

African Americans and Older Americans Act Services A Series on Racial and Ethnic Minorities

The Older Americans Act (OAA), enacted in 1965, supports a range of home- and community-based services designed to meet the needs of adults age 60 and older. All older Americans are eligible to receive services, but the Act targets those with the greatest need and vulnerability. Using data from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), this report series focuses on the needs of older adults that are members of racial and ethnic minority groups and their use of OAA programs and services.

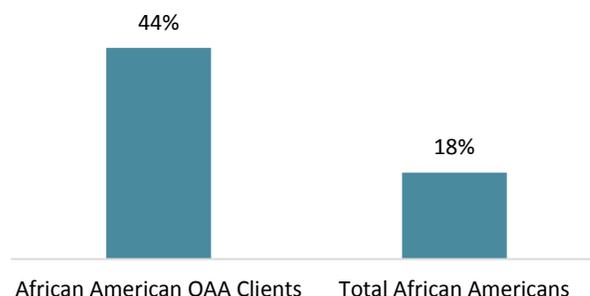


In 2017, 70.8 million Americans were age 60 and older. Among them, 17.3 million (25%) were members of racial and ethnic minority groups. Over the past decade, this population has increased from 20% in 2007 to 25% in 2017, and is projected to increase to 29% over the next decade.^{1,2}

Older African Americans numbered 6.8 million in 2017 and comprised 10% of the population age 60 and older.² Among this population, 336,000 (5%) utilized OAA programs and services through their local Area Agencies on Aging, and almost 17,000 received caregiver support services to help care for family and friends.³

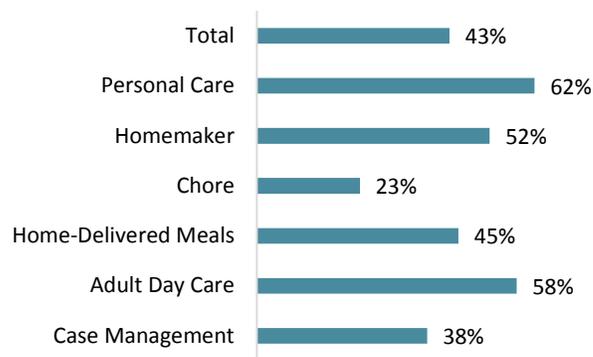
In 2017, 44% of older African American OAA clients age 60 and older had incomes below the poverty level, as compared with 18% of all African Americans age 60 and older in the United States (Figure 1).^{3,4}

Figure 1. Percentage of African Americans Age 60 and Older with Income below Poverty Level, 2017



Research shows that older adults who have difficulty with three or more Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) (e.g., bathing, eating, getting dressed) tend to be at higher risk for nursing home placement.⁵ Figure 2 displays the percentage of older African American OAA clients who have three or more ADLs by service type. In 2017, more than half of older African American OAA clients receiving Personal Care, Homemaker, and/or Adult Day Care had difficulty with three or more ADLs.³

Figure 2. Percentage of African American OAA Clients Age 60 and Older with Three or More Limitations in ADLs, by Service, 2017



The high percentage of African American OAA clients living below the poverty level, combined with the large percentage of this population having difficulties with three or more ADLs, places them at a higher risk of entering a nursing home than the total African American population age 60 and older. OAA programs and services play an important role in helping these older adults remain living safely in their homes and communities by delaying or preventing the need for institutionalization.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 2017 National Population Projections.

² ACL. 2017 Population Estimates. Available at <https://agid.acl.gov/>

³ Ibid. 2017 State Program Report Data.

⁴ Ibid. 2012-2016 ACS Special Tabulation.

⁵ Gaugler et al. Predicting Nursing Home Admission in the U.S: A Meta-Analysis. BMC Geriatrics. 2007; 7:13.