essentially that men were less likely to live alone than women. Blacks were more likely than Whites to live alone than with relatives, but less likely than Whites to live alone than with nonrelatives. Young adults, aged 18 to 34, were less likely than those aged 35 to 64 to live alone than with relatives, as well as less likely than those aged 35 to 64 to live alone than with nonrelatives only. But a look at Model 3 shows that young adults age 18 to 34 were more likely to live with nonrelatives than with relatives. This makes sense, since many young adults live with roommates or unmarried partners, while middle aged adults are more likely to live with a spouse. Older adults, both those 65 to 74, and those 75 and over were more likely than middle aged adults (35 to 64) to live alone than with relatives or nonrelatives (see Model 1 and Model 2). Given the extremely large sample size, results for region showed relatively small variation. All groups of years had lower odds of living alone (versus with relatives and with nonrelatives only) than 1980 to 2010.

Throughout the earlier time periods the odds of living alone compared with relatives were less than the odds between 1980 and 2010 (see Model 1, Table 1). This result reflects trends shown in the descriptive figures that demonstrate living alone was quite uncommon during the early 20th century. Results in the model comparing the risks of living alone versus living with nonrelatives suggest that the rise of living alone seems to have offset living with nonrelatives. The odds of living alone compared to living with a nonrelative were smaller in every time period compared with the odds in 1980 to 2010. In other words, prior to 1980, adults were more likely to be living with a nonrelative than to be living alone. Again, this finding mirrors the descriptive trends in that it was quite rare for adults to be living alone until the later 20th century.

Discussion

There are many reasons for the rise of living alone across this time period. In a past PAA paper, we explored the relationship between several macro-level changes such as increases in the gross domestic product, changes in the median age at marriage, and the gap in life expectancy between men and women and also evaluated the proportion of one-person households. We ran various logistic regression models with these data, predicting living alone for adults, adding in some of these macro-level variables. One issue is that many of the macro-level variables are highly correlated with each other, or with our grouped time period indicator variables. The results of the models were not substantively different from our findings at the household level in the last paper, and so we have concentrated here on a more descriptive look, since there are few sources for such a long look at living arrangements over time, by age and sex.

While the decline in living with nonrelatives only did correspond with the increase in living alone, this was not the case in the most recent decades, when both were rising. As we saw when considering who lives with nonrelatives only, this is related to the fact that the unmarried partner category now makes up a majority of adults who live with nonrelatives only. In essence, many of these couples who would theoretically have been married in earlier decades now live together unmarried, which puts them in the 'nonrelatives only' category.

Whenever we research demographic changes over large swaths of time, we would do well to keep in mind that the meaning of the categories we are measuring is also changing. The meaning of nonrelatives, as well as who is included has changed since 1850, which makes modeling it quite tricky, since what we see in the data are changes to the underlying categories, in addition to real demographic shifts. The changes in living arrangements also reflect changes in cultural preferences for and acceptability of living alone, which we cannot capture in this analysis. During the rise in living alone, the United States experienced substantial changes in its economic situation, such as the rise of wage labor and decline in apprenticeships and occupational inheritance in family businesses, which can be only

approximated by the dummy variables for time period in this paper. Because we lack the data to model these historical changes, we should be cautious about drawing conclusions beyond the data.

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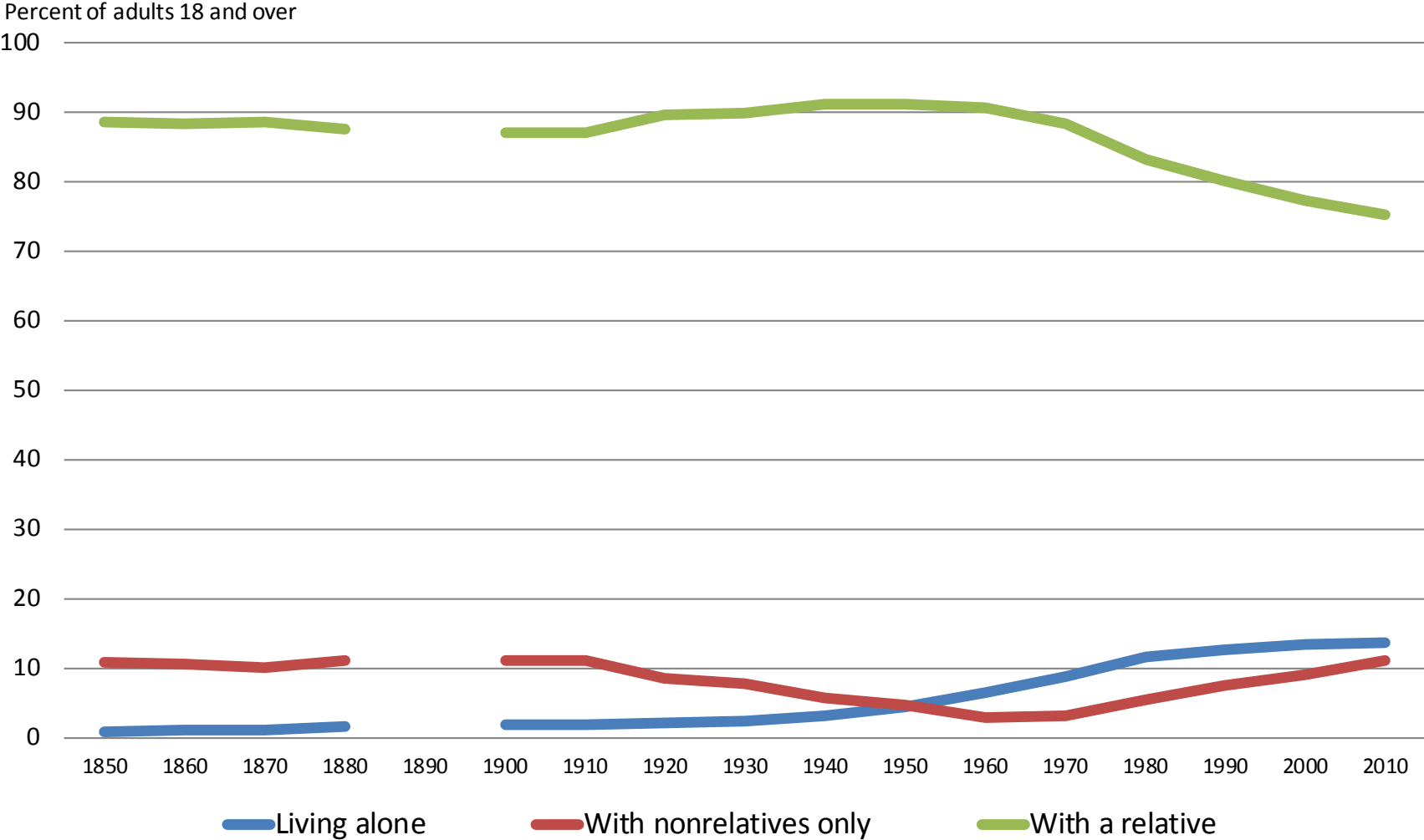
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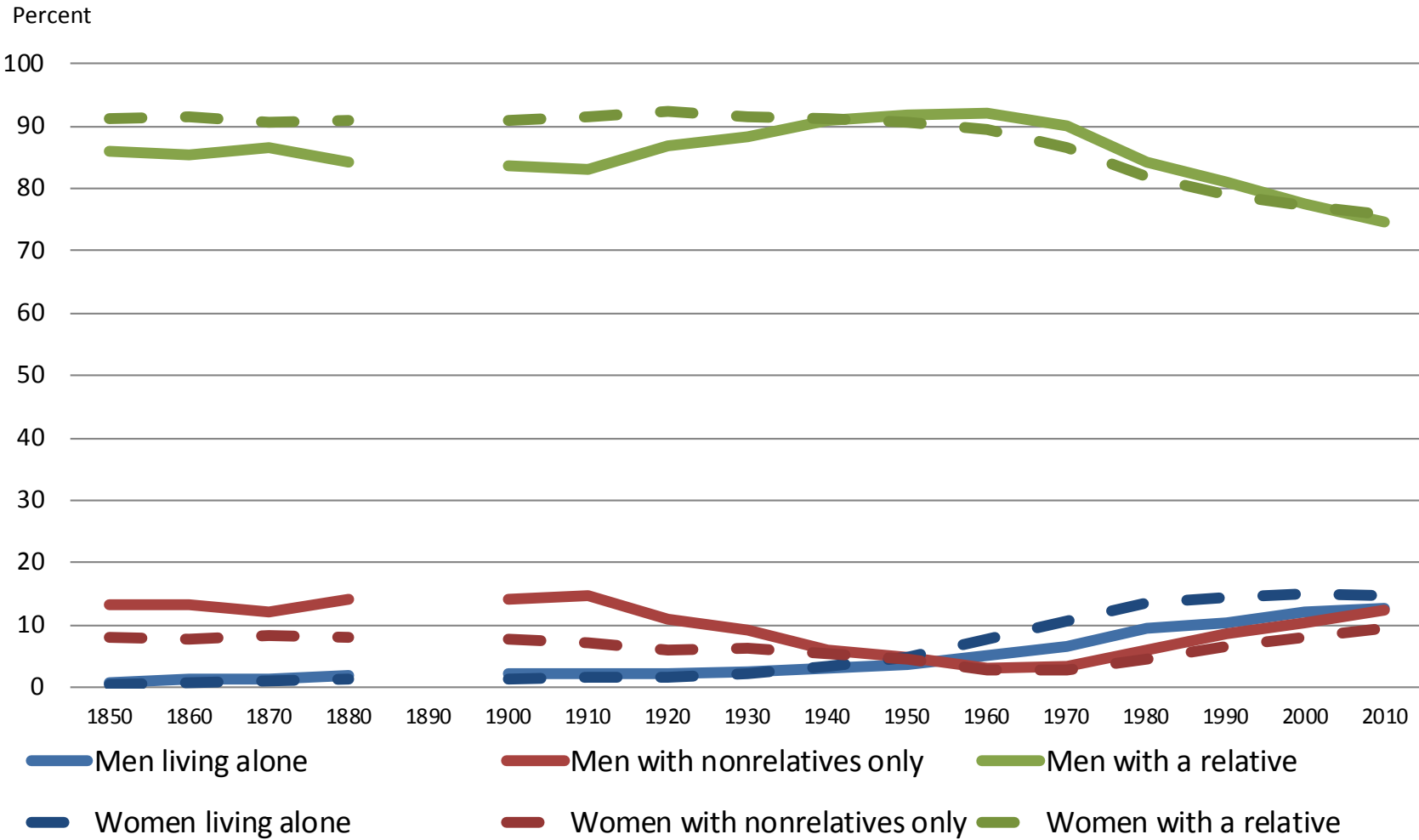
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Figure 1. Living Arrangements of Adults 18 and Over: 1850 to 2010



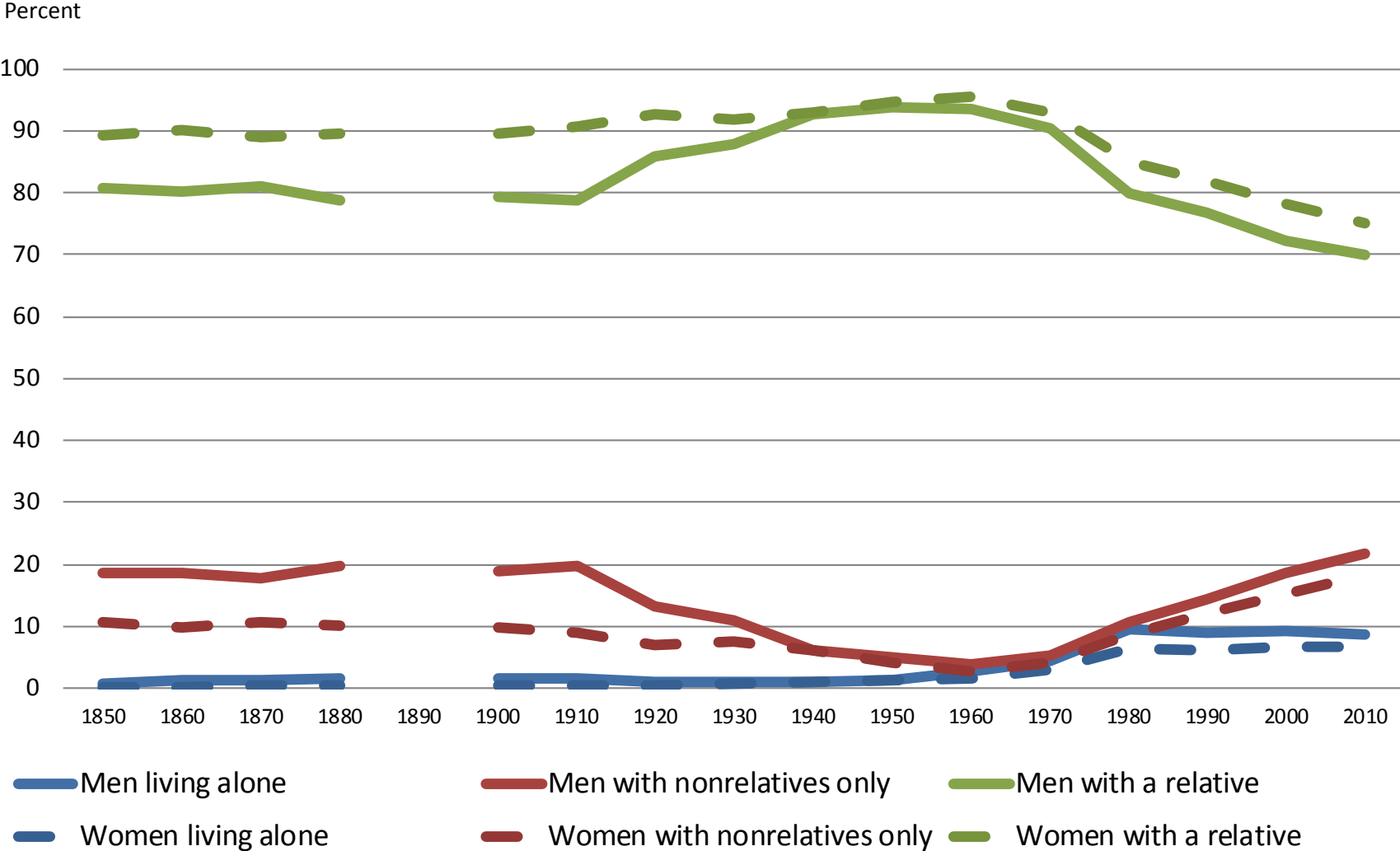
Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Figure 2. Living Arrangements of Adults 18 and Over by Sex: 1850 to 2010



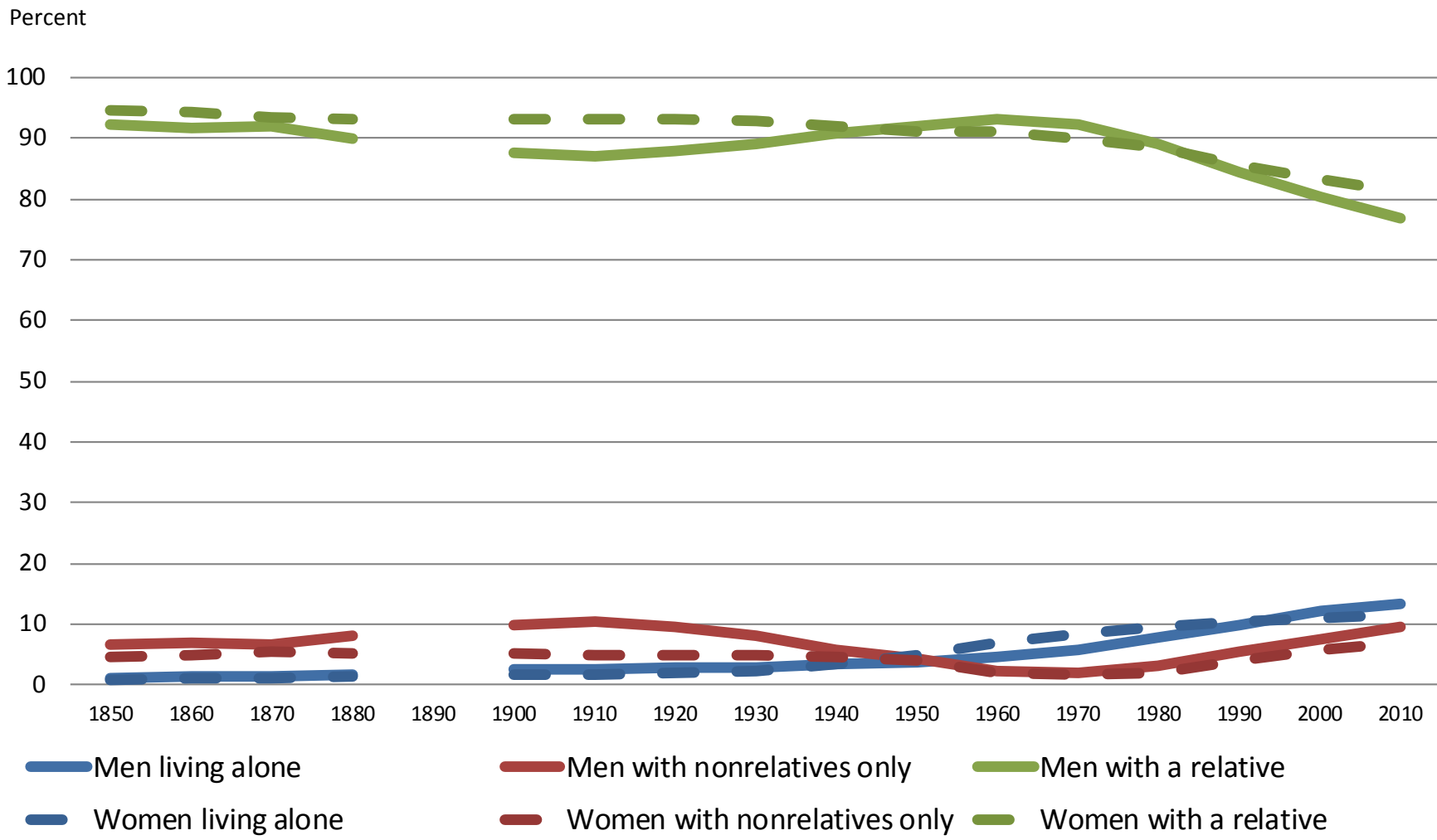
Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Figure 3. Living Arrangements of Adults Aged 18 to 34: 1850 to 2010



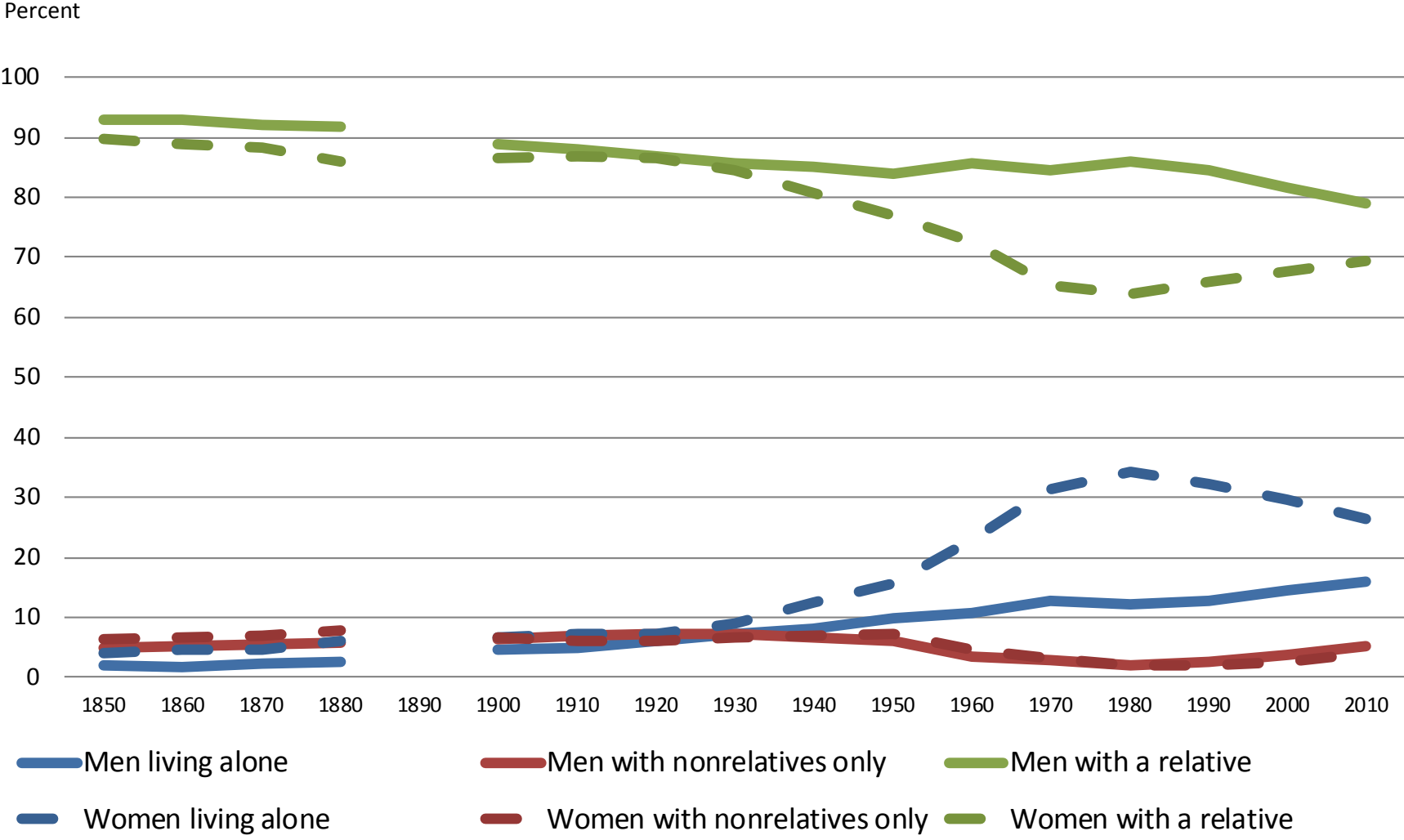
Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Figure 4. Living Arrangements of Adults Aged 35 to 64: 1850 to 2010



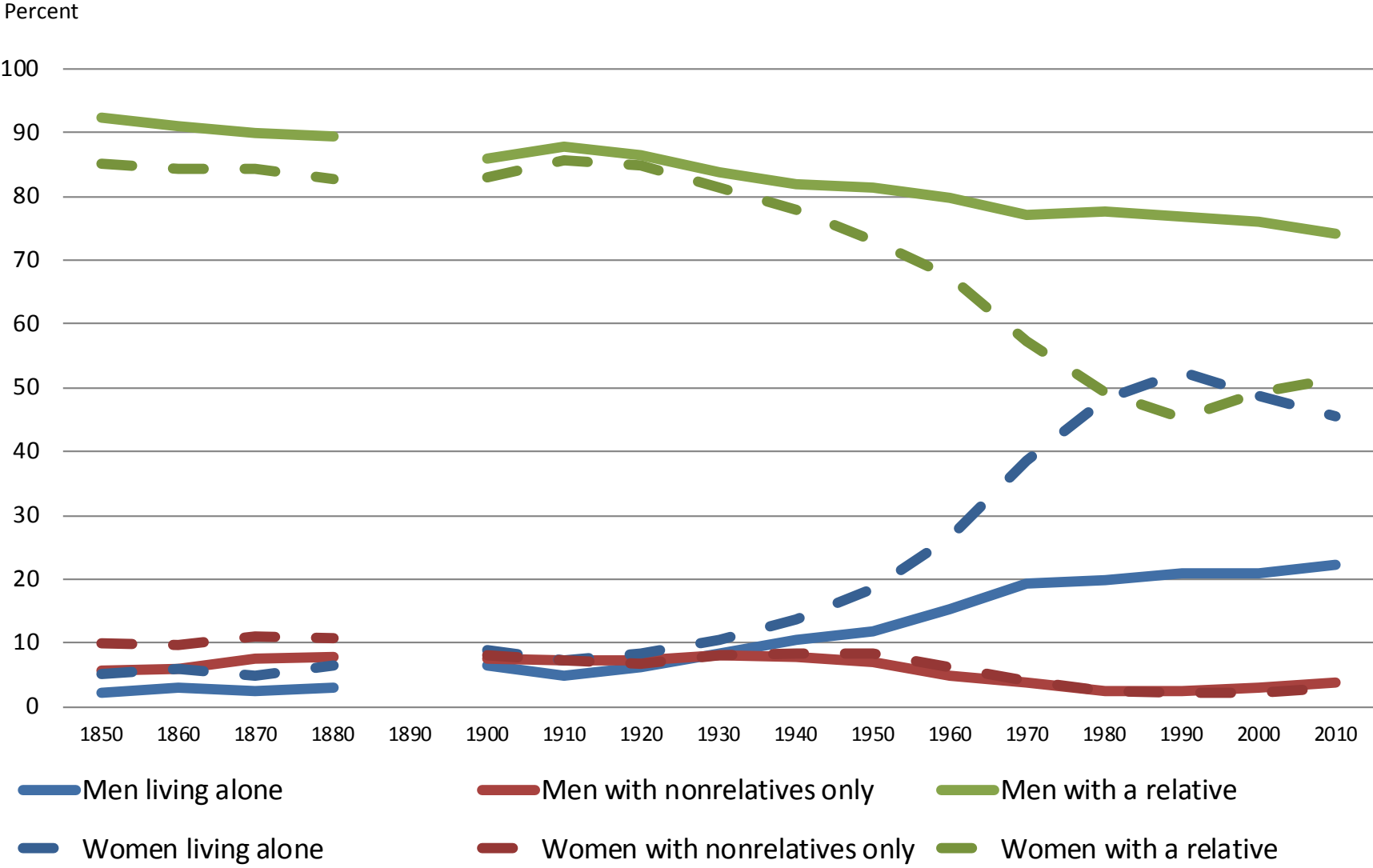
Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Figure 5. Living Arrangements of Adults Aged 65 to 74: 1850 to 2010



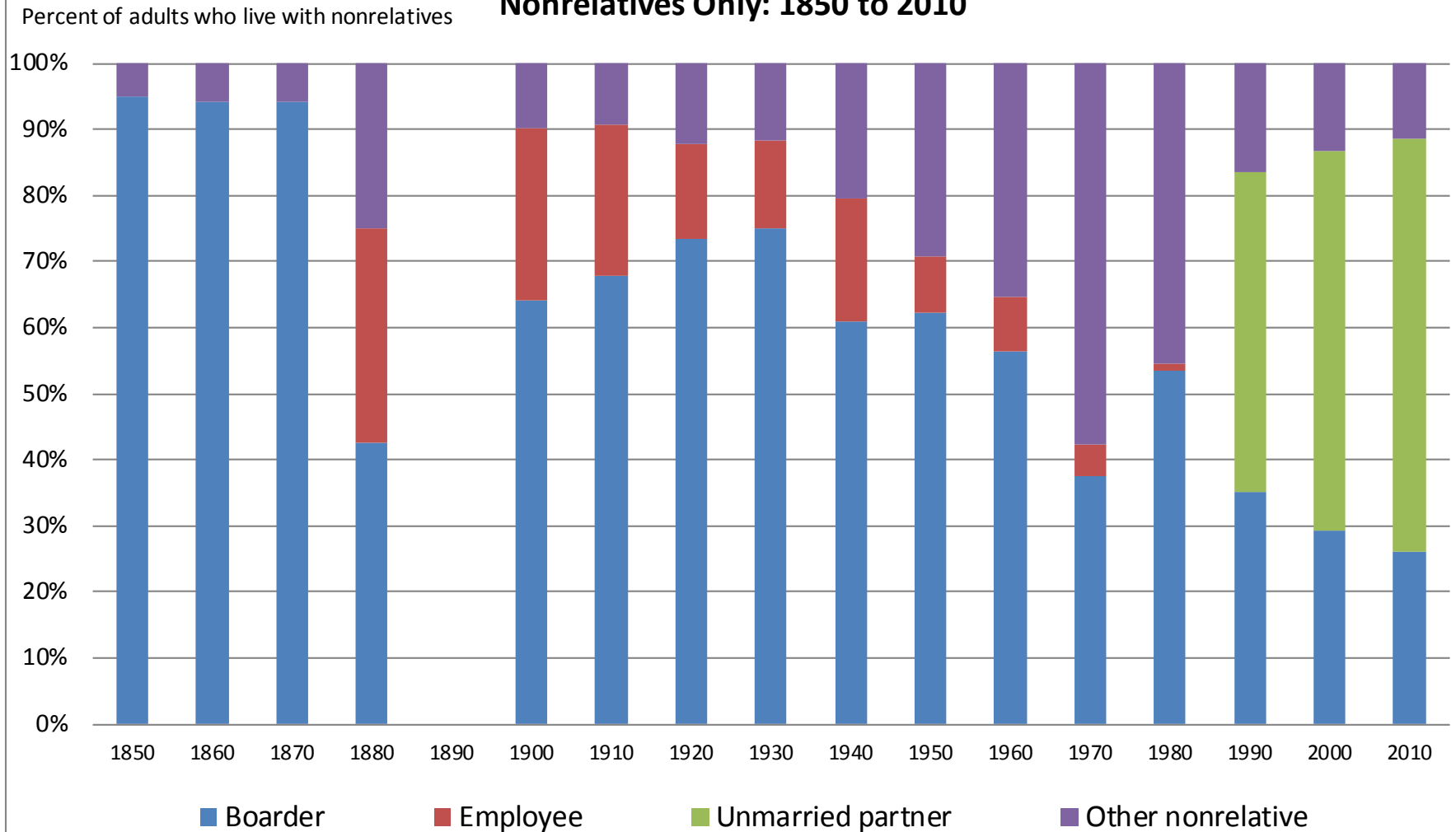
Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Figure 6. Living Arrangements of Adults Aged 75 and over: 1850 to 2010



Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Figure 7. Living Arrangements of Adults 18 and Over Who Live with Nonrelatives Only: 1850 to 2010



Note: Some of these 'nonrelatives' may have a relative present, but no relative of the householder is present. Householders are included either in 'unmarried partner' if there is one in the household, or in 'other nonrelative.'

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Table 1. Likelihood of living in selected living arrangements, 1850 to 2010 (odds ratios reported)

| | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | | Model 3 | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------|------|-----|------------------------------------|----------|------|-----|--|----------|------|-----|
| | Living alone vs. with relatives | | | | Living alone vs. with nonrelatives | | | | Living with nonrelatives vs. relatives | | | |
| | Estimate | s.e. | OR | | Estimate | s.e. | OR | | Estimate | s.e. | OR | |
| Time period | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1850 to 1890 | -0.3155 | 0.000587 | 0.73 | *** | -0.2967 | 0.000622 | 0.74 | *** | -0.0188 | 0.000225 | 0.98 | *** |
| 1900 to 1930 | -0.7569 | 0.000238 | 0.47 | *** | -0.9187 | 0.000269 | 0.40 | *** | 0.1618 | 0.000136 | 1.18 | *** |
| 1940 to 1970 | -0.3889 | 0.000122 | 0.68 | *** | -0.0913 | 0.000175 | 0.91 | *** | -0.2977 | 0.000132 | 0.74 | *** |
| 1980 to 2010 | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | |
| Demographics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | -0.1166 | 0.000111 | 0.89 | *** | -0.2911 | 0.000154 | 0.75 | *** | 0.1745 | 0.000114 | 1.19 | *** |
| Female | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | |
| Black | 0.1503 | 0.000178 | 1.16 | *** | -0.1029 | 0.00024 | 0.90 | *** | 0.2531 | 0.000176 | 1.29 | *** |
| Other race | -0.2129 | 0.000319 | 0.81 | *** | -0.3797 | 0.000395 | 0.68 | *** | 0.1669 | 0.00026 | 1.18 | *** |
| White | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | |
| Age 18 to 34 | -0.227 | 0.000143 | 0.80 | *** | -0.6093 | 0.000181 | 0.54 | *** | 0.3822 | 0.000121 | 1.47 | *** |
| Age 35 to 64 | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | |
| Age 65 to 74 | 0.5413 | 0.000153 | 1.72 | *** | 0.5444 | 0.000301 | 1.72 | *** | -0.0031 | 0.000273 | 1.00 | *** |
| Age 75 and over | 0.8284 | 0.000167 | 2.29 | *** | 0.7416 | 0.00037 | 2.10 | *** | 0.0868 | 0.000351 | 1.09 | *** |
| Region | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Northeast | -0.0155 | 0.000157 | 0.98 | *** | -0.0823 | 0.000214 | 0.92 | *** | 0.0668 | 0.000155 | 1.07 | *** |
| South | -0.0429 | 0.000147 | 0.96 | *** | 0.049 | 0.000209 | 1.05 | *** | -0.0919 | 0.000158 | 0.91 | *** |
| West | 0.1061 | 0.000167 | 1.11 | *** | -0.1036 | 0.000232 | 0.90 | *** | 0.2097 | 0.000174 | 1.23 | *** |
| Midwest | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | | --- | --- | --- | |

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

*** p < .001

Appendix Table 1. Living Arrangements of Adults Aged 18 and Over: 1850 to 2010

| Year | Living alone | With a relative | With nonrelatives only |
|---------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Percent | | | |
| 1850 | 0.7 | 88.6 | 10.7 |
| 1860 | 1.1 | 88.4 | 10.5 |
| 1870 | 1.2 | 88.7 | 10.2 |
| 1880 | 1.5 | 87.4 | 11.1 |
| 1890 | NA | NA | NA |
| 1900 | 1.9 | 87.2 | 11.0 |
| 1910 | 1.9 | 87.2 | 11.0 |
| 1920 | 2.0 | 89.5 | 8.5 |
| 1930 | 2.3 | 89.9 | 7.8 |
| 1940 | 3.1 | 91.1 | 5.8 |
| 1950 | 4.3 | 91.1 | 4.6 |
| 1960 | 6.4 | 90.7 | 2.9 |
| 1970 | 8.8 | 88.2 | 3.0 |
| 1980 | 11.6 | 83.1 | 5.3 |
| 1990 | 12.5 | 80.0 | 7.5 |
| 2000 | 13.5 | 77.4 | 9.1 |
| 2010 | 13.7 | 75.3 | 11.0 |

Note: Data for 1890 are not available.

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.

Appendix Table 2. Living Arrangements of Adults Aged 18 and Over by Sex and Age Group: 1850 to 2010

| Year | Men | | | Women | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| | Living alone | With a relative | With nonrelatives only | Living alone | With a relative | With nonrelatives only |
| 18 and over | | | | | | |
| Percent | | | | | | |
| 1850 | 0.9 | 86.0 | 13.2 | 0.6 | 91.3 | 8.2 |
| 1860 | 1.4 | 85.5 | 13.2 | 0.8 | 91.5 | 7.8 |
| 1870 | 1.4 | 86.6 | 12.0 | 0.9 | 90.8 | 8.3 |
| 1880 | 1.8 | 84.2 | 14.0 | 1.2 | 90.8 | 8.0 |
| 1890 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 1900 | 2.3 | 83.6 | 14.1 | 1.4 | 90.9 | 7.7 |
| 1910 | 2.2 | 83.1 | 14.7 | 1.5 | 91.5 | 7.0 |
| 1920 | 2.2 | 86.9 | 10.9 | 1.7 | 92.3 | 6.0 |
| 1930 | 2.4 | 88.3 | 9.2 | 2.2 | 91.5 | 6.3 |
| 1940 | 3.0 | 91.0 | 6.0 | 3.3 | 91.3 | 5.5 |
| 1950 | 3.6 | 91.7 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 90.6 | 4.4 |
| 1960 | 5.0 | 92.0 | 3.0 | 7.6 | 89.6 | 2.8 |
| 1970 | 6.6 | 90.2 | 3.2 | 10.7 | 86.5 | 2.8 |
| 1980 | 9.5 | 84.4 | 6.1 | 13.4 | 81.9 | 4.7 |
| 1990 | 10.4 | 81.1 | 8.5 | 14.5 | 79.0 | 6.5 |
| 2000 | 12.0 | 77.6 | 10.4 | 14.9 | 77.2 | 7.9 |
| 2010 | 12.7 | 74.8 | 12.5 | 14.7 | 75.7 | 9.6 |
| 18 to 34 | | | | | | |
| Percent | | | | | | |
| 1850 | 0.7 | 80.8 | 18.5 | 0.1 | 89.3 | 10.6 |
| 1860 | 1.3 | 80.1 | 18.6 | 0.2 | 90.0 | 9.8 |
| 1870 | 1.3 | 81.1 | 17.6 | 0.3 | 89.1 | 10.6 |
| 1880 | 1.6 | 78.6 | 19.7 | 0.4 | 89.5 | 10.1 |
| 1890 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 1900 | 1.6 | 79.4 | 19.0 | 0.4 | 89.7 | 9.9 |
| 1910 | 1.4 | 78.7 | 19.8 | 0.4 | 90.7 | 8.9 |
| 1920 | 1.0 | 85.8 | 13.2 | 0.5 | 92.7 | 6.9 |
| 1930 | 1.0 | 88.0 | 11.1 | 0.6 | 91.8 | 7.6 |
| 1940 | 1.1 | 92.7 | 6.2 | 0.9 | 93.1 | 6.1 |
| 1950 | 1.3 | 93.7 | 5.0 | 1.2 | 94.8 | 4.1 |
| 1960 | 2.6 | 93.5 | 3.9 | 1.7 | 95.5 | 2.8 |
| 1970 | 4.5 | 90.3 | 5.2 | 3.0 | 92.9 | 4.1 |
| 1980 | 9.6 | 79.8 | 10.6 | 6.3 | 85.1 | 8.6 |
| 1990 | 8.9 | 76.8 | 14.3 | 6.1 | 82.0 | 11.9 |
| 2000 | 9.3 | 72.1 | 18.5 | 6.6 | 78.2 | 15.2 |

| | 2010 | 8.5 | 69.9 | 21.6 | 6.7 | 75.0 | 18.3 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <hr/> | | | | | | | |
| 35 to 64 | | | | | | | |
| Percent | | | | | | | |
| 1850 | 1.0 | 92.2 | 6.8 | 0.8 | 94.6 | 4.6 | |
| 1860 | 1.3 | 91.8 | 6.9 | 1.1 | 94.2 | 4.8 | |
| 1870 | 1.4 | 92.1 | 6.5 | 1.2 | 93.4 | 5.4 | |
| 1880 | 1.9 | 90.0 | 8.2 | 1.5 | 93.3 | 5.3 | |
| 1890 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | |
| 1900 | 2.5 | 87.5 | 10.0 | 1.6 | 93.2 | 5.2 | |
| 1910 | 2.5 | 87.0 | 10.4 | 1.8 | 93.2 | 5.0 | |
| 1920 | 2.7 | 87.8 | 9.5 | 2.0 | 93.0 | 5.0 | |
| 1930 | 2.8 | 89.2 | 8.0 | 2.4 | 92.7 | 4.9 | |
| 1940 | 3.4 | 90.8 | 5.7 | 3.4 | 92.0 | 4.6 | |
| 1950 | 3.7 | 92.1 | 4.2 | 5.1 | 91.0 | 4.0 | |
| 1960 | 4.6 | 93.1 | 2.3 | 6.8 | 91.1 | 2.1 | |
| 1970 | 5.8 | 92.3 | 1.9 | 8.3 | 89.9 | 1.8 | |
| 1980 | 7.9 | 89.0 | 3.1 | 9.5 | 88.5 | 2.1 | |
| 1990 | 10.0 | 84.4 | 5.6 | 10.4 | 85.6 | 4.0 | |
| 2000 | 12.1 | 80.5 | 7.4 | 11.2 | 83.1 | 5.7 | |
| 2010 | 13.5 | 76.9 | 9.6 | 11.6 | 81.3 | 7.1 | |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | |
| 65 to 74 | | | | | | | |
| Percent | | | | | | | |
| 1850 | 2.0 | 93.0 | 5.0 | 3.9 | 89.7 | 6.5 | |
| 1860 | 1.8 | 93.0 | 5.2 | 4.5 | 88.7 | 6.7 | |
| 1870 | 2.4 | 92.1 | 5.5 | 4.6 | 88.4 | 7.1 | |
| 1880 | 2.6 | 91.7 | 5.6 | 6.2 | 86.0 | 7.8 | |
| 1890 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | |
| 1900 | 4.8 | 88.8 | 6.5 | 6.8 | 86.5 | 6.7 | |
| 1910 | 5.0 | 87.9 | 7.1 | 7.2 | 86.7 | 6.1 | |
| 1920 | 6.0 | 86.8 | 7.2 | 7.4 | 86.5 | 6.2 | |
| 1930 | 7.2 | 85.6 | 7.2 | 8.9 | 84.4 | 6.7 | |
| 1940 | 8.2 | 85.2 | 6.6 | 12.4 | 80.8 | 6.8 | |
| 1950 | 9.8 | 84.1 | 6.1 | 15.8 | 76.9 | 7.3 | |
| 1960 | 10.9 | 85.7 | 3.5 | 22.9 | 72.5 | 4.6 | |
| 1970 | 12.8 | 84.5 | 2.7 | 31.5 | 65.4 | 3.1 | |
| 1980 | 12.1 | 85.9 | 2.0 | 34.2 | 63.8 | 2.1 | |
| 1990 | 12.8 | 84.6 | 2.6 | 32.2 | 65.8 | 2.1 | |
| 2000 | 14.6 | 81.7 | 3.7 | 29.7 | 67.8 | 2.6 | |
| 2010 | 15.9 | 78.9 | 5.2 | 26.5 | 69.5 | 4.0 | |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | |
| 75 and over | | | | | | | |
| Percent | | | | | | | |
| 1850 | 2.1 | 92.3 | 5.6 | 5.1 | 85.1 | 9.8 | |
| 1860 | 3.0 | 91.1 | 5.9 | 5.8 | 84.4 | 9.7 | |

| | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|
| 1870 | 2.5 | 90.0 | 7.5 | 4.7 | 84.3 | 11.0 |
| 1880 | 3.0 | 89.3 | 7.7 | 6.5 | 82.7 | 10.8 |
| 1890 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 1900 | 6.5 | 86.0 | 7.5 | 8.8 | 83.0 | 8.2 |
| 1910 | 5.0 | 87.8 | 7.3 | 7.1 | 85.7 | 7.1 |
| 1920 | 6.3 | 86.6 | 7.1 | 8.4 | 84.8 | 6.7 |
| 1930 | 8.3 | 83.7 | 8.0 | 10.6 | 81.5 | 7.9 |
| 1940 | 10.4 | 81.9 | 7.8 | 13.7 | 78.0 | 8.4 |
| 1950 | 11.7 | 81.3 | 7.0 | 18.4 | 73.2 | 8.4 |
| 1960 | 15.4 | 79.9 | 4.7 | 26.4 | 67.5 | 6.1 |
| 1970 | 19.2 | 77.1 | 3.7 | 38.6 | 57.4 | 4.0 |
| 1980 | 19.9 | 77.8 | 2.3 | 48.3 | 49.2 | 2.5 |
| 1990 | 20.9 | 76.7 | 2.4 | 52.5 | 45.3 | 2.2 |
| 2000 | 21.0 | 76.2 | 2.9 | 48.7 | 49.2 | 2.1 |
| 2010 | 22.2 | 74.1 | 3.7 | 45.6 | 51.5 | 2.9 |

Note: Data for 1890 are not available.

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) 1850-2000 and 2010 Census.