FAST FACTS – DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT

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A global and national tour of some demographics related to adults, children, youth, and older adults.

General

The world population in the early 1800s was 1 billion people. 120 years later, in the 1920s, it was 2 billion people. By 1960, 40 years later, the population was about 3 billion people. Today, 50 years later, we’re at 7 billion people and still growing.

The world’s population is changing. Since 1960, the percentage of the population under 5 years of age has steadily decreased, while the percentage of adults 65 years and older has sharply increased (see graph on following page). For the first time in history, and probably for the rest of human history, people age 65 and older outnumber children under age 5. By 2050, for the first time there will be more older people than children under 15. An overall older population is driven by declines in fertility and improvements in health and longevity. (National Institute on Aging, 2007) (United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge, 2012)

Life expectancy in the US has increased from 47 years for Americans born in 1900 to 77 years for those born in 2001 (although disparities exist across class and race). (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)

The chance of meeting a 65 year-old in western affluent countries was 1 in 40 before the Industrial Revolution. It improved to 1 in 25 at the turn of the last century. In 1990, it was 1 in 10. In 2040, it will be 1 in 4. (City of Nashville, 2009)

Japan is the only country in the world with more than 30% of its population age 60 or over. By 2050, there will be 64 countries where older people make up more than 30% of their population. (United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge, 2012)

Around the world, two persons celebrate their sixtieth birthday every second – an annual total of almost 58 million sixtieth birthdays. (United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge, 2012)

Virtually half of recent births in the US are minorities. 25% are Hispanic, 13.6% are African American, and 4.2% are Asian. Nearly 1 in 20 births are two or more races. However, the population 65 years and older is largely white. Minorities make up only 15% of those 85 years and older. (Frey, 2011)

Thirty years ago, there were no “aged economies” in which consumption by older people surpassed that of youth. In 2010, there were 23 aged economies and by 2040, there will be 89. (United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge, 2012)

Worldwide in 1950, there were 12 people of working age for every person 65 years or older. By 2010, that number had shrunk to 9. By 2050, this ratio is projected to drop to 4. (Population Reference Bureau, 2010)

As people live longer and have fewer children, family structures are transformed. This leaves many older people with fewer options for care. (National Institute on Aging, 2007)

Changing family structures also affect children. 66% of children 0-17 years live with two married parents. 23% live with only their mothers. 3% live with only their fathers.
4% live with neither of their parents. (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2011)

The Great Recession, which officially began in December, 2007, continues to heavily influence policy, programs, and planning. States continue to cut budgets, and municipalities are also financially distressed. As a result of the recession, there are fewer resources for youth and aging supports and services – precisely at the time they’re needed most. (National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, 2011)

Approximately one-third of US adults are obese. Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011)

Three behaviors – smoking, poor diet, and physical inactivity – were the root causes of almost 35% of US deaths in 2000. These behaviors are risk factors that often underlie the development of the nation’s leading chronic disease killers: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)
Children and Youth

According to the 2010 census, there are 74.2 million children in the United States, 1.9 million more than in 2000. This number is projected to increase to 87.8 million in 2030. There are approximately equal numbers of children in three age groups: 0-5 (25.5 million), 6-11 (24.3 million), and 12-17 (24.8 million). (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2011)

Since the mid-1960s, children have been decreasing as a proportion of the total US population. In 2010, children made up 24% of the population, down from a peak of 36% at the end of the “baby boom” (1964). Children’s share of the population is projected to remain fairly stable through 2050, when they are projected to make up 23% of the population. (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2011)

Based on 2009 data, 21% of all children 0-17 years live in poverty. (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2011)

It’s estimated that up to 10% of elementary children are “addicted” to video games, with some as young as two years of age. As children connect more to technology, they disconnect more from humanity and nature. (Rowan, 2010)

At 7.5 hours per day average use of entertainment technologies (television, video games, movies, Internet, mobile devices), children are not participating in activities they need to optimize their growth and success. Youth who spend more time with media report lower grades and lower levels of personal contentment. (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010)

As many as half of grade 8 students do not have the literacy skills necessary to secure a job. Literacy is defined as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010)

The high school dropout rate for 16-24 year-olds declined from 14% in 1980 to 8% in 2009. A significant part of this decline occurred between 2000 and 2009 (from 11% to 8%). In general, the dropout rates for Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics each declined between 1980 and 2009. However, in each year during that period, the dropout rate was lower for Whites and African Americans than for Hispanics. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011)

The skills of young people need to be effectively matched to job needs in the economy. Most future jobs will not require university education, though clearly that education has value beyond meeting job needs. Preparing 100% of students for the 40% of society’s jobs that require university skills may not meet the needs of young people or society. (Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, 2008)

Approximately 17% of US children and adolescents aged 2-19 years are obese. Since 1980, obesity prevalence among children and adolescents has almost tripled. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011) The World Health Organization reports that globally, more 21st century children will die from conditions related to obesity than to starvation.

Older Adults

By 2030, the number of Americans age 65 and older is expected to reach 71 million, roughly 20% of the population, or 1 in 5. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)

The number of oldest old is rising. People age 85 and older are now the fastest-growing segment of the population. (National Institute on Aging, 2007)
There are an estimated 65 million grandparents in the US. By 2020, the number of grandparents is projected to reach 80 million, at which time they will be nearly 1 in 3 adults. (MetLife Mature Market Institute, 2011)

About 1 in 10 households headed by someone who is a grandparent has at least one grandchild living with them. Part of the reason for this is the recession-driven high unemployment among their grandchildren’s parents. 34% of these households had neither parent of the grandchild in the household. About 2.5 million grandparents are responsible for and raising their grandchildren. (MetLife Mature Market Institute, 2011)

The poverty rate for Americans 65 years and older is 9%. (US Census Bureau, 2010)

Adults 55 years and older made up 13% of the US workforce in 2002. They will make up 19% of the workforce by 2050. (Toosi, 2002)

From 1992 to 2003, the average literacy scores of adults ages 50-64 and 65 or older increased. Literacy is defined as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010)

The health status of older adults in racial and ethnic minorities lags far behind that of non-minority populations. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)

The cost of providing healthcare for an older adult is three to five times greater than the cost for someone younger than 65 years. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007) As a result, there’s a tremendous personal and social incentive to support healthy aging – engaging in regular physical activity, eating a healthy diet, not smoking, and getting regular health screenings (e.g. mammograms, colonoscopies).

The top three causes of death for older adults in the US are heart disease (32%), cancer (22%), and stroke (8%). (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)

Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of injuries and hospital admissions for trauma among adults age 65 and older. Fall-related injuries cause significant mortality, disability, loss of independence, and early admission to nursing homes. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)

Worldwide, more than 46% of people age 60 years and over have disabilities. More than 250 million older people experience moderate to severe disability. (United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge, 2012)

At least 80% of older Americans are living with at least one chronic condition, and 50% have at least two – including high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)

5.4 million Americans have Alzheimer’s – 5.2 million 65 and older; 200,000 with younger-onset Alzheimer’s. Nearly half of people age 85 and older have the disease. 2 in 3 people with Alzheimer’s are women. By 2050, as many as 16 million Americans will have the disease. (Alzheimer’s Association, 2011)

The World Health Organization points out that Alzheimer’s will most likely become one of the leading causes of disability in older adults. The number of people with dementia worldwide is estimated at 35.6 million and is projected to nearly double every 20 years, to 65.7 million in 2030. (United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge, 2012)

Most people survive an average of 4 to 8 years after an Alzheimer’s diagnosis, but some live as long as 20 years. On average, 40% of a person’s years with Alzheimer’s are
spent in the most severe stage of the disease – longer than any other stage. (Alzheimer’s Association, 2011)

4% of the general population will be admitted to a nursing home by age 80. For people with Alzheimer’s, 75% will be admitted to a nursing home by age 80. (Alzheimer’s Association, 2011)

More than 8 in 10 Boomers (those born 1946-1964) and 9 in 10 people over 65 years report they want to stay in their current home for as long as possible. (AARP, 2010)

More than 10 million Americans are getting long-term assistance today, either at home or in institutions. (Gleckman, 2009)

Nearly 1.7 million Americans live in nursing homes and 1 million people reside in assisted living facilities. (Ramnarace, 2011) The number of people in nursing homes has been dropping over the last two decades.

The average annual price of a nursing home stay exceeds $78,000. The hourly cost of a home health aide is around $20. (Gleckman, 2009)

Most paid long-term care comes from Medicaid, which doesn’t help individuals until they are impoverished. Less than 10% of care is paid by private long-term-care insurance, which remains too expensive for most families. (Gleckman, 2009)

Nearly 70% of all 65 year-olds will need some long-term care before they die. 1 out of every 5 will require this help for more than 5 years. (Gleckman, 2009)

More than 8 out of 10 Americans who need personal assistance and other long-term care will get it at home, not in nursing homes. Most is provided by family members who are often unprepared and untrained for this difficult work. (Gleckman, 2009)

In 2009, 42.1 million US family caregivers were caring for an adult with limitations, with 61.6 million providing care at some time during the year. The economic value of this unpaid care is estimated at $450 billion, a 21% increase over 2007. (AARP, 2011)

Americans who provide care for aging parents lose an estimated $3 trillion in wages, pensions, and Social Security benefits when they take time off to do so. (MetLife Mature Market Institute, 2011)

The prevention of cognitive decline and alleviation of end-of-life suffering are key areas where the public health arena can help make significant improvements in quality of life. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007)

There is considerable evidence that links community engagement to longevity, physical health, life satisfaction, and other indicators of psychological well-being of older adults. (AARP, 2005)

23.9% of adults 65 years and older volunteer. The median annual hours these older adults spend on volunteer activities is 90. This is the highest of any age range. (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009)

Boomers (those born 1946-1964) currently have the highest volunteer rate of any age group. They also volunteer at higher rates than past generations did when they were the same age. (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007)

The number of volunteers age 65 years and older will increase 50% by 2020. Harnessing the skills of Boomers, who are generally healthier and have higher levels of education than past elders, will be a tremendous resource for addressing numerous social challenges. (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007)
CITATIONS


