

The World is Getting Older*

The world's population is aging due to a decline in fertility and increases in the average life span during the second half of the 20th century. A decline in the number of children born per family as incomes increase leads to a decrease in the proportion of young versus older individuals in the world. The increased fertility in many countries over the twenty years after World War II known as the "Baby Boom" while it increased young populations in the 1950's is now contributing to the aging of the world's population. The individuals in the Baby Boomer age group will increase the numbers of individuals over 65 between now and 2030.

Overall increases in lifespan are also increasing the average age around the world. In fact, the average lifespan around the world is expected to increase by ten full years by the year 2050. In developed countries, the largest gain in life expectancy in human history occurred during the 20th century, averaging 71% for females and 66% for males. Life expectancy at birth in developed countries now ranges from 76 to 80 years.

In the United States, the proportion of the population over 65 years of age is predicted to increase from 12.4% back in 2000 to 19.6% in 2030 . This would mean an increase from approximately 35 million people over 65 in 2000 to an estimated 71 million in 2030. The number of people over 80 years of age is expected to increase from 9.3 million in 2000 to 19.5 million in 2030. The fastest growing age group, while still small, are centenarians, those over 100 years of age.

In 2000, the worldwide population of persons over the age of 65 years was an estimated 420 million, a 9.5 million increase from 1999. By 2030, the worldwide population over the age of 65 years is projected to be 973 million increasing from 6.9% to 12.0% of the world's population. The largest increases in absolute numbers of older persons will occur in developing countries. By 2030, the number of persons in developing countries over 65 years of age is projected to almost triple to an estimated 690 million in 2030. Furthermore developing countries' share of the world's population over 65 years of age is projected to increase to 71 percent.

The increased population of aging adults will increase demands on the public health system and on medical and social services. Age-related chronic diseases will contribute to disability, diminished quality of life, and increased health- and long-term--care costs.

As the world prepares for an increase in the size of the elderly population, new solutions to attempt to prevent age-associated muscle loss and fat gain with healthy active lifestyle and balanced nutrition will need to be promoted along with scientific research seeking solutions to delay the onset of age-related chronic diseases.

*United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2015 Revision accessed at <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/> 10/24/16

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