

## IS WORKING LONGER THE SOLUTION TO AN AGING SOCIETY?

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Population aging, together with increases in life expectancy, women's employment, dual-earner households, and unraveling safety nets, are transforming the demography of work and retirement in the later life course. A seemingly obvious policy solution is to encourage Boomers and those following to work longer, postponing retirement. And yet there is insufficient understanding of factors that predict ongoing older adult participation in paid work. The simple work/retirement dichotomy no longer fits the experience of growing numbers of Americans. Drawing on census data, I show six such pathways differing by age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Needed is policy development recognizing the new realities of different and unequal pathways. The challenge is recognizing disparities in capacities and constraints among our aging population, along with the need to change the way we work, opening up flexible options in order to enable working longer.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BRIDGE JOBS IN AMERICA TODAY

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Gradual retirement, consisting of phased retirement, bridge employment, and reentry, has been a persistent feature of older Americans' work decisions for decades. This persistence is remarkable in light of the many changes to the retirement landscape that have taken place since the mid-1980s, including changes to Social Security incentives, private-sector pensions, and macroeconomic volatility. Our paper addresses two topics related to these retirement transitions. First, using 26 years of data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), we quantify the prevalence of bridge employment among the initial group of HRS respondents. For the first time, bridge job prevalence can be calculated for a large cohort of older Americans who have completed their retirement transitions. Second, we comment on what these findings mean for policymakers, with respect to income inequality later in life, barriers to retirement pathways, and public-private sector differences, and what role public employers might be able to play.

## WHY RETIREMENT AND AGE DISCRIMINATION POLICIES NEED TO CONSIDER THE INTERSECTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF OLDER WOMEN

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We summarize how older women face intersectional experiences that affect their retirement security. These include differential trends in aging, life expectancy, labor supply, work history, retirement savings, and poverty at old age. We also highlight research showing that older women experience significantly more age discrimination than older men, affecting the ability for older women to improve their retirement security by working longer. We demonstrate through

examples that these differential trends and intersectional experiences of older women have important policy implications. We provide examples of how Social Security policies, such as increases in the full benefit retirement age and changes to the retirement earnings test, have differential effects on older women. We also discuss how age and gender employment discrimination law fails to protect older women from intersectional sex-plus-age discrimination. We conclude by urging policymakers to consider how older women experience different challenges and how policy should consider their unique experiences.

## HOW DO EMPLOYERS SPAN THE GENERATIONS?

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The concepts of "generations" and "generational differences" are nearly ubiquitous phenomena. Organizational policy makers often face questions about the purported influence of generations and differences assumed to exist between them for a variety of issues. Given the sheer volume of work dedicated to the topic, both academic and in the popular press, it can be difficult to parse correct from incorrect answers to such questions. In the present article, we pose and answer 10 common questions about generations and generational differences in an attempt to "clear the air" about common thinking, (mis)conceptions, and myths surrounding these phenomena. We offer this work with the goal of clarifying the truth about generations and generational differences, with an eye toward helping organizational policy makers navigate the complexities of these issues and making better decisions about the (assumed) role that generations play across different contexts.

## EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TO AN AGING WORKFORCE: DIFFERENCES BY INDUSTRY, OCCUPATION, AND SIZE

Robert Clark, *North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, United States*

Employers are facing significant demographic changes in their workforce as the US population continues to age and older workers seek to delay retirement until later ages. The challenges associated with workforce aging vary substantially across the economy and vary by industry, occupation, and size of the organization. This analysis highlights the findings from employer surveys and workshops of senior HR leaders. The article summarizes the findings from our three-year research project including whether employers perceive that workforce aging is a challenge to their organization and if so, what changes in compensation and working conditions are being made to accommodate the changes in age structure

## SESSION 7501 (SYMPOSIUM)

### RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC: AN UPDATE FROM THE GSA COVID-19 TASK FORCE

Chair: Kathryn Hyer

Co-Chair: Elizabeth Sobczyk

The GSA COVID-19 Task Force was convened in March 2020 to address the needs of GSA members and older adults related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This

interdisciplinary group of members represents physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, educators, and researchers with expertise in disaster preparedness, caregiving, trauma, HIV, vaccination, home health, long-term care, social isolation, motivation, and risk communication with older adults. In this symposium, Task Force members will share how they have advanced the areas of research, education, and practice related to the pandemic. Speakers will discuss the process of developing a COVID-19 research agenda and how that is moving forward. They will also share how Task Force members representing AGHE have been supporting members through listening sessions and the development of materials to assist with the transition to online teaching. Finally, speakers will provide updates on the several fact sheets, webinars, and a decision aid that have been developed to support GSA members and their work with older adults.

#### **GSA COVID-19 TASK FORCE: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH AGENDA**

Barbara Resnick,<sup>1</sup> and Sheryl Zimmerman,<sup>2</sup> 1. *University of Maryland School of Nursing, Baltimore, Maryland, United States*, 2. *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United States*

GSA COVID-19 Task Force members worked with organizational leaders and special interest groups to ascertain areas where further research about COVID-19 and older adults would be helpful. The responses were compiled into a single document to create a research agenda. Processes to share the agenda with federal agencies and partners will be shared.

#### **GSA COVID-19 TASK FORCE: SUPPORTING THOSE IN PRACTICE**

Lisa Brown, *Palo Alto, California, United States*

The GSA COVID-19 Task Force developed multiple materials to assist older adults, those who care for them, and policy makers in understanding a variety of topics, including aging and immunity, ageism, the process of developing a vaccine, and how to social distance. Members of the group also undertook development of a decision aid on whether to engage in activities outside the home. The process of developing the decision aid according to Ottawa Research Institute guidelines will be explained.

#### **GSA COVID-19 TASK FORCE: SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS TO ONLINE TEACHING**

Joann Montepare,<sup>1</sup> and Judith Howe,<sup>2</sup> 1. *Lasell University, Newton, Massachusetts, United States*, 2. *Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Bronx, New York, United States*

GSA COVID-19 Task Force members collaborated with AGHE to develop multiple teaching briefs and biblio briefs on various topics to support faculty who had to adjust to online teaching quickly. Task Force members will review those documents, as well as the AGHE listening session to identify where educators and students need additional support.

## **SESSION 7510 (SYMPOSIUM)**

### **THE STUDY OF SENSORY AGING IN EXISTING COHORTS OF OLDER ADULTS**

Chair: Joshua Ehrlich

Sensory impairments in later life are associated with numerous adverse health outcomes, including falls, depression, cognitive decline and dementia, and loss of independence. While population-based cohort studies offer a wealth of data for studying health and aging, these studies have not been widely leveraged to investigate the epidemiology of sensory impairment and the effect of sensory impairments on health outcomes and well-being in older adults. This symposium will provide attendees with examples from presenters' own research using sensory function data from large-scale and population-based cohort studies. Presentations will also describe available sensory data and opportunities to improve measures of sensory function in cohort studies. Finally, presenters will focus on methodological considerations when studying the effect of sensory impairment on health outcomes, trends, and trajectories in older adults using data from cohort studies. The symposium will include presentations on vision, hearing, olfaction, and nesting of a randomized controlled trial within an existing cohort study. Participants will gain a clear understanding of the importance of measuring sensory function; methods for integrating sensory measures into existing cohorts; and the original results of analyses that have used sensory data from existing cohorts to study health and well-being in older adults. Sensory Health Interest Group Sponsored Symposium.

### **THE SENSE OF SMELL AND AGING: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM POPULATION STUDIES**

Jayant Pinto, *University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, United States*

Decline of the sense of smell with age causes a marked impact on older adults, markedly reducing quality of life. Olfactory dysfunction impairs nutrition, decreases the ability to experience pleasure, and results in depression, among other burdens. Large-scale population studies have identified impaired olfaction as a key health indicator that predicts the development of decreased physical and mental health, reduced physical activity, weight loss, mild cognitive impairment and dementia, and mortality itself. These data have been generated via analyses of data from several aging cohorts, including the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP); the Beaver Dam cohort; the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities project; the Rush Memory and Aging Project; the Health, Aging, and Body Composition project; the Washington Heights/Inwood Columbia Aging Project; among others. In this presentation, we will review the close connection between olfaction, health, aging, including discussion of insights from these studies. We will also discuss emerging data from NSHAP on the effects of sensory function on cognition, mental health, and social interaction, which demonstrate that sensory function plays a vital role in the lives of older adults. Part of a symposium sponsored by Sensory Health Interest Group.

And even as those costs go up, Canada's tax base will erode further because fewer people are entering the work force every year. "The role of population aging on economic growth might have been underappreciated," says Colin Busby, a research director at the Institute for Research on Public Policy, a Montreal-based think tank. "It might be an even stronger driver of the decline in economic growth and government revenues going forward." Without long-term solutions to the fiscal challenges of an aging society, intergenerational tensions are likely to rise. In some countries, those tensions are already severe. Now, possible solutions. I am not sure I would use the word solution, as it implies that an aging population is a problem. But if we want to have a younger population, the first things which come to mind are to have more children and to stop extending the lives of older people. But as a society, this isn't the direction we are going. Our largest expense imposed on our society is during the first year and last years of our lives. The rest is a time for greater contributions to all. They are able to work for longer than previous generations. The way we work needs to change - why one week does a person work 40+ hours a week and then they have their cut of birthday, let's say 65, and suddenly they don't work at all. The main reason is longer life-expectancies combined with declining birth rates. It is true that people in industrialised nations can expect to live longer than ever before. Although there will undoubtedly be some negative consequences of this trend, societies can take steps to mitigate these potential problems. In other words, an ageing population will mean a greater tax burden for working adults. Further pressures will include a rise in the demand for healthcare, and the fact young adults will increasingly have to look after their elderly relatives. There are several actions that governments could take to solve the problems described above. Firstly, a simple solution would be to increase the retirement age for working adults, perhaps from 65 to 70. Nowadays, people of this age tend to be healthy enough to continue a productive working life.