

# Does Our Housing Stock Meet Accessibility Needs?

**Jennifer Molinsky**

**Project Director, Housing an Aging Society Program**

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**Accessibility features:**  
design elements or  
technology that make  
a home navigable and  
usable by people with  
a variety of disabilities



# Overview

- Housing accessibility data
- Specific accessibility features in US housing
- Fit between people and their homes
- Addressing accessibility gaps



# Data Measuring Housing Accessibility in the US

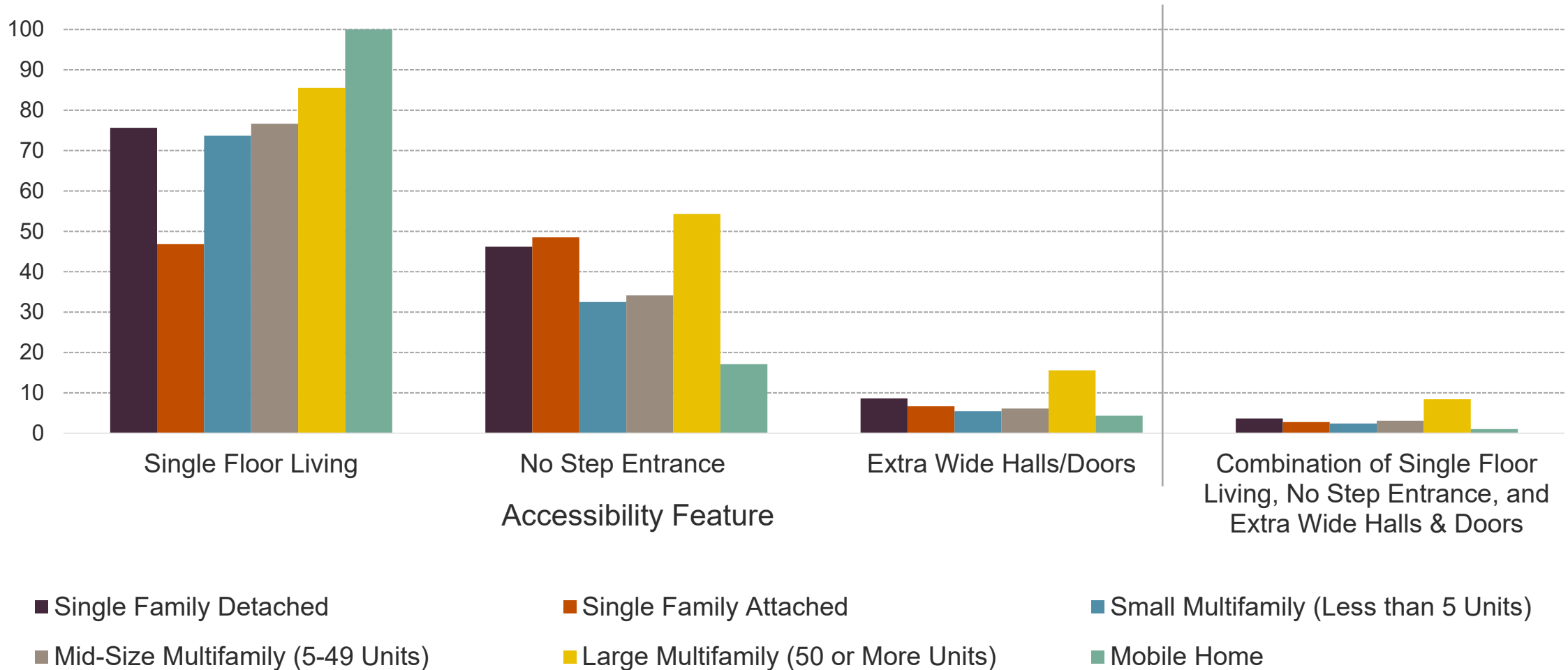
## American Housing Survey

- 2011: Features of the home
- 2019: Fit between residents and their housing



# Few Homes Have Basic Accessibility Features

Share of Housing Units by Structure Type (Percent)



Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2011 American Housing Survey.

## For Other Findings on Accessibility of Stock, See:

- *Projections and Implications of Housing a Growing Older Population* (JCHS, 2016)
- *Accessibility Features for Older Households in Subsidized Housing* (JCHS, 2020)
- *Accessibility of America's Housing Stock: Analysis of the 2011 American Housing Survey* (Bo'sher et al., 2017)
- *Housing for an Aging Population* (Chan and Ellen, *Housing Policy Debate* 2016)
- *Housing Accessibility for Seniors with Mobility and Grasping Disabilities: Lessons from the American Housing Survey* (Kim, *Housing Studies* 2019)

Web addresses: <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research-areas/reports/projections-and-implications-housing-growing-population-older-households>,  
<https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research-areas/working-papers/accessibility-features-older-households-subsidized-housing>,  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3055191](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3055191)

# Sample 2019 American Housing Survey Questions

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*Without assistance from another person, does anyone in the household 6 years of age and older currently have difficulty entering the home or property because of a condition other than a temporary injury?*

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*Without assistance from another person, does anyone in the household 6 years of age and older currently have difficulty using a bedroom because of a condition other than a temporary injury? Consider such activities as reaching and opening closets or windows, getting dressed, or getting in or out of bed.*

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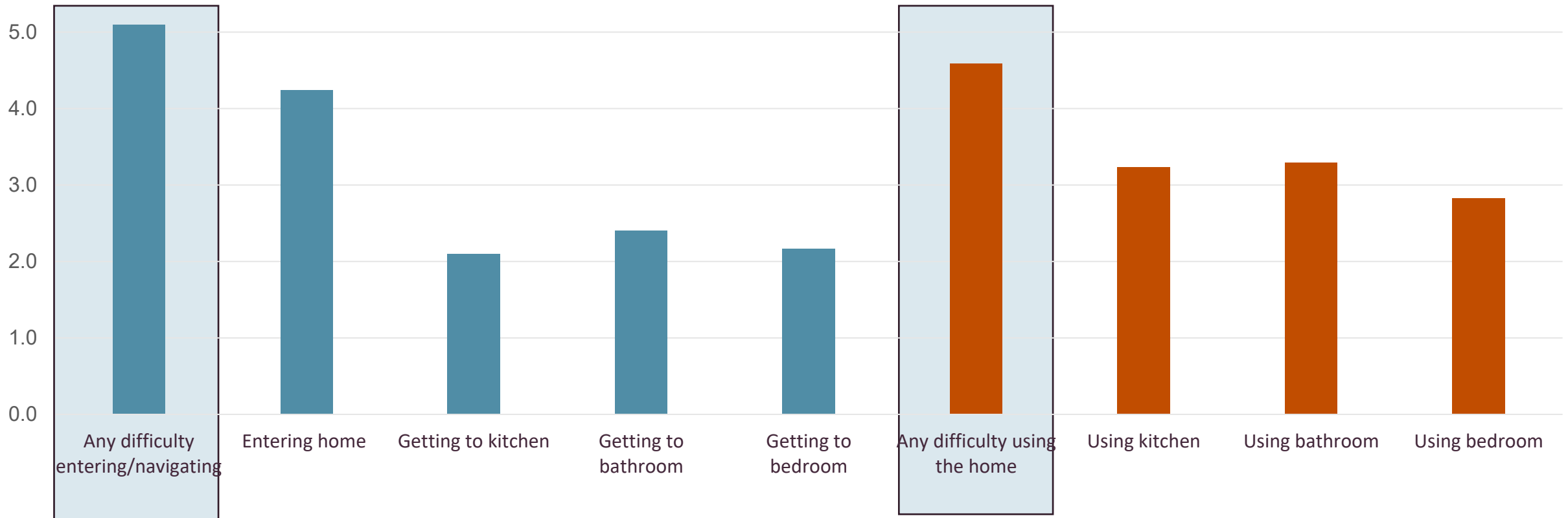
# Person-Environment Fit

- Speaks to the alignment between a residents' needs and the home
- Adequacy of fit can affect behavior and health
  - Poor fit may limit individuals' functioning and mean they need to rely on others for help, change behaviors in their home, or face heightened risks
  - A good fit can increase residential stability, safety, independence
- Environmental gerontology emphasizes person-environment fit; “draws upon the idea that old age is a period of adult development profoundly influenced and shaped by the environment” (Wahl)
  - Person-environment fit is not static but changes as environments change (e.g. home deteriorates), individuals' circumstances change (e.g. health changes)



# Millions of US Households Experience Difficulty Navigating and Using their Homes

Number of Households with a Member Experiencing Difficulty (Millions)

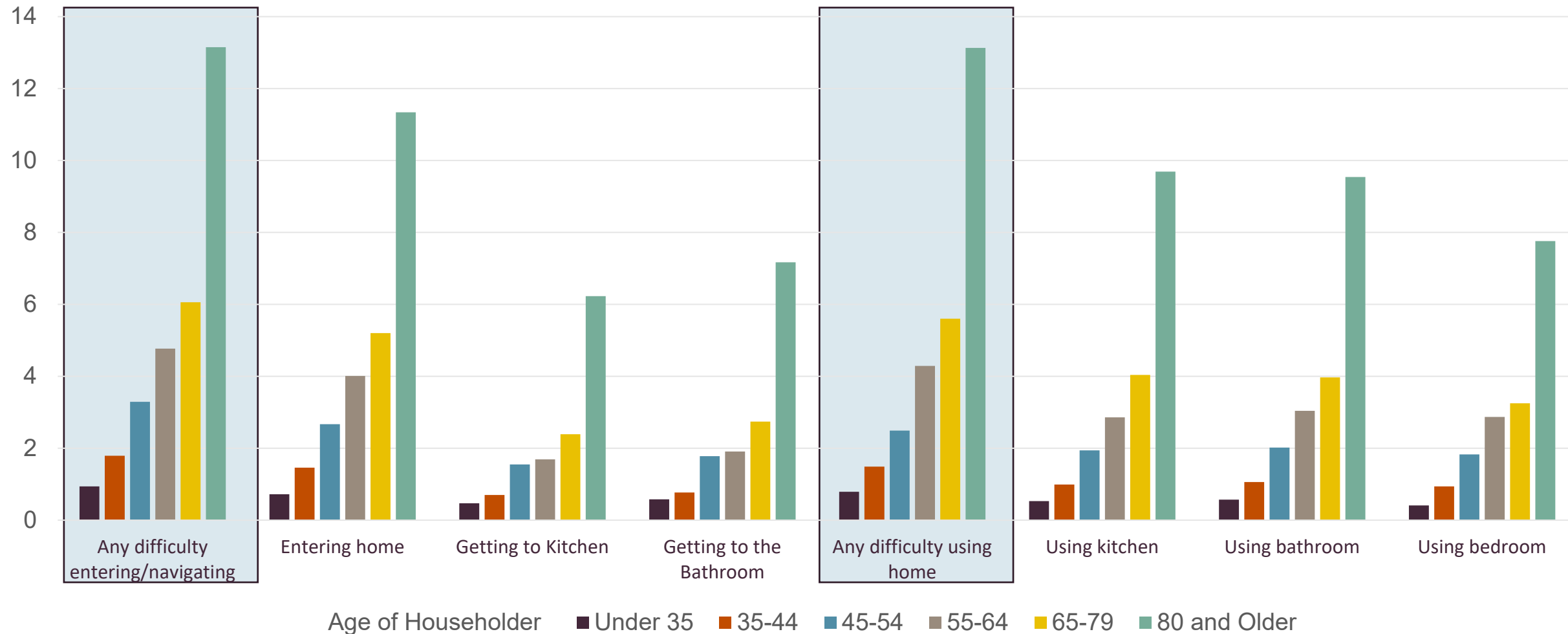


Note: Difficulties entering, navigating, and using the home without assistance are the result of a condition other than a temporary injury and apply to occupants over 6 years old.

Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Older Adults Are More Likely to Experience Difficulties Navigating and Using Their Homes

Share of Households Reporting Difficulty (Percent)

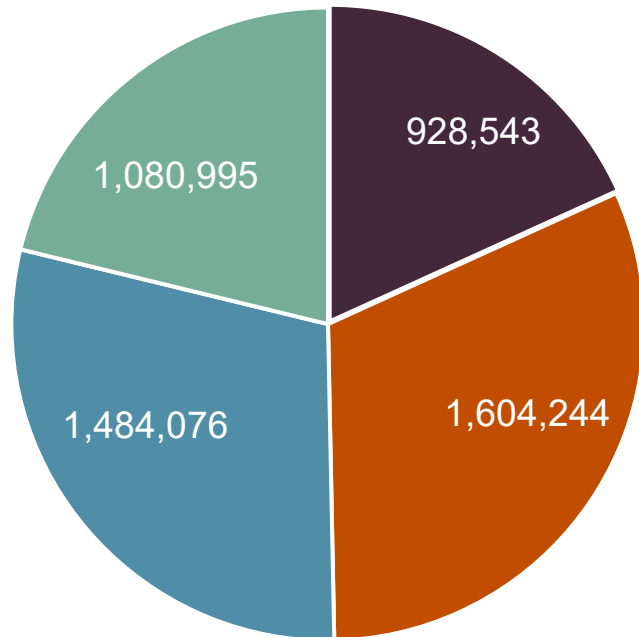


Note: Difficulties entering, navigating, and using the home without assistance are the result of a condition other than a temporary injury and apply to occupants over 6 years old.

Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

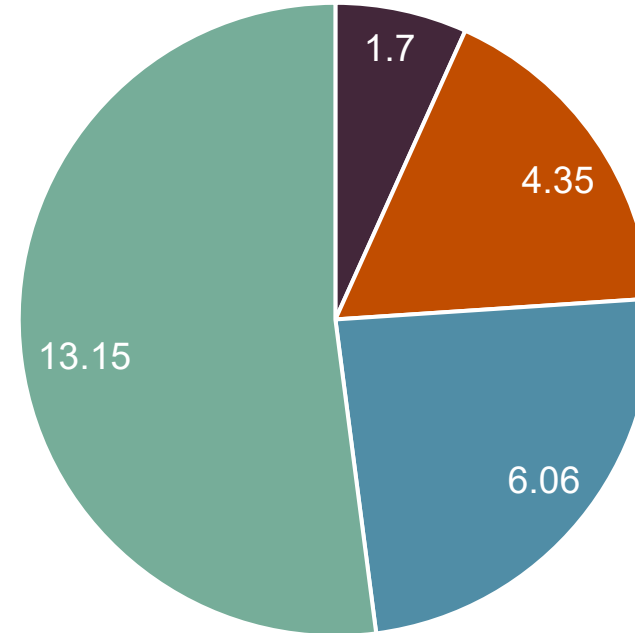
# Households Headed by Someone 50-69 Report Over Half of Difficulties Entering/Navigating Home

Any Difficulty Entering/Navigating Home, Number of Households



■ Under 50 ■ 50-64 ■ 65-79 ■ 80 and Older

Any Difficulty Entering/Navigating Home, Share of Households (Percent)



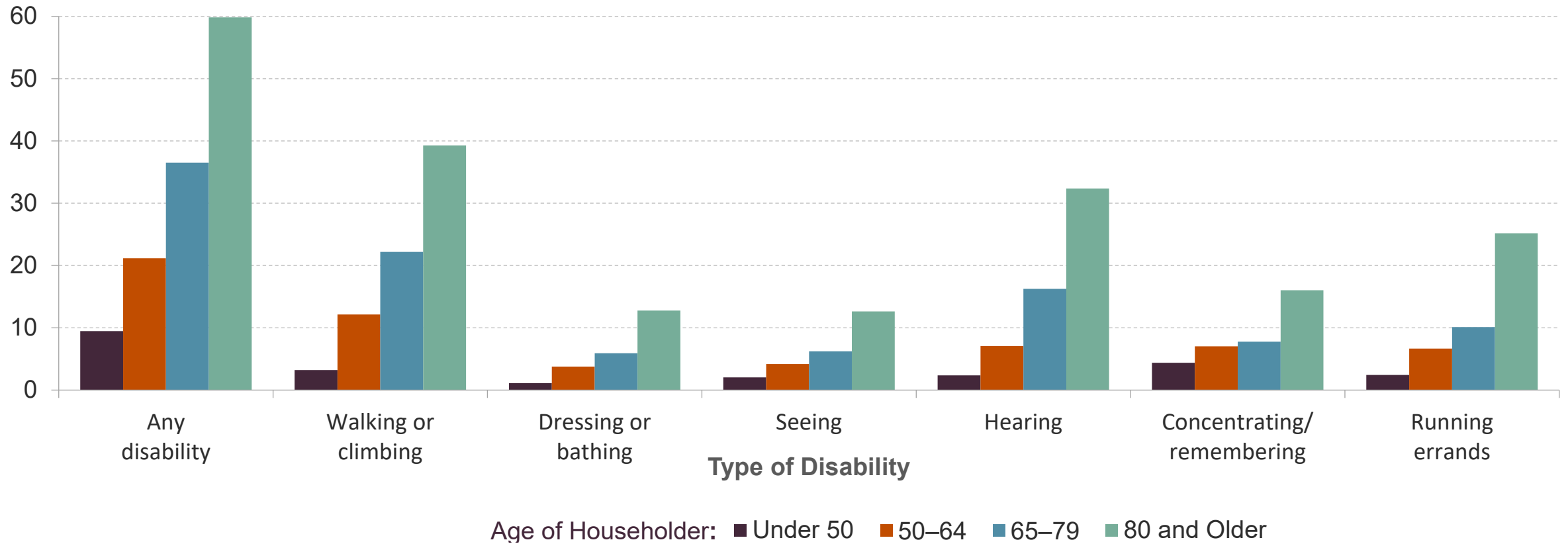
■ Under 50 ■ 50-64 ■ 65-79 ■ 80 and Older

Note: Difficulties entering, navigating, and using the home without assistance are the result of a condition other than a temporary injury and apply to occupants over 6 years old.

Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Disabilities that May Affect House Fit Increase with Age

Share of Households Reporting Difficulty (Percent)



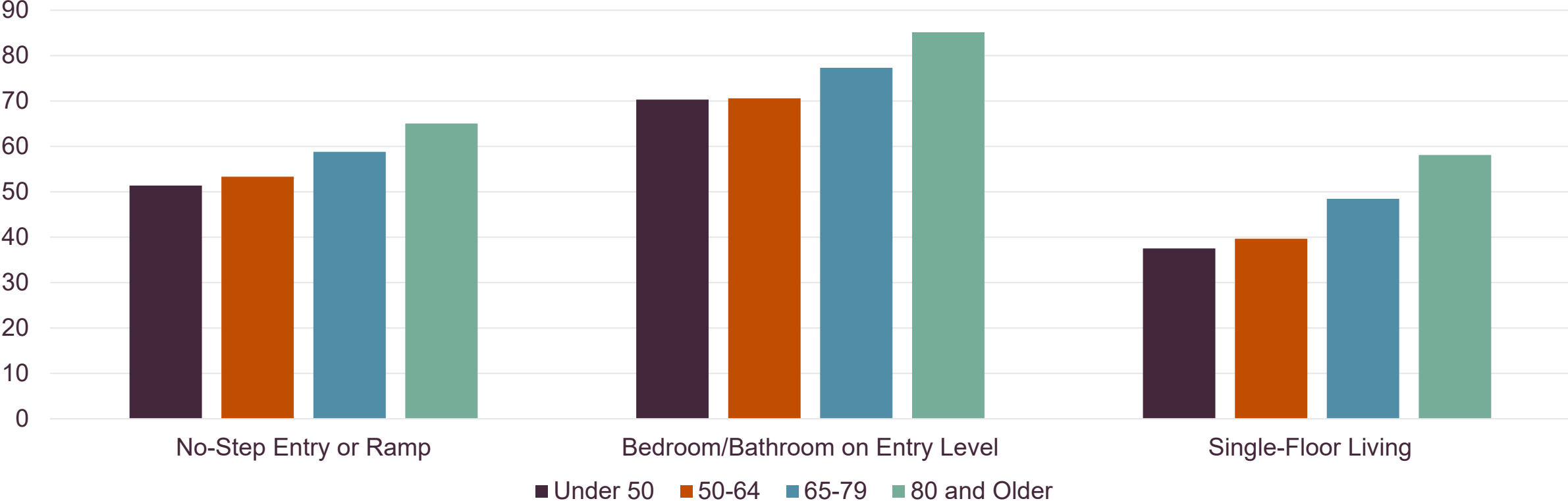
Note: Households reporting at least one household member of any age having a difficulty.

Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

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# While Homes of Those 80 and Over Are More Likely to Have Accessibility Features, They May Not Be Sufficient to Secure Good Housing Fit

Share of Households Reporting Specific Feature in Their Home (Percent)

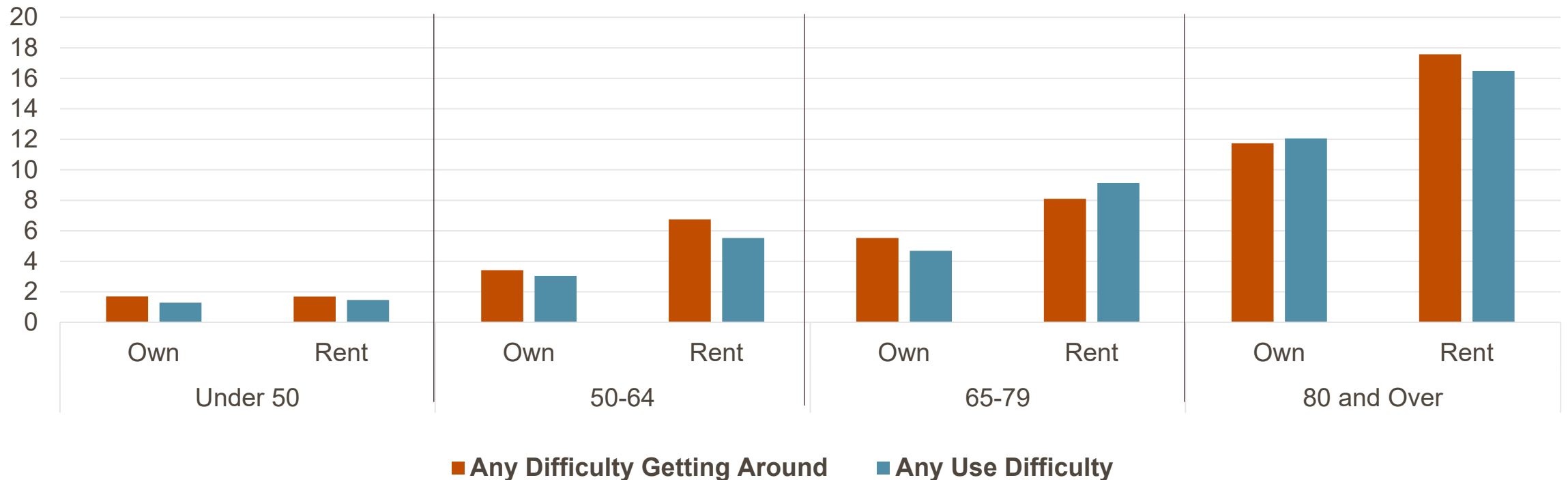


Note: Single-floor living refers to presence of no-step entry or ramp, plus bedroom and bathroom on entry level or the presence of a lift to a different floor.  
Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.



# Higher Shares of Renters Report Difficulties Navigating and Using Their Homes

Share of Households Reporting Difficulty by Age of Household Head (Percent)

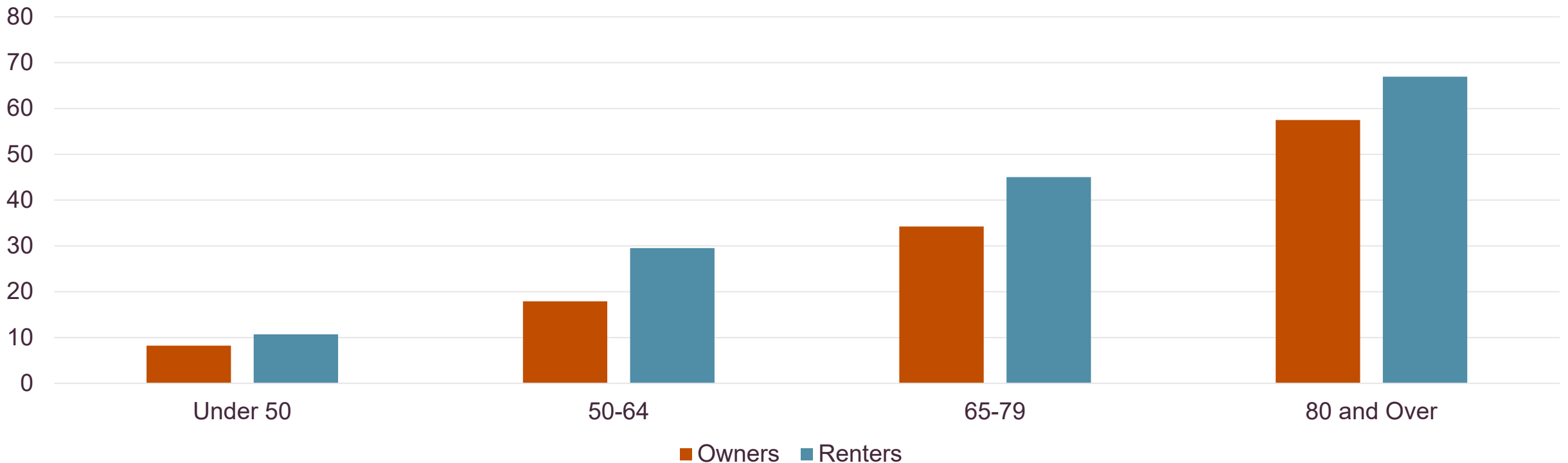


Note: Difficulties entering, navigating, and using the home without assistance are the result of a condition other than a temporary injury and apply to occupants over 6 years old.

Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Renters Are More Likely to Report Disabilities At All Ages

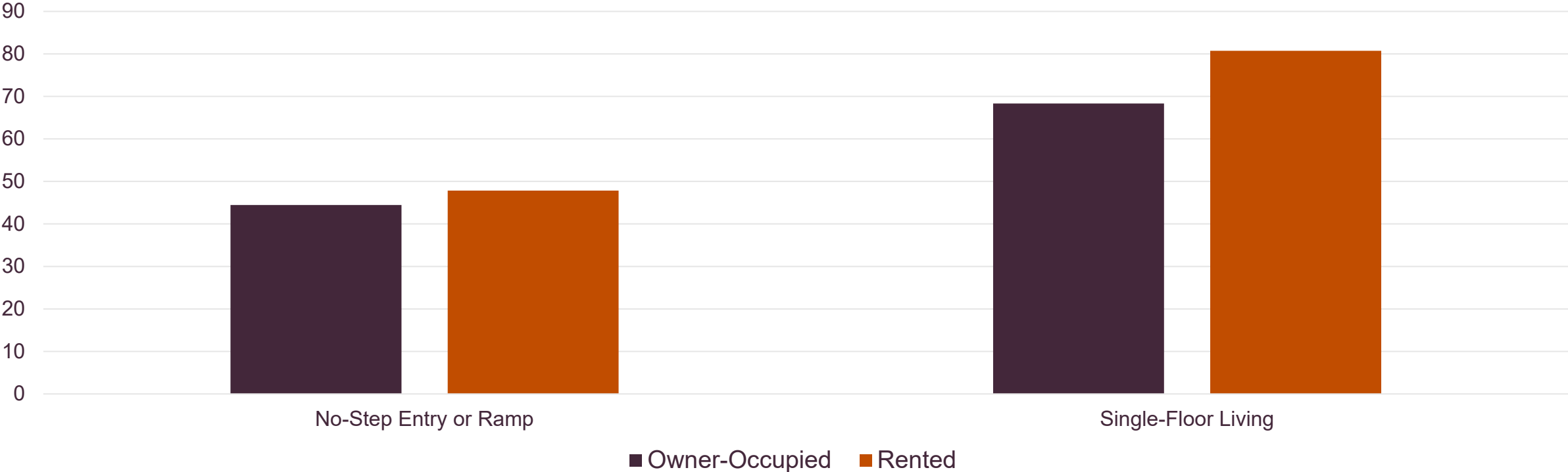
Share of Households Reporting at Least One Disability Among Household Members (Percent)



Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# According to 2019 Data, Owner-Occupied and Renter Households Offered Similar Rates of No-Step Entry and Single-Floor Living

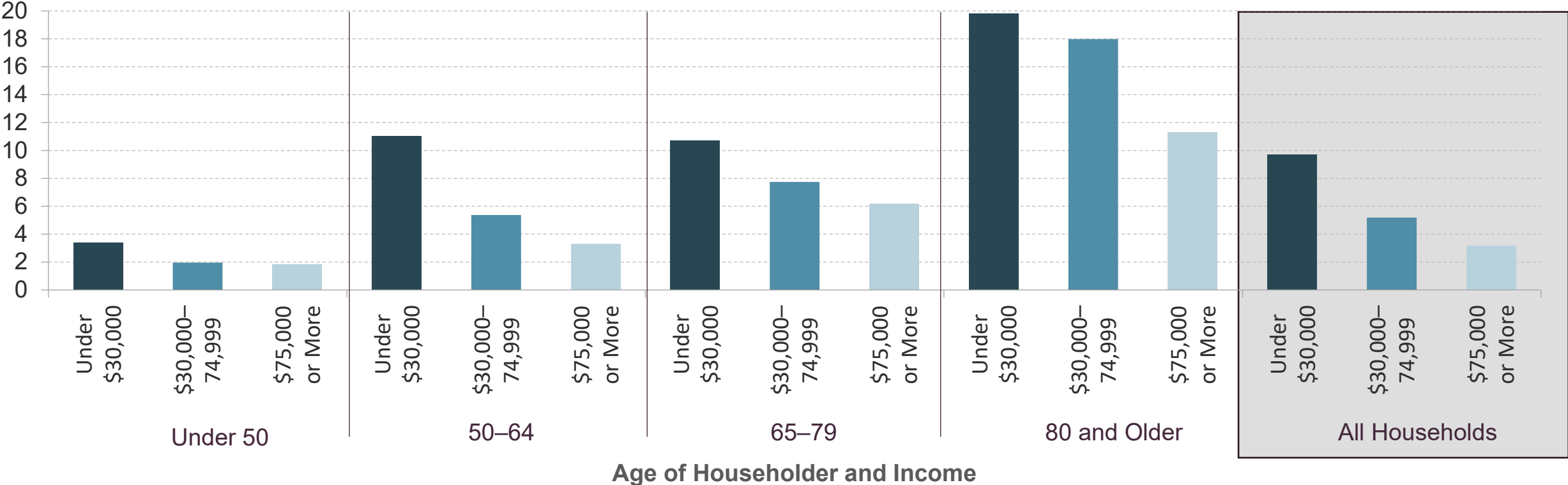
Share of Households reporting Feature (Percent)



Note: Single-floor living refers to presence of no-step entry or ramp, plus bedroom and bathroom on entry level or the presence of a lift to a different floor.  
Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Older, Lower-Income Households Are Most Likely to Have Difficulties Getting Around In or Using Their Homes

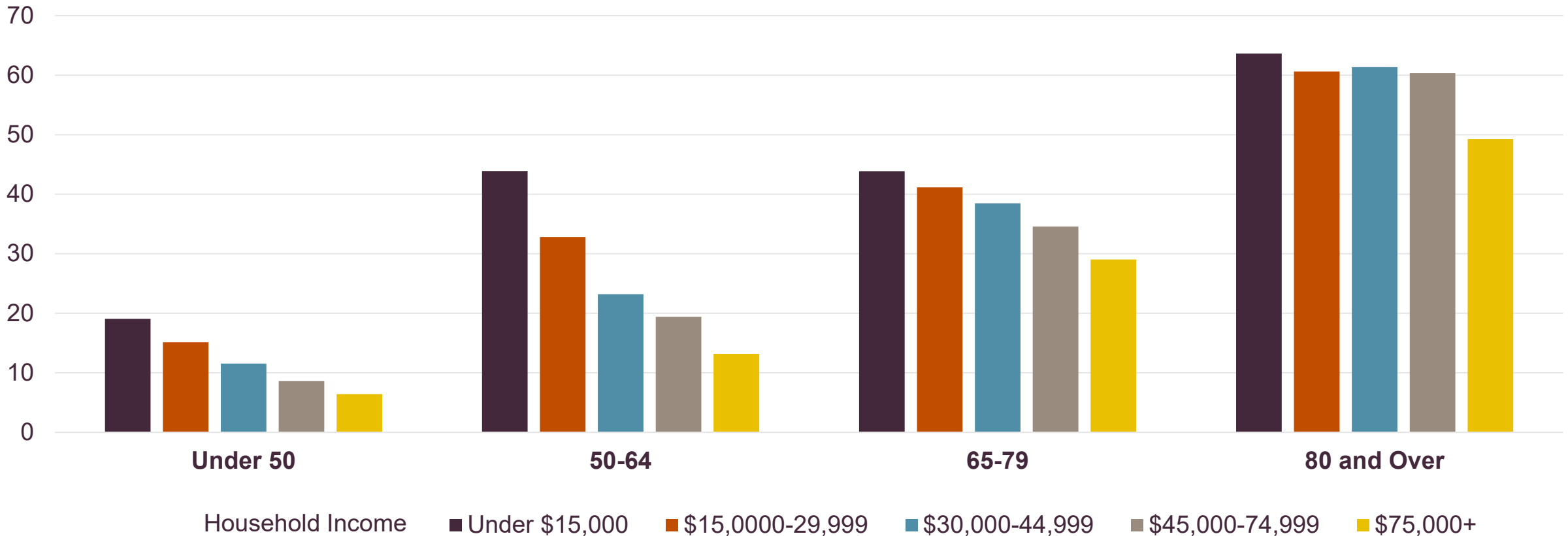
Share of Households with Any Difficulty (Percent)



Note: Difficulties entering, navigating, and using the home without assistance are the result of a condition other than a temporary injury and apply to occupants over 6 years old.  
 Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Lower-Income Households Are More Likely to Report Disabilities at All Ages

Share of Households Reporting at Least One Difficulty (Mobility, Bathing/Dressing, Seeing, Hearing, Doing Errands) (Percent)

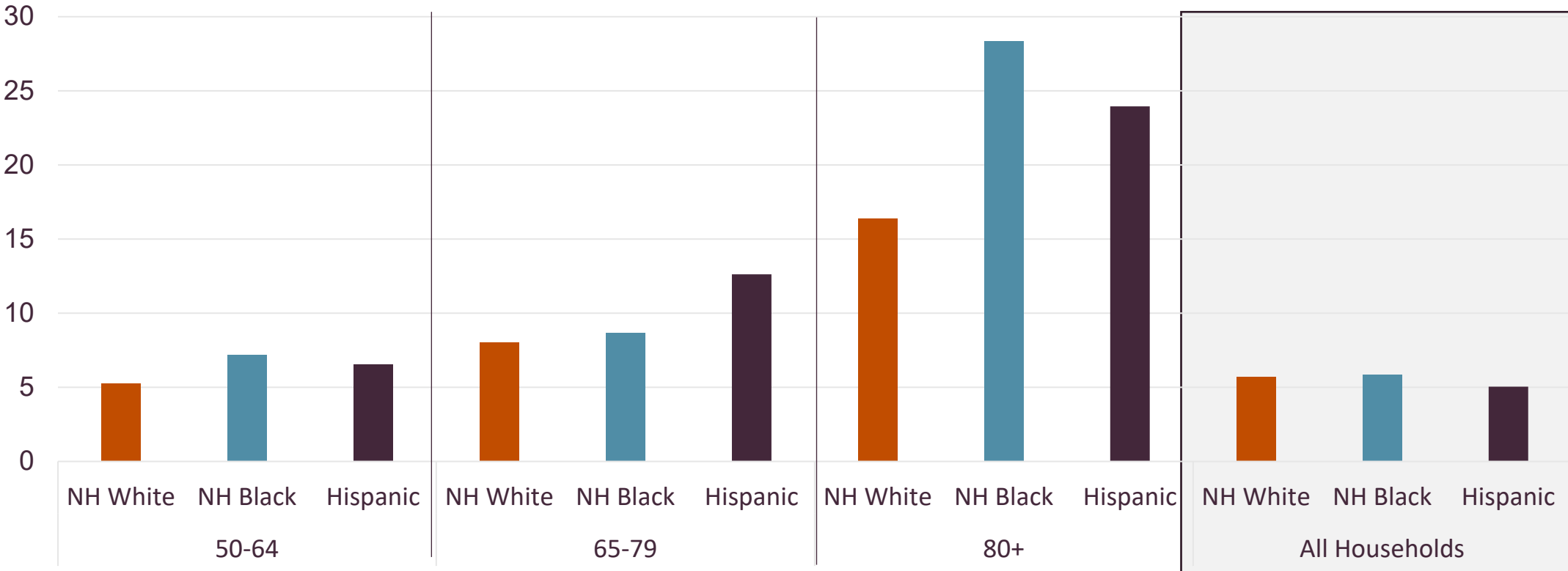


Note: Households reporting at least one household member of any age having a difficulty.  
Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.  
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# Older People of Color Are More Likely to Report Difficulties with Their Home

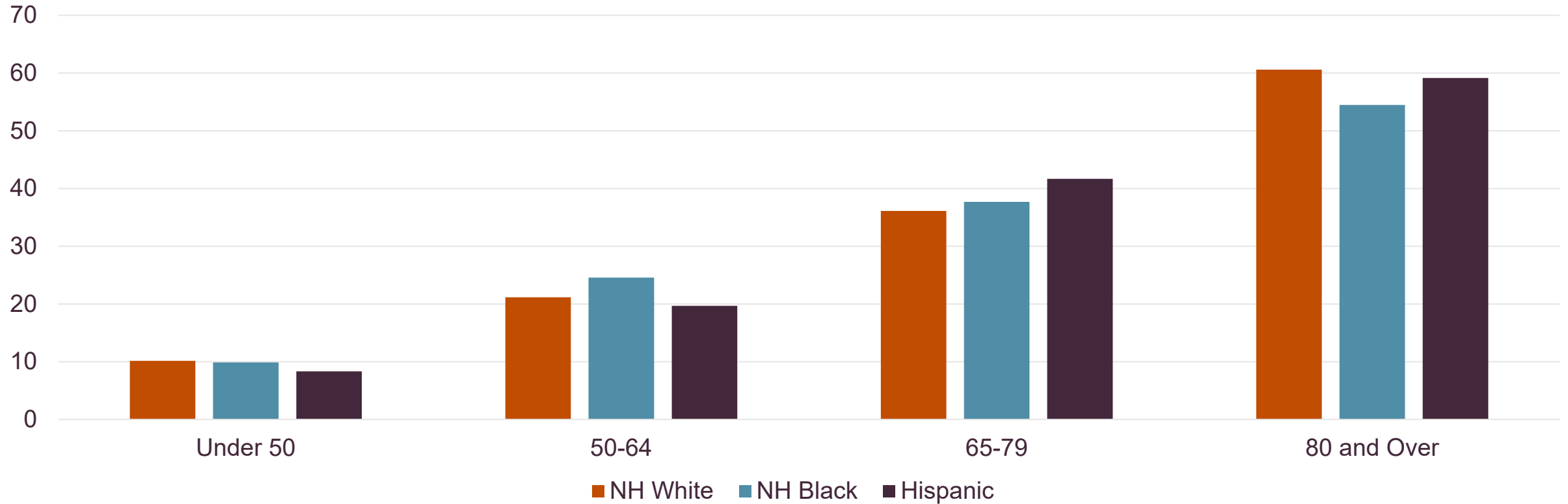
Share of Households Reporting a Difficulty Entering, Navigating, or Using Home (Percent)



Note: Difficulties entering, navigating, and using the home without assistance are the result of a condition other than a temporary injury and apply to occupants over 6 years old.  
 Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Disabilities Diverge Only Slightly by Race/Ethnicity

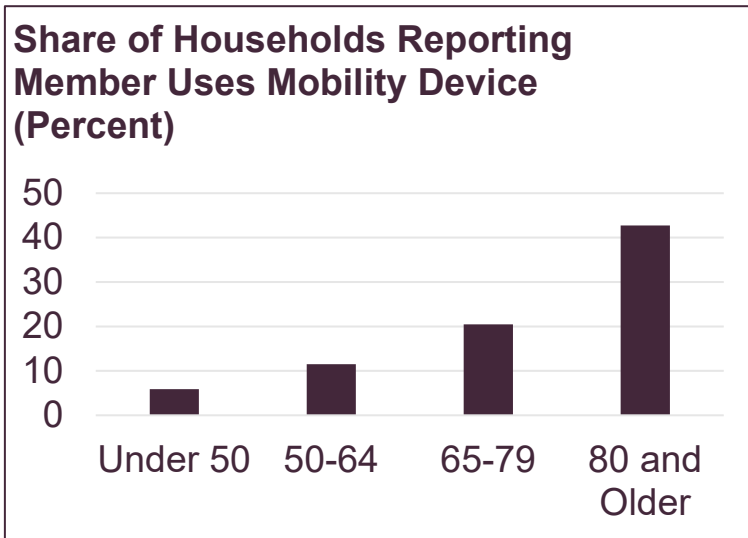
Share of Households Reporting a Member with at Least One Disability (Percent)



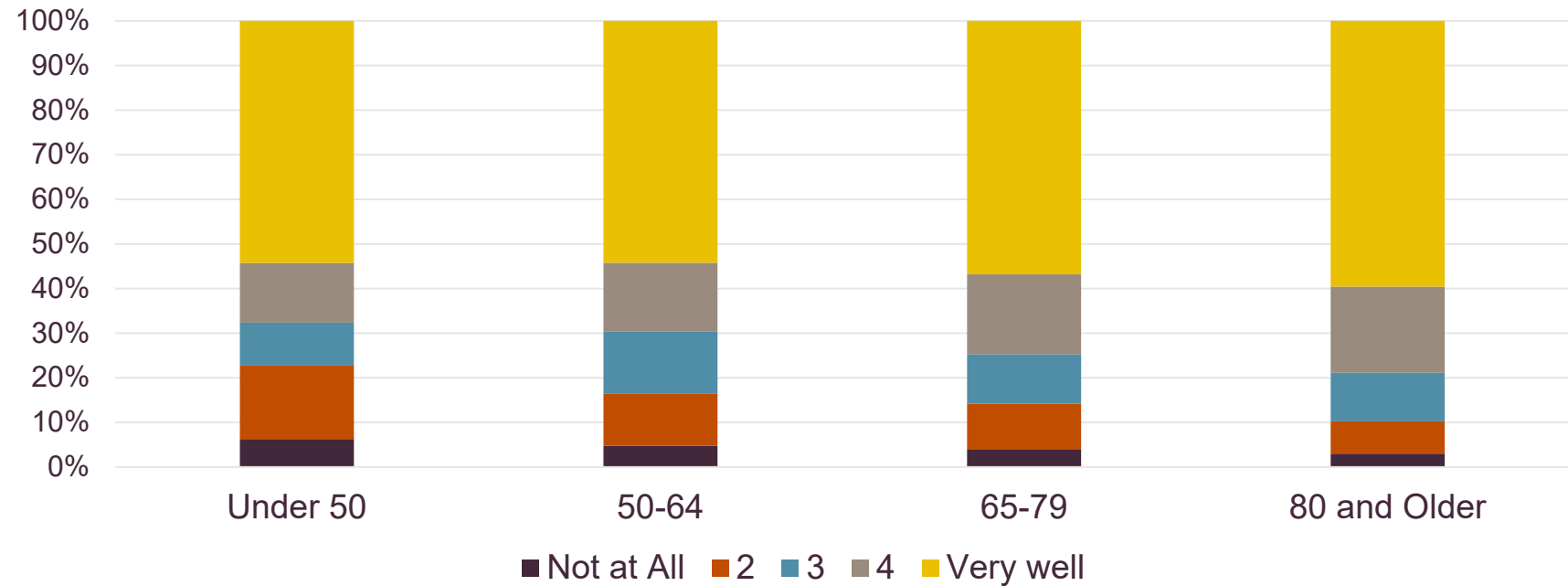
Notes: Households reporting a member with a difficulty walking/climbing stairs, bathing/dressing, seeing, hearing, or running errands.

Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey

# At Oldest Ages, Households In Which a Member Uses a Mobility Device Are Most Likely to Report Their Homes Fit Their Needs Very Well



**Share of Households (Percent)**

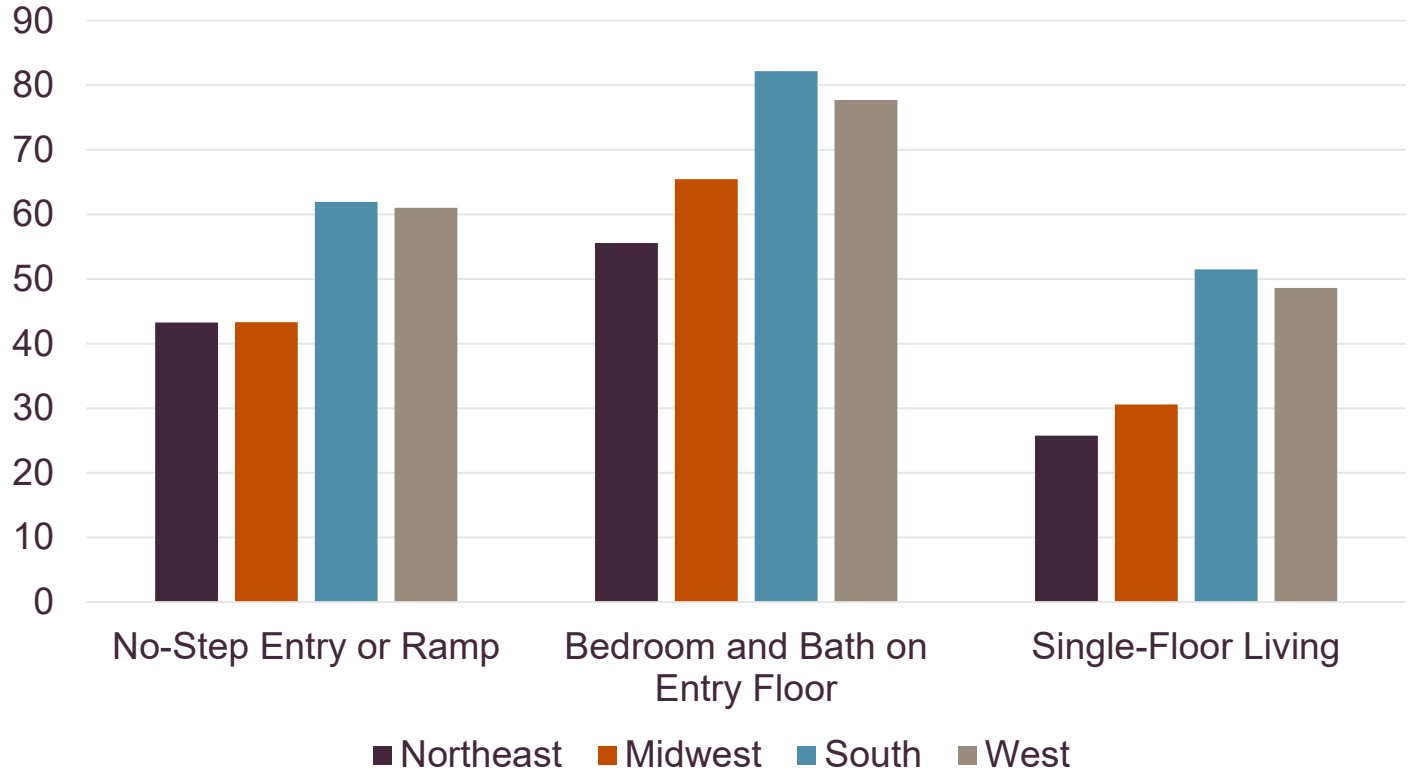


Notes: Mobility devices include canes, crutches, or wheelchairs. Respondents ranked extent to which their homes fit their needs from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very well).

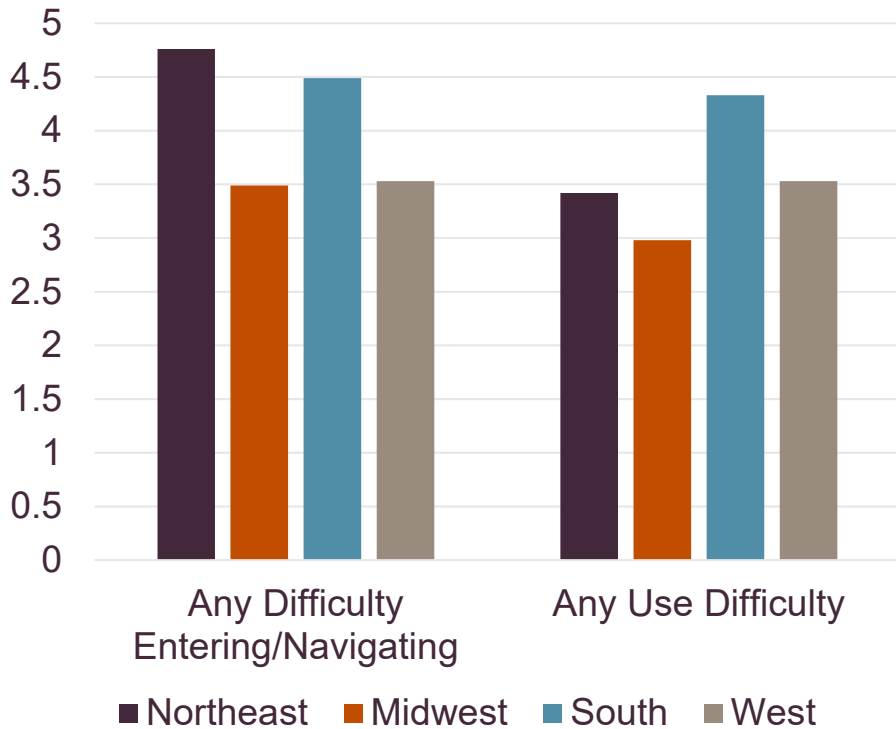
Source: Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Housing is Less Accessible in the Northeast and Midwest in 2019

Share of Households Reporting Feature (Percent)



Share of Households Reporting Difficulty (Percent)

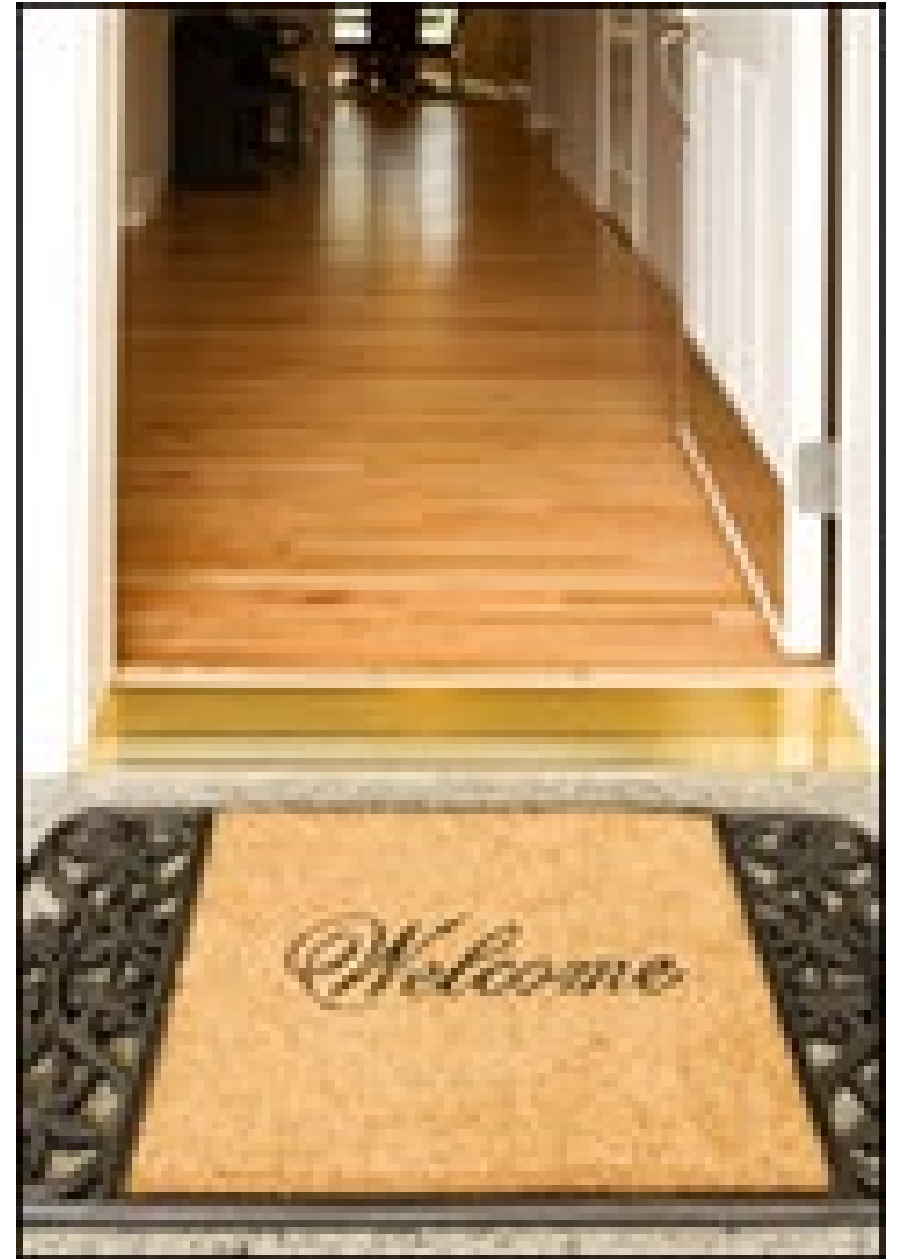


Note: Single-floor living refers to presence of no-step entry or ramp, plus bedroom and bathroom on entry level or the presence of a lift to a different floor.  
 Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, 2019 American Housing Survey.

# Improving Housing for the Future

- Single-family homes: “Visitable” homes offer zero-step entry, doors that are 32” wide or more, and accessible entry-level bathroom
- Multifamily buildings: Fair Housing Act requirements; Americans with Disabilities Act (public and common areas); Section 504 (HUD programs)

Notes: For more information, see [visitability.org](http://visitability.org) and <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/disability-forward-policy-recommendations-advance-accessible-affordable-housing/>





# Improving Housing Fit

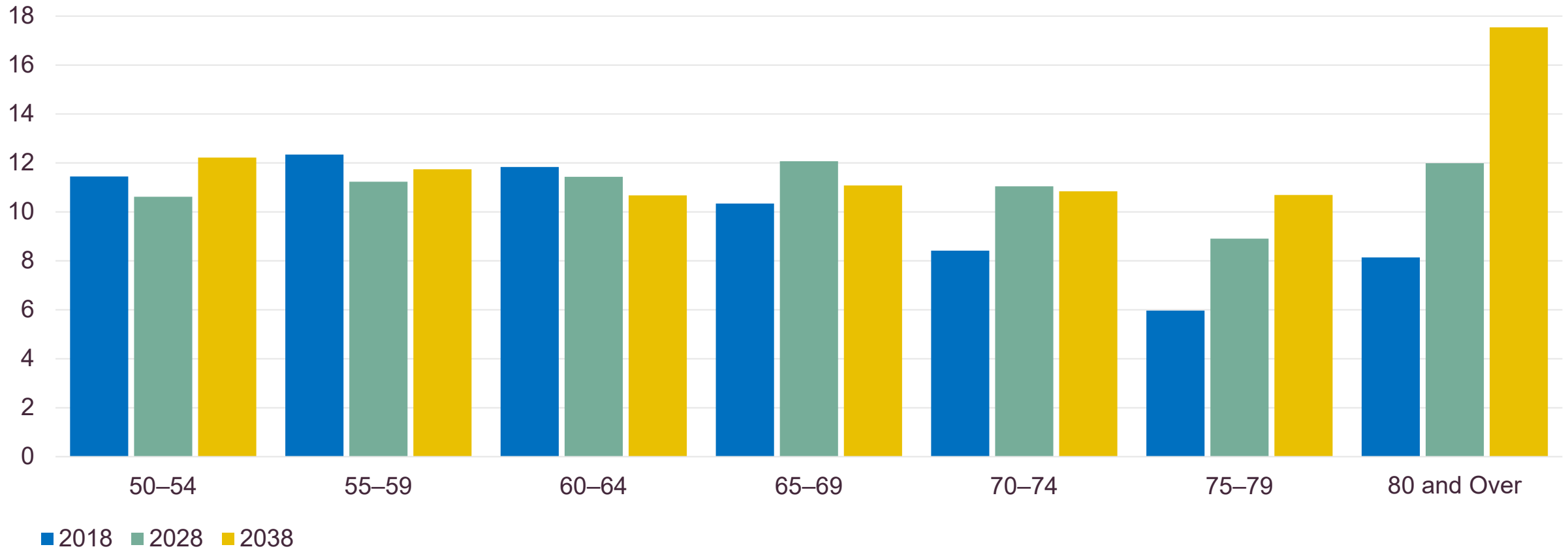
- Programs to assess barriers and modifications
- Assistance to residents to make modifications
  - Medicaid Home and Community-Based Care Waivers
  - VA, USDA Rural Development programs
  - State and local programs for households with older adults and/or persons with disabilities
    - *Massachusetts Home Modification Loan Program*
    - *Bath Housing Comfortably Home*
  - Nonprofit programs – Habitat for Humanity, CAPABLE
- Renters and accessibility

# Technology May Reduce Need for Physical Changes to Home – But Cost Is Still a Concern



# Over the Next 20 Years, Households in Their 80s Will Be the Fastest Growing Age Group

## Households (Millions)



Source: 2018 JCHS Household Projections.



Thank You

Jennifer\_Molinsky@harvard.edu