



Unprecedented Global Aging Examined in New Census Bureau Report Commissioned by the National Institute on Aging

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WASHINGTON, July 20 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The average age of the world's population is increasing at an unprecedented rate. The number of people worldwide 65 and older is estimated at 506 million as of midyear 2008; by 2040, that number will hit 1.3 billion. Thus, in just over 30 years, the proportion of older people will double from 7 percent to 14 percent of the total world population, according to a new report, [An Aging World: 2008](#).

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The report examines the demographic and socioeconomic trends accompanying this phenomenon. It was commissioned by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health and produced by the U.S. Census Bureau.

"The world's population of people over age 65 is growing rapidly, and with it will come a number of challenges and opportunities," said NIA Director Dr. Richard J. Hodes. "NIA and our partners at the Census Bureau are committed to providing the best data possible so that we can better understand the course of population aging and its implications."

An Aging World: 2008 examines nine international population trends identified in 2007 by the NIA and the U.S. Department of State ("[Why Population Aging Matters: A Global Perspective](#)"). The report also contains detailed information on life expectancy, health, disability, gender balance, marital status, living arrangements, education and literacy, labor force participation and retirement and pensions among older people around the world.

"Aging is affecting every country in every part of the world," said Richard Suzman, director of NIA's Division of Behavioral and Social Research. "While there are important differences between developed and developing countries, global aging is changing the social and economic nature of the planet and presenting difficult challenges. The fact that, within 10 years, for the first time in human history there will be more people 65 and older than children under 5 in the world underlines the extent of this change."

Highlights of the report include:

- While developed nations have relatively high proportions of people 65 and older, the most rapid increases in the older population are in the developing world. The current rate of growth of the older population in developing countries is more than double that in developed countries, and is also double that of the total world population.
- As of 2008, 62 percent (313 million) of the world's people 65 and older lived in developing countries. By 2040, today's developing countries are likely to be home to more than 1 billion people 65 and over, 76 percent of the projected world total.
- The oldest old, people 80 and older, are the fastest growing portion of the total population in many countries. Globally, the oldest old population is projected to increase 233 percent between 2008 and 2040, compared with 160 percent for the population 65 and over and 33 percent for the total population of all ages.
- The 65-and-older population in China and India alone numbered 166 million in 2008, nearly one-third of the world's total. Issues related to population aging in the world's two most populous nations will be accentuated in the coming decades as the absolute number climbs to 551 million in 2040 (329 million in China and 222 million in India).
- Childlessness among European and U.S. women 65 and older in 2005 ranged from less than 8 percent in the Czech Republic to 15 percent in Austria and Italy. Twenty percent of women 40-44 in the United States in 2006 had no biologic children. These data raise questions about the provision of care when this cohort reaches advanced ages.
- Older people provide support to as well as receive support from their children. In countries with well-established pension and social security programs, many older adults provide shelter and financial assistance to their adult children and grandchildren. Older people in developing countries, although less likely to provide financial help to children, make substantial contributions to family well-being through such activities as household maintenance and grandchild care.

The report was prepared by Kevin Kinsella and Wan He of the International Programs Center in the Population

Division of the Census Bureau. Research for and production of the report were supported under an interagency agreement with the NIA's Behavioral and Social Research Division.

The NIA leads the federal effort supporting and conducting research on aging and the medical, social and behavioral issues of older people. For more information on research and aging, go to www.nia.nih.gov.

The NIH -- the nation's medical research agency -- includes 27 institutes and centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.

Editor's note: The report can be accessed at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p95-09-1.pdf>.

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