



IFAS EXTENSION

The Future of Aging is Florida<sup>1</sup>

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Aging in the 21st Century

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by the year 2050 the nation's elderly population will more than double to 80 million, and the more frail, over-85 population will quadruple to 18 million.

Currently, Florida ranks first in the United States in the percent of the population who is full-time and seasonal residents over the age of 65. Older Floridians, their families and communities face a myriad of issues related to aging.

*Aging in the 21st Century* is an eight-topic program that addresses issues such as:

- health and medical care
- family relationships
- economic concerns
- caregiving
- home modifications
- retirement
- nutrition and diet

Institute on Aging core faculty from the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions, and Liberal Arts and Sciences joined Extension faculty from IFAS as educators for this series.

*Professional audiences*

1. This document is FCS2209 FY624, one of a series of publications from the distance education in-service "Aging in the 21st Century," coordinated by Carolyn Wilken, PhD, MPH, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS. First published: September 2003. Reviewed by Candice King, formerly coordinator of Research Programs, Institute on Aging. University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

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## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- **AGING DEMOGRAPHICS:** National and international aging statistics. Why the United States is considered an "old" society.
- **AGING IN FLORIDA:** How Florida is aging and what the long-term care implications are for older adults living in this state.
- **"LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS:** What opportunities for community-based education and intervention in relation to our aging society exist in Florida.
- **DIVERSITY AMONG OLDER ADULTS:** How the similarities and differences among the group we call "older adults" impact aging in Florida.

## INTRODUCTION

Compared to most disciplines, the study of aging is a new science. Those of us who work in this field are stepping in unknown grounds. There is much to learn and much to contribute as our society ages and we strive to improve the lives of older adults. As we move forward, it is important to remember that aging is not only about older adults. It is about their families, the community they live in and the influence they exert on our society both directly and indirectly.

This publication will attempt to explain some of the changing demographics that have made the study of aging so important. It will also strive to show the differences and similarities within the group we call "older adults" and offer possible solutions to some of the issues we face as we "age in the 21st Century".

## AGING DEMOGRAPHICS: The U.S. and The World

Although the media constantly portrays the United States as a young country, the reality of our population's demographics is very different. We are historically a young country, with an increasing aging population.

The increase in the older adult population in the US is due to advances in technology, medicine, and public health resulting in lower mortality rates.

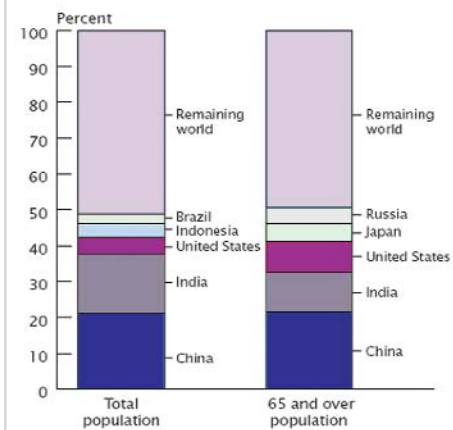
The United States represents only about 2% of the world's total population. However, almost 10% of the world's total older adult (65+) population lives in America. See *Graph 1* for more details.

Furthermore, the United Nations designates a country as old if the percentage of the population 65 and older is more than 7%. *Graph 2* shows that according to this designation, the U.S. is indeed old. In the majority of states, more than 10% of the

population is over 65 years old. This is especially true for Florida, Pennsylvania, Iowa, West Virginia and North Dakota, which have 15% or more of its population over the age of 65.

**GRAPH 1**

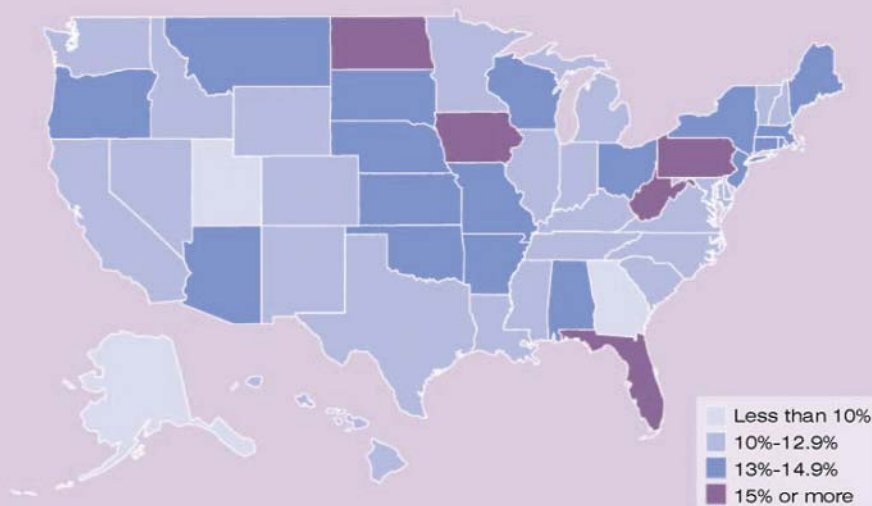
**Distribution of the World's Population: 2000**  
(For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base: Census 2000. Summary File 1: United Nation, 1999. *World Population Prospects: The 1998 Revision*. New York, for the age-sex distribution of some countries in 1990.

**GRAPH 2**

### Percentage of the population age 65 and older, by state, 2000



Note: Data for the year 2000 are middle-series projections of the population. Reference population: These data refer to the resident population. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Projections.

## AGING IN FLORIDA

Florida is perhaps the "oldest" state in the U.S. Due to inter-state migration and the aging of baby boomers, who often choose Florida as their post-retirement home, the oldest old (85+) population in the state is expected to more than double between the years 1995 and 2020.

**Graph 3** demonstrates how the older adult population (65+) will account for more than 26% of Florida's total population by 2025, nearly doubling to 5.5 million people.

Thus, it is not surprising that Florida is leading the way in aging research around the country.

The sunshine state often serves as a model for other states in geriatrics and gerontology. As Florida ages, the remainder of the country learns from it how to work for the benefit of older adults.

On the other hand, Florida's changing demographics don't come without problems. Following are some of the key issues we, as

a state, need to address in order to provide a better quality of life for older adults, their families and caregivers.

- **LACK OF NURSING HOME ALTERNATIVES**

Florida lacks community-based alternatives to nursing home care. Of all money spent in long-term care, 88% is spent on nursing homes, and 12% is spent on community-based alternatives.

- **HIGH LIABILITY INSURANCE**

Twenty percent of all nursing homes in Florida are filing for bankruptcy due to the high cost of liability insurance.

- **UNDERPAID STAFF**

Certified nurse assistants (CNA) are paid about \$7.84 per hour. Underpaid, understaffed and under-appreciated nursing home staff leave the field in search of better pay, better hours and more favorable working conditions.

## LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

The issues we face in our aging society require solutions that consider the structure of society today as well as the changes that are yet to come.

The points listed below are suggestions for long-term solutions that will be helpful now as well as in the future.

- **INCREASE FUNDING AND STAFFING**  
As the number of older adults in our society increases, funding and staffing should increase accordingly.

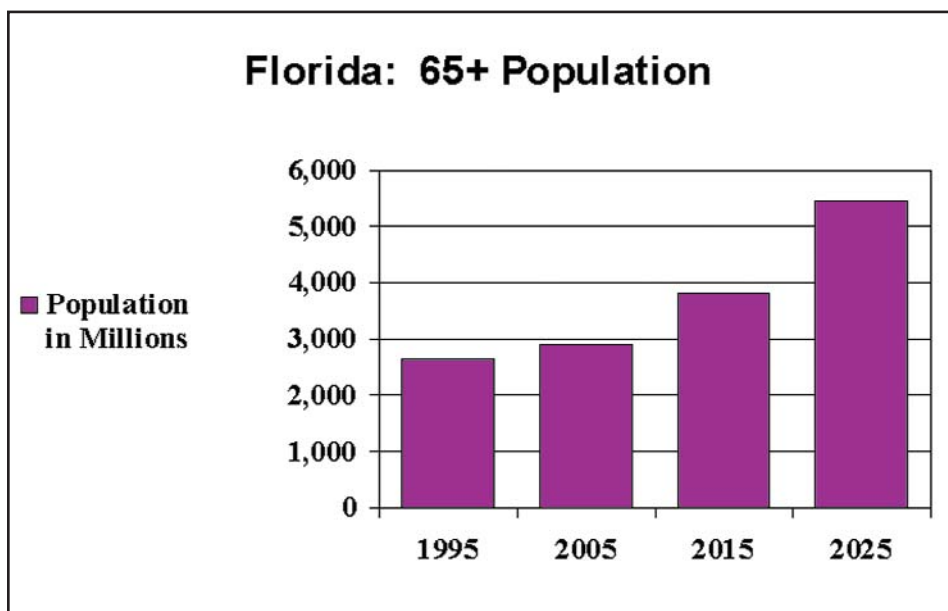
- **BALANCE**  
It is essential that the ratio of nursing home per community-based alternatives for care be balanced.

- **APPLIED RESEARCH**  
Applied research is fundamental for the study of aging.

- **SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL INITIATIVES**  
Clinical and biological disciplines need to blend knowledge with social and behavioral initiatives. This will create a synergy that can greatly improve the quality of life for older adults.

- **SINGLE POINT OF ENTRY**  
A single point of entry is perhaps the most needed of all solutions addressed here. It suggests that one single entity serve as facilitator for older adults, their families and caregiver. After a first contact, this "single point of entry" would channel the person requesting information to an appropriate source. This would facilitate, and to an extent ensure, that older adults and their families make informed and valuable decisions.

**GRAPH 3**



### DIVERSITY IN AGING

The term "older adults" is very broad. It includes all people more than 65 years old. However, it is imperative to be sensitive to differences among the various subgroups in this category when developing successful programs.

#### COHORT DIVERSITY

A cohort is a group of people with similar historical characteristics due to their proximity in age.

We often divide the "older adults" group in five major cohorts: 65 to 69; 70 to 74; 75 to 79; 80 to 84 and; 85 or more. There are great differences between the needs of each one of these groups. Sensitivity to this diversity is essential when working

with older adults. For example, in 1991, approximately 9.2% of those aged 65 to 69 needed assistance with daily activities while more than 30% of those 80 to 84 needed the same kind of help.

#### GENDER DIVERSITY

Men and women in our society age very differently. Male and female gender roles play a major part in an individual's quality of life during older adulthood. For example, because men are more likely to remarry and have someone caring for them in their old age, they are much less likely than women to spend their later years alone or in institutional care.

#### RACIAL & ETHNIC DIVERSITY

In a country as diverse as the United States, racial and ethnic sensitivity is crucial when working with people of any age. This is also true with the older adult population.

The graph on the left shows the projected distribution of the population age 65 and older in the next fifty years. As you will note, the number of minority older adults will increase much faster than those who are non-Hispanic whites. The increase is most significant among those of Hispanic origin.

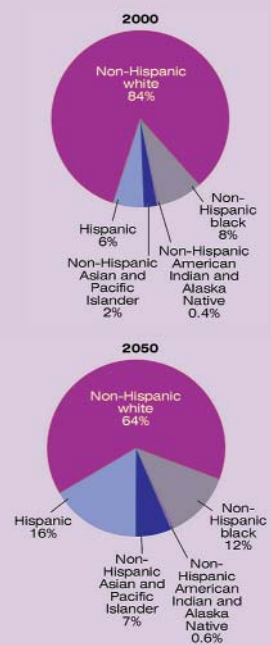
These statistics imply that a greater level of sensitivity to and understanding of racial and ethnic differences will be required when working with older adults in the future.

#### PUBLICATIONS IN THIS SERIES:

- **Designing Educational Programs for Older Adults**  
Carolyn Wilken, PhD, MPH
- **Safe Return**  
Meredeth Rowe, RN, PhD
- **Financial Issues**  
Jo Turner, PhD, CFP
- **Elder Nutrition**  
Linda Bobroff, PhD, RD, LD/N
- **Fall Prevention**  
Kristen Smith, MPH
- **Family Relationships in an Aging Society**  
Terry Mills, PhD
- **Adapting the Home**  
Pat Dasler, MA, OTR/L
- **The Future of Aging is Florida**  
Jeffrey Dwyer, PhD

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Projected Distribution of the Population 65 and older by race and hispanic origin, 2000 and 2050



Note: Data are middle-series projections of the population. Hispanics may be of any race. Reference Population: These data refer to the resident population Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Projections

