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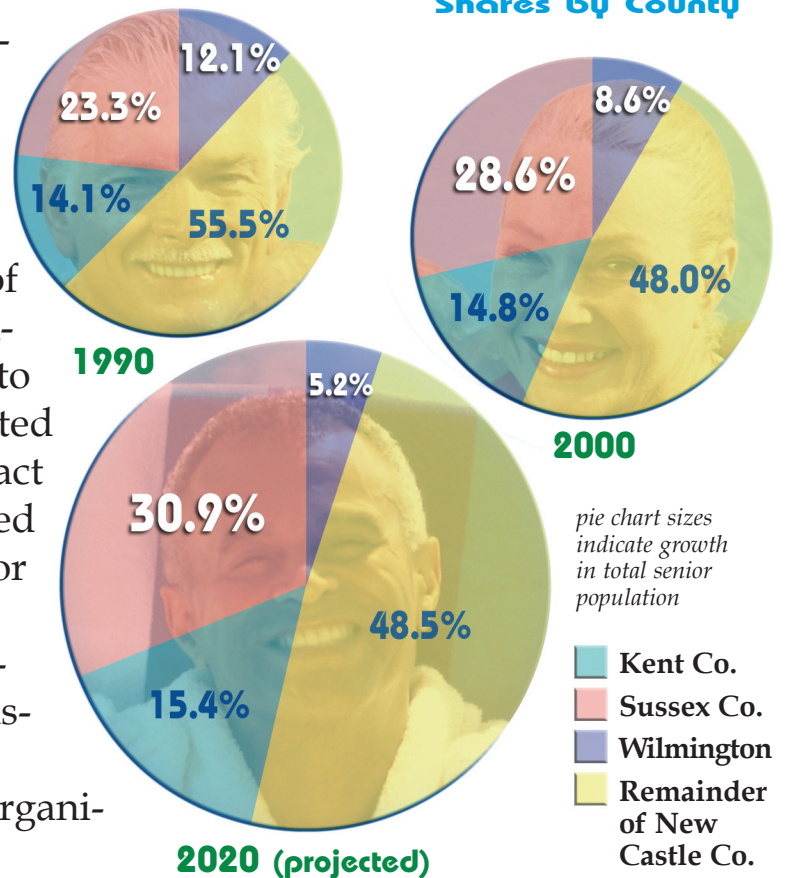
## Demographics and Profiles of Delaware's Elderly

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### OVERVIEW

Delaware's growing elderly population presents significant issues for state and local governments, community organizations, and the general public. In response to the growing diversity and complexity of the state's older citizenry, it is essential for key players of these groups to understand how current and projected population trends will directly impact future appropriation levels calculated from Delaware's Grant-in-Aid Senior Center Funding Formula. Also important to consider is how demographic shifts among the state's jurisdictions will place new burdens on individual communities and local organizations serving residents.

Change in Delaware Senior Population Shares by County



The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information that will assist Delaware policymakers, healthcare policy researchers, and senior center directors understand and plan for future service delivery needs within the constraints of formula-determined Grant-in-Aid (GIA) allocations. Highlighted are state and local elderly demographic trends affecting the state and its local communities. National elderly demographic information also is presented to better understand Delaware's trends from a comparative perspective. The source of the demographic projections presented is the Delaware Population Consortium. The University's Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research provided estimates of Delaware's low-income seniors.

## Demographics and Profiles of Delaware's Elderly

### SIGNIFICANCE OF STATE TRENDS TO DELAWARE COMMUNITIES AND SENIOR CENTERS

Delaware's senior center GIA allocations are based on a two-tiered funding formula that addresses geographic, demographic, and programmatic factors. Analysis of projected trends in Delaware's elderly population provides the basis for Tier One of the funding formula, which considers age and income levels of seniors living in the state's four funding jurisdictions—Sussex County, Kent County, City of Wilmington, and the remainder of New Castle County.

More specifically, Tier One allocations are based on three variables—each funding jurisdiction's share of the state's 60+, 75+, and 60+ low-income populations. Given the demographic changes described in the preceding paragraphs, it will become increasingly important to monitor statewide elderly population growth within each of the funding jurisdictions to plan for major changes in Tier One GIA allocations.

Essentially, there are two methods of analyzing the state's elderly population. The first, *which is the basis for determining GIA distributions*, evaluates each jurisdiction's share of seniors **as a portion of Delaware's total elderly population**. So, for example, Sussex County's 38,400 residents aged 60 and older represent approximately 29 percent of the state's 134,400 total senior population. The second approach, which also is incredibly useful for monitoring statewide population growth, examines the total number of elderly living in each jurisdiction **as a portion of the jurisdiction's total population**. For instance, Sussex County's senior residents represent 24.4 percent of the county's total population of approximately 160,000.

### JURISDICTIONAL TRENDS IN DELAWARE: EFFECTS OF DELAWARE'S DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS ON ITS LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In analyzing the state's elderly demographics, there are three main trends that are important to the funding formula, which will be described further in the following paragraphs. Between 2000 and 2020, the state and its local communities are likely to experience:

- A significant *overall increase* in the state's share of individuals aged 60+ and 75+ populations living in Sussex County.
- An *overall decrease* in the state's share of individuals aged 60+ and 75+ populations in the City of Wilmington.
- *Little or no change* in the state's share of individuals aged 60+ and 75+ populations in the remainder of New Castle and Kent Counties.<sup>1</sup>

### 60+ AND 75+ POPULATION TRENDS WITHIN EACH JURISDICTION

The Delaware Population Consortium predicts that New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties will experience rapid growth in the number of seniors residing in the jurisdictions over the next several decades. The share of people 60+ living in these jurisdictions will nearly double, with increases of 84.7, 90.4, and 97.5 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, the City of Wilmington expects a relatively small increase of its 60+ population, anticipating a significantly lower growth rate of growth of 9.5 percent.

Similar jurisdictional growth patterns can be observed among the rapidly growing 75+ population. Between 2000 and 2020, increases in this cohort will be most dramatic in Sussex and Kent Counties, where the number of seniors 75+ is expected to increase 94.3 and 107.7 percent, respectively. These increases will practically double the number of elderly residents 75+ currently living in these jurisdictions. During that time, the remainder of New Castle County's 75+ population will increase by 60.7 percent. However, the City of Wilmington is predicted to see a decrease in its share of this population cohort.<sup>1</sup>

The City of Wilmington's expected 30 percent decline in its 75+ population may be attributed to a variety of factors. For example, research suggests that seniors are relocating to other parts of the state for access to alternative services and medical facilities and to be closer to family members in suburban areas of the county. In addition, the City of Wilmington has the oldest senior population. The median elderly age is 72, as compared to the remaining jurisdictions where the median elderly age is 70 years old. Thus, the City of Wilmington's elderly population will decline as seniors pass on or relocate.

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### 60+ BELOW POVERTY LEVEL

While Delaware's concentration of people 60+ is projected to change significantly between 2000 and 2020, only small changes are predicted in the population of low-income seniors (those 60+ below the poverty level). This projection is similar to the national trend. In 2000, 28 percent of the state's low-income seniors resided in Sussex County. Nearly the same share (27%) lived in the remainder of New Castle County. By comparison, 25 and 20 percent resided in the City of Wilmington and Kent County, respectively.

Over the next 20 years, the state's low-income elderly trends are expected to parallel the state's senior population trends to some extent. For example, in terms of both seniors and low-income seniors, Sussex County is likely to experience an increase in its share of the state's total. Kent County, on the other hand, while experiencing relatively little change in its share of the state's 60+ population, anticipates an increase in its share of low-income seniors. Very importantly, the shares of low-income seniors in the City of Wilmington and the remainder of New Castle County are projected to fall.<sup>2</sup>

### "FIRST STATE" DEMOGRAPHICS MIRROR NATIONAL TRENDS

Anticipated overall growth in Delaware's elderly population will mirror national aging trends. By 2020 Delaware's 60+ population will comprise one-fifth of Delaware's total population, a drastic increase from 1990. During that time Delaware's population aged 60+ is projected to more than double from 111,109 to 245,605, an increase of 121 percent. The state's population aged 75 and older (75+) will increase even more rapidly by approximately 146 percent to reach 76,562 over the next several decades.

The exponential growth of Delaware's senior population can be more clearly illustrated and understood by comparing it to the growth rates of other population cohorts in the state. For example, it is predicted that the state's elderly population will experience a 2.7 percent annual growth rate between 1990 and 2020. In other words, it is expected to increase by an average of almost three percent each year for the next 20 to 30 years. Meanwhile, the population cohort comprising individuals between the ages of 20-44 will only experience a 0.3 percent growth rate while the share of individuals aged 0-19 is

expected to decline at a rate of 0.8 percent.

In addition to experiencing an overall increase in its percentage of residents 60+, Delaware also reflects national trends in terms of its elderly population profiles. For example, Delaware's baby boomer generation tends to have higher education and income levels in addition to varied backgrounds and interests.

### NATIONAL TRENDS

With higher education, greater financial resources, and stronger family support, future elderly consumers will have the power to demand better health and social services, as well as a high quality lifestyle. Given that the oldest baby boomers start turning 60 in 2006, local communities will be faced with challenges and opportunities to accommodate a more diverse elderly population as indicated by the following facts and projections:

- Between 1970 and 2002, the percentage of seniors who received high school degrees increased from 28 percent to 70 percent.
- In 2002, most seniors lived in the suburbs (50%) followed by central cities (27.4%), and rural areas (22.6%).
- By 2030, about one out of four seniors will be a member of a minority group.<sup>3</sup>

Contributing to an increase in senior financial stability, federal programs such as Social Security, Medicare, the Older Americans Act, and private pension plans have helped reduce poverty in America's senior population over the past three decades.

Additionally, favorable demographic and socioeconomic trends, such as higher education levels, have led to historically low poverty rates among the elderly. For instance, the lowest senior poverty levels were reached in 1999 (9.7%) and grew only slightly through 2002 (10.4%). With additional opportunities for financial assistance and elevated standards of living, the low rate of poverty among the elderly is likely to continue in the future.<sup>4</sup>

Illustrating the impact of a "healthier and wealthier 50+ population," a recent survey conducted by the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) suggests emerging trends in the retirement status of the nation's seniors.

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According to the survey, many of today's seniors are seeking and attaining post-retirement employment in a variety of unique and challenging fields including restaurant management, art design, and journal publishing. Movement toward active senior volunteerism, travel, and community building parallels the employment trend, which is also expected to continue with the aging of the baby boomer generation.<sup>5</sup>

### DELAWARE'S TRENDS

Similar trends are evidenced in the education and income levels as well as the diversity among Delaware's elderly population as indicated by the following facts and projections:

- Approximately 67.1 percent of the state's senior population have a high school degree or higher, and 17.4 percent have at least a bachelor's degree.
- Over the past ten years, despite an overall increase in the elderly population (24%), low-income seniors have decreased by 5.4 percent.<sup>6</sup>
- Between 1990 and 2020, Delaware's share of the senior minority population is predicted to increase by 141.2 percent.<sup>7</sup>

Looking into the future, these trends, along with state and national population projections, will impact the demand for jurisdictional senior services and programs over the next several decades. Specifically, state and local governments in Delaware will increasingly look to the funding formula to ensure that the state's senior centers are meeting the needs of its growing elderly population.

Wilmington's senior centers will face the constraint of the lower rates of senior population growth. Modest rates of funding formula increases will create pressures for Wilmington's centers to search for new revenue sources and improve service efficiencies. Expected population trends, moreover, will translate into larger funding formula increases in Sussex and Kent Counties. New revenues will provide resources for these centers to serve more seniors and expand services.

The Institute for Public Administration (IPA) links the research and resources of the University of Delaware with the management needs of the state of Delaware and its local communities, governments, and nonprofit organizations. IPA provides government support, applied research and forums, and professional development programs.

### NOTES & RELATED PUBLICATIONS

<sup>1</sup>Population data was retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau and Delaware Population Consortium. Retrieved March 2005 from [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and [www.cadsr.udel.edu](http://www.cadsr.udel.edu).

<sup>2</sup>Population data was retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau and Delaware Population Consortium. Retrieved March 2005 from [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and [www.cadsr.udel.edu](http://www.cadsr.udel.edu).

<sup>3</sup>"A Profile of Older Americans: 2003," Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved May 2004 from [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov).

*As life expectancies increase, more Americans are living into their retirement years. This fact, along with the aging baby boom generation, is evidenced through large increases in the 65+ population. This report provides statistical information on the national trends in aging and factors, such as housing and poverty that affect older Americans.*

<sup>4</sup>C. Manjarrez. (2002). "Where We Live," The Urban Institute. Retrieved May 2004 from [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org).

*Manjarrez presents a comparison of how the Washington, D.C., area compares to national trends in elderly poverty. While government and private programs have reduced elderly poverty rates, many older adults are not financially secure for the future.*

<sup>5</sup>W. Duka, T. Nicholson. (2002 December). "Retirees Rocking Old Roles: Trend Toward Longer Life Leads Many Americans to Reinvent Their Retirements," AARP Bulletin Online. Retrieved May 2004 from [www.aarp.org/bulletin](http://www.aarp.org/bulletin).

*There is an increasing number of people 65+ remaining in the workforce, a trend that is likely to continue with the aging of the baby boomers. Those who do retire from full-time work have better health and financial resources than past generations and seek activities that allow them to enjoy their retirement, challenge themselves, and maintain a sense of purpose.*

<sup>6</sup>L. Flowers, R.J. Cool, M.E. Melvin. (2003). "State Profiles: Reforming the Health Care System," American Association for Retired Persons. Retrieved May 2004 from [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

*The profiles provide national and state data for comparison on a variety of health indicators, including state demographics, insurance coverage, and key trends.*

<sup>7</sup>American Fact Finder. (2000). Retrieved May 2004 from [factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov).