



CENSUS 2000: ORANGE COUNTY'S SENIORS

INTRODUCTION

Orange Countians are getting both younger and older. This apparent paradox is a consequence of high birth rates among minority and multi-racial groups at the same time that a large Baby Boomer population cohort is aging-in-place and people are living longer than in the past. A recent issue of Profiles reviewed the county's youth population (March 2002), noting that the 1990s witnessed a 179,120 increase in the number of persons under age 18. Simultaneously, the Orange County residents age 65 and over rose by 59,650 persons. Growth in these two age groups contributed more than half (55%) of the net population increase in the past decade.

This issue of Orange County Profiles continues CDR's review of evidence from Census 2000 by focusing on the senior population, that is, individuals age 65 or older. First, it presents the senior numbers and distributional patterns in the county. Then the report turns to distinctions within the senior population in terms of more detailed age subgroups, gender differences, and racial/ethnic contrasts. Those themes are followed by a review of the senior's living arrangements. Finally, we close with a brief glimpse into the "graying prospect" for Orange County as the Baby Boomer generation swells the numbers and complexity among the senior population.

SENIORS ACROSS THE COUNTY

The 2000 Census identified almost 280,800 persons age 65 or over residing in Orange County. That is approximately 9.9% of the county total, a proportion slightly under the seniors' 10.6% contribution to the California population. This age group expanded by 27% in the decade of the 1990s. That rate of increase was one and a half times that of the general Orange County growth pace and, as discussed later in this report, this rate is expected to be sustained. Seniors' concerns over access to affordable health care, appropriate housing, meaningful

retirement lifestyles, and maintaining an effective political voice are frequently highlighted in the news media and certainly will resonate throughout this year's political campaigns.

Table 1 lists the absolute numbers of seniors and their share of each city's total population. A widespread dispersion among Orange County's older population is revealed by the fact that the combined senior population of the top five cities accounts for just under 34% of all county seniors but these largest municipalities contain 40% of the total population. Not surprisingly, though, Laguna Woods and Seal Beach top the list of senior-oriented places with 86.4% and 37.5% of their respective populations being at least age 65. Both are sites of renowned Leisure World gated communities that were developed in the 1960s and early 1970s. Only one other Orange County city, Newport Beach, contains more than 15% seniors. Looking at the spatial pattern in terms of total numbers, all of the most populous cities can also claim at least 10,000 senior residents. Almost 26,800 seniors live in Anaheim, a figure that is more than one-and-a-half times the total population of Laguna Woods. In rank order, the other jurisdictions with large numbers of senior citizens are Huntington Beach (19,656), Santa Ana (18,565), Fullerton (14,274), Orange (12,409), and Newport Beach (12,295). Sizeable concentrations can also be found in Mission Viejo and Irvine, two cities where the popular imagery depicts the lifestyles of younger, family-oriented households even as those places have become home for more than 10,000 seniors. In contrast, there are few individuals age 65+ in Orange County's most recently created municipalities, Rancho Santa Margarita (1,591) and Aliso Viejo (1,350).

The uneven distribution of senior residential enclaves is illustrated even more by the map on page 6. Approximately 30 of Orange County's 577 census tracts each contain at least 20% seniors. Expected concentrations

Table 1
Orange County's Senior Population by Place, 2000

Place	Total Population	Population Age 65+		% of OC Seniors
		Number	Percent	
Laguna Woods	16,507	14,268	86.4%	5.1%
Seal Beach	24,157	9,068	37.5%	3.2%
Newport Beach ¹	70,032	12,295	17.6%	4.4%
Villa Park	5,999	888	14.8%	0.3%
Los Alamitos	11,536	1,704	14.8%	0.6%
Laguna Beach	23,727	3,146	13.3%	1.1%
San Clemente	49,936	6,534	13.1%	2.3%
San Juan Capistrano	33,826	4,415	13.1%	1.6%
Dana Point	35,110	4,568	13.0%	1.6%
Laguna Hills	31,178	3,788	12.1%	1.3%
Brea	35,410	4,023	11.4%	1.4%
Fountain Valley	54,978	6,236	11.3%	2.2%
Fullerton	126,003	14,274	11.3%	5.1%
Westminster	88,207	9,843	11.2%	3.5%
Mission Viejo	93,102	10,139	10.9%	3.6%
La Habra	58,974	6,366	10.8%	2.3%
Cypress	46,229	4,879	10.6%	1.7%
Huntington Beach	189,594	19,656	10.4%	7.0%
La Palma	15,408	1,575	10.2%	0.6%
Orange	128,821	12,409	9.6%	4.4%
Stanton	37,403	3,581	9.6%	1.3%
Garden Grove	165,196	15,765	9.5%	5.6%
Buena Park	78,282	7,305	9.3%	2.6%
Placentia	46,488	4,213	9.1%	1.5%
Laguna Niguel	61,891	5,495	8.9%	2.0%
Lake Forest ¹	58,707	5,051	8.6%	1.8%
Costa Mesa	108,724	9,182	8.4%	3.3%
Anaheim	328,014	26,773	8.2%	9.5%
Yorba Linda	58,918	4,526	7.7%	1.6%
Irvine	143,072	10,302	7.2%	3.7%
Tustin	67,504	4,804	7.1%	1.7%
Santa Ana	337,977	18,565	5.5%	6.6%
Rancho Santa Margarita	47,214	1,591	3.4%	0.6%
Aliso Viejo CDP ²	40,166	1,350	3.4%	0.5%
Unincorporated Areas	127,999	12,186	9.5%	4.3%
Orange County Total:	2,846,289	280,763	9.9%	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 1, Table P12.

1- Census figures for the cities of Lake Forest and Newport Beach do not include the annexations of Foothill Ranch, Portola Hills, Newport Coast and San Joaquin Hills CDPs.

2- The incorporated boundaries of the City of Aliso Viejo vary from the identified boundaries of the Aliso Viejo CDP.

appear most noticeably just south of the 5 Freeway in Laguna Woods and in north Seal Beach at the western-most corner of the county --- again both areas are the Leisure World developments. Other clusters are scattered among coastal neighborhoods (in San Clemente, Laguna Beach,

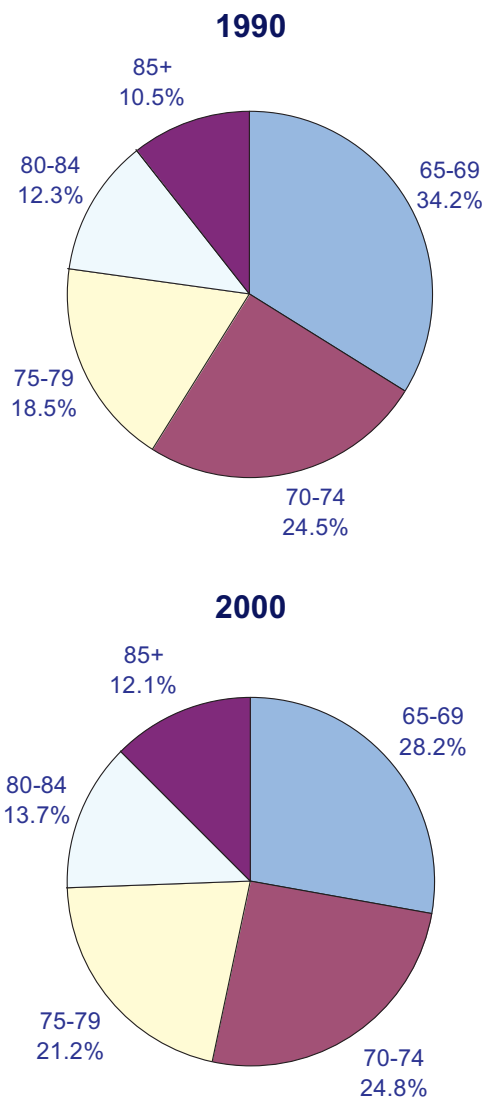
central Huntington Beach, Corona del Mar and the islands of Newport Beach). The prominent senior outlier visible just below the Foothill Corridor toll road is Casta del Sol [sic], Mission Viejo, a gated community of 1,930 homes for seniors and empty nesters age 55 or over.

A different kind of senior cluster appears in north central Fullerton. Three census tracts there are dominated by middle-aged and older homeowners whose children are leaving the nest or who have already gone. The residential process of "aging-in-place" is manifested by the fact that 35-45% of householders have lived in the same home for twenty years or more, a rate that is almost triple the norm of just 14.7% countywide (Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table DP-4).

TRENDS IN AGE MIX

Older residents of Orange County are far from being a homogeneous group. Their work histories, economic circumstances, health conditions, and family backgrounds are as diverse as their numbers. Although it is not possible to explore those themes in this report, we can obtain some clues by considering recent changes in the region's senior population mix. [The Public Use Microdata Sample does contain detailed information along those lines.] In 1990, seniors numbered approximately 211,100 in the county, or almost 60,000 fewer than at the beginning of this new century. The most dramatic increases occurred among the cohort age 85 years and over and the subgroup in their late 70s (Figure 1). Individuals in their 80s and beyond constitute the fastest growing segment of the senior population, as is the case nationally (Population Bulletin, 56 [4], 2001). In the 2000 Census, some 399 Orange Countians declared themselves to be centenarians ---- at least 100 years old. An additional 11,417 were in their 90s. The decade of the 1990s saw the

Figure 1
Orange County's Senior Population by Age Cohort, 1990 and 2000



Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000 Summary File 2.

Table 2
Sex Ratios for Orange County's Senior Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2000

	Number	Females per 100 Males
Non-Hispanic White	216,732	144.6
Non-Hispanic Black	1,768	133.9
Non-Hispanic Asian	29,717	126.5
Non-Hispanic Other	4,371	124.2
Hispanic of any Race	28,175	146.1

Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 2.

number of persons age 85+ increase from just over 23,100 to nearly 34,100 individuals.

The implications of this "aging within the larger senior population" are beyond the scope of this brief Profile but suffice it to say that the demographic process will have major impacts on such concerns as health and adequate income security from governmental programs and retirement accounts, as well as the ability of individuals to sustain independent living arrangements.

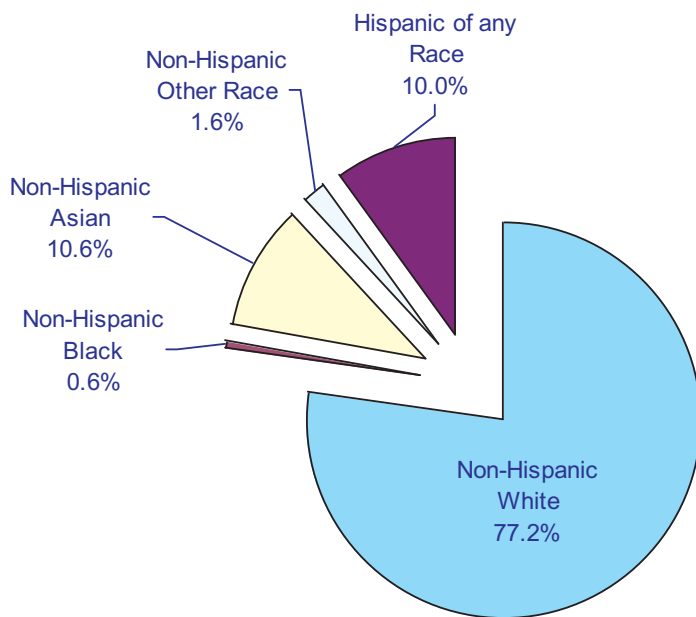
GENDER, RACE & ETHNICITY

At every age level within the older population, women outnumber the men, because of higher death rates for men than women (See Figure 3). Overall, there are 142 senior age women for every 100 senior men in Orange County. The ratio is virtually identical among non-Hispanic whites and the Hispanic elderly as shown in Table 2. Slightly lower female-to-male sex ratios exist among the African-American and Asian seniors. The importance of sex ratio differences is emphasized by a recent report authored by Christine Himes for the Population Reference Bureau:

Most elderly women will face the challenges of later life alone. [They] are more likely than older men to be poor, to live alone, to enter nursing homes, and to depend on people other than their spouses for care. Population Bulletin, vol. 56 no. 4 (2001), p. 8.

In 2000, just over 77% of the county's seniors were

Figure 2
Senior Population by Race/Ethnicity Orange County, 2000



Source: U.S. Census 2000 Summary File 2.

Table 3
Living Arrangements of Orange County Seniors, 2000

Living Arrangement	Census 1990		Census 2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Householder or Spouse of Householder	123,667	55.9%	151,689	54.0%
Living w/Children or Other Relatives	22,107	10.0%	35,224	12.5%
Living Alone	55,895	19.4%	67,247	19.0%
Females Age 65+	45,351	20.5%	51,742	18.4%
Males Age 65+	10,544	4.8%	15,505	5.5%
Living w/ Non-Relatives	8,504	3.8%	12,397	4.4%
In Group Quarters	10,940	3.8%	14,206	3.9%
Non-Institutionalized	497	0.2%	6,284	2.2%
Nursing Homes	N.A.	N.A.	7,411	2.6%
Other Institutions	10,443	4.7%	511	0.2%
Total Seniors:	221,113	100.0%	280,763	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 1, Adapted from Tables 30 & 38; and 1990 Census, Summary File 1, Table P23.

non-Hispanic whites (Figure 2); another 10.6% are Asian and 10.0% Hispanic. Statewide, the comparable figures were 70.0% non-Hispanic white, 9.8% Asian, and 13.1% Hispanic. Other racial and ethnic groups contributed only miniscule proportions to the total older population. That mix is projected to change sharply over the next decades as Hispanics and other immigrant groups become much larger shares of the region's seniors.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Older people have strong preferences for independent living in their own homes even when health conditions and economic resources would suggest an alternative support environment to be beneficial. About 78% of Orange County seniors live either alone or with their spouse in independent households (Table 3). Just one of every eight seniors lives with their children or with other relatives. House sharing by living with non-relatives is comparatively rare, practiced by only 4.4% of seniors. The proportion of seniors who live in nursing homes or other institutions is likewise rather small, despite the image cast by media advertising. That subgroup (officially listed as those "in group quarters" by the Census Bureau) comprise 14,200 or 5.0% of all Orange County senior citizens.

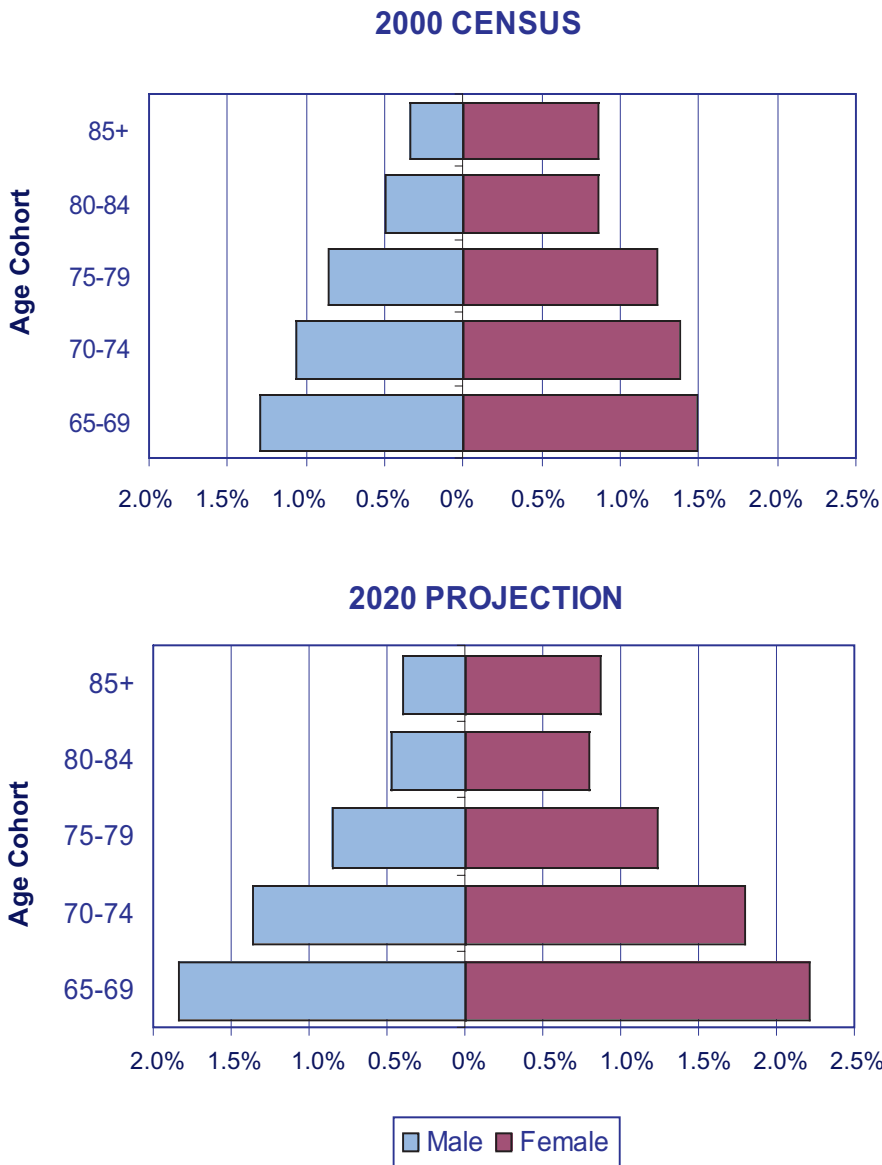
There appears to have been only limited change in the proportions of different living arrangements among the county's older residents since 1990. Numeric growth within each of the categories listed in Table 3 followed the general growth rate among seniors. Even the rise in the

"non-institutionalized, group quarters" figure may have as much to do with the self-classification process of the census as it does any true increase in group settings within senior housing enclaves.

GRAYING PROSPECT

As this 21st century dawned, there were nearly 245,000 people age 55-64 in the Orange County population. These Baby Boomers, born in the first decade after the close of World War II, will become the next wave of seniors, with the oldest of the boomers reaching age 65 less than a decade from now. Demographically, that will "enlarge the top of the age pyramid and even put a 'hat' on its top," as illustrated by Figure 3. Preliminary numeric forecasts by the Center for Demographic Research suggest a senior population of 415,400 in the year 2020. That would represent a senior growth rate of 48%, which is more than double the 23% growth rate forecast for the total population. This will change the ratio of seniors in the total population to one in eight in the year 2020 compared to the current rate of one in ten today. Put another way, the growth in senior population (from the 2000 Census figure of 280,763) represents an addition, equivalent to another Fullerton or two more Tustins. The wellness of those seniors, how they are housed, and their social and political roles are all concerns that will take on a growing importance in Orange County's future.

Figure 3
2000 Census Population and 2020 Projected Senior Population
Orange County



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 2 and the Center for Demographic Research *Orange County Projections 2004*.

RESOURCES FOR ORANGE COUNTY'S SENIORS

Most communities have specialized Senior Centers that offer a wide array of programs and special events. The box to the right is a short list of organizations and programs that provide activities and other support for the interests and needs of older residents.

Council on Aging, Orange County

www.coaoc.org

Phone (714) 479-0107

Non-profit service organization

Information and services to promote independent living, Ombudsman support, health insurance counseling, residential care facilities, and accredited continuing education opportunities.

County of Orange Office on Aging

www.officeonaging.ocgov.com

Phone (714) 567-7500

County government sponsored entity

Heavily oriented toward information and referral services on a broad range of senior concerns, including adult day care, emergency hotlines, in-home services, support groups, and specialized transportation.

Continuing Learning Experience (CLE), CSU Fullerton

<http://cle.fullerton.edu>

Phone: (714) 278-2446

Membership organization that offers more than 50 educational classes each semester along with special events of interest to seniors.

Center for Successful Aging CSU Fullerton

<http://hdcs.fullerton.edu/csa>

Phone: (714) 278-3717

Focused on health and well-being through its Senior Fitness Program, Balance and Mobility Program and Health Promotion Program - open to non-students.

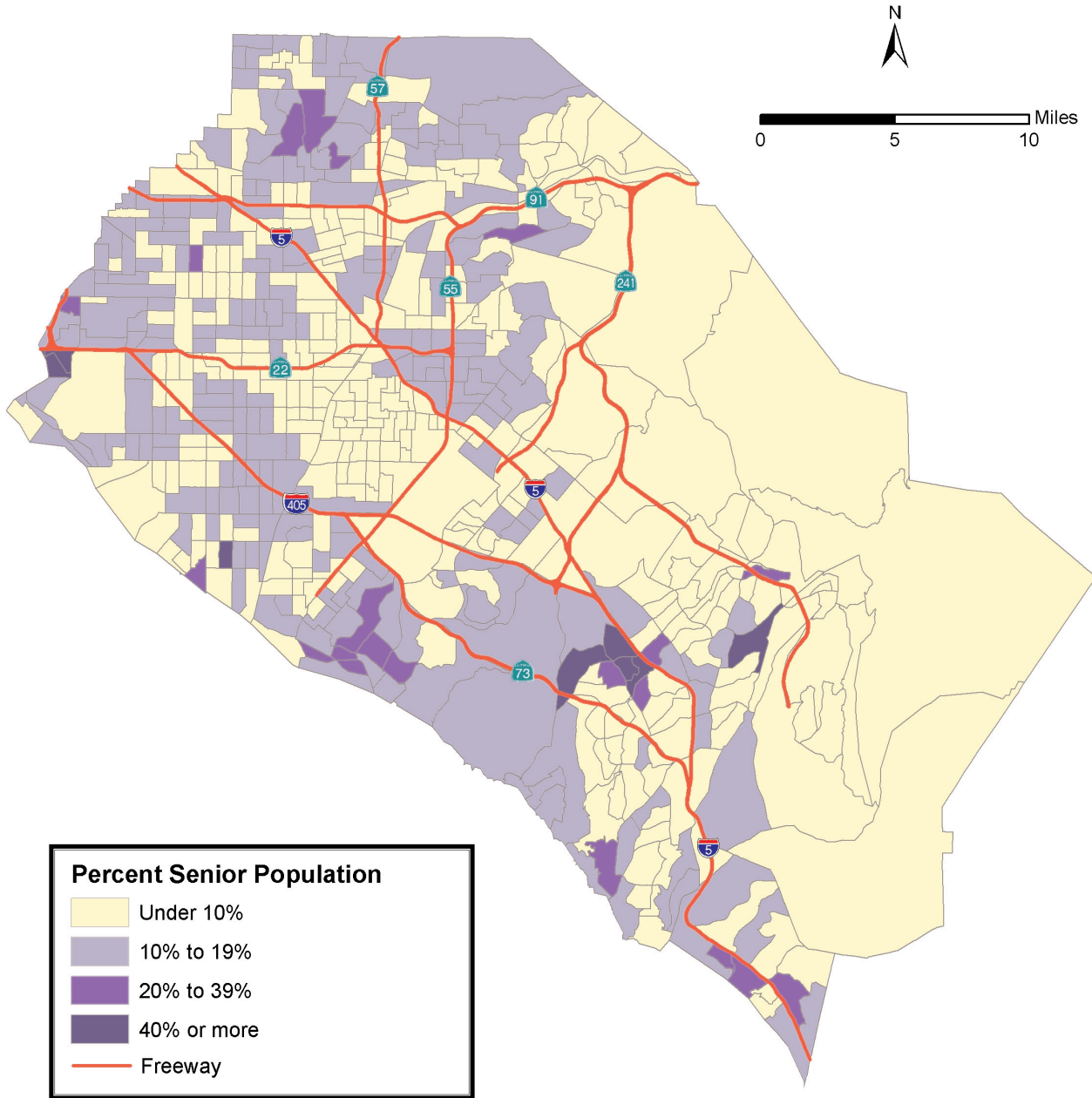
UC Irvine, Program in Geriatrics

<http://www.ucihs.edu/com/geriatrics>

Phone: (877) 824-3627

Provides consultation and medical care for the elderly; special Health Assessment Program for seniors available at north and south county sites.

Distribution of Orange County Population Aged 65 and Over by Census Tract, 2000



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 2.

PROFILES IS PRODUCED BY THE CENTER FOR DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON.

PROFILES IS A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION THAT FOCUSES ON DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES IN ORANGE COUNTY.

THIS ISSUE WAS AUTHORED BY DR. RAY YOUNG.

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