

Background Data on the Target Population

DEMOGRAPHICS

The aging of 78 million Baby Boomers (those born from 1946 to 1964) has caused a demographic revolution in America. And the next generation of retirees will be the healthiest, longest lived, best educated, most affluent in history. Consider:

- Due to healthier lifestyles, improved healthcare and lower birthrates, we are approaching a time when there will be more older adults than youth.
- In 2004, 12% of all Americans were 65 and over. By 2050, people 65 and over will comprise an impressive 21% of the U.S. population.
- In 2050, the number of people 65 and older is projected to reach 86.7 million.
- Americans reaching age 65 today have an average life expectancy of 82.9 years.
- Cuyahoga County is the second “oldest” county in the United States outside of the Sunbelt.
- 20% of people ages 65 to 69 today have a bachelor's degree or higher education. Among people ages 70 to 74, 19% have achieved this level of education; for those 75 and over, 15% are college graduates.
- The median net worth in 2000 of households with householders 65 and over was \$108,885. In contrast, householders under the age of 35 had a median household net worth of \$7,240.
- Registered voters ages 65 to 74 had the highest rate of voter participation in both the 2000 and 2002 elections.

ATTITUDES

The gift of longevity is behind the new shift in the way people think about retirement. In 1900 the average American lived to the not-so-ripe age of 47. Today that number is 77, and rising. And that's long enough for retirees to get bored. How much golf can one play?

As a result, now people seldom think of retirement as a final stage of life, but rather as an interlude between stages. More and more individuals are "retiring" for a period to catch their breath before making the transition to a new chapter in life. Neither young nor old, they are finished with midlife, yet they can look forward to the likelihood of decades of vitality. The vast majority of Boomers plan to continue working – full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid – in their so-called retirement years. According to a recent study by AARP, nearly 80 percent of Boomers are planning to continue in paid labor during their 60s and 70s.

CHARACTERISTICS & MOTIVATIONS

Nearly half of all Americans age 55 and over volunteered at least once in the past year. Even among those age 75 and older, 43% had volunteered at some point in the previous year.

Boomers are more demanding than their volunteering predecessors. They seek opportunities for growth and new uses of their time that are innovative, interesting, and meaningful to them. The challenge is to understand their needs and create an environment that can benefit from their unique contributions. They are going to want to change the status quo. And they are likely to seek volunteer experiences that are project-oriented rather than giving lots of hours over long periods of time.

Participation of this population in volunteering could be expanded substantially if more were asked to volunteer or were offered an incentive to serve. According to a 2002 survey sponsored by Civic Ventures, just 17% of adults age 55 and over who were not directly asked to volunteer did so on their own. Among those who were asked, however, 83% volunteered. An additional 21% of these Americans would commit at least five hours a week to volunteering if they received a small incentive for their service, such as discounts

on prescription drugs and/or a \$200/month stipend. Offering such an incentive could nearly double the current 55-and-over volunteer workforce, from 25% to 46%. Nearly one in three of these adults say they would serve 15 hours a week for such an incentive. More than half of the respondents say civic engagement will be at least a fairly important part of retirement

A 2003 survey conducted for AARP found that many Americans between the ages of 50 and 70 plan to work far into what has traditionally been viewed as the "retirement years." The most common reasons given by pre-retirees for wanting to continue working in retirement were the desire to stay "mentally active" (87%) or "physically active" (85%) and the desire "to remain productive or useful" (77%). Slightly more than half of the pre-retirees indicated that their motivation was based on "a need for money."

Sources:

S. Kathi Brown, "Staying Ahead of the Curve 2003: The AARP Working in Retirement Study," Washington, DC: AARP, 2003

Marc Freedman, *The Selling of Retirement*

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, "The New Face of Retirement: An Ongoing Survey of American Attitudes on Aging," San Francisco: Civic Ventures, 2002

Volunteer Connections: Volunteer Canada, 2001

The Cleveland Foundation

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