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OVERVIEW

U.S. life insurance companies sell the vast majority of life insurance and annuities purchased in the United States. Fraternal organizations and federal government agencies are also in the marketplace, and certain Canadian life insurers with U.S. legal reserves are allowed to sell insurance directly from their Canadian offices to U.S. purchasers. Data from Canadian companies are not included in this chapter.

At the end of 2020, 747 life insurance companies were in business in the United States (Table 1.1). The number of active companies peaked in 1988 (Table 1.7), and has since fallen steadily, mostly due to company mergers and consolidations. This streamlining has helped to reduce operating costs and general overhead, and has significantly increased efficiency.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Stock and Mutual Life Insurers

Most life insurers are organized as either stock or mutual companies. Stock life insurance companies issue stock and are owned by their stockholders. Mutual companies are legally owned by their

policyholders and consequently do not issue stock.

Stock life insurers can be owned by other stock life insurance companies, mutual life insurance companies, or companies outside the life insurance industry. Only policyholders own a mutual company, however. If a stock company is owned by a mutual company, that stock company is categorized as a mutual company. The majority of life insurers are stock companies—553, or 74 percent of the industry (Table 1.1). Many life insurers are affiliated with other life and non-life insurance companies in fleets with a single owner.

Besides consolidation, another trend in the life insurance industry is demutualization and the formation of mutual holding companies—a structure that allows easier and less expensive access to capital. In creating a mutual holding company, the mutual insurer either starts a stock insurance company or acquires a stock company. For data in this chapter, mutual holding companies are included in the totals for pure mutual companies.

Together, stock and mutual life insurers provide most of the insurance and annuities underwritten by U.S.

organizations (Table 1.2). Mutual companies had \$7.7 trillion of life insurance in force in 2020 and stock life insurers, \$12.2 trillion. Fraternal societies and other type companies underwrite the remainder of U.S. insurance.

Other Life Insurance Providers

Fraternal benefit societies provide both social and insurance benefits to their members. These organizations are legally required to operate through a lodge system, allowing only lodge members and their families to own the fraternal society's insurance. In 2020, there were 74 fraternal life insurance companies that had \$359 billion of life insurance in force and \$194 billion in assets (Tables 1.1 and 1.2).

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides protection to U.S. veterans under six insurance programs: U.S. Government Life Insurance, National Service Life Insurance, Veterans' Special Life Insurance, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance, Veterans' Reopened Insurance, and Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance. The federal agency also oversees three life insurance programs for members of the uniformed services: Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, SGLI Family Coverage, and Veterans' Group Life Insurance.

Veterans' Special Life Insurance in force totaled \$1 billion in 2020 (Table 1.3). U.S. Government Life Insurance, covering World War I veterans, had less than \$100,000 of insurance in force in 2020, while National Service Life Insurance, for veterans of World War II and those covered by the Insurance Act of 1951, totaled \$1.5 billion. Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance—for veterans separated from service after April 1951 who have a service-connected disability but are otherwise insurable—had \$2.9 billion of insurance in force in 2020.

The largest life insurance plan, Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, had \$781 billion of insurance in force with 2.2 million policies at year-end 2020 (Table 1.3).

EMPLOYMENT

The insurance industry plays an important role in the nation's economy. In 2020, U.S. insurers employed 2.9 million individuals in all of their branches, a 2 percent increase from a year earlier (Table 1.4).

Government data on employees of insurance agencies and home offices in 2020 show 1.7 million insurance home-office personnel (368,600 in life insurance) and 1.2 million insurance agents, brokers, and service personnel.

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP

The proportion of life insurance companies operating in the United States that are foreign-owned was 12.4 percent in 2020 (Table 1.5).

Practically, the same countries have fielded the major foreign players in the U.S. market since the mid-1990s. Among life insurance companies operating in the United States during 2020, Canada controlled 23 companies; Japan, 16; Bermuda, 14; Switzerland, 12; Cayman Islands, 9; the United Kingdom, 7; Germany, 5; France, 3; the Netherlands, 2; Spain, 1; and Panama, 1 (Table 1.6).

Table 1.1

Number of U.S. Life Insurers, by Organizational Structure			
	In business at year's end		Average annual percent change
	2019	2020	2019/2020
Stock	570	553	-3.0
Mutual¹	108	110	1.9
Fraternal²	74	74	0.0
Other³	9	10	11.1
Total	761	747	-1.8

Source: ACLI tabulations of National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) data, used by permission.

Note: NAIC does not endorse any analysis or conclusions based on use of its data.

¹ Includes stock companies owned by mutual parents (life & PC) and mutual holding companies.

² Includes stock companies owned by fraternal benefit societies.

³ Includes farm bureau, reciprocal, and risk retention groups.

Table 1.2

Size of U.S. Life Insurers, by Organizational Structure, 2020 (millions)					
	Stock	Mutual¹	Fraternal	Other²	Total
Life insurance in force	\$12,184,427	\$7,668,181	\$358,723	\$214,278	\$20,425,609
Life insurance purchased	2,117,470	1,153,352	37,095	26,612	3,334,528
Assets	5,945,427	1,979,786	194,356	30,819	8,150,389
Benefit Payments³	502,181	161,564	12,025	1,894	677,664
Premium income⁴	466,071	158,197	9,542	1,835	635,645

Source: ACLI tabulations of National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) data, used by permission.

Note: NAIC does not endorse any analysis or conclusions based on use of its data.

¹ Includes stock companies owned by mutual holding companies.

² Includes farm bureau, reciprocal, and risk retention groups.

³ Includes payments to beneficiaries, surrender values, policy dividends, annuity payments, matured endowments, and other payments.

⁴ Includes life insurance premiums, annuity considerations, and accident and health premiums.

Table 1.3

Veterans Life Insurance, 2020

	Policies	Face amount in force (millions)
Veterans programs		
U.S. Government Life Insurance	4	\$0
National Service Life Insurance	114,318	1,456
Veterans' Special Life Insurance	67,567	1,007
Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance	277,710	2,923
Veterans' Reopened Insurance	4,550	47
Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance	2,529	355
Total	466,678	5,788
Uniformed service member programs		
Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)	2,152,500	781,275
Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI)*	-	207,450
SGLI Family Coverage	2,577,000	108,042
Veterans' Group Life Insurance	437,527	82,043
Total	5,167,027	1,178,810
Aggregate total	5,633,705	1,184,598

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

*TSGLI is a rider to the basic SGLI coverage.

Table 1.4

Insurance Industry Employment in the United States					
	Number employed			Average annual percent change	
	2010	2019	2020	2010/2020	2019/2020
Home-office personnel					
Life insurance	366,400	352,800	368,600	0.1	4.5
Health insurance	437,700	578,400	593,900	3.1	2.7
Other	641,100	678,900	693,200	0.8	2.1
Total	1,445,200	1,610,100	1,655,700	1.4	2.8
Agents, brokers, and service personnel					
	895,500	1,192,200	1,202,400	3.0	0.9
Aggregate total	2,340,700	2,802,300	2,858,100	2.0	2.0

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current Employment Statistics survey (National).

Note: The Bureau of Labor Statistics adjusts annual employment data in April of the year following its survey.

Table 1.5

Foreign-Owned U.S. Life Insurers, 2016-2020							
	Number of companies					Average annual percent change	
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016/2020	2019/2020
U.S. life insurers	797	781	773	761	747	-1.6	-1.8
Foreign-owned U.S. life insurers	106	107	105	98	93	-3.2	-5.1
Percentage of U.S. life insurers	13.3%	13.7%	13.6%	12.9%	12.4%		

Source: ACLI tabulations of National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) data, used by permission.

Notes: NAIC does not endorse any analysis or conclusions based on use of its data. Companies are defined as foreign owned if 50 percent or more of stock is owned by a foreign entity or entities.

Table 1.6

Foreign-Owned Life Insurers Operating in the United States, by Country of Origin

	Number of companies				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bermuda	15	15	14	14	14
Canada	27	27	27	26	23
Cayman Islands	10	11	10	10	9
France	8	8	8	3	3
Germany	5	5	5	5	5
Japan	15	15	16	16	16
Netherlands	4	4	4	3	2
Panama	1	1	1	1	1
Spain	2	2	1	1	1
Switzerland	14	14	14	12	12
United Kingdom	5	5	5	7	7
Total	106	107	105	98	93

Source: ACLI tabulations of National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) data, used by permission.

Notes: NAIC does not endorse any analysis or conclusions based on use of its data. Companies are defined as foreign owned if 50 percent or more of stock is owned by a foreign entity or entities.

Table 1.7

U.S. Life Insurers Organizational Structure, by Year

Year	In business at year's end				Total
	Stock	Mutual	Fraternal	Other	
1950	507	142	NA	NA	649
1955	942	165	NA	NA	1,107
1960	1,286	155	NA	NA	1,441
1965	1,475	154	NA	NA	1,629
1970	1,627	153	NA	NA	1,780
1975	1,603	143	NA	NA	1,746
1980	1,823	135	NA	NA	1,958
1981	1,855	136	NA	NA	1,991
1982	1,926	134	NA	NA	2,060
1983	1,985	132	NA	NA	2,117
1984	2,062	131	NA	NA	2,193
1985	2,133	128	NA	NA	2,261
1986	2,128	126	NA	NA	2,254
1987	2,212	125	NA	NA	2,337
1988	2,225	118	NA	NA	2,343
1989	2,153	117	NA	NA	2,270
1990	2,078	117	NA	NA	2,195
1991	1,947	117	NA	NA	2,064
1992	1,835	109	NA	NA	1,944
1993	1,736	108	NA	NA	1,844
1994	1,565	115	NA	10	1,690
1995*	1,356	259	NA	35	1,650
1996*	1,331	240	NA	36	1,607
1997*	1,193	238	NA	45	1,476
1998*	1,167	248	NA	29	1,444
1999*	1,064	250	NA	33	1,347
2000*	1,018	221	NA	30	1,269
2001*	986	222	117	16	1,341
2002*	956	204	114	10	1,284
2003*	931	180	105	11	1,227
2004*	901	161	108	9	1,179
2005*	857	151	102	9	1,119
2006*	818	142	103	9	1,072
2007*	768	133	99	9	1,009
2008*	741	132	95	8	976

Table 1.7, continued

U.S. Life Insurers Organizational Structure, by Year, Continued

Year	In business at year's end				Total
	Stock	Mutual	Fraternal	Other	
2009*	714	131	93	8	946
2010*	700	121	89	7	917
2011*	687	117	85	6	895
2012*	660	120	82	6	868
2013*	648	113	82	7	850
2014*	636	106	81	7	830
2015*	616	110	81	7	814
2016*	598	113	78	8	797
2017*	584	112	76	9	781
2018*	580	109	75	9	773
2019*	570	108	74	9	761
2020*	553	110	74	10	747

Source: ACLI tabulations of National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) data, used by permission.

Notes: NAIC does not endorse any analysis or conclusions based on use of its data. After 1993, data include life insurance companies that sell accident and health insurance.

NA: Not available.

*Beginning with 1995 data, stock companies that are part of fleets headed by non-stock companies are counted by the parent's ownership type, not as stock companies.

Table 1.8

Insurance Industry Employment in the United States, by Year

Year	Home-office personnel			Total	Agents, brokers, and service personnel	Aggregate total
	Life insurance	Health insurance	Other			
1960	452,400	50,200	329,100	831,700	217,300	1,049,000
1965	481,200	54,200	358,000	893,400	250,300	1,143,700
1970	525,600	93,900	410,200	1,029,700	288,000	1,317,700
1975	520,500	122,100	442,700	1,085,300	356,600	1,441,900
1980	531,900	141,900	550,300	1,224,100	463,800	1,687,900
1981	542,200	142,700	552,000	1,236,900	475,800	1,712,700
1982	546,100	142,100	549,100	1,237,300	485,900	1,723,200
1983	539,900	144,800	544,200	1,228,900	498,900	1,727,800
1984	536,700	153,900	549,100	1,239,700	525,000	1,764,700
1985	559,300	170,700	561,600	1,291,600	548,200	1,839,800
1986	578,200	188,100	598,500	1,364,800	579,400	1,944,200
1987	578,000	202,100	634,900	1,415,000	611,800	2,026,800
1988	570,400	216,500	648,500	1,435,400	639,600	2,075,000
1989	550,200	228,100	660,100	1,438,400	651,800	2,090,200
1990	522,600	204,200	611,600	1,338,400	677,800	2,016,200
1991	537,200	219,000	613,500	1,369,700	681,400	2,051,100
1992	530,600	228,300	627,000	1,385,900	672,200	2,058,100
1993	552,500	237,900	640,400	1,430,800	684,000	2,114,800
1994	562,600	249,400	649,300	1,461,300	700,300	2,161,600
1995	547,200	260,100	626,800	1,434,100	712,600	2,146,700
1996	510,000	278,000	642,800	1,430,800	726,400	2,157,200
1997	505,300	292,100	678,800	1,476,200	744,100	2,220,300
1998	510,600	306,200	729,400	1,546,200	766,300	2,312,500
1999	496,100	319,200	742,800	1,558,100	783,400	2,341,500
2000	481,100	330,600	732,600	1,544,300	806,800	2,351,100
2001	470,300	340,500	728,600	1,539,400	823,000	2,362,400
2002	446,000	348,000	743,000	1,537,000	839,400	2,376,400
2003	440,500	351,400	753,400	1,545,300	856,200	2,401,500
2004	392,400	374,900	721,000	1,488,300	879,200	2,367,500
2005	334,500	430,400	680,900	1,445,800	893,200	2,339,000
2006	362,400	428,200	677,100	1,467,700	911,400	2,379,100
2007	352,800	434,400	674,000	1,461,200	930,500	2,391,700
2008	356,300	444,500	674,600	1,475,400	929,600	2,405,000

Table 1.8, continued

Insurance Industry Employment in the United States, by Year, Continued

Year	Home-office personnel			Total	Agents, brokers, and service personnel	Aggregate total
	Life insurance	Health insurance	Other			
2009	362,600	440,300	660,400	1,463,300	907,400	2,370,700
2010	366,400	437,700	641,100	1,445,200	895,500	2,340,700
2011	346,700	442,300	637,200	1,426,200	910,300	2,336,500
2012	347,300	463,900	625,200	1,436,400	931,800	2,368,200
2013	340,600	472,600	619,900	1,433,100	955,800	2,388,900
2014	334,400	494,600	619,800	1,448,800	1,017,100	2,465,900
2015	330,200	499,500	636,700	1,466,400	1,071,800	2,538,200
2016	347,800	471,100	668,800	1,487,700	1,105,000	2,592,700
2017	345,600	504,800	666,300	1,516,700	1,142,900	2,659,600
2018	344,900	537,900	658,100	1,540,900	1,171,800	2,712,700
2019	352,800	578,400	678,900	1,610,100	1,192,200	2,802,300
2020	368,600	593,900	693,200	1,655,700	1,202,400	2,858,100

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current Employment Statistics survey (National).

Notes: Figures comprise only those on the payroll of insurers that participate in the unemployment insurance program; The Bureau of Labor Statistics adjusts annual employment data in April of the year following its survey.