

SYNOPSIS BY FRANK RIDZI

Trends To Note: Facing an Aging and Increasingly Diverse Population in Onondaga County. (Final 2-11-05)

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Introduction

In the fall of 2003 Onondaga County government embarked upon an ambitious plan to prepare for shifts in its demographic profile that are expected to take place by the year 2015. This planning process has been countywide and has included numerous departments. The following pages provide an overview of the major anticipated changes that have inspired this planning and offer some insight into the types of considerations that they have evoked. In particular, the county has focused on demographic changes in aging and increasing diversity.

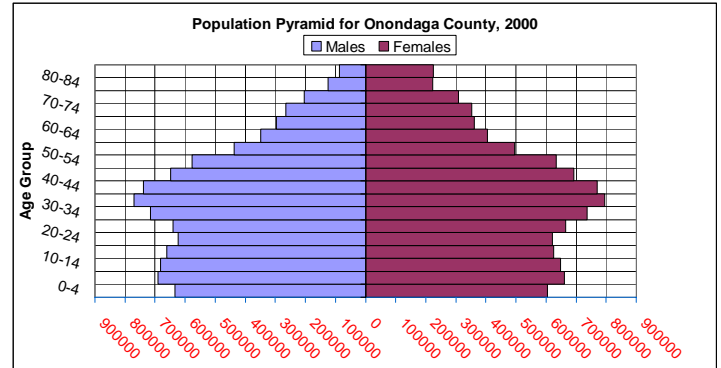
An Aging Population

The aging baby boom cohort has presented public policy challenges since the birth of its members in the 18 years following World War II, from 1946-1964. Initially, dilemmas involved schooling and policies related to youth, but as the baby boom cohort nears retirement age, public policy discussions have included such issues as Social Security, Medicare and elder care (N.Y.S.O.F.A. 2002, State Society on Aging of New York 2002). For Onondaga County, planning for the year 2015 entails ensuring that this important segment of the population remains able to access and benefit from the services provided by its over 30 different governmental agencies.

To address this mission, the county has first turned to considering the magnitude

of its baby boom cohort and the age groupings that they are likely to occupy in future years. As of 2000, the bulk of the county's adult population was concentrated in the 30 to 54 age range (see chart 1).

Chart 1

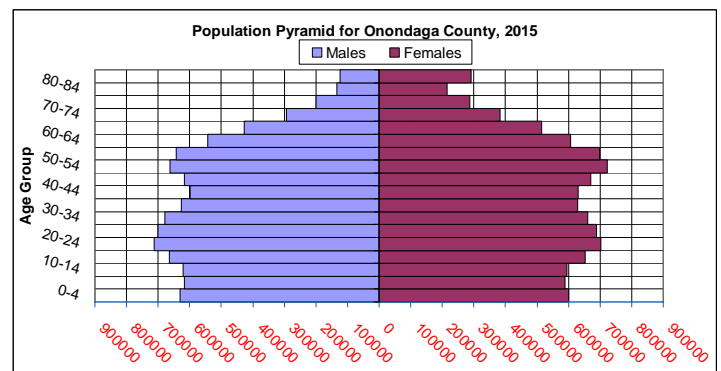


Source: New York Statistical Information System, 2004.

While this age distribution has helped the county in terms of productive workers, taxable income, and an abundance of familial caregivers for older and younger generations, the age distribution is projected to change considerably in future years.

By 2015, the bulk of the county's adult population will be concentrated in the 50 to 64 age range, followed by a rise in young adults between the ages of 20 and 29 (chart 2).

Chart 2

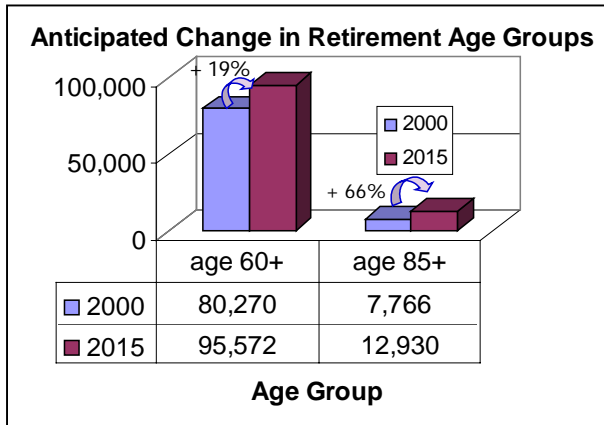


Source: New York Statistical Information System, 2004.

This redistribution of the county population presents significant issues to be addressed by local government agencies. In particular

there will be a rise of almost 19% in retirement age citizens and an even more drastic increase of almost 66% in those age 85 and older (chart 3).

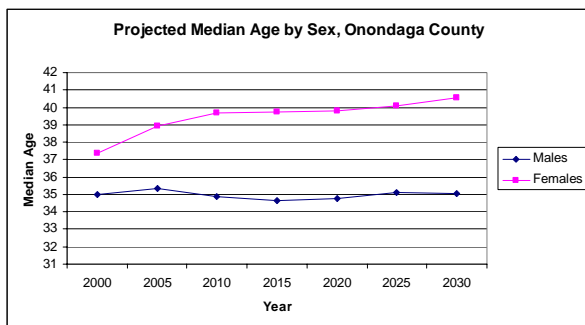
Chart 3



Source: New York State Data Center, 2004.

Of additional consideration is the gendered nature of the aging process. Since women tend to live longer, local officials anticipate a larger percentage of older women than men. Between 2000 and 2015, the median age is expected to rise from 37 to 41 years for women while remaining relatively constant for men at 35 years (see chart 4).

Chart 4



Source: New York Statistical Information System, 2004.

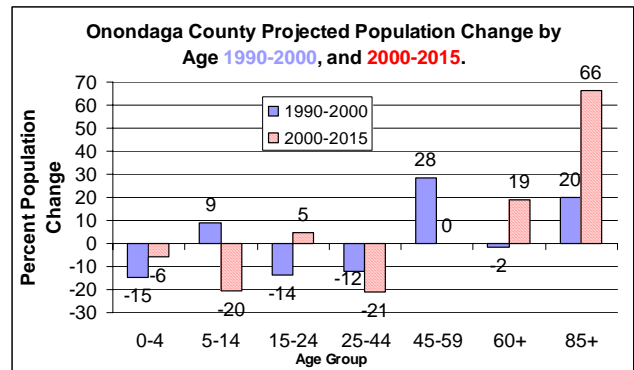
Since women tend to be the primary caregivers for older and younger generations, an aging female population has led to new considerations of care provision networks. Changes in care work arrangements are difficult to estimate, particularly given an increasing diversity of

household structures and ethnic groups, which carry differing familial traditions and varying levels of trust toward government officials.

Increasing Diversity

In addition to an aging adult population, the county is preparing for anticipated changes in younger age cohorts, household composition and ethnic identity. Due to a transitioning global economy, young, middle aged and older workers find it increasingly imperative to migrate within New York State and internationally to maintain their standard of living and achieve career advancement. This brings some new residents to Onondaga County and causes others to leave. These migrations, in addition to variations in birth cohort size, lead to noticeable fluctuations in the various age groups that populate the community.

Chart 5

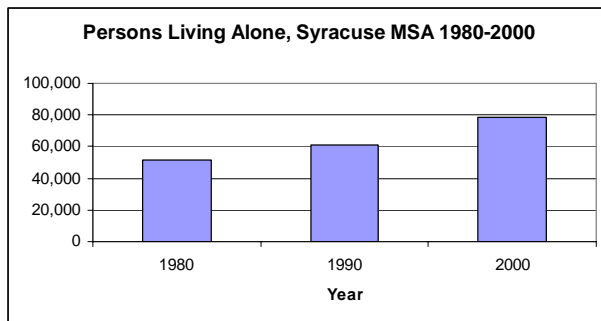


Source: New York State Data Center, 2004.

While some age cohorts that had grown smaller between 1990 and 2000, such as those age 15 to 24 and age 60+, are projected to grow, others that had grown in the past decade, such as those age 5-14 and 45-59, are forecast to decline or remain constant (chart 5). Most notably, to reinforce data presented earlier, the largest changes in population groupings are anticipated among those age 85+ and 60+, respectively.

Attempting to consider the care giving needs of the aged portions of our community, the county has paid close attention to observed trends in family structure, and in particular, increases in the number of persons living alone (see chart 6).

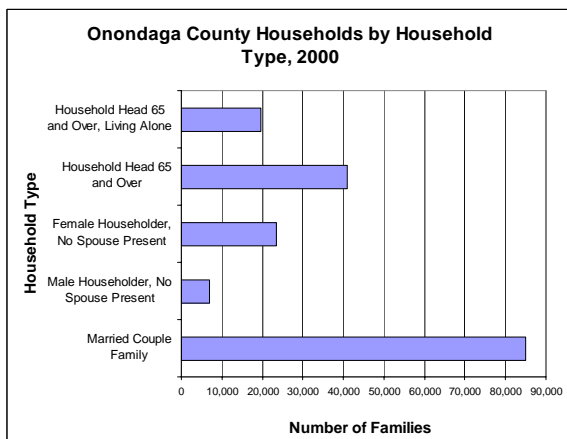
Chart 6



Source: US Census 1980, 1990 and 2000.

As of 2000, married couples were the largest household type, followed by households headed by someone 65 and over, female head of household and then households consisting of an individual age 65 and over living alone (see chart 7).

Chart 7



Source: New York State Data Center, 2004.

In addition to noting the public policy concerns of access and service provision to families with changing household structures, Onondaga County has taken care to monitor the evolution of the community's ethnic identity. Many of the same economic complexities that have led former residents

to leave the county have brought new and exciting groups to the region.

Ethnic diversity, while adding to the wealth of the Onondaga community, also brings challenges for service delivery and outreach.

Chart 8

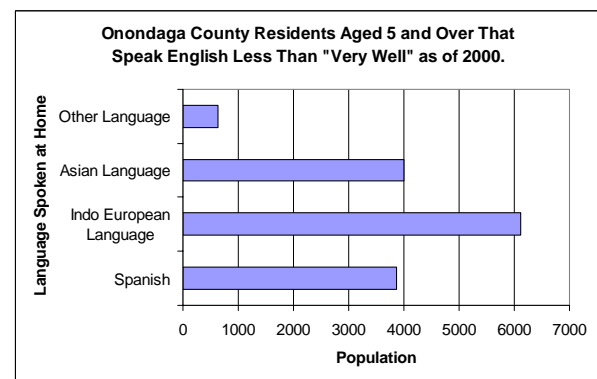
	1990	2000	Percent Change
White	414,524	383,599	-7.5
Black	36,912	41,772	13.2
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	3,159	3,721	17.8
Asian or Pacific Islander	6,702	9,632	43.7
Hispanic origin:	7,195	11,175	55.3

Source: US Census 1990 and 2000.

Between 1990 and 2000, the numerically dominant white population of the county has declined while other ethnic groups such as Blacks, Asians and Hispanics have increased (see chart 8). Of particular concern to county agencies, with respect to ensuring that these new members of the community are able to access services, is the formidable language barrier.

As of the 2000 census, over 14,600 Onondaga County residents reported speaking English less than very well. This means that 37% of all Spanish speakers in the county, and 60% of those who speak any of a variety of Asian languages reported difficulty with English (see chart 9).

Chart 9



Since these residents speak a variety of other languages at home, public service providers face a multilingual challenge that is

expected to increase as we approach the year 2015.

Conclusion

The year 2015 promises to present Onondaga County with a series of significant changes in the characteristics and needs of its population. These include an aging baby boom generation, more individuals living alone, and a growing diversity of ethnic traditions and English language abilities. In response to careful consideration of these impending changes facing Onondaga County between today and the year 2015, the Office of the County Executive in conjunction with the Department of Aging and Youth has embarked upon a series of information sharing and long-term planning sessions that promise to ensure consideration of the county's changing population across all aspects of county service delivery. While this is an ongoing process that is being implemented in increments, the first fruits of this effort are displayed in the following pages of this volume.

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