

## Introduction to: Sociology of Aging



## Why study about old people?

- Provides an opportunity to understand what can be done to assist older people
- Helps us anticipate what to expect as we grow older
- Assists those of us who will be working with the elderly in the future either as co-workers, customers, patients, etc.

Putting the course in context:  
What is the **Sociology of Aging**?

**Sociology** is a Social Science.

What is **Science** (hint: there are at least two major components)?

The development of knowledge, ultimately presented in the form of laws and **theories** and gained through a systematic examination of facts (**research methods**).

## A Shifting Perspective of the elderly

Older people used to be highly respected (lets say prior to the industrial revolution) but eventually that respect was reduced.

Why were they so highly regarded in the past?

Why aren't they respected as much today as years past?

## A Shifting Perspective of the elderly

Prior to **industrialization**, knowledge was passed on from person to person (e.g., apprentice).

The elderly were the knowledge holders as well as land owners.

More recently the elderly are no longer the only knowledge holders. This is obtained through schooling taken advantage of by younger people.

## What is ageism?

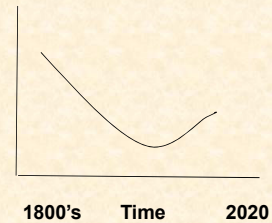
How is it related to social change?

Most recently the elderly have been gaining in prestige.

Why might this be?

Are older people respected? How has respect for the elderly changed over time, lets say from the 1800s to today?

Respect For the Elderly



A Shifting Perspective of the elderly

Wealth from investments and retirement programs.



Size of the Elderly Population

The elderly population has continued to grow as a proportion of the whole population.

Why?

Size of the Elderly Population

--Improved Medical care is keeping the elderly alive longer

-Baby boom generation has started filling the ranks of old age

Who are the baby boom generation?  
Why "baby boom" generation?

Baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964.

The baby boom generation is having a variety of effects on American society

What kinds of effects would you guess the baby boom generation has had on society as it has aged?

The pig in a python?

The baby boom generation is having a variety of effects referred to as:

**The pig in a python:**

- hospital delivery rooms
- public schools
- Food
- Jobs
- Housing
- Stock market
- Services for the elderly

ROME - Rita Levi Montalcini, a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, said that, even though she is about to turn 100, her mind is sharper than it was when she was 20.

(what allows one to live a long life?)

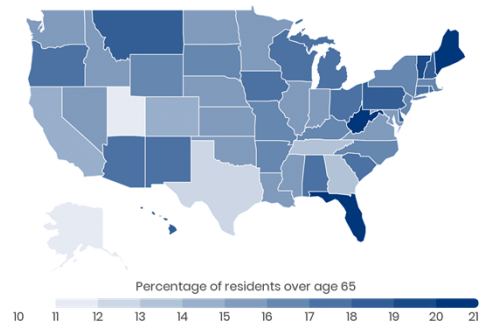
genes, low stress, physical/eating habits



Which states have the highest percentage of elderly?

(not necessarily the most elderly but rather the highest percentage of elderly)

**States with the Oldest Populations**



Source: United States Census Bureau

2019 data

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What is meant by "life expectancy" for a particular nation?

How would you guess the "life expectancy in the U.S. compares to other more technologically "advanced" nations (e.g., France, Great Britain, Germany, Canada)?

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In 1950 the U.S. had the longest life expectancy of any advanced nation.

In 2020 the U.S. is at the bottom of advanced nations in terms of life expectancy.

Why might this be?

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Hillier and Barrow (authors of your book) attribute it to more smoking and obesity in the U.S. than other nations.

Another more direct reason, that the authors seem to overlook, is that all other advanced nations established national health care around the 1950s.

The U.S. does not have a national health care system. Instead, it is a system where health care providers seek to make a profit from those needing care (people in the U.S. die because they can't afford needed health care services).