

San Francisco Baby Boomers – A Breed Apart?

A report prepared by the Baby Boomer Task Force of the Advisory Council to the San Francisco Aging and Adult Services Commission

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Introduction

In order to plan for San Francisco’s aging baby boomer population, the Department of Aging and Adult Services’ (DAAS) 2005-2009 Area Plan proposed the creation of a task force of current and future consumers, Advisory Council representatives, researchers, and service contractors to discuss needs of baby boomers, gather existing information and trends, presenting the results to providers and the public. In addition, an educational forum for baby boomers themselves, service providers and others concerned about meeting the future needs of this sizable aging cohort will be presented with the findings of the task force’s research.

Significant research has been conducted about the baby boomer population at both the national and state level. In order to determine whether national data are applicable to San Francisco boomers, the task force conducted a demographic overview, a review of related quantitative research on projected needs and programming trends, and a survey of local service providers to gauge existing local planning efforts.

Executive Summary

This report reviews demographic information comparing San Francisco’s baby boomer population to national and state statistics and reports on research related to boomer needs and services. National, state and local research reports are included with special attention to currently funded providers reporting their planning efforts. San Francisco-specific conclusions and recommendations complete the report.

Demographic findings:

- As they age, **San Francisco's baby boomers are projected to cause a significant increase in the senior population that mirrors the national trend, but it will not be quite as dramatic.** The local housing market may impact the demographic projections: some baby boomers may sell their high-value homes and move to lower cost areas in retirement, while others may choose to migrate into the city to take advantage of the benefits of centralized urban living.
- **San Francisco baby boomers are less likely to have income below the federal poverty level than the city's current seniors age 65 or older, but they have higher poverty rates than baby boomers at the national level.** These poverty figures are troubling; high costs of living exacerbate the difficulties associated with living on a poverty-level income.
- Culturally relevant and multilingual programming is likely to continue to be an important feature of San Francisco's senior services as the baby boomers age -- **the baby boomer population in San Francisco is significantly more diverse than it is in California or the nation.**
- **Nationally, baby boomers have a higher level of education than any generation. In San Francisco, this trend is dramatic.** More than 50 percent of the baby boomers here have at least an Associate degree, and approximately 70 percent attended some college.
- **San Francisco baby boomers are significantly less likely to own their homes than are baby boomers nationally or statewide.** Nationwide, 70 percent of all households headed by a baby boomer own their housing units; the rates are almost half that in San Francisco, at only 38 percent.

Findings from National, Statewide and Local Research

Senior organizations, governmental sources, Area Agencies on Aging and others concerned with retirement issues have conducted research about the future needs of the baby boomer generation. A review of this research finds conflicting predictions about the baby boomer generation; researchers seem only to agree that this generation will approach their later years in a different way than did those that preceded it, sometimes due to preference, and sometimes out of necessity. For example:

- Researchers assert that the boomers will be the healthiest & wealthiest of all previous retirees (7). Income analysis for San Francisco suggests that this trend may largely hold for San Francisco's boomers, but that low-income boomers will continue to struggle to make ends meet in this expensive city.

- Many baby boomers will postpone retirement due to inadequate financial preparation (2). A local study suggests that 80% of boomers are expected to work in retirement in some capacity. The reasons for continuing work are varied, including both financial necessity and the desire to continue fulfilling work.
- Some studies anticipate increasing numbers of boomers living with chronic diseases in the near and long term (5).

Conclusions from existing research vary from suggestions for providing expanded and appropriate service to boomers, recruiting them for volunteers or possibly hiring them. Significant concern exists that current senior center programs will not appeal to baby boomers, making it difficult to recruit them as either as volunteers or participants.

Findings from a survey of local service providers mirror these findings. Almost all respondents indicated that they are engaged in planning efforts related to serving a growing population of seniors who may have different needs or preferences. Reflecting the research that baby boomers are more educated and may be in better physical health than preceding generations, many providers indicated that they are adding more physical activities, social or recreational activities, and computer-related programming. Anticipating needs around financial planning and chronic illness management, some providers have added aging workshops that address those issues. Still others are engaged in site expansion or considering changing hours to better anticipate baby boomer needs.

Finally, local providers requested technical support in understanding aging trends, needs analysis, and demographic information. Many providers offered to share their own planning experience with colleagues.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to non-profit service providers, the Department of Aging and Adult Services, and other city departments.

Recommendations to service providers

1. Attend training sessions and information sessions that focus on the unique needs and preferences of baby boomers.
2. Acknowledge that although senior centers and services may change, the social need to congregate will remain. Such centers can be the contact sites connecting boomer seniors with services which may be needed in the future.
3. Continue to pilot new programming efforts intended to attract and retain baby boomers in senior programming (e.g., expanded hours, physical and educational activities, health promotion, brain health activities, etc.)

Recommendations to service providers, DAAS, and other public agencies

4. Begin public education tailored to the baby boomer population to ensure that they are aware of available consumer and caregiver support services.
5. Update public-facing websites, as they are likely to be a primary source of information for the baby boomer population.

Recommendation to DAAS

DAAS may consider including some of the following recommendations in its upcoming Area Plan.

6. Initiate citywide planning and policy development to address baby boomer issues.
7. Continue and expand training sessions that improve the capacity of non-profit and public service providers to address the needs of baby boomers.
8. Monitor enrollment levels and waitlist in DAAS programs in the coming years (e.g., Office on the Aging programs, APS, IHSS, etc.), especially among the baby boomer age cohort. Consider additional analysis about changes in consumers' needs, preferences, and choices over time.

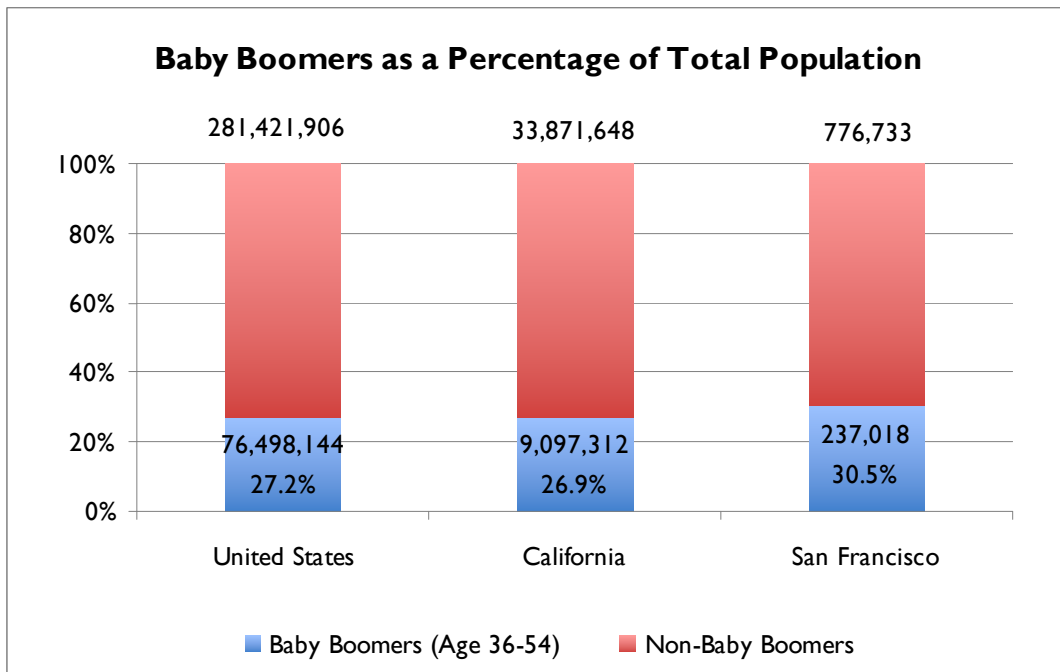
Demographic Trends

Significant demographic analysis exists regarding the baby boomer population at the national level, and many reports base recommendations for planning activities on these national statistics. The following section of this report provides comparisons of the national baby boomer demographic facts to those of California and San Francisco in an effort to understand which nationally-based recommendations are most relevant to our local population.

“Baby boomers” are adults born between 1946 and 1964, making them age 36 to 54 at the time of the 2000 Census. Many of the analyses below will include adults age 35 to 54, due to the typical age groupings of the Census data tables.

Population Size

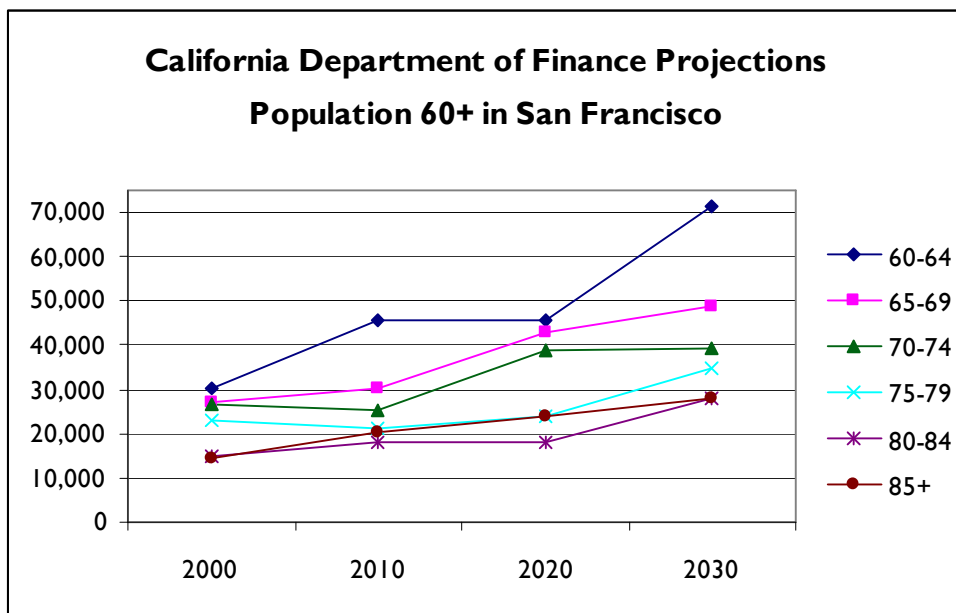
San Francisco baby boomers make up a slightly larger proportion of the city’s total population as compared to the state and country. As of the 2000 Census, baby boomers made up 27.2% of the country’s population, 26.9 percent of California’s population, and 30.5 percent of San Francisco’s population.



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) - 100-Percent Data, Table PCT12.

A projection by the MetLife Mature Market Institute Analysis Population Projections Program (MetLife) suggests that, nationally, baby boomers will be ages 66 to 84 and will make up about 20% of the total US population in 2030 (6). In 2000, the same age group made up only 10 percent of the US population.

As they age, current projections indicate that San Francisco’s baby boomers will cause a significant increase in the senior population that mirrors the national trend, but it will not be quite as dramatic. Growth projections are available for California and San Francisco through the California Department of Finance (DOF), though only with slightly broader age-group summaries. The July 2007 DOF projections estimate that the aging of the baby boomers by 2030 will swell the population age 65 to 85¹ from 10 to 16 percent in California and from 13 to 18 in San Francisco as compared to 2000 Census figures. Specifically, the population of “older old” seniors in San Francisco (age 85+) is projected to nearly double by 2030.



It is worth noting that some analysts consider the DOF projections to be unrealistic for San Francisco. Mid-Census data from the American Community Survey suggest that the DOF 2010 figures are inflated, as the population over 60 in San Francisco has grown by approximately 7,000 between 2000 and 2006, not nearly the 12,000 that would put the city on track to reach the DOF’s projected 161,000 seniors for 2010.

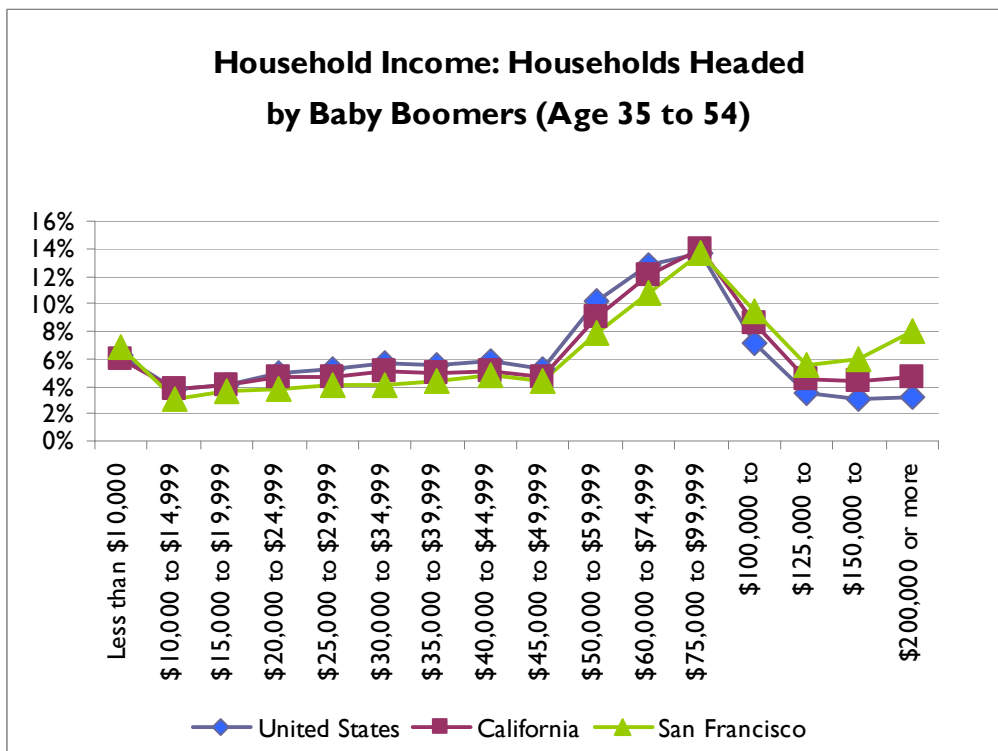
Some local analysts also speculate that some baby boomers who currently own homes in San Francisco may choose to move to lower cost areas as they age, “cashing out” their real estate assets. It is unclear what the impact of the current housing market

¹ California Department of Finance projections show ages 65 to 84, not 66 to 84 as in the MetLife analysis.

crisis will have, however; the market in San Francisco has seen some slow-down to date, but has been more resilient than that of the greater Bay Area or of the state as a whole. Information regarding home ownership rates from the 2000 Census is included below.

Income and Poverty

The overall distribution of incomes for households headed by a baby boomer is very similar when we compare San Francisco households to those in California or nationally. Generally, there are a smaller proportion of San Francisco’s baby boomer-headed households with lower incomes as compared to state and national figures, and more with higher incomes. This trend might be expected, as higher incomes in the Bay Area reflect the cost of living here.

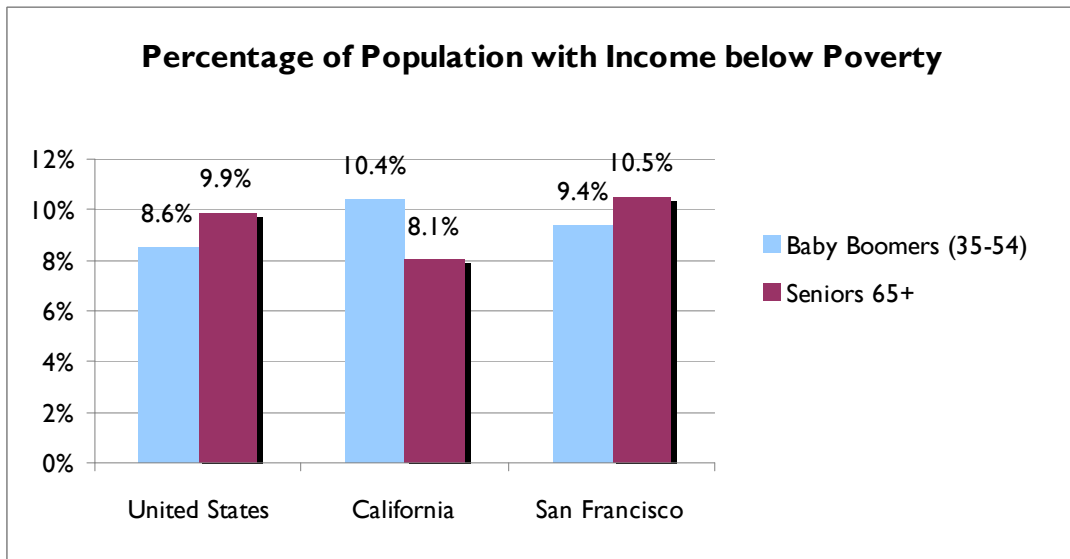


Source: Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data, Table P55.

This trend does not hold true for the lowest-income households, however. Nine percent (9.4) of San Francisco baby boomers have incomes below the poverty level. These poverty rates for baby boomers are slightly higher in San Francisco than at the national level, but they are lower than the state rates. These poverty figures are troubling; high costs of living exacerbate the difficulties associated with living on a poverty-level income.²

² Note: San Francisco’s baby boomers have the same proportion of individuals with incomes below 200% of poverty as does the national population (21%).

San Francisco baby boomers have a lower poverty rate (9.4%) than do the city's current seniors age 65 or older (10.5 percent).



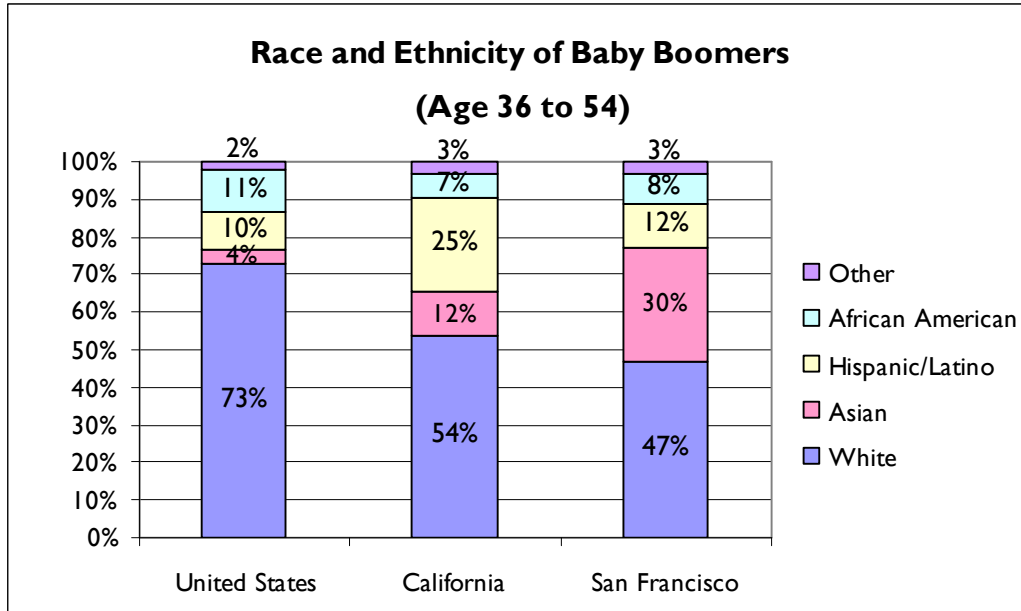
Source: Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data, Table PCT50.

Indicators of Population Diversity

Race and Ethnicity

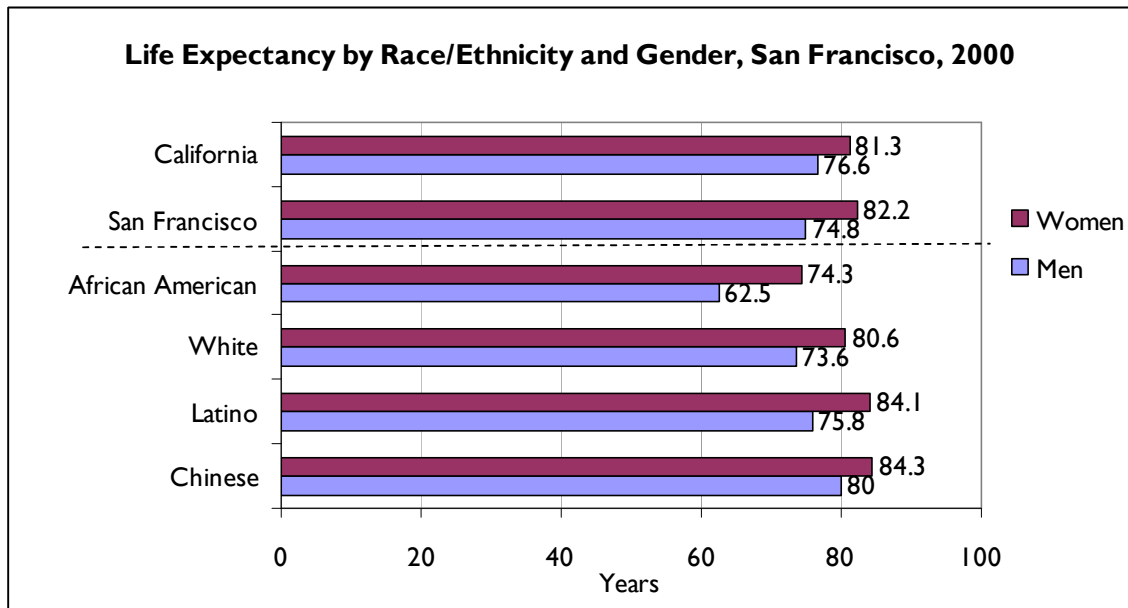
Culturally relevant and multilingual programming is likely to continue to be an important feature of San Francisco's senior services as the baby boomers age. The baby boomer population in San Francisco is significantly more diverse than it is in California or the nation.

Racial and ethnic demographics of San Francisco's baby boomer population differ significantly from the national trends. Nationally, 73 percent of baby boomers are White and non-Hispanic; the same group represents less than half of San Francisco's baby boomer population. Asians make up nearly one-third of San Francisco's baby boomers and only four percent of the national baby boomer population. For more details, see the chart on the next page.



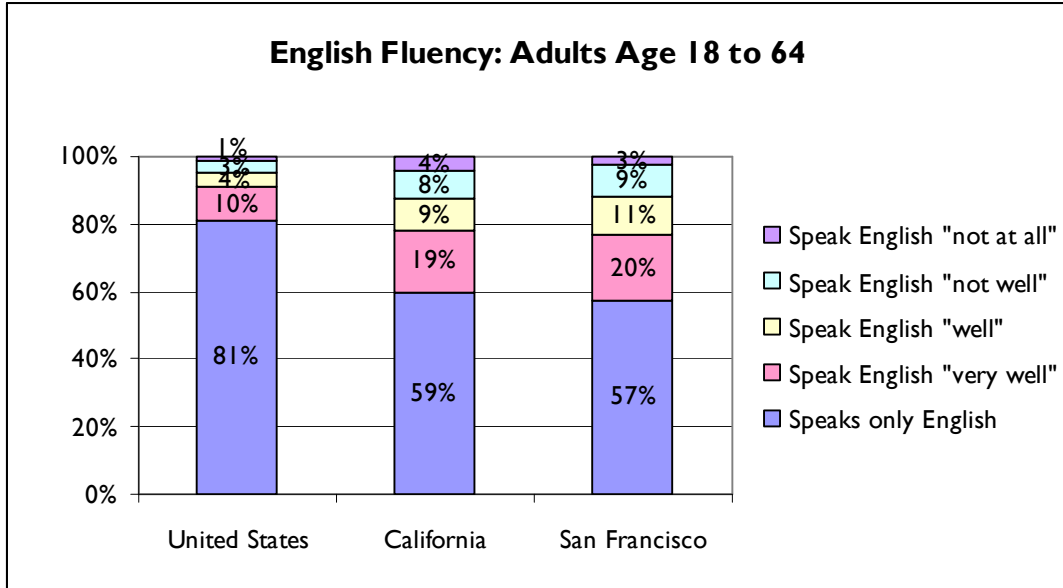
Source: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) - 100-Percent Data, Table PCT12H.

Latinos and Chinese resident have longer life expectancies than do African Americans and Whites in San Francisco, according to a local 2004 Community Health Assessment. This may further result in an increasingly diverse community of older adults as the baby boomer population ages in the city.



Source: San Francisco Department of Public Health. 2004 Community Health Assessment.

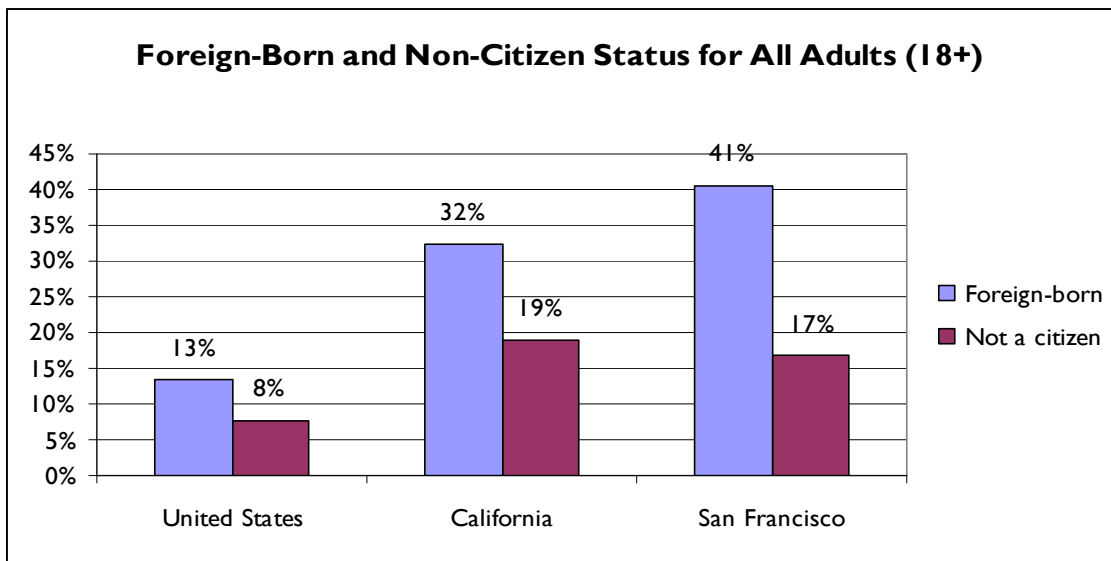
Census data for English fluency does not allow for an analysis of fluency rate for baby boomers specifically. The following chart demonstrates that all San Francisco younger adults (ages 18 to 64) are much less likely than adults nationally to speak English only. In fact, more than 40 percent of this population in San Francisco speaks a language other than English at home. Twelve percent speak English “not well” or “not at all.”



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) – Sample Data, Table P19.

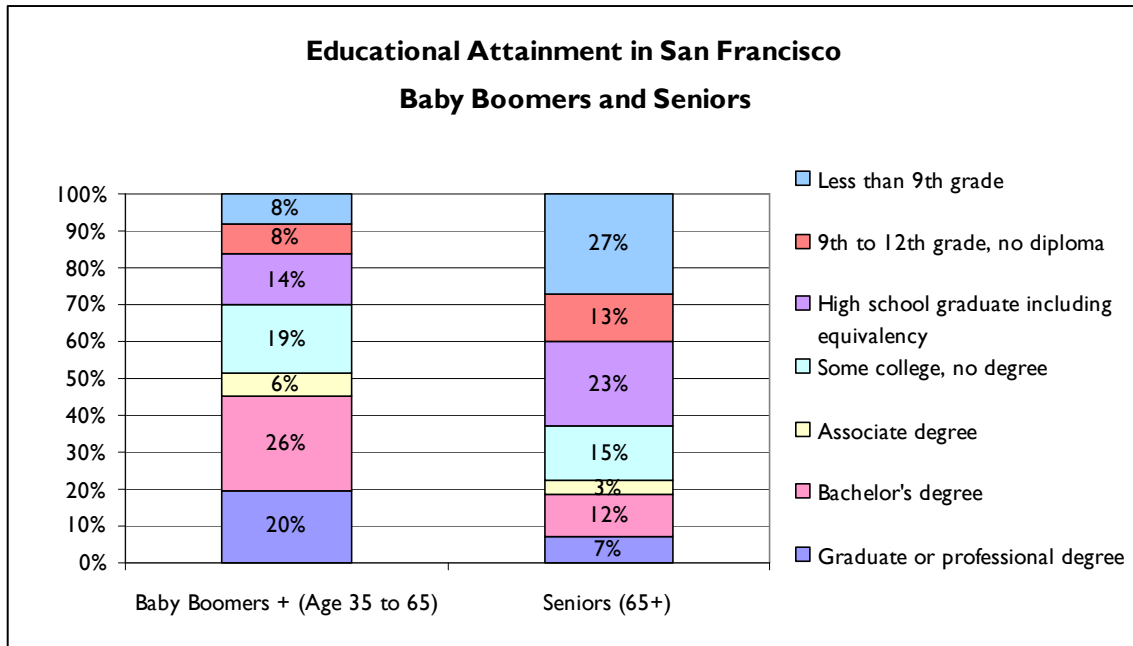
Immigration and Citizenship Status

As with the English fluency data above, citizenship and foreign-born status data are not available from the Census for the baby boomer age group. The following chart shows that San Francisco is home to a dramatically higher proportion of foreign-born and non-citizen adults than the country as a whole. These figures are likely to underestimate the true proportions, as many immigrants are resistant to respond to the Census at all.



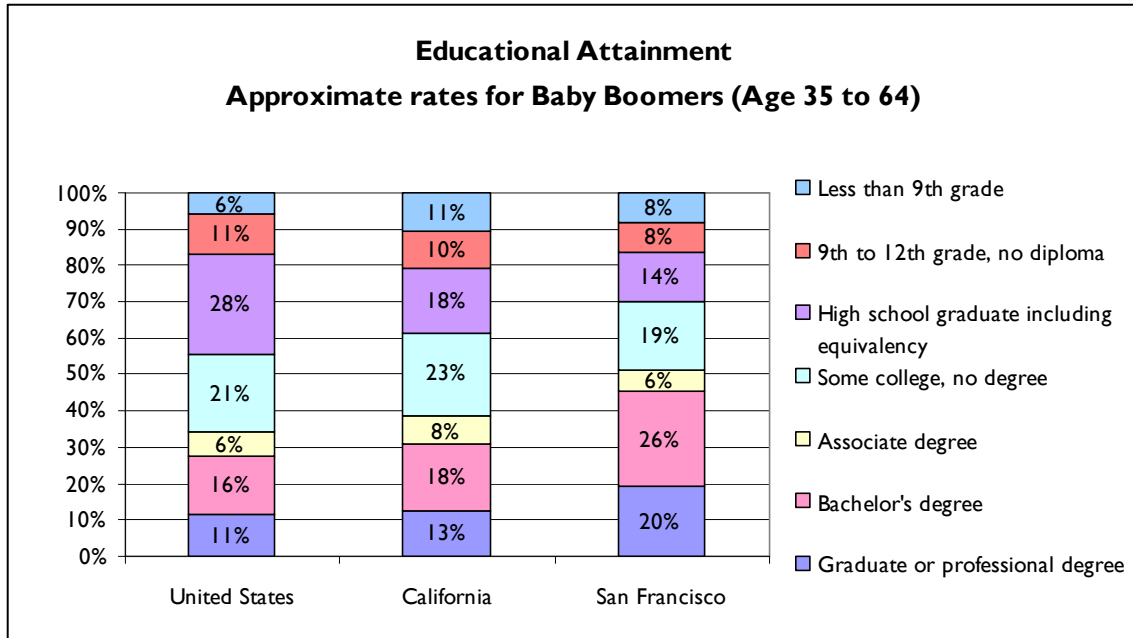
Educational Attainment

Nationally, baby boomers have a higher level of education than any generation (6). In San Francisco, this trend is dramatic. The following graph shows approximate educational attainment for baby boomers and seniors in San Francisco. Unfortunately, Census data for these data are only broken into broader age groups, so adults age 55 to 64 are included in the “baby boomer” category here. Because the younger generation has higher educational attainment, however, the inclusion of the older cohort with the baby boomers only serves to mute the actual differences between the groups.



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF -3) Sample Data, Table PCT25.

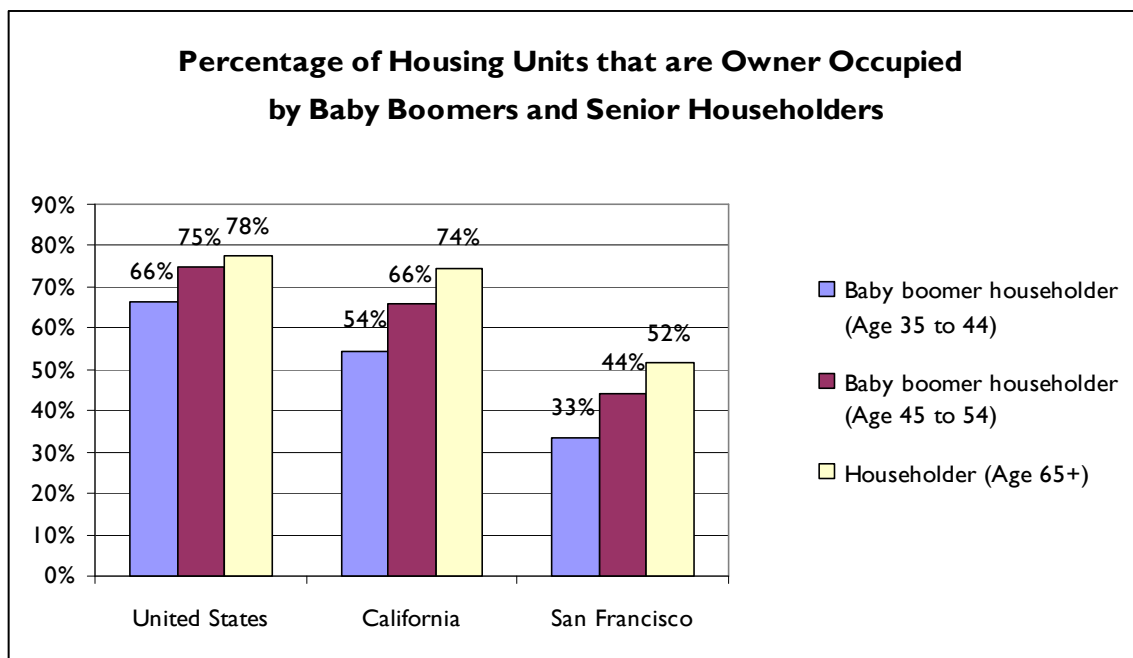
San Francisco’s high educational attainment among baby boomers is significantly greater even than the state or national trends. More than 50 percent of the baby boomers here have at least an Associate degree, and approximately 70 percent have attended some college.



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF -3) Sample Data, Table PCT25.

Home Ownership

San Francisco baby boomers are dramatically less likely to own their homes than are baby boomers nationally or statewide. Nationwide, 70 percent of all households headed by a baby boomer own their housing units. Home-ownership rates are almost half that rate for baby boomer-headed households in San Francisco, at only 38 percent. The chart below demonstrates that younger baby boomers are less likely than older baby boomers to own their homes, and both groups are less likely to do so than seniors age 65 or older.



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 4 (SF 4) – Sample Data, Table HCT26.

The city's historically high cost of houses has likely been prohibitive to many younger baby boomers, making San Francisco largely a city of renters when it comes to the baby boomer population. This may have some implications for their financial planning needs, which could be further complicated for both owners and renters as a result of the recent national housing market crisis.

Existing Research: Projected Needs, Programming Trends

Research review finds conflicting data with some researchers asserting that the boomers will be the healthiest & wealthiest of all previous retirees (7). Others expect retirees to postpone retirement due to inadequate financial preparation (2) and anticipate boomers with chronic diseases in the near and long term (5).

Research has been conducted by senior organizations, governmental sources. Area Agencies on Aging and others concerned with retirement issues. Conclusions vary from suggestions for serving boomers, recruiting them for volunteers or possibly hiring them. There is concern that current senior center programs will not appeal to seniors making it difficult to recruit them as either as volunteers or participants. This report documents the findings pertinent to the planning needs of San Francisco's boomers and senior provider community.

Nationally

Nationally some 50 % of boomers are located in nine states:

California, Texas, New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan & New Jersey descending from a high of roughly ten percent (9.81%) in California to just under three percent (2.59%) in New Jersey (6). In 2000, the US Census found boomers to be 26% of the total population, with expectations that the number aging boomers will boost seniors as a percentage of the population dramatically in coming years. Projections for senior growth in California were noted earlier.

The 1999 AARP segmentation analysis discovered that only 16% of boomers surveyed expected to *not* work in retirement and trends show that both men & women are beginning to retire at later ages. Decreases in early retirement incentives, increasing ages at which one may draw full Social Security benefits, disappearing defined benefit pensions and rising health care costs have been identified as contributing factors (4) as well as the expected increased life span for the aging boomers. Sadly, many of the poorer boomers do not expect to retire at all. This lower income group also reported concerns about disability or poor health in retirement. These issues are more severe for women. Women typically have lower retirement resources than men and have greater need for those resources because of longer life spans, and because they often face high out-of-pocket medical expenses at the time of a spouses' death (9).

Despite delaying full retirement, boomers anticipate participating in community service or volunteering during retirement (10). Historically, people volunteer more during mid-life than in retirement, but retiree volunteers do so more frequently than mid-lifers. It is expected that boomers will be more interested in short term volunteer opportunities as opposed to long term commitments, a finding of interest to senior centers that rely heavily on volunteers.

Boomers' perception of aging apparently does not include themselves, as a result many senior centers are re-inventing themselves as community center to avoid the boomer aversion to the term "senior" (7)(11).

Statewide

In California, the Area Agencies on Aging are already providing services to boomers with disabilities through case management, protective services, IHSS and other programs (3). These boomers are currently living with disabilities compared to those who will be retiring at later dates. In anticipation of the impact of increased numbers of seniors in need of services, agencies statewide are planning new ways to provide care including existing and emerging technologies. Examples include *Network of Care*, internet model information and assistance tool for caregivers, computer software to integrate information from various services into a coordinated care plan, and remote telemetry for medical monitoring at home.

The state government notes that not only does California have the most seniors; it will become even more ethnically diverse, rivaling Hawaii (2). The State also faces a dearth of health care professionals and paraprofessionals to support its aging population. California echoes the national trend of lower birth rates increasing the anticipated need for paid caregivers in the future. This projected lack of family and/or paid caregivers may well increase the costs of long term care (5).

San Francisco

In keeping with its name, the San Francisco Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) conducted a review of boomer research with an eye toward volunteering. Consistent with other research, RSVP's review found that 80% of boomers expected to work in retirement – in some capacity. Earning money and staying involved with others were cited as reasons for continued employment. Volunteering is envisioned a part of active semi-retirement with women more likely to volunteer than men. Types of volunteering differ by ethnic group, with African Americans interested in religious institutions and minority rights groups, Asian-Americans gravitating to libraries and museums while Hispanic-American are concerned with immigrant services and whites interested in the environment and animal causes. This finding suggests a more tailored approach to volunteer recruitment.

In addition, intergenerational settings are of more interest to boomers than seniors-only sites and activities. RSVP may expand on its current model of matching volunteers with agencies by serving as de facto volunteer coordinators for providers who do not have such positions, sharing resources and decreasing costs (8).

A need for collaboration between various types of senior service providers was a key finding of another research effort evaluating social support systems & needs. Providers interviewed were well aware of the need to adapt programs in expectation of boomer participation (11).

The DAAS Baby Boomer Task Force developed a targeted survey which was used to gain a clearer understanding of planning efforts, program changes and organizational changes that San Francisco agencies had already undertaken related to serving baby boomers. The survey was administered in a web-based format during November, 2007. An invitation to participate was emailed to all DAAS contractors, all members of the Coalition of Agencies Serving the Elderly, and to the mailing list of the Mayor's Office on Disability. Thirty-six agencies responded; most respondents were management staff.

The survey found that local service providers have a variety of expectations related to the future needs of the baby boomers. The most common predictions of what will be different about San Francisco baby boomers' needs or interests follow:

- More interest in technology and more tech-savvy (28%)
- More active, both physically and socially (17%)
- Greater sense of entitlement/assertiveness (14%)
- Will work longer, possibly entering second careers (14%)
- Will live longer with chronic diseases (14%),
- Fewer savings (14%),

Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated that they had already added programming they considered to be attractive or relevant to baby boomers. More than a quarter of the providers responding have already begun to implement changes in with physical activities (26%), such as "Always Active," dancing, fitness, yoga, and tai chi given as examples. Other common recent programming changes included:

- Social/recreational activities (19%)
- Aging workshops (19%) (e.g., long-term care navigation counseling, reverse mortgages, etc.)
- Computer instruction or labs (15%)
- Site expansion/improvement (11%)

Almost all respondents reported that their agencies were conducting planning for or expansion of current services to meet increased demand. Several others indicated that they were considering expanded services and hours, moving to a larger facility, or updating their assessment and intake tools in response to baby boomer trends.

Information on aging trends, needs analysis, and demographics information were cited as technical assistance considered most helpful from the Department of Aging and Adult Services by the providers surveyed. More than half of providers surveyed generously offered to assist other providers with information by participating in focus groups and sharing what they had already done. Cultural competency, individual research, and specific needs of ethnic groups, specifically those of African Americans were topics mentioned for sharing in survey responses.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The age group identified as Baby Boomers will have a profound impact on society as they age, given their sheer numbers. Problems are anticipated related to increased disability with age, financial concerns, support systems challenged with fewer children, health professionals and caregivers.

San Francisco providers will be challenged to addressing the needs of our multi-ethnic population, our higher numbers of the poor, as well as serving a more affluent and educated constituency. Planning for the long term is a must – another challenge given the current funding cycles of services.

The following recommendations are directed to non-profit service providers, the Department of Aging and Adult Services, and other city departments.

Recommendations to service providers

1. Attend training sessions and information sessions that focus on the unique needs and preferences of baby boomers.
2. Acknowledge that although senior centers and services may change, the social need to congregate will remain. Such centers can be the contact sites connecting boomer seniors with services which may be needed in the future.
3. Continue to pilot new programming efforts intended to attract and retain baby boomers in senior programming (e.g., expanded hours, physical and educational activities, health promotion, brain health activities, etc.)

Recommendations to service providers, DAAS, and other public agencies

4. Begin public education tailored to the baby boomer population to ensure that they are aware of available consumer and caregiver support services.
5. Update public-facing websites, as they are likely to be a primary source of information for the baby boomer population.

Recommendation to DAAS

DAAS may consider including some of the following recommendations in its upcoming Area Plan.

6. Initiate citywide planning and policy development to address baby boomer issues. For example:
 - a. DAAS conduct a forum for contract providers also open to funders and boomers to share this report. Included in the forum will be reports from providers and DAAS about boomer-related program changes.

- b. Begin discussions with the San Francisco’s workforce development policy-makers about the potential employment needs and opportunities that may result from a population of baby boomers who do not retire. Pertinent issues may include: reasonable accommodations in workplaces to address possible disabilities of an aging workforce; flexible employment schedules; identifying job opportunities that may be attractive to baby boomers; etc.
7. Continue and expand training sessions that improve the capacity of non-profit and public service providers to address the needs of baby boomers. For example, provide:
- c. Ongoing cultural competency training sessions. Consider utilizing the expertise and credibility of the DAAS Partnership Programs.
 - d. Training sessions that focus on the current and future needs of the baby boomer population in provider trainings (financial issues, etc.)
8. Monitor enrollment levels and waitlist in DAAS programs in the coming years (e.g., Office on the Aging programs, APS, IHSS, etc.), especially among the baby boomer age cohort. Consider additional analysis about changes in consumers’ needs, preferences, and choices over time.

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