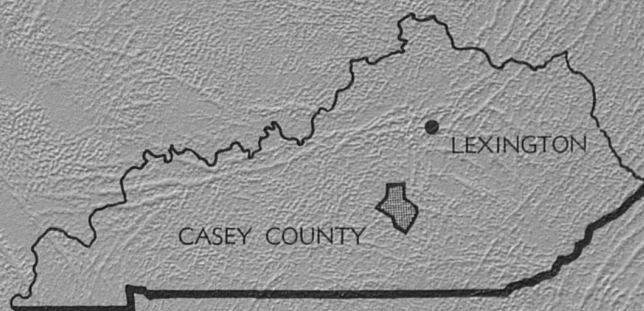


Economic Status and Attitudes of Older Men in Selected Rural and Urban Areas of Kentucky

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By E. GRANT YOUMANS
Department of Rural Sociology



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UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
KENTUCKY AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
LEXINGTON

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University of Kentucky
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In cooperation with
Farm Population Branch, Economic and Statistical
Analysis Division, Economic Research Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture

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ECONOMIC STATUS AND ATTITUDES OF OLDER MEN IN
SELECTED RURAL AND URBAN AREAS OF KENTUCKY

INTRODUCTION

The well-being of older persons in the United States has been studied from two major points of view. One view has stressed the objective and external environmental conditions of older persons; the other has focused attention on their subjective, inner life—their feelings and attitudes, satisfactions and happiness. Careful studies have revealed various patterns of interrelationship between environmental conditions and subjective states. Some persons respond quickly and intensely to certain aspects of their social environment; others remain relatively detached and unresponsive. Some persons are overwhelmed and defeated by adverse socio-economic conditions, while others meet these setbacks with fortitude and vigor and attempt to change or modify them. All persons, to some degree, must cope with, or adjust to, conditions and circumstances of their life situation.

Old age in the United States is a period of many changes. As the individual enters the sixth, seventh, or eighth decades of his life, he may lose relatives and friends through death and separations; he may lose prestige and respect by being unable to participate in many community activities; and he may lose status through loss of

income, property, and savings. These changes are often accompanied by adverse changes in the subjective, inner life of the older person—his feelings and attitudes, his satisfactions and morale.

Objectives and Procedures

This report is meant to add to existing knowledge about the relationships between environmental conditions and the subjective life of older persons. The major environmental conditions examined were economic in nature. The subjective states, referred to here as attitudes, were inferred from responses of the subjects to statements concerning selected life situations.

One aim is to assess the changes in economic conditions and attitudes which occurred with age. Almost all of the subjects in this study grew up and have lived their adult lives in their present communities. The patterns of age-changes in economic conditions and attitudes will probably persist for some time and thus provide a basis for anticipating the well-being of older persons in similar circumstances.

This report has three objectives:

1. It provides some factual information on the economic status and attitudes of older rural and urban men.
2. It examines some of the interrelationships between economic status and attitudes.
3. It assesses the changes in economic status and attitudes which occurred with advances in age.

Sample

In 1959, men aged 60 and over in an area probability sample of households drawn from a rural Kentucky county and men of comparable age in a random sample of households drawn from a Kentucky metropolitan community were interviewed in their homes. (No institutionalized persons were included in the sample.)

Casey county, with a total population of slightly over 14,000 persons in 1960, is a completely rural county located in the Southern Appalachian Region about 75 miles from the nearest large urban center. The metropolitan community, Lexington, had a population of about 130,000 persons in 1960.

The men ranged in age from 60 to 97, with a median age of 70. Three-fourths of the rural men lived on farms, one-fifth in villages or towns, and slightly less than one-tenth in open country but not on farms. One-fourth of the urban men were nonwhite, compared with less than 1 percent of the rural men. Eight-tenths of the men were married and seven-tenths were Protestant. The average number of grades completed in school by the rural men was 5.1 and by the urban men, 7.4 (Table 1). The urban men had lived an average of 30 years in their present community, compared with 60 years for the rural men.

Table 1. Selected Characteristics of Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Characteristic	Rural (Casey County)		Urban (Lexington)		Total	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
<u>Age</u>						
60-64	72	23	49	22	121	23
65-69	78	25	54	25	132	25
70-74	60	19	60	27	120	23
75 and over	102	33	57	26	159	30
<u>Color</u>						
White	312	100	170	77	482	91
Nonwhite	*	*	50	23	50	9
<u>Marital Status</u>						
Married	253	81	168	76	421	79
Widowed	37	12	40	18	77	14
Never married	12	4	8	4	20	4
Divorced or separated	10	3	4	2	14	3
<u>Religion</u>						
Protestant	210	67	180	82	390	73
Catholic	6	2	6	3	12	2
Jewish	1	*	3	1	4	1
Other	18	6	7	4	25	5
No response	77	25	24	10	101	19
<u>Formal Education</u>						
0-4 grades	130	41	49	22	179	34
5-8 grades	145	46	74	34	219	40
9-12 grades	20	7	43	19	63	12
13-16 grades	8	3	33	15	41	8
17 grades or more	2	1	8	4	10	2
No response	7	2	13	6	20	3
Total cases	(312)	(100)	(220)	(100)	(532)	(100)

*Less than 0.5 percent.

ECONOMIC STATUS

The economic status of the men is assessed from their responses to a variety of questions concerning work and retirement, income, housing conditions, and property and equipment.

Work and Retirement

Labor Force Participation. The men surveyed were asked to state their present major occupation. Almost half the men (48 percent) were in the labor force, slightly less than half (46 percent) were retired, and the remainder reported they were unable to work (5 percent) or were doing housekeeping work (1 percent).

A larger proportion¹ of rural than of urban men reported they were in the labor force (52 and 42 percent), and, conversely, a larger proportion of urban than of rural men said they were retired (54 and 41 percent). The employed rural men were engaged mainly in farm work, and the employed urban men were equally divided between white collar and manual workers (Table 2).

The men who reported themselves in the labor force were asked if they considered themselves partly retired. About one-fourth of the total sample of men said they were partly retired. Thus, about

¹The 0.05 level of probability was used in testing the significance of differences. Differences which are not statistically significant but supply supporting evidence are referred to as slight or negligible.

Table 2. Work Status of Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Work Status	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Business and professional	7	18	11
Clerical and sales	--	3	1
Nonfarm skilled and semi-skilled	1	18	8
Farm operator	43	1	26
Farm labor	1	2	2
Housekeeper	1	2	1
Unable to work	6	2	5
Retired	41	54	46
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)

seven-tenths of the men (72 percent) were fully or partly retired, with very little difference between rural and urban men (75 percent rural and 70 percent urban).

Partial retirement appeared to occur at an earlier age among rural than among urban men. About one-fourth (26 percent) of the rural men aged 60 to 64 acknowledged they were partly retired, but only 2 percent of the urban men in this age category made such a report. Almost half (48 percent) of the rural men aged 65 to 69 said they were partly retired, but only 17 percent of the urban men of the same age made this statement.

Reasons for Retiring. The fully or partly retired men were asked why they had retired. It is recognized that responses to such a question may reflect faulty memories, since some of the men had been retired for many years. The largest proportion of the men (66 percent) gave "health or not able to work" as the reason for retiring—a response which coincided with the chief reasons reported in numerous recent studies of retirement in United States and England.² The second largest proportion of the men (16 percent) gave "age" as the reason for retiring, and small proportions said "no work available," "wanted to retire," "retirement pension," and "company policy" (Table 3).

²Wilma Donahue, Harold L. Orbach, and Otto Pollak, "Retirement: The Emerging Social Pattern," in Handbook of Social Gerontology edited by Clark Tibbitts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 356.

Table 3. Reasons for Retiring Given by Fully or Partly Retired Men Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Reasons for Retiring	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Health or not able to work	83	40	66
Age	6	30	16
No work available	--	11	4
Wanted to retire	--	9	3
Retirement pension	3	5	3
Company policy	*	5	2
No response	8	--	5
Total fully or partly retired	(234)	(153)	(387)

*Less than 0.05 percent.

The reasons given for retirement indicate that poor health was a more important factor in the retirement of rural than of urban workers. For example, more than twice the proportion of rural retired men as of urban retired men said they retired for health reasons (83 and 40 percent, Table 3). In contrast, "external" factors were decidedly more important in the retirement of urban workers. For example, almost 3 times the proportion of urban retired men than of rural retired men named such reasons for retiring as age, no work available, and company policy (46 and 6 percent, respectively, Table 3).

The very large proportion of rural retired men who gave health reasons for retiring suggests that rural men may be less healthy than urban men and are thus obliged to withdraw either partly or fully from their usual work roles. The men in the study were asked a question which probed their health status: "Do you now have any ailment or health condition that bothers you either all the time, or off and on?" A larger proportion of rural men than of urban men reported they were bothered with health ailments (72 and 57 percent). This difference between rural and urban men in health status (15 percentage points) was markedly less than the difference between rural and urban retired men who gave health reasons for retiring (43 percentage points).

It appears that the large percentage of rural retired men who gave health reasons for retiring may be responding to factors other than their health status. Perhaps the arduous demands of farm occupations play an important role. It is generally recognized that agricultural work requires greater physical exertion than most urban occupations.

With the normal decline in physical vigor and the consequent inability to perform as well as in the past, the rural male probably is more aware of his physical incapacities than the urban male, and he tends to attribute this incapacity to poor health.

Income

Amount of Income. The men were asked to estimate the income they and their wives received for the 12-month period preceding the interview.³ (In the following discussion, the income of the men includes the income of their wives.) The average (median) income for the total sample was \$1,130. The median income for the men aged 65 and older was \$968, which was substantially less than the median income of \$1,576 for men aged 65 and older in the United States in 1959.⁴ Four percent of the men reported they had no money income, and another 3 percent said they received some income but less than \$250 for the year. Sixteen percent of the men reported incomes of \$3,000 or more, and 4 percent of the respondents did not report their income (Table 4).

³Income reported was before taxes, and income from operating a nonfarm business or a farm excluded production expenses, depreciation on buildings, equipment, and machinery. A flash card was used and the respondent was asked in which of the listed groupings the joint income of himself and his wife fell.

⁴U. S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports: Consumer Income, Series P-60, No. 35, January 5, 1961, Table 23.

Table 4. Money Income for Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Income 1959*	<u>Rural</u> (Casey County)	<u>Urban</u> (Lexington)	Total
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	5	2	4
\$1 - \$249	5	**	3
\$250 - 499	19	5	14
\$500 - 999	31	17	25
\$1,000 - 1,999	23	18	22
\$2,000 - 2,999	8	18	12
\$3,000 - 4,999	4	16	7
\$5,000 and over	3	18	9
No response	2	6	4
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)
Median income	(\$815)	(\$2,256)	(\$1,130)

*Income reported by married men included the income of their wives.

**Less than 0.05 percent.

The rural men received markedly less money income than did the urban men in 1959. The average (median) incomes for the rural and urban men were \$815 and \$2,256, respectively. Ten percent of the rural men reported incomes of less than \$250, but only 2 percent of the urban men received this amount. Fifteen percent of the rural men had incomes of \$2,000 or more, but 52 percent of the urban men reported this amount.

Sources of Income. The men were asked about the sources of money income they and their wives received for the 12-month period preceding the interview. (In the following discussion, income of the men includes the income of their wives.) The interviewer read a list of possible sources of income and the respondent indicated which applied to him.

Seven-tenths of the men (71 percent) reported they received income from employment, slightly less than seven-tenths (67 percent) said they received income from retirement and pension systems. Slightly more than one-third (36 percent) received income from property and investments, and one-seventh (14 percent) received some financial assistance from relatives (Table 5).

A slightly greater proportion of rural than urban men reported incomes from employment (77 and 62 percent), a larger proportion of urban than of rural men received income from retirement and pension systems (75 and 62 percent), and twice the proportion of urban than of rural men reported income from property and investments (50 and 25 percent, Table 5). Approximately equal proportions of both rural and urban men received financial help from relatives (14 and 13 percent).

Table 5. Sources of Income of Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Sources of Income*	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent**</u>	<u>Percent**</u>	<u>Percent**</u>
<u>Employment</u>			
Operating farm	61	4	37
Salaries and wages	11	45	25
Nonfarm business	5	13	9
<u>Retirement and pensions</u>			
Social security	42	55	47
County assistance	16	4	11
Private retirement	4	16	9
<u>Property and investments</u>			
Interests and dividends	10	24	16
Rentals	8	17	12
Sale of property	4	4	4
Annuities	3	5	4
<u>Relatives</u>	14	13	14
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)

*Sources of income reported by married men included the sources of income of their wives.

**Percentages exceed 100 because of multiple responses.

Housing

Type of Home and Ownership. Almost all (93 percent) of the men lived in private homes, and a larger proportion of rural men than of urban men lived in private dwellings (99 and 85 percent). Ten percent of the urban men and 1 percent of the rural men lived in apartments. Five percent of the urban men lived in rooming houses or other kinds of living quarters. More than seven-tenths of the men (73 percent) said they owned their homes, and a greater proportion of rural men than of urban men made this statement (79 and 65 percent). Eleven percent of rural men and 29 percent of urban men said they paid rent. The remaining proportions said they "lived free" in the home.

Condition and Upkeep of Homes. Interviewers rated the condition and upkeep of the homes where the respondents lived. Less than half the homes (44 percent) were rated in "good condition," and about one-third (36 percent) were rated as "clean, neat, and attractively furnished" (Table 6).

A much larger proportion of urban than of rural men's homes were rated in good condition, that is, with no major defects (66 and 29 percent). A larger proportion of rural than of urban men's homes were rated as somewhat run-down and in poor condition (59 and 25 percent). The remaining proportions of both rural and urban men's homes were rated as very dilapidated. Ratings of the upkeep of the men's homes followed a similar pattern. A much larger proportion of urban than of rural men's homes were rated clean, neat, and tastefully furnished

Table 6. Housing Conditions of Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Housing Conditions	Rural	Urban	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Living in private homes	99	85	93
Home owned by self or spouse	79	65	73
<u>Condition of Home</u>			
In good condition, no major defect	29	66	44
Some signs of dilapidation	41	15	30
Run-down and in poor condition	18	10	15
Very run-down, very dilapidated	11	9	10
No rating made	1	*	1
<u>Upkeep of Home</u>			
Good, clean, neat, attractively furnished	24	53	36
Fairly clean, adequate furniture	49	28	41
Somewhat unclean, unattractive furniture	19	12	16
Very unclean, very unattractive furniture	7	5	6
No rating made	1	2	1
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)

*Less than 0.05 percent.

(53 and 24 percent); a larger proportion of rural than of urban men's homes were rated as fairly clean with adequate furniture (49 and 28 percent); and the remaining proportions of both rural and urban men's homes were rated as somewhat or very unclean with unattractive furniture (Table 6).

Property and Equipment

Estimated Value of Property. The men surveyed were asked to estimate the money value of the total property and assets that they and their wives owned. This estimate included the value of insurance policies and other nontangible items, as well as real property. (In the following discussion, property of the men includes the property of their wives.) The average (median) value of the property reported by the men was \$5,055. Ten percent of the men said they owned no property or assets, and 11 percent reported they owned some but less than \$1,000. Seven percent of the men valued their assets at \$30,000 or more.

The urban men valued their property and assets markedly higher than did the rural men (median values \$9,393 and \$3,943). Four percent of the urban men had no property, but 15 percent of the rural men said they had no possessions. Fourteen percent of the urban men had property valued at \$30,000 or more, but only 4 percent of the rural men placed this evaluation on theirs (Table 7).

Equipment and Facilities. The interviewer read a list of 14 items of equipment commonly found in American homes and the respondent

Table 7. Estimated Value of Property and Assets Owned by Men Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Value*	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	15	4	10
\$1 - \$499	5	9	7
\$500 - 999	4	4	4
\$1,000 - 4,999	34	17	27
\$5,000 - 9,999	18	15	17
\$10,000 - 29,999	18	33	24
\$30,000 - 99,000	3	9	5
\$100,000 or more	1	5	2
No response	2	4	3
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)
Median value of estate	(\$3,943)	(\$9,393)	(\$5,055)

*The value of the property reported by married men included that of their wives and covered nontangible items as well as real property.

indicated whether he owned or had access to the item. Slightly larger proportions of urban than of rural men reported they owned or had access to electricity, a radio, a mechanical refrigerator, and an automobile. Equal proportions of rural and urban men reported a home freezer and an automatic clothes washer in the home. Markedly larger proportions of urban than of rural men owned or had access to the remaining 8 items of equipment listed in Table 8, i.e., a gas or electric range, piped water, television, running hot water, inside flush toilet, bath or shower, telephone, and central heating. The average (mean) number of items owned by or accessible to the rural men was 5.3 per person and for the urban men, 11.1.

ECONOMIC LOSSES WITH AGE

For most people in the United States, old age means giving up the normal roles of middle age and adopting those of later life. Employed persons are expected to withdraw or taper off their economic activities in their sixties and seventies. With a decline in their economic activities, most older men experience loss in economic status. To what extent does labor force participation decrease with advances in age among older rural and urban men? What changes occurred with the age of the men in income, in housing conditions, and in property ownership? The "losses" are assessed by comparing the economic conditions of the youngest men (aged 60 to 64) with those of oldest men

Table 8. Ownership of or Access to Equipment and Facilities by Men Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Item	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent*</u>	<u>Percent*</u>	<u>Percent*</u>
Electricity	88	97	92
Radio	86	90	87
Mechanical refrigerator	80	94	86
Gas or electric range	54	92	70
Television	39	76	55
Piped water	27	93	54
Automobile	49	61	54
Running hot water	23	87	49
Inside flush toilet	17	89	47
Bath or shower	17	88	46
Telephone	13	82	41
Automatic clothes washer	33	35	34
Central heating	6	63	30
Home freezer	14	15	14
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)
Median	(5.3)	(11.1)	(7.6)

*Percentages exceed 100 because of multiple responses.

(aged 75 and over). Differences between these two categories of men are inferred to represent losses which have occurred with the passage of time.

The most pronounced differences of an economic nature occurred in labor force status and income. Among rural men, 88 percent of the youngest men, but only 28 percent of the oldest men were in the labor force. The proportions of urban men in the labor force, for comparable age groups, were 76 and 18 percent.

As might be expected, differences in income between the youngest and oldest men coincided with differences in labor force participation. Among rural men, the median incomes of the youngest and oldest men in 1959 were \$1,105 and \$668, respectively. The median incomes of the youngest and oldest aged urban men in 1959 were \$3,333 and \$1,399, respectively.

The following question gave another index of economic loss experienced by the men: "Have you used up any of your savings in the past year?" Unfortunately, the men were not asked whether they had any savings. However, almost half the rural men (49 percent) and slightly more than a third of the urban men (35 percent) said they had used some savings in the past year. Among rural men, the proportions who had used some savings varied slightly with age. Almost equal proportions of both the youngest and the oldest rural men had used some of their savings. Among urban men, in contrast, the use of savings varied markedly with age. Twenty-nine percent of the urban men aged 60 to 64 reported they had used some savings. This

proportion increased to 45 percent among the men aged 65 to 69, and then dropped to 39 percent among the men aged 70 and over.

The number of items of equipment in the homes varied markedly with age for rural men but only slightly for urban men. Among rural men, the median number of items of equipment in the homes of the youngest men was 5.9, and for the oldest rural men it was 4.3. Among urban men, the median numbers of items of equipment in the home for comparable age groups were 11.2 and 10.7.

The oldest men in the study owned markedly less property than the youngest men. Among rural men, the median values of the property owned by the youngest and oldest men were \$5,417 and \$3,555, respectively. Among urban men, the median values of the property owned by the youngest and oldest men were \$12,272 and \$7,916, respectively.

Housing conditions of the oldest men were slightly inferior to those of the youngest men. A comparison of the housing conditions of the oldest and youngest rural men revealed no difference in the proportions living in private homes, a slight difference in the proportions who owned their homes (oldest 79 percent, youngest 89 percent), a slight difference in the proportions whose homes were rated in good condition (oldest 25 percent, youngest 34 percent), and a slight difference in the proportions whose homes were rated as having good upkeep (oldest 18 percent, youngest 25 percent).

Among urban men, the differences in housing conditions were more pronounced. A comparison of the housing conditions of the oldest

and youngest urban men revealed a slight difference in the proportions living in private homes (oldest 81 percent, youngest 90 percent), a substantial difference in the proportions who owned their own homes (oldest 54 percent, youngest 69 percent), a slight difference in the proportions whose homes were rated in good condition (oldest 63 percent, youngest 70 percent), and a marked difference in the proportions whose homes were rated as having good upkeep (oldest 37 percent, youngest 61 percent).

ATTITUDES

As an individual grows older, he has to keep adapting and adjusting himself psychologically to changing circumstances and conditions. While most thoughtful persons recognize that such a process is a fact of life, the research task of studying the phenomenon is extremely difficult. For example, it would be a formidable task to obtain data on changes in mental outlook of older persons which occurred with the passage of time. Such a task would require intensive psychiatric examinations at periodical intervals, a procedure too expensive for studying large numbers of persons.

The men in this study responded to a number of questions concerning certain areas of day-to-day living, and these responses gave an indication of their subjective feelings and mental outlook. They were asked questions about work, about their willingness to disengage

themselves from work activities, about their feelings toward economic deprivation, and about their general mental outlook.

This section of the report focuses on the following question: "To what extent do the attitudes of the men vary with economic status, with rural-urban residence, and with age?" The index of economic status used consists of 14 items of equipment commonly owned by and accessible to American families (Table 8). Those owning or having access to 8 or less items were classified as low economic status, and those owning or having access to 9 to 14 items were classified as high economic status.

Work Attitudes

A number of investigators have suggested that work has lost its intrinsic value to many men in the United States and has become a means of obtaining other values.⁵ It would be important to know more about the attitudes of older men toward work. To what extent are older men interested in obtaining paid employment? To what extent do they value work for noneconomic reasons?

The men in this study evidenced little interest in work for financial or monetary reasons. Only 17 percent of the total sample of men indicated they felt the need for more opportunities to work

⁵Wilma Donahue, H. L. Orbach, and Otto Pollak, op. cit., pp. 359-61.

for pay or profit (Statement 1, Table 9). On the other hand, the men appeared to place considerable value upon the noneconomic aspects of work. For example, more than a third of the men (36 percent) agreed that housewives whose children have grown up should get a paying job so as to keep busy (Statement 2, Table 9), and 38 percent believed that "most people lose respect for a person who has retired and does not do any work" (Statement 3, Table 9). In addition, two-thirds of the men indicated there was value in working even if they did not need the money. They were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "There is no sense in working if you can get along without the money." Only one-fourth of the men agreed with this statement, but two-thirds disagreed, a response which probably revealed a belief that there is sense in working for other than financial reasons (Statement 4, Table 9).

The interest of the men in work for economic reasons (i.e., for pay or profit) varied slightly with their economic status and with their place of residence, but more markedly with their age. A slightly larger proportion of men of low than of high economic status felt they needed more opportunities to work for pay or profit (18 and 14 percent). On the other hand, rural men, who were of rather low economic status, were slightly less interested than urban men in more opportunities to work for pay or profit (13 and 22 percent). This difference probably reflects the more limited opportunities for paid employment in the rural area. With advances in age, despite the marked "losses" in economic status, there was a declining interest

Table 9. Work Attitudes of Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Statements About Work	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1. Do you feel the need for more opportunities to work for pay or profit?			
Yes	13	22	17
No	81	76	79
No response	6	2	4
2. Housewives whose children have grown up should get a paying job so as to keep busy.			
Agree	37	35	36
Disagree	54	44	50
Don't know	9	21	14
3. Most people lose respect for a person who has retired and does not do any work.			
Agree	46	26	38
Disagree	44	57	49
Don't know	8	15	13
4. There is no sense in working if you can get along without the money.			
Agree	26	27	27
Disagree	70	61	66
Don't know	4	12	7
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)

in working for pay or profit. One-fourth (26 percent) of the men aged 60 to 64 were interested in more work for pay, but only 12 percent of the men aged 75 and over expressed this interest.

Some of the men's attitudes about noneconomic aspects of work varied with such factors as economic status, place of residence, and age, and some did not. Almost equal proportions of men of low and high economic status, equal proportions of rural and urban men, and equal proportions of young (age 60 to 64) and old (75 and over) men agreed with the statement that "housewives whose children have grown up should get a paying job so as to keep busy." Equal proportions of men of low and high economic status indicated they believed there was "sense in working" even if one could "get along without the money." However, a slightly larger proportion of rural than urban men revealed this attitude (Statement 4, Table 9), and a slightly larger proportion of the oldest (75 and over) than of the youngest (60 to 64) men indicated this belief (72 and 66 percent).

The attitudes of the men about work as a means of maintaining a position of respect varied markedly with economic status, with rural-urban residence, and, among rural men, with age. A much larger proportion of men of low than of high economic status felt that "most people lose respect for a person who has retired and does not do any work" (45 and 28 percent agreed). A greater proportion of rural than of urban men revealed this attitude (46 and 26 percent agreed), and this attitude was much more prevalent among the oldest rural men

(75 and over) than among the youngest rural men (60 to 64), as indicated by the respective percentages who agreed with the statement (52 and 36). Among urban men, the importance of work as a means of maintaining respect remained constant with age.

Disengagement Attitudes

One of the current hypotheses concerning successful aging is that it involves "the acceptance and the desire for a process of disengagement from active life."⁶ This hypothesis is based on the observation that as they grow older people tend to withdraw from or reduce some of the activities of middle age. This disengagement process involves both overt and subjective behavior. To what extent are older rural and urban men willing to disengage themselves from work activities? What are some of their attitudes about this process?

The majority of the men in this study indicated they subscribed to the view that older persons should "disengage" themselves from the work roles of middle age, but, at the same time, they believed such disengagement was not "good" for them. Three-fifths of the men agreed with the statement that "older persons should step aside and let younger persons get jobs" (Statement 1, Table 10); three-fifths agreed with the statement that "workers should be encouraged to retire at age 65" (Statement 2, Table 10); but three-fifths of the men also agreed with the statement that "retirement is bad for a person" (Statement 3, Table 10).

⁶Robert J. Havighurst, "Successful Aging," The Gerontologist, 1961, 1, 8-13.

Table 10. Disengagement Attitudes of Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Statements About Disengagement	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1. Older persons should step aside and let younger persons get jobs.			
Agree	73	47	62
Disagree	20	41	29
Don't know	7	12	9
2. Workers should be encouraged to retire at age 65.			
Agree	71	47	61
Disagree	24	46	33
Don't know	5	7	6
3. Generally speaking, retirement is bad for a person.			
Agree	60	55	58
Disagree	27	33	30
Don't know	13	12	12
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)

Men of low economic status revealed a much greater readiness to disengage themselves from work activity than did men of high economic status, but equal proportions felt that this was "bad." The proportions of men of low and high economic status who felt that older persons should step aside and let younger persons get jobs were 75 and 48 percent; the proportions who believed workers should be encouraged to retire at age 65 were 70 and 49 percent; and the proportions who believed that retirement was "bad for a person" were 56 and 59 percent.

Willingness to disengage themselves from work activity was a much more common attitude among rural than among urban men. A substantially larger proportion of rural than of urban men agreed with the statements "older persons should step aside" and that "workers should retire" but almost equal proportions of rural and urban men felt that retirement was "bad" (Table 10).

Willingness to disengage themselves from work activity was inversely associated with age, and the attitude that such disengagement was "bad" was directly related to age. The proportions of youngest (60 to 64) and oldest (75 and over) men who agreed that "older persons should step aside" were 65 and 60 percent, and the proportions who believed that workers should be encouraged to retire at age 65 were 68 and 56 percent. However, there was a much greater difference between the oldest and youngest urban men than between the oldest and youngest rural men in the proportions who felt retirement was "bad." For example, this attitude was expressed by 54

percent of the rural men aged 60 to 64 and by 61 percent of the rural men aged 75 and over. In contrast, among urban men 39 percent of the youngest men believed that retirement was bad but 65 percent of the oldest men believed this.

Economic Deprivation

It is commonly observed that feelings of economic deprivation may not coincide with one's objective economic status. Persons of relatively high income and economic status may experience strong feelings of deprivation, while persons of less income and lower economic status may not. It is generally recognized the "meaning" the individual gives to his environmental conditions is an important factor in whether or not he feels deprived. How do older men subjectively view their economic situation? To what extent do they feel economically deprived? About what things do they feel deprived?

The men were asked three questions concerning their feelings of deprivation: (1) "Are there any things you dislike about your present living quarters?" (2) "Compared with the way you got along financially when you were 50 years of age, are you getting along better now, about the same, or worse?" (3) "Do you have to go without some things because you don't have enough money?"

One-fourth of the total sample of men said there were some things they disliked about their living quarters (Statement 1, Table 11). The 134 men who reported a dislike for their living quarters were asked what things they disliked. Two-fifths of the

Table 11. Feelings of Deprivation of Men Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Deprivation Statements	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1. Are there any things you dislike about your present living quarters?			
Yes	28	21	25
No	71	78	74
No response	1	1	1
2. Compared with age 50, how do you get along financially now?			
Better now	17	20	19
About the same	42	48	44
Worse	38	30	35
No response	3	2	2
3. Do you have to go without things because you don't have enough money?			
Yes	47	32	41
No	49	65	56
No response	4	3	3
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)

134 men (41 percent) said they disliked the equipment and facilities, one-fourth (26 percent) said their house was not "a good" house, and the remainder said they disliked such things as poor location, expense, neighbors, and poor transportation.

One-fifth of the men estimated that their financial condition in 1959 (at the time of the survey) was better than at age 50, slightly more than two-fifths said their financial condition was about the same as at age 50, and about one-third judged their financial condition worse than at age 50 (Statement 2, Table 11).

It was pointed out (Table 4) that the average annual income of the men in 1959 was \$1,130. Despite this rather low income, only two-fifths of the men said they went without things because they lacked money. The men who said they went without things because they lacked money were asked an additional question: "What things do you go without?" The largest proportion of these men (59 percent) said they lacked necessities of life, such as proper food and clothing. The second largest percentage (38 percent) said they went without certain common luxuries. Thirteen percent of the men said they lacked adequate health services because they did not have enough money to pay for them. (The percentage responses to this question exceeded 100 because some men gave more than one answer).

As might be expected, subjective feelings of economic deprivation of the men varied with their economic status. The proportions of men of low and high economic status who said they disliked some things about their living quarters were 31 and 18 percent, and the proportions who said they went without things because they lacked money were

55 and 24 percent. A substantially larger proportion of men of low economic status than men of high economic status estimated that their financial condition in 1959 was worse than at age 50 (43 and 24 percent).

Despite the markedly superior housing conditions of the urban men (Table 6), there was little difference between rural and urban men in the proportions who said they disliked some things about their present living quarters (28 and 21 percent, Statement 1, Table 11). A slightly larger proportion of rural than urban men estimated that their financial condition was worse in 1959 than at age 50 (38 and 30 percent, Statement 2, Table 11). However, a markedly larger proportion of rural than urban men said they had to go without things because they did not have enough money (47 and 32 percent, Statement 3, Table 11).

It has been pointed out that the oldest men (75 and over) lived in houses which were somewhat inferior to those of men aged 60 to 64 and that the oldest men had markedly smaller incomes than did the youngest men. It would thus be expected that the oldest men would express the greater dissatisfaction with their present housing conditions and financial status. This expectation was not supported by the responses of the men. A slightly larger proportion of the youngest than of the oldest men said they disliked some things about their living quarters (26 and 23 percent), and a markedly larger proportion of the youngest than of the oldest men said they went without some things because they did not have enough money (52 and 38 percent).

Several hypotheses may be suggested to account for the greater dissatisfaction among the youngest men. The youngest men were more actively engaged in productive work. They probably had greater economic responsibilities, higher expectations for economic betterment, and more unmet wants and needs. They consequently felt deprived. In contrast, the oldest men were less involved in productive work. They tended to have fixed incomes principally from retirement and pension systems, probably had lower expectations for economic betterment, had fewer unmet wants and needs, and consequently felt less deprived than the youngest men. With advances in age, the men appeared to have made some adjustments to their economic condition.

In comparison with age 50, a greater proportion of the oldest than the youngest men estimated that their present financial condition was worse (43 and 27 percent). For the youngest men (aged 60 to 64) this was a comparison with their financial situation about 12 years ago, while for the oldest men (75 and over) the comparison covered a quarter of a century. Only a few of the youngest men apparently felt they had gone "downhill" financially in that period of time, but a much larger proportion of the oldest men probably felt their financial status had deteriorated in the last quarter of a century.

Mental Outlook

It is frequently observed that older persons in the United States seem to be discouraged and depressed and that they seem to be concerned

about problems of the present rather than about problems of the future. Are these observations fact or fiction? To what extent do older rural and urban men living in the community show a pessimistic outlook and a preoccupation with the present?

The men in this study responded to two statements which indicated their feelings of pessimism and their orientation to the future. Less than half the men (45 percent) indicated that they held a pessimistic view about life; that is, this proportion of men agreed with the statement, "In spite of what some people say, the life of the average man or woman is getting worse not better" (Table 12). Less than half the men (47 percent) revealed that they were preoccupied with the present, that is, this percentage of men agreed with the statement "Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself."

Men of low compared with those of high economic status and rural compared with urban men evidenced the greater degree of pessimism and the greater preoccupation with the present. The proportions of men of low and high economic status who agreed with the statement on pessimism were 55 and 32 percent, and the proportions of men of low and high economic status who agreed with the statement on "living for today" were 55 and 38 percent. The markedly larger proportions of rural than of urban men who agreed with these two statements are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Pessimism and Attitudes Toward the Future of Men Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Statements	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	Total
	(Casey County)	(Lexington)	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1. In spite of what some people say, the life of the average man or woman is getting worse, not better.			
Agree	51	35	45
Disagree	35	49	41
Don't know	14	16	14
2. Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.			
Agree	53	38	47
Disagree	40	54	46
Don't know	7	8	7
Total cases	(312)	(220)	(532)

The economic "losses" with advances in age apparently had little effect on their mental outlook. Although the men's financial condition deteriorated markedly with age, feelings of pessimism increased only slightly and their orientation to the future remained almost constant. For example, 36 percent of the youngest men (aged 60 to 64) agreed with the statement on pessimism, and agreement increased to 45 percent among the oldest men (aged 75 and over), a difference of only 9 percentage points. Forty-five percent of the youngest men and 47 percent of the oldest men agreed with the statement on "living for today," an increase of only 2 percentage points.

SUMMARY

This report has examined the economic status and attitudes of 532 men aged 60 and over living in selected rural and urban areas of Kentucky.

At the time of interview (1959), almost half the men were in the labor force. The average annual income of the men was \$1,130. Four percent of the men had no income, and 9 percent had annual incomes of \$5,000 or more. Almost all the men lived in private homes and three-fourths owned their homes. The average value of the property and assets owned by the men was \$5,055, and they had use of half of the 14 items of equipment commonly found in American homes.

The urban men were of markedly higher economic status than the rural men. The urban men had almost three times the income of the rural men; the value of their property was more than double that of the rural men; and they had access to more than twice as many items of equipment as the rural men. A larger proportion of rural than of urban men owned their own homes, but the homes of the urban men were judged by the interviewers to be in markedly better condition than those of the rural men.

The economic status of the men deteriorated with age. Compared with the youngest men (60 to 64), the oldest men (75 and over) participated much less in the labor force, had substantially smaller incomes, owned smaller estates, and had access to fewer items of equipment. A smaller proportion of the oldest than of the youngest men owned their own homes, and the homes of the oldest men were in much poorer condition than those of the youngest men.

Noneconomic values in work appeared to be more important to the men than economic values. Two-thirds of the men indicated they were interested in working even though they could get along without the money. Rural men, the oldest men (75 and over), and men of low economic status placed considerable value on work as a means of maintaining respect.

The large majority of the men believed that older persons should disengage themselves from the work roles of middle age, but at the same time they believed that such disengagement was not "good" for them. Rural men, men of low economic status, and the youngest men (60 to 64) evidenced the greater willingness to disengage themselves

from their normal work roles, but the oldest men (75 and over) expressed the greatest disapproval about doing this.

Despite the small incomes of the men, only 2 out of 5 said they had to go without things because they lacked money. Rural men, men of low economic status, and the youngest men (60 to 64) expressed the stronger feelings of economic deprivation. The oldest men (75 and over) despite their low economic status, did not feel as deprived as the youngest men—a finding which suggests the adjustments made by the oldest men.

Half the men evidenced feelings of pessimism and a preoccupation with the present. These reactions were decidedly more pronounced among men of low than of high economic status and among rural as opposed to urban men. Although the economic status of the oldest men was markedly lower than that of the youngest men, there was only a slight difference in feelings of pessimism between the two age groups; and the men's preoccupation with problems of the present remained almost constant with age.