

WORKING IN A MEANINGFUL & IMPACTFUL WAY WITH OLDER ADULTS

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National Council on Aging

Improving the lives of 40 million older adults by 2030

Working in a Meaningful & Impactful Manner with Older Adults

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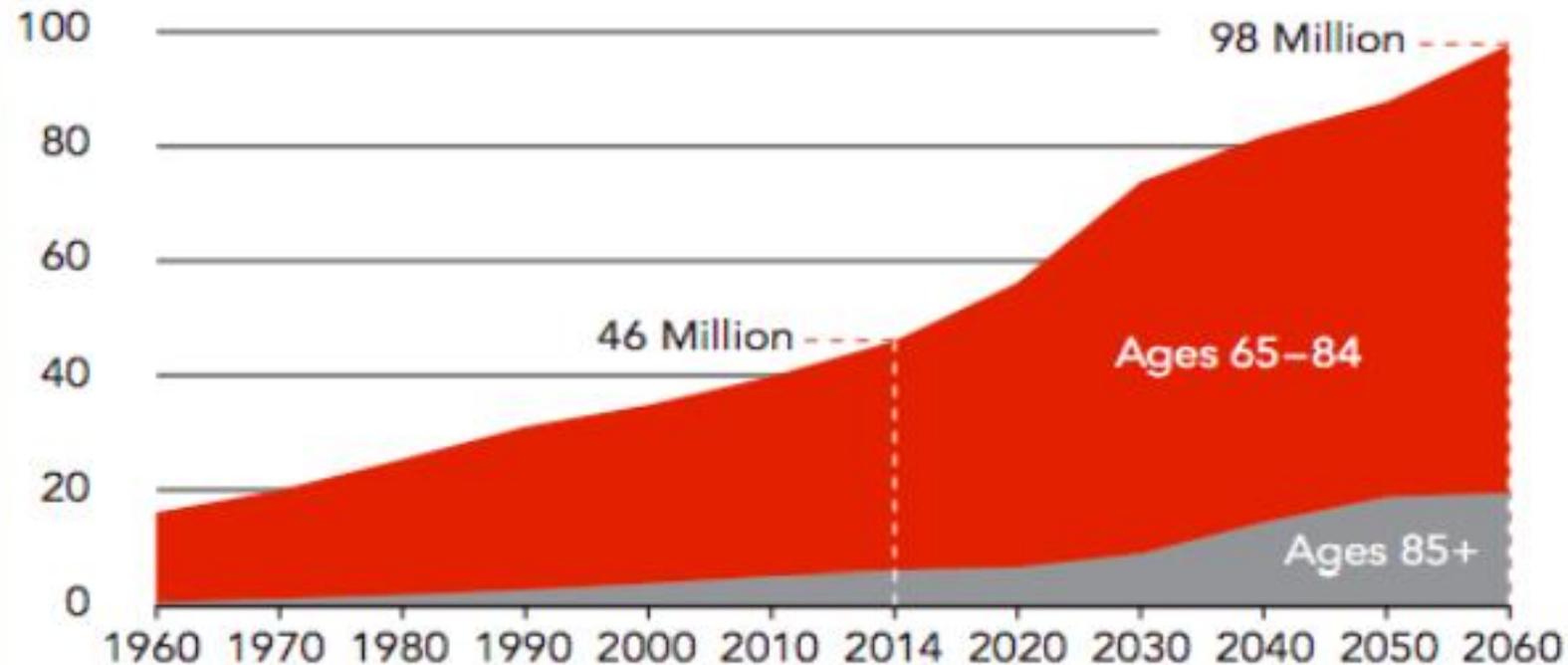
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FIGURE 1

The Number of Americans Ages 65 and Older Will More Than Double by 2060.

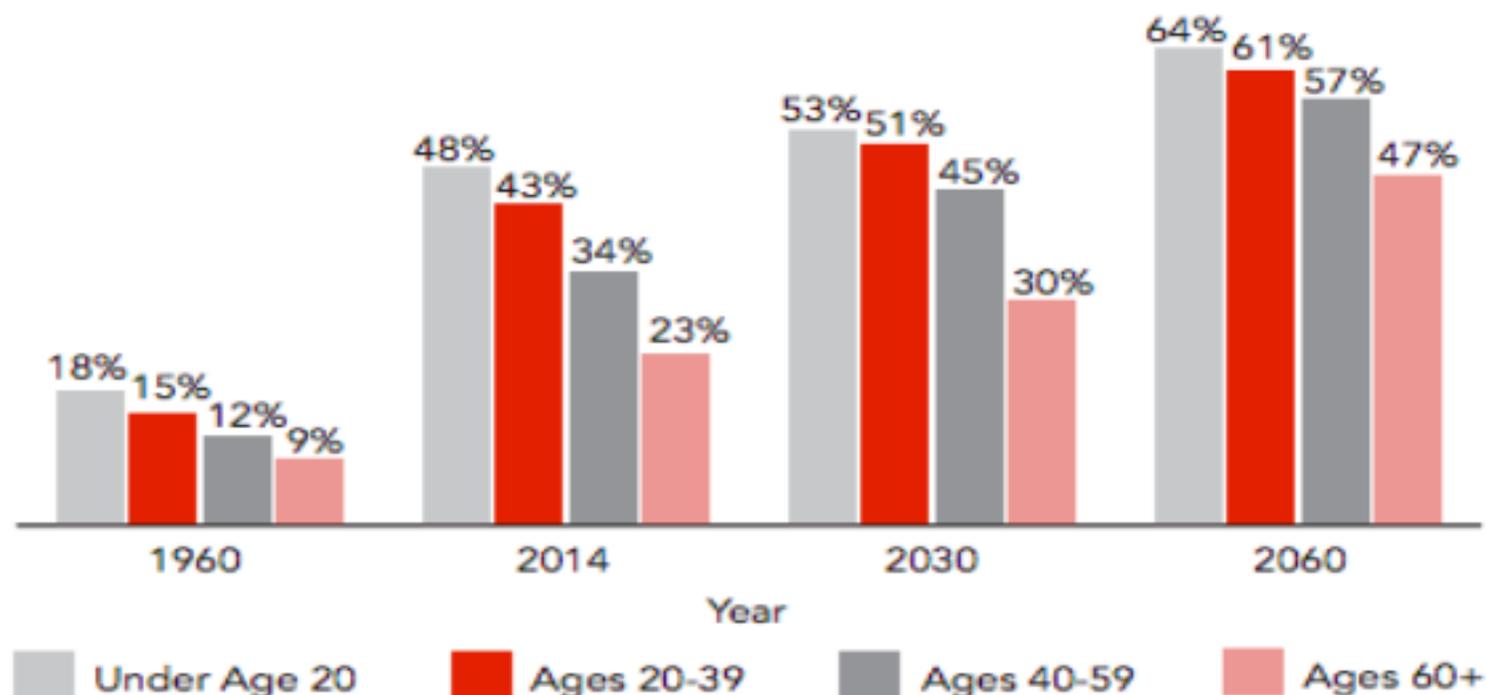
U.S. Population Ages 65 and Older, 1960 to 2060 (Millions)



Source: PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Current "Diversity Gap" Between the 60+ Population and Younger Generations Will Widen by 2030.

Percent Minority in United States, by Age Group, 1960, 2014, 2030 and 2060



Note: Minorities include all racial and ethnic groups except non-Hispanic whites.

Source: PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau; and IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

The Baby Boomers



- § The cohort born during the post-World War II baby boom in the United States
- § Has been driving change in the age structure of the U.S. population since their birth.
- § Is projected to continue to influence characteristics of the nation in the years to come.
- § Began turning 65 in 2011 and are now driving growth at the older ages of the population.

The Baby Boomers



- § By 2029, when all of the baby boomers will be 65 years and over, more than 20 percent of the total U.S. population will be over the age of 65.
- § Although the number of baby boomers will decline through mortality, this shift toward an increasingly older population is expected to endure.
- § By 2056, the population 65 years and over is projected to become larger than the population under 18 years.

Social Determinants of Health

- **POVERTY (Amt vs cost of living)**
- **EDUCATION (Differences)**
- **HOUSING (Place matters)**
- **FOOD INSECURITY (Poor nutrition)**
- **TRANSPORTATION (Access-rural)**
- **SOCIAL ISOLATION (Need more programs)**
- EMPLOYMENT
- PUBLIC SAFETY
- RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION
- LANGUAGE/LITERACY
- HEALTH INSURANCE

The groups with the most disparities and inequities:

- Women
- People of Color
- People with Disabilities

Rapid growth of older adults

- The most rapid increase is expected between the years 2010 and 2030 when the “baby boom” generation reaches age 65. By 2030, there will be about 71.5 million older persons, more than twice their number in 2000.
- The Silver Wave – approximately 10, 000 people turn 65 years old every day

Life Expectancy

A male child can expect to live more than 76 years, and a female child, 81 years.

Factors that impact Life Expectancy:

- **Heredity:** Heredity influences whether a person will develop a disorder. There is **good evidence that living to a very old age**—to 100 or older—**runs in families.**
- **Lifestyle:** **Avoiding smoking, not abusing drugs and alcohol, maintaining a healthy weight and good nutrition and exercising can help people function well and avoid disorders.**
- **Exposure to toxins in the environment:** Such **exposure can shorten life expectancy** even among people with the best genetic makeup.
- **Health care:** **Preventing disorders or treating disorders** after they are contracted, especially when the disorder can be cured (as with infections and sometimes cancer), **helps increase life expectancy.**

What is aging?

- Aging is a continuous process from birth to death, which encompasses physical, social, psychological, and spiritual changes.
- During early middle age, many bodily functions begin to gradually decline.
- Traditionally and historically, age 65 has been designated as the beginning of old age.

Aging can be described as...

- **Chronologic age:** Chronologic age is based solely on the passage of time. It is a **person's age in years**. Because chronologic age helps predict many health problems, it has some legal and financial uses.
- **Biologic age:** Biologic age refers to **changes in the body** that commonly occur as people age. noticeable differences in apparent age among people of similar chronologic age are caused by lifestyle, habit, and subtle effects of disease rather than by differences in actual aging.
- **Psychologic age:** Psychologic age is based on **how people act and feel**. For example, an 80-year-old who works, plans, looks forward to future events, and participates in many activities is considered psychologically young.

Most Common Issues Affecting American Older Adults

- **Chronic Health Condition** (92% have 1 / 77% have 2)
- **Cognitive Health** (Dementia)
- **Mental Health** (Depression/suicide)
- **Physical Injury** (Fall prevention)
- **HIV/AIDS & STIs** (HIV)
- **Malnutrition**
- **Sensory Impairments** (most common: vision and hearing)
- **Oral Health** (missing teeth, dry mouth, oral cancer)
- **Substance Abuse**
- **Bladder Control & Constipation**

Source: NCO

Cognitive changes...

- With advanced age, a mild decline in mental function is nearly universal and is considered normal aging

Vision changes...

- As people age, the lens of the eye thickens, stiffens, and becomes less able to focus on close objects, such as reading materials (a disorder called presbyopia). This change occurs in virtually all older people. Thus, presbyopia is considered normal aging.



Dental changes...

Older people are more likely to lose teeth. But seeing a dentist regularly, eating fewer sweets, and brushing and flossing regularly may reduce the chances of tooth loss.

Probable causes:

- Access to dental care early in life
- Access to dental insurance
- Potable water
- Poor dental care
- Lack of preventive care services



BRAIN & NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Number of nerve cells in the brain typically decreases
- Nerve cells may lose some of their receptors for messages. Blood flow to the brain decreases.
- Some mental functions—such as vocabulary, short-term memory, the ability to learn new material, and the ability to recall words—may be subtly reduced after age 70.
- Short-term memory seems to decrease.
- Long-term memory seems to improve with increasing age.

Practice Tips:

- Ask if they live alone or have a caregiver
- Medication management
- Polypharmacy Review
- Organizations Chart
- Medical Record Management
- Social connections and activities that stimulate brain activity

Policy considerations:

- Home health aid/care services
- Qualifying Criteria (ie. Going over by \$60)
- Taking limited assets in order to qualify for services
- Draft policies to meet the needs of the population (state by state)
- Insure regular screening for early detection of cognitive function
- Fund Public Service Announcements

Eyes



- A gray-white ring (arcus senilis) may appear on the surface of the eye. The ring is made of calcium and cholesterol salts. It does not affect vision.
- The lower eyelid may hang away from the eyeball because the muscles around the eye weaken and the tendons stretch. This condition (called ectropion) may interfere with lubricating the eyeball and contribute to dry eyes.
- The eye may appear to sink into the head because the amount of fat around the eye decreases.

Eyes

- Lens stiffens, making focusing on close objects harder.
- Lens becomes denser, making seeing in dim light harder.
- Pupil reacts more slowly to changes in light.
- Lens yellows, changing the way colors are perceived.
- The number of nerve cells decrease, impairing depth perception.
- The eyes produce less fluid, making them feel dry.

Practice Tips:

- Make font size bigger and bolder
- Vocabulary level
- Length of document; keep it simple
- Lighting of room
- Ensure that client has appropriate glasses
- Consider reading, paraphrasing and explaining written documents

Policy considerations:

- Vision plans all inclusive
- Consider the cost for coverage: premiums, deductibles, copays and out-of-pocket expenses
- Continue to fund fall prevention sessions and interventions

Mouth & Nose

- Ability to taste and smell starts to gradually diminish
- Taste buds on the tongue decrease in sensitivity
- Lining of the nose becomes thinner and drier
- Drier mouth; less saliva
- Receding gums; more collection of food, bacteria, sugar
- Nose lengthens and enlarges then droop
- Thick hair begins to grow in nose, upper lip and chin

Practice Tips:

- Talk about the importance of hydration, healthy eating
- Have close access to water stations/fountains
- Medications may cause mouth dryness or cause fluid loss

Policy considerations:

- Dental coverage for dentures or other special interventions and/or procedures
- Advocate for policies that reduce the cost of healthy food and increase the cost of junk food

Ears

- Most changes in hearing are probably due as much to noise exposure as to aging
- Hearing high-pitched sounds becomes more difficult.
- High-pitched sounds are particularly hard for older people to hear.
- Words become harder to understand
- It may become harder to understand women and children

Practice Tips:

- Speak slow, clear and with a good tone
- Watch distance and location
- Be aware if client is turning in a certain direction to be able to hear better

Policy considerations:

- Make hearing aids more affordable and accessible

SKIN

- Becomes thinner, less elastic, drier, finely wrinkled
- Becomes rough and blotchy
- Fat layer under skin thins
- Less nerve endings; less sensitive to pain, temp, pressure and injuries
- Number of sweat glands and blood vessels decreases
- Age spots begin to appear due to less protection against UV

Practice Tips:

- Talk to older adults about Shingles, Dehydration (tenting), the Importance of Hydration
- Keep client under the shade

Policy considerations:

- Payment for medication for older adults (ie shingles vaccine, pneumovax, other)

Muscles and Body Fat

- Muscle mass and strength decreases
- Muscles do not contract as fast
- More muscle loss
- Physical inactivity leads to loss of muscle and strength
- By age 75, body fat typically doubles
- Fat distribution changes and affects the body

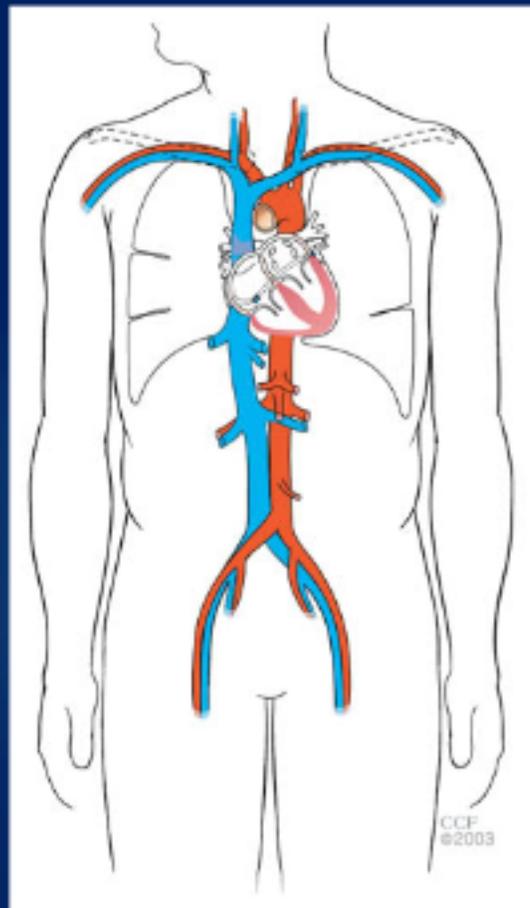
Practice Tips:

- Have conversations on healthy eating (overweight and obesity)
- Fall in-home assessments
- Consider bringing a group together to do sitting aerobics; light aerobics while moving and dancing to oldies

Policy considerations:

- Expand services for club memberships
- Lower the age for eligibility
- Fund initiatives that promote social events for older adults that promote physical activity

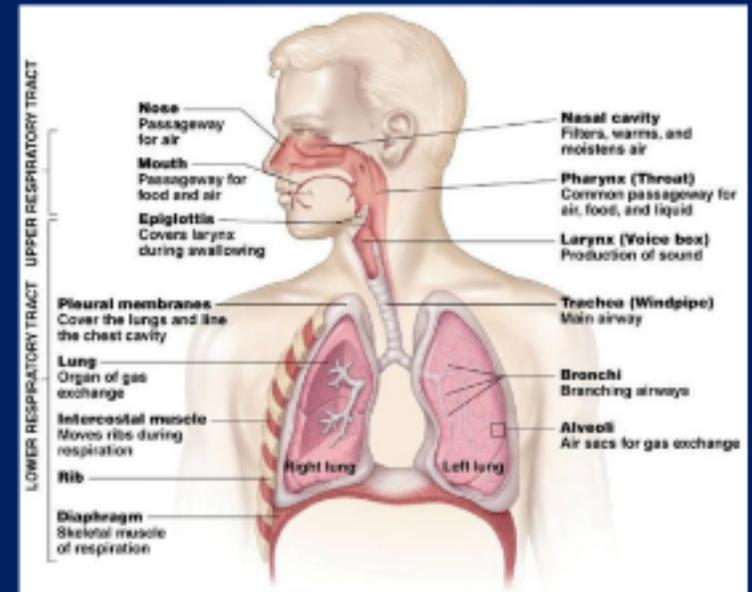
Heart & Blood Vessels



- The heart and blood vessels become stiffer; therefore, heart has to work harder
- The heart fills with blood more slowly.
- Blood pressure tends to increase.

Muscles of Breathing & the Lungs

- The muscles used in breathing, such as the diaphragm, **tend to weaken**; the **lungs are less elastic**
- The **number of air sacs (alveoli)** and capillaries in the lungs **decreases**.
- **Slightly less oxygen is absorbed** from air that is breathed in. The lungs become less elastic. In people who do not smoke or have a lung disorder, these changes do not affect ordinary daily activities, but these **changes may make exercising more difficult**. **Breathing at high altitudes (where there is less oxygen)** may also be harder.
- The **lungs become less able to fight infection**, partly because the cells that sweep debris containing microorganisms out of the airways are less able to do so. **Cough, which also helps clear the lungs, tends to be weaker**.



Bones & Joints

- Bones become less dense; also due to less calcium
- Less levels of vitamin D, less use of calcium
- Become weaker and more likely to break
- In women, less estrogen speeds loss of bone density
- Vertebral changes; head tips forward
- Less cushion between disks shorter spine
- Cartilage thins; wear and tear; joint issues (i.e. osteoarthritis)
- Less elastic ligaments and tendons leads to stiffness

Practice Tips:

- Promote and encourage physical activity and healthy eating (overweight, obesity, constipation)
- Consider fall prevention in-home assessments

Policy considerations:

- Improve prevention and early intervention for assessing bone density
- Advocate for public places to be American with Disabilities Act 1990 compliant
- If serving primarily older adults, advocate for low counters, spacious walking areas, sitting areas
- Advocate for safe sidewalks, walking paths

Aside from the physical and social...

Seriously reemphasize on:

- Social Isolation
- Economics
- Transportation
- Food Insecurity
- Polypharmacy
- Disease Prevention, Education and Linking to services on:
 - Cardiovascular Disease
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
 - Cancer
- Medication cost and dosing
- Mixed status families



Many older Americans rely on family caregivers, but high divorce rates and fewer children among baby boomers may reduce the availability of family caregivers in the future.

WHAT IS HEALTHY AGING?

Healthy aging refers to postponement of or reduction in the undesired effects of aging. The goals of healthy aging are maintaining physical and mental health, avoiding disorders, and remaining active and independent.

REFERENCES

- § Centers for Disease Control
- § Current Population Reports by Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman
- § Families Caring for an Older Aging America
- § National Council on Aging
- § www.merckmanuals.com