

Creating Aging Friendly Communities: How Prepared Is Your Community for the Coming “Age Wave”



WAHCE POOL Training

**Leader Training Materials
Fall 2010**

Objectives:

- Participants will become aware of aging population in Wisconsin
- Participants will explore community-level impacts of this demographic trend
- Participants will learn about a tool to assess their community's readiness for this coming "age wave."

For most of human history, until about a century ago, persons aged 65 and over have constituted no more than 2-3 percent of the total world population. As a result of increased life expectancy and decreased birth rates, the elderly in many "developed" countries (e.g. U.S., Canada, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Italy, Denmark, etc.) currently comprise 15 percent of the population. By the year 2030, this figure will increase to approximately 25 percent...on in every four people.

This trend applies not only to populations globally, but also to populations in the United States, in Wisconsin, and in most Wisconsin counties and communities. Importantly, this trend will accelerate once those born between 1946 and 1964 (The "Baby Boomers," now known as "Aging Boomers") begin crossing the age-65 threshold; a phenomenon often referred to as the "age wave" or the "silver tsunami." Beginning in January 2011, it is estimated that 10,000 Americans will turn 65 every day; a trend that will continue for 20 years.

For most people, it is not surprising to learn that almost 18 percent of persons currently residing in Florida are age 65 and older. What is not commonly known is that by 2030, the elderly population in many states in the U.S. will match or exceed this figure, including Wisconsin. In fact, the majority of Wisconsin counties and communities will have an elderly population that exceeds 20 percent; and in some instances will be more than 40%

With these trends in mind, a key question posed to those who will participate in this session is: How prepared is your community for the coming age wave? A primary focus on this session will be to explore the community impacts of population aging, and discuss how an "Aging Readiness Questionnaire" might be used to answer the question posed in the workshop title.

This presentation was developed by members of the UW-Extension Family Living Program Aging in Our Communities Team:

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The vast majority of Americans want to remain in their communities as they age. Contrary to popular belief, only a small minority actually move to warmer climates upon retirement. Fewer than 5 percent of the 65 and over population reside in nursing homes. Instead, most Americans choose to age in place, within the same communities where they have long lived. With this in mind, every community - from the suburbs to rural areas - will have to adapt to an increasingly older population.

How prepared is your community for the coming “age wave”?



The primary focus of this presentation is on the question: How prepared is your community for the coming “age wave”?

The term “age wave” describes the significant increase in the older population as a result of the aging of the “Baby Boom” generation; that is, those born between 1946 and 1964. You may also have heard this referred to as the “silver tsunami”.

This photo of a wave crashing a map image of Wisconsin is intended to foster reflection on the extent to which our communities are “aging-ready”. Our goal is to encourage both individual and collective action to make communities in Wisconsin more aging-friendly.

The presentation is organized into two parts.

Presentation Outline

1. Riding the “Age Wave”: **Understanding Population Aging**
2. Preparing for the “Age Wave”: **Exploring the Impacts of Population Aging**
3. Creating Aging-Friendly Communities: **Assessing, Planning and Taking Action**

(Part 1) is designed to illustrate why creating aging-friendly communities is important. Specifically, we will share information on the population aging. The presentation of demographic data can, at times, be a bit “dry”. We hope such is not the case.

(Part 2) explores – with your help - the impacts of population aging, particularly at the local (county/community) level; since that is where the everyday lives of people are lived.

(Part 3) this section is an introduction to an aging-readiness questionnaire that communities can use to assess the extent to which the current community/county environment is “aging friendly” (optional).

Aging: A Personal Perspective

Whether we like it or not (or whether we admit it or not), all of us – as human beings - experience aging.



Before we discuss the aging of populations, perhaps it will be useful to briefly talk about the aging of individuals...a phenomenon with which all of us are familiar.

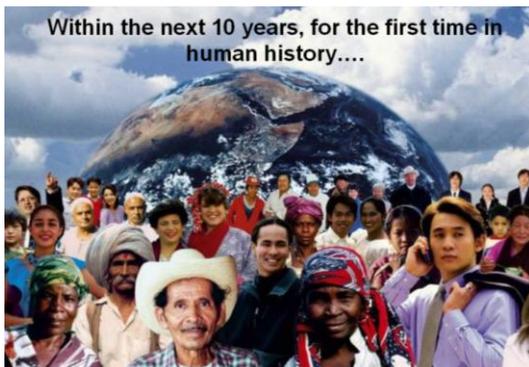
Whether we like it or not (or whether we admit it or not), all of us are aging.

How is the aging of individuals measured? (may want to invited audience participation in responding to this question).

Perhaps the most common means is chronological – number of years since birth (number of candles on the cake).

But aging can also be measured in biological, psychological, social, and functional terms as well...and even subjectively (how old do you feel?).

As an example of a measure of biological aging, hold your hand out flat with the palm facing down. Now gently pull up the skin on the top of you hand; just behind your knuckles. Let go. For an older person whose skin has aged due to unprotected and prolonged exposure to sunlight, the loss of elasticity (the cross-linking of collagen molecules), the skin that was pulled up remains. For a younger person, the pulled up skin returns immediately to its original shape.



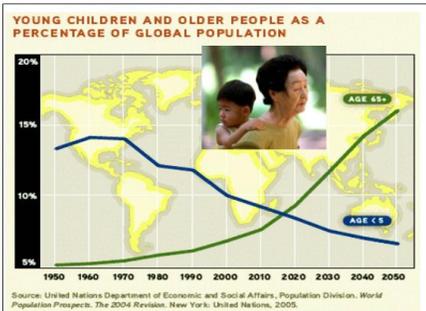
Within the next 10 years, for the first time in human history.... (pause before moving to next slide)

...the percentage (and number) of persons age 65+ in the world will be greater than those age 5 and younger!

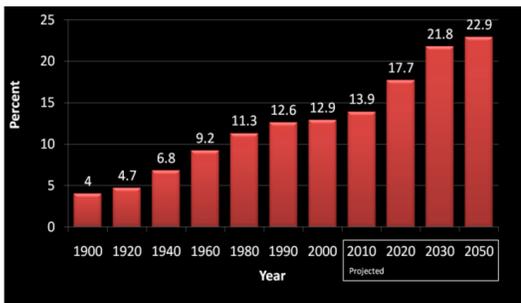
..the percentage (and number) of persons age 65+ in the world will be greater than those age 5 and younger.

For many persons, this is surprising...even shocking. Think of the implications of a world in which there are – for the first time ever – more older than younger people.

As you can see from this line graph, the percentage of children age 5 and younger has been declining at the same time that the percentage of persons age 65+ has been increasing. Although the percentage of those age 5 and younger is currently higher, it is projected this will change sometime before 2020.



Percentage of Americans Age 65 and Older: 1900-2050



Not only has the actual number of persons age 65+ in the United States increased; but the declining birth rates has also resulted in an increase in the percentage of persons age 65 and older. Whereas they constituted only 4 percent of the total population in 1900, they represent nearly 13 percent today, and this will climb to more than 20% beginning in 2030.

By 2050, it is projected that nearly 23 percent (almost 1 in 4) will be age 65+.

SUGGESTION FOR AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Distribute note cards or pieces of paper of two different colors; make sure that 25% of the group receives one color and have them stand up or hold up the card/piece of paper so the entire group can get a “visual feel” for what constitutes 1 in 4...this proportion of the entire U.S. population will be ages 65 or older in about 40 years.

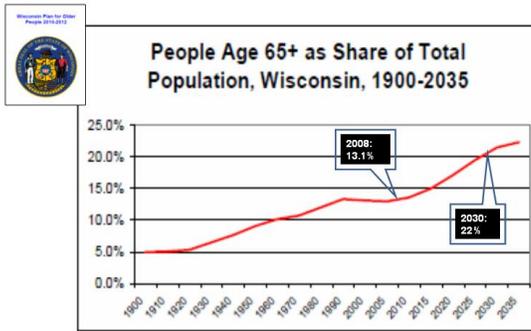
Aging Populations: State Ranking (Top 20)

Rank	State	Total resident population (thousands)	Population age 65+ (thousands)	Percent of population age 65+
1	Florida	15,982	2,808	17.6
2	Pennsylvania	12,281	1,919	15.6
3	West Virginia	1,808	277	15.3
4	Iowa	2,926	436	14.9
5	North Dakota	642	94	14.7
6	Rhode Island	1,048	152	14.5
7	Maine	1,275	185	14.4
8	South Dakota	755	108	14.3
9	Arkansas	2,673	374	14.0
10	Connecticut	3,406	470	13.8
11	Nebraska	1,711	232	13.6
12	Massachusetts	6,349	860	13.5
13	Missouri	5,595	755	13.5
14	Montana	902	121	13.4
15	Ohio	11,353	1,508	13.3
16	Hawaii	1,212	161	13.3
17	Kansas	2,688	356	13.3
18	New Jersey	8,414	1,113	13.2
19	Oklahoma	3,451	456	13.2
20	Wisconsin	5,364	705	13.1

This graph, created by the UW Extension Applied Population Lab based on 2000 US Census data, shows that Wisconsin ranks 20th in terms of the percentage of the population age 65 and older.

Note that the percent of persons age 65+ in Florida is currently 17.6; in contrast to 13.1% for Wisconsin.

Population Aging in Wisconsin



You may recall from the previous slide that 17% of residents of Florida are age 65+. That will probably not be surprising to many of us.

What may catch some of us “off-guard”, however, is this projection by the Wisconsin Demographic Services Center, updated in 2009 (reported in the Wisconsin Plan for Older People 2010-2012). Within 20 years, 22% of Wisconsin residents will be age 65 or older; that’s more and 1 in every 5....and higher than is currently the case in Florida.

Population Aging in Wisconsin: A County Perspective

- In the 2000 Census, almost 18% of Florida’s population was age 65+. By 2030, which Wisconsin counties will have this same percentage or higher?
- Between 2000 and 2007, which Wisconsin counties aged the fastest (in terms of median age)?
- In terms of median age, which Wisconsin counties are the oldest?



Lastly, we turn to a county-level perspective of aging populations.

In the 2000 Census, almost 18% of Florida’s population was age 65+.

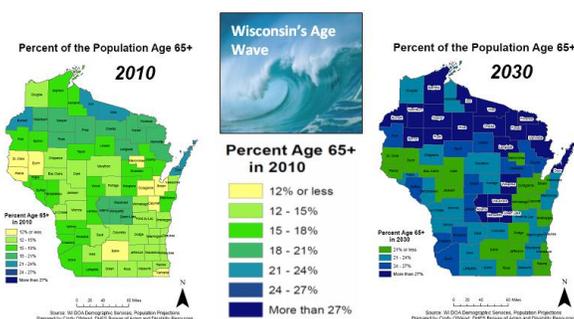
SUGGESTIONS FOR AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Twenty years from now (i.e. in 2030), which Wisconsin counties will have this same percentage or higher? (answer on following slides)

Between 2000 and 2007, which Wisconsin counties aged the fastest (in terms of median age)? (answer on following slides)

In terms of median age, which Wisconsin counties are the oldest? (answer on following slides)

Population Aging in Wisconsin Percentage of Persons Age 65+ by County: 2010-2030



Based on U.S. Census data and projections, the county-maps of Wisconsin illustrate the change in percentage of persons age 65 and older between 2010 (the map on the left) and 2030 (the map on the right).

Yellow indicates counties with age 65+ population of 12% or less.

Increasing shades of green indicates counties with elderly populations of between 12 and 21%. And increasing shades of blue, counties with aged populations over 21%.

The darkest blue – and note how many counties there are – have age 65+ populations that are more than 27%.

SUGGESTION FOR AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Ask participants to share observations regarding why the shift toward older populations in Wisconsin counties.

What Impacts Will Population Aging Have on Wisconsin Communities?



Within the next 20-25 years, the percentage of persons in Wisconsin who are age 65+ will rise from 13 to more than 20%...and their number will increase from 800,000 to more than 1.4 million.

Some counties will have elderly populations that are more than twice what Florida is at the present time.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

What do you think will be some of the impacts of population aging in Wisconsin?

Impacts of the Aging Population on Your Community

- Families/Family Caregiving
- Housing
- Transportation
- Nutrition/Food Safety/Wellness
- Health Services
- Land Use Planning
- Public Safety
- Parks and Recreation
- Workforce Development and Education
- Volunteerism and Civic Engagement
- Arts and Cultural Activities
- Economic Development
- Other?

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: Select one of the first three areas bulleted to the left + one additional area of your choosing. For each area, (1) list several community impacts as a result of population aging, and (2) brainstorm what might be done to make the community more aging-friendly.



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY – AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Form small groups of between 3-5 persons. Select one of the first three bulleted areas (i.e. families, housing, and transportation) + one additional area (your choice).

To complete this activity, please do the following: (a) select a community in your county (b) select one of the twelve areas listed below (c) identify how this area will be impacted in the community chosen by an aging population (d) list action steps that could be taken to make the community chosen more aging-friendly.

Record your responses on the sheet provided in the members' packet (Impact (s) of Aging Populations, A Small Group Activity).

Select one member of your group to record the results of group discussion and serve as the spokesperson for the group in reporting back.

Questions We All Need to Ask?

- Is your community a good place to grow up and grow old?
- Will your community meet your needs when you are 65, 75, 85, 95...or even 105?
- If not, what can you do now to begin to make your community a friendly and supportive environment for persons of all ages?

In closing, we pose some questions:

Is your community a good place to grow up and grow old?
Will your community meet your needs when you are 65, 75, 85, 95...or even 105?
If not, what can you do now to begin to make your community a friendly and supportive environment for persons of all ages?

Aging Readiness Survey

Based on your knowledge and experience in your respective communities, please complete the “Aging Readiness Survey.”



Please see handout in members’ packet Assessing Your Community’s Aging-Readiness: A checklist of key features of an aging-friendly community.

**In serving as a catalyst in promoting community action...
Are you willing to take the risk?**



Responses to these questions will require your involvement.

Are you willing to take the risk?