



Research Highlights in the Demography and Economics of Aging

no. 10

march 2007

The NIA Demography Centers

As the proportion of older people increases in the United States and around the world, nations will face new challenges and opportunities, particularly in health care and retirement systems, intergenerational relationships within families, and labor market supply. To help inform public discussion of these issues, the National Institute on Aging (NIA) has promoted economic and demographic research on population aging.

In 2004, four new Centers were awarded five-year grants to develop, support, and coordinate research activities on social and behavioral aspects of health, savings, retirement, and global aging. They joined nine other Centers, all charged with maintaining and improving information available to the public and to policymakers as they address population aging issues.

Although each of the NIA Demography Centers has its own set of disciplinary specializations, research conducted by staff at the different Centers is often interrelated. All Centers investigate aspects of health and health care, the societal impact of population aging, and the economic and social circumstances of the elderly. Harvard University, Princeton University, and the University of North Carolina (three of the newer Centers) also conduct research on global aging and cross-national comparisons. Pennsylvania State University, also newly funded in 2004, joins several other Centers that are pioneering work on the biodemography of aging, investigating the relationships among biology and genetics, health and mortality, and life expectancy.

NIA Demography Centers train new researchers, develop and share

data resources and research methodologies, and facilitate the formation of collaborative networks. In addition, they provide resources that encourage investigators to engage in aging-related research and that aid in the widespread dissemination of research findings. As a result, these Centers enhance the research community within and beyond their home institutions.

MAJOR RESEARCH AREAS

- Demographics and Population Research
- Biodemography, Longevity and Genetics
- Population, Economic and Policy Forecasting
- Health, Chronic Illness and Disability
- Health Care and Health Policy
- Income, Savings, Work and Retirement
- Family Support Systems
- Socioeconomic Status and Health
- Minority Populations
- Dementia/Alzheimer's Disease
- Cognitive Aging, Psychological Development
- Comparative International Research

CENTER ACTIVITIES

- Research on Aging
- Pilot Projects on Innovative Topics
- Data Resource Development
- Statistical Enclaves for Sensitive Data
- Methodological Research
- Training Programs
- Workshops and Conferences
- Newsletters and Reports
- Web-Based Information and Resources
- Multidisciplinary Collaborations
- International Collaborations

THE THIRTEEN CENTERS

[UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY](#)

Center on the Economics and Demography of Aging (CEDA)

The Berkeley Center facilitates and encourages economic and demographic research on aging, with a number of themes: the biodemography of aging; demographic and fiscal projections and analysis; health, disability, and mortality; behavioral and experimental economics; life cycle planning and intergenerational transfers; and labor supply. It includes three major NIA-funded collaborative projects: the Human Mortality Database, National Transfer Accounts, and the Biodemography of Longevity. The Center will soon provide access to web-based programs for forecasting mortality and projecting Social Security finances.

[THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING](#)

As a part of the National Institutes of Health in the Department of Health and Human Services, NIA seeks to improve the health and well-being of older Americans through efforts to understand the aging process and to extend healthy life. The Institute conducts and supports research on all aspects of aging, from investigating basic questions about cellular and molecular changes that occur as people age to the demographic and economic implications of an aging society. Applied research programs funded by the Institute encourage rapid translation of research findings into practical information that physicians or the public can use to benefit the health of older people. Ongoing initiatives also address critical issues of elderly health and health care: disparities among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups; Alzheimer's disease; and communication of research-based information to seniors. The Demography Centers are supported through NIA's Behavioral and Social Research Program, which focuses on how people and their families change with aging, on the interrelationships between older people and social institutions (e.g., the retirement and health care systems), and on the changing age composition of the population in the United States and worldwide.

[UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO & NATIONAL OPINION RESEARCH CENTER \(NORC\)](#)

Center on the Demography and Economics of Aging

Research at the Chicago Center focuses on: social relationships, living arrangements, and family; the social context of aging; health care; and biobehavioral pathways. Current projects examine the predictors and health consequences of loneliness in older adults, the biological foundations of longevity, socioeconomic status and age-related disability, and the alterations of circadian timing in sleep and aging. The Chicago Center is also home to the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP), a longitudinal study of the health and well-being of American adults ages 57 to 84. The Chicago Center brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars from the Harris School of Public Policy, the Pritzker School of Medicine, the Graduate School of Business, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), and the Departments of Sociology and Economics. Through the Chicago Core on Biomarkers in Population-Based Aging Research (CCBAR), the Chicago Center facilitates the exchange of evolving ideas related to the collection of biological and physiological data in population-based health and aging research. The CCBAR sponsors a website, an annual conference, and a series of workshops to promote an interdisciplinary approach to the study of health in aging populations.

[HARVARD UNIVERSITY](#)

Center for Global Demography of Aging

Harvard University's Program on the Global Demography of Aging (PGDA) focuses on pressing questions related to global aging and health, particularly in the developing world. Interdisciplinary research teams are examining changes in patterns of adult morbidity and mortality, associated implications, and the policies and programs designed to address these implications. PGDA also supports research on determinants of health and aging and on the demographic and economic consequences of global aging. This Center fosters international collaboration on population aging issues through a variety of activities. Center members participate in international conferences and publish in magazines and journals targeting a global audience. PGDA also makes data and technical assistance available through the Harvard-MIT Virtual Data Center, hosts international workshops, and holds an annual conference on the global demography of aging.

Center on the Demography of Aging

At the Michigan Center, researchers study health, work, and retirement; trends in chronic disease and disability; health disparities across racial and ethnic populations and socioeconomic groups; and the migration and geographic concentration of older people. Comparative international research is also an emerging area at Michigan. Current projects incorporate biological measures into the study of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in health; investigate the effect of aging on perceptions and behavior, including behavior on surveys and in the economy; and assess the impact of HIV/AIDS on the elderly in South Africa, Vietnam, and in high poverty areas in the United States. Michigan is home to The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), the National Archive of Computerized Data on Aging (NACDA), and the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), which has been renewed through 2011. In addition to the core questionnaire, this survey has collected information on physical performance tests, anthropometric measurements, biomarkers, psychosocial factors, dementia, consumption and activities, and the new Prescription Drug program. The Michigan Center is a joint program of the Population Studies Center and Survey Research Center at the Institute for Social Research, and also incorporates researchers from the Departments of Economics and Sociology. The Center fosters international collaboration through coordination of seven research networks covering such topics as disability trends, AIDS and the older population, comparative analysis of the aging population in developing countries, and international sister studies to the HRS. It also provides coordinating support for the overall Centers' program in the demography of aging, including management of a website with extensive information on programs at all the Centers (<http://agingcenters.org>).

Center for Aging and Health Research

Research at the NBER Center encompasses labor market behavior, the financial circumstances of people as they age, health and health care, and aging around the world. Leading scholars address such issues as work and retirement decisions at older ages, saving for retirement, the dynamics of health care costs, and the economic and policy implications for countries. An important new area of research for the Center is the investigation of the biological and psychological foundations of economic behavior. The NBER Center maintains a database of 401(k) plan participation, a Medicare claims database, and an enhanced version of the Longitudinal Study of Aging Danish Twins that includes administrative data and supplemental survey information. NBER brings together researchers from across disciplinary boundaries, research institutions, and countries. In addition, the Center also holds an annual summer institute on the economics of aging.

LARGE-SCALE DATA COLLECTION AND DATABASE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Berkeley	Linked Database of Death Records and Micro-Census Information, Human Mortality Database
Chicago	Union Army Life History Data
Michigan	Health and Retirement Study, Panel Study of Income Dynamics, National Archive of Computerized Data on Aging
U Penn	African Demographic Census Project, Mexican Migration Project, Mexican Health and Aging Study, Twin-Sibling Data
Princeton	Social Environment and Biomarkers of Aging Study (SEBAS) in Taiwan
RAND	Family Life Surveys (Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh)
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, National Survey of Families and Households

[UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – CHAPEL HILL](#)

[Demography and Economics of Aging Research](#)

The Demography and Economics of Aging Research (DEAR) program focuses on the determinants of retirement, labor supply, and savings; the impact of changes in health on health care expenditures and long-term care arrangements; the association between health and demographic, social, and economic factors over the life course; and health disparities by gender and race. Major projects are underway on saving and retirement, dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and closing the gap in minority aging and health. Administered through the Carolina Population Center, DEAR brings together researchers from the Institute on Aging and the Departments of Economics, Nutrition, Sociology, Public Policy, Psychology, Biostatistics, Epidemiology, Health Behavior and Health Education, and Health Policy and Administration.

[UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA](#)

[Population Aging Research Center](#)

The Population Aging Research Center (PARC) specializes in research on health and mortality at older ages; the economics of pensions, retirement, health care, and health care systems; multigenerational resource flows in aging families; and diversity within aging populations both in the United States and internationally. Current projects involve research on Alzheimer's disease; the transition of baby boomers to retirement; the life cycle effects of health insurance on elderly health; the determinants of saving in 401(k) plans; and family culture and intergenerational allocation. The Penn Center is home to the Mexican Health and Aging Study and hosts its bilingual website. PARC researchers also participate in the Latin American Network on Aging (LANA). The Center brings together an interdisciplinary group of researchers from the Institute on Aging, the Population Studies Center, the Pension Research Council and the Boettner Center for Pensions and Retirement Security in the Wharton School of Business, the Leonard Davis Institute for Health Economics, and the Departments of Sociology, Economics, Psychology, Business and Public Policy, Political Science, Women's Studies, Biology, Statistics, Nursing, and Medicine.

[PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY](#)

[Center on Population Health and Aging](#)

Research at the Center on Population Health and Aging (CPHA) focuses on the interrelationships among socioeconomic status, race-ethnicity, gender, and health; trends and differences in chronic disease and disability; biodemographic approaches to aging and health; work and family perspectives on the health and well-being of the older population; and the living arrangements and care of the frail elderly. CPHA researchers are studying models of cognitive aging, midlife cognitive change and risk of cognitive decline, ways to enhance resident quality of life, and the psychology of intergenerational transfers. At Penn State, the CPHA collaborates with the Population Research Institute, the Center for Health Care and Policy Research, the Gerontology Center, the Center for Developmental and Health Genetics, and the Center for Human Development and Family Research in Diverse Contexts. The Center's diverse, interdisciplinary research program draws on faculty from the Departments of Sociology, Demography, Human Development and Family Studies, Health Policy and Administration, Rural Sociology, Nursing, Nutrition, and Biobehavioral Health.

[PRINCETON UNIVERSITY](#)

[Center for the Demography of Aging](#)

Princeton's Center specializes in research on the interrelationships between socioeconomic status and health; the determinants of decisionmaking and well-being among the elderly; the determinants and consequences of increased longevity and population aging across countries and over time; and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the health and living conditions of the elderly. Current projects focus on the measurement of subjective well-being in the United States and other countries using the daily reconstruction method (DRM); SES gradients in health among Hispanics; the effect of relative income on mortality; the role of genetics in determining cognitive function and mood among the elderly; and judgment and decisionmaking on health and health care and contributions to Flexible Spending Accounts. Housed within the Center for Health and Wellbeing, the Aging Center also coordinates research with Princeton's Roybal Center on Experience and Wellbeing. The Center's interdisciplinary researchers are drawn from the Departments of Economics, Sociology, and Public Affairs; and from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, the Office of Population Research, and the Center for the Study of Brain, Mind, and Behavior.

[RAND CORPORATION](#)

Center for the Study of Aging

RAND's Center focuses on the complex relationship between health and economic circumstances at older ages. Some researchers are examining the evolution of economic circumstances over the course of life and implications for savings and wealth. Others are investigating health changes that accompany aging, trends in population health, and the role of health insurance. Researchers are also conducting cross-national studies of attitudes toward retirement and work disability, self-employment among the elderly, and how policy influences health and income differences among the elderly. RAND continues to be active in data collection and dissemination, including development of user-friendly versions of HRS data, collaboration on European studies of aging (SHARE, ELSA), and development of tools for Internet interviewing. In addition, the RAND Center holds annual summer institutes for new scholars in the demography, economics, and epidemiology of aging, and hosts a "mini-med" workshop that introduces social scientists to biomedical aspects of aging.

[STANFORD UNIVERSITY](#)

Center on the Demography and Economics of Health and Aging

Health care needs of the elderly in the United States and other nations, financing of this care, and retirement needs are among the major research themes at Stanford's Center. Researchers are investigating the cost and effect of health insurance coverage for different groups of people in the United States, including the elderly and the obese. As part of its activities in health care, the Stanford Center is also examining the effectiveness of pedometers in increasing physical activity among the elderly and developing population-based estimates of older adults' health preference for functional dependency that can be applied to cost-effectiveness analyses of interventions that improve function. Current international projects are assessing the effect of public health insurance programs on the elderly in Colombia and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on Africa's orphaned-elderly. Work on aging and the sex-ratio in China has led to a published book and funding by Stanford's Freeman Spogli Institute for further research on males in China who cannot find brides and how this affects domestic stability and the welfare of the elderly.

Some of the center's key affiliates at Stanford are the Centers for Health Policy and Primary Care and Outcomes Research (CHP/PCOR); The Morrison Institute for Population and Resource Studies; the Stanford Institute for

Economic Policy Research (SIEPR); the Stanford Center on Longevity; the Stanford Prevention Research Center (SPRC); the Graduate School of Business; and the Departments of Medicine, Health Research and Policy, Economics, Statistics, Sociology, and Psychology. In addition, Stanford researchers participate in international networks studying long-term care, the consequences of changes in medical technology, and the economic effects of obesity.

[UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES](#)

Center on Biodemography and Population Health

The USC-UCLA Center brings a variety of disciplines, including biology, epidemiology, and clinical geriatrics, together for the collaborative study of population health. Drawing on research findings in the health sciences, Center researchers apply demographic tools and perspectives to evaluate the determinants of population health in order to better assess the effect of changes in risk factors and interventions on population health. The USC-UCLA team is studying the interdependence of chronic illness, functional disability, and mortality; potential changes in disease prevalence and functional disability over time; and causes of racial, socioeconomic, and gender differences in health at older ages. Center members also participate in the Network for Measurement of Biological Risk.

[UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MADISON](#)

Center for Demography of Health and Aging

Aging and midlife development, the economics of population aging, inequalities, and international comparative studies in health and aging are among the signature themes at the University of Wisconsin Center for Demography of Health and Aging (CDHA). Another area of research at Wisconsin focuses on variations in health and longevity across the population, and their relationship to geography, socioeconomic status, and family circumstances. In addition, CDHA seeks to link social-demographic and biomedical and epidemiological research on population aging. It maintains unique data resources: the Wisconsin Longitudinal Survey (WLS); the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH); Health, Well-being and Aging in Latin America and the Caribbean (SABE); and Puerto Rican Elderly Health Conditions (PREHCO). Through the SABE project, the Center participates in a cross-national cooperative venture involving researchers from eight countries in the Americas.

CORE MISSIONS

The NIA Demography Centers provide a research infrastructure to address critical questions about population aging in the United States and globally. These Centers serve a large community of investigators engaged in national and international research on aging. The Centers' programs also stimulate innovation in all aspects of research from design to analysis and dissemination of findings. The types of activities in which all Centers engage are:

Program Development. Each Center promotes exploratory research on innovative topics in aging through the funding of pilot projects, recruiting new investigators to study aging, and supporting the career development of established scholars. Pilot projects lay the foundation for more comprehensive research projects in new topic areas. Recruitment and career development both expand the network of researchers in the field of aging and enhance the skills of existing researchers.

Training. NIA-supported training programs enable new investigators to gain experience in aging-related research. Centers provide an environment with a variety of research projects on aging, with regular interactions and connections to research scholars in aging, and with convenient access to data and other resources. The pre- and post-doctoral fellowships through which this training is provided ensures a continuing stream of new scholars in the field.

Data Resources. Data resources developed and managed by the Centers contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge about aging and healthy years of life. Centers administer major surveys of older people both in the United States and abroad. They also initiate and design new surveys, supplement existing surveys, and formulate and evaluate experimental survey questions and techniques. In addition, they ensure the availability of data and facilitate its use by other researchers through the maintenance of data libraries, the linking of data from multiple sources, and the management of sensitive data.

Statistical Data Enclaves. The Centers have developed secure data environments where researchers can analyze sensitive data under highly restricted conditions. Without these secure data enclaves, fewer researchers would be able to analyze detailed information on finances, health and medical care, and geographic environment.

Conferences and Workshops. Weekly seminar series, annual summer institutes, data use workshops, and formal research conferences enable the interaction of a broad network of investigators engaged in aging-related research. The Centers foster cross-national comparisons and international collaboration in the study of aging by sponsoring meetings of international scholars.

Research Dissemination. Investigators at the Centers disseminate their research results through articles published in scholarly journals and through books. They also present their findings to policy audiences in both technical and non-technical formats. In addition, Center-based newsletters serve to circulate results among other researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners. These include the *HRS/AHEAD User Newsletter* (Michigan), *Research Reports on the Comparative Study of the Elderly in Asia* (Michigan), *NBER Digest*, and *RAND Research Briefs*. Also, the Wisconsin Center manages an electronic mailing service for news and information on aging. (For more information or to subscribe to this service, visit the Wisconsin website at www.ssc.wisc.edu/cdha/pubs/caar.html.) *Research Highlights in the Demography and Economics of Aging* is produced by the Centers, and summarizes research findings from the Centers program as a whole. (Find *Research Highlights* at http://agingcenters.org/res_high.html.)

International Collaborations. As the United States and the world age rapidly, economic and demographic population research benefits from cross-national comparisons that allow researchers to distinguish cultural effects from the effects of national policies and programs. The NIA Demography Centers provide supportive infrastructure for the development of international networks of scholars and for the implementation of collaborative projects across national boundaries.

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The National Institute on Aging supports 13 research centers on the demography and economics of aging, based at the University of California at Berkeley; the University of Chicago; Harvard University; the University of Michigan; the National Bureau of Economic Research; the University of North Carolina; the University of Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania State University; Princeton University; the RAND Corporation; Stanford University; the University of Southern California and the University of California at Los Angeles; and the University of Wisconsin. *Research Highlights in the Demography and Economics of Aging* is prepared as a cooperative activity of these centers. For further information about the Centers and to view other issues of *Research Highlights*, please visit the all-centers website at <http://agingcenters.org>.

Research Highlights

in the Demography and Economics of Aging

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Addressing the Fiscal Impact of Aging
Issue No. 9, January 2007

*The Future of Human Life Expectancy:
Have We Reached the Ceiling or Is the Sky the Limit?*
Issue No. 8, March 2006

The Health and Retirement Study Part I: History and Overview
Issue No. 7, May 2000

The NIA Demography Centers
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The Declining Disability of Older Americans
Issue No. 5, March 1999

Socioeconomic Status, Health and Longevity
Issue No. 4, February 1999

Early Retirement in the United States
Issue No. 3, January 1999

Social Security and Retirement Around the World
Issue No. 2, June 1998

Health Insurance and Retirement
Issue No. 1, May 1998

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