

Demographics of Aging

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The experience of growing older in the 21st century is vastly different from the past. The advancement in technology, medicine, and lower rates of death at birth has allowed for the population to shift in size. The shift is specifically from the baby boomers generation, which refers to the increase in birth rate from 1940's to the early 1960's. This generation is aging and in recent years the first baby boomers began reaching retirement age. This segment of the U.S. is the fastest growing, so it is essential to understand the growth of the aging population. This aging group is divided due to its immense diversity.

According to projections between 2012 and 2050, estimates suggest a considerable growth with the older adult population with 83.7 million aged 65 and older in 2050 (Ortman, Velkoff, & Hogan, 2014). In the past decade the population of individuals aged 65 and older is the fastest growing age segment. Specifically, 21.7 million individuals are aged 65 to 74, 13.1 million are between 75 to 84 years, and 5.1 million are between 85 to 94 years old (Werner, 2011). The population between the ages 85 to 94 has experienced the fastest growth, growing by 29.9% in the past decade (Werner, 2011). The aging population is showing its growth in all regions of the United States. The South and Midwest have shown the largest number of older adults (Werner, 2011).

Life expectancy is gradually growing although this varies across the group. In year 2050, the projections of life expectancy, of those aged 65 that are non-Hispanic Caucasian, is estimated to rise to 23.5 years for females and 20.6 years for males, while at age 85 it is estimated to have a life expectancy of 8.5 for females and 7 years for males. Similarly, at age 65 the life expectancy for non-Hispanic blacks (22.3 years for females; 19.2 years for males) and for Hispanics (23.5

years for females and 20.6 years for males) has gradually grown, as well at age 85 it is projected to have similar projections to the non-Hispanic Caucasian group (Ortman, Velkoff, & Hogan, 2014). Noteworthy, across all age and race groups gender is a constant, in which females outnumber men as they age. However, males are showing a rapid growth, for instance, those 85 to 94 years old in the past ten years has increased by 46.5%, while females increased by 22.9% (Werner, 2011). The sex ratio gap is increasingly closing as males life expectancies are progressively increasing.

As life expectancy gradually grows throughout the years with the aging population, causes of mortality would be expected to decline. However, this is not the case. Mortality will affect how this population declines over the years and this will have wide-ranging implications. One of the most prevailing illnesses is Major Neurocognitive Disorder due to Dementia. According to the DSM-5 (2013) dementia rises steeply with age; between the ages 65 and 74 approximately 7% are diagnosed with Alzheimer's, 53 % between the ages 75 and 84, and 40% of those diagnosed are 85 years and older (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Additionally, the prevalence of vascular dementia estimates from .2% between the ages 65 and 70, increasing to 13% at age 70, and by 90 years or older the prevalence steeply increases to 44.6%. Furthermore, the prevalence of Parkinson's disease, which is more common in males, has been steadily increasing with age, in which between 65 and 69 year the prevalence is 5% and by 85 years or older it narrows to 3% (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Accompanying these types of neurocognitive disorders are usually behavioral and psychological manifestations. It is estimated that about 80% of those diagnosed with major neurocognitive disorders will have some sort of distressing cognitive manifestations, such as symptoms of depression and fatigue, as well as physical manifestations, including incontinence

and gait impairments (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to the 2010 Census, approximately 40.2 million individuals, 65 and over, live in skilled-nursing facilities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This will present complications in terms of Medicare and Social Security in the U.S., while simultaneously affecting families, businesses, and health care providers. These pressures signal a need to transition towards more interdisciplinary practices that are superiorly suited to help with the increasing demands of this aging population.

Further Reading

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

Ortman, J. M., Velkoff, V. A., & Hogan, H. (2014). An aging nation: The older population in the United States. U.S. Census Bureau, 1, 25-1140. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p25-1140.pdf>

U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Population 65 years and older in skilled-nursing facilities by selected age groups and sex: 2010. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf>

Werner, C. A. (2011). The older population: 2010. *U.S. Census Bureau*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>.