

What is Gerontology?

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Gerontology

- Scientific study of aging and aging process
- Relatively new discipline

How old is "old"? -Age is subjective

Older Adults

- Young-old: 55-85
- Old-old: 85 and older
- Centenarians: 100 years old and over

Meaning of Age

Chronological age: calendar age

Perceived age: age you think of yourself as

Biological age: functioning of vital systems

Psychological age: functioning of your psychological abilities

Natural limit of human lifespan: 120

Increased Life Expectancy Due To:

- Reduction in Acute Disease
 - o Medical and Public Health Advancements
- Reduction in infant mortality
- Reduction in female mortality at childbirth
- Treatment advances in Chronic Diseases
 - o Lifestyle

Life Expectancy

- The number of years that will probably be lived by the average person born in a given year
- Average life expectancy is 78 years (80 years for women, 75 years for men)
- Related to:
 - o Gender
 - o Genetics
 - o Lifestyle

Demography

- Population aging: term for shifts in the age distribution of the population toward older ages
- Cohort: group of people born in the same year
- Why do you care?
 - o Population changes affect families, social policy, economics, and well being

Change from Pyramid to a Rectangle: population aging
2000: almost a pyramid
2025: population as a whole is more of a rectangle

Change in Age Structure of US related to:

- Increase in average life expectancy
- Change in immigration patterns
- Change in fertility patterns across cohorts

Ethnic and Racial Variations

- Entire population much more ethnically diverse in 2050

Gender Variations

- Increase in female life expectancy
- The majority of older women are single
 - o Single women highest poverty rate among the aged
 - o More likely to be institutionalized compared to men

Baby Boomers

- Born 1946-1964 (1/4 of US population)
- Blamed for nation's problems & successes
- Profound effects on society from childhood through adulthood