Changing perspectives on, and Demographics of, Ageing

Peter Öberg
PhD, Associate Professor
University of Gävle
Sweden
E-mail: Peter.Oberg@hig.se

THE FUTURE IS OLDER

The world’s older population (65+) is increasing by approximately how many people *each month* in 2008?

A) 75,000  
B) 350,000  
C) 600,000  
D) 870,000
THE FUTURE IS OLDER

- 870,000 each month
- 10,4 million people each year (July 2007 – July 2008)

(US Census Bureau)

THE FUTURE IS OLDER

1) Changing demography – challenges and myths
2) How demographical changes affect and change social relations and life-styles
3) Examples mostly from the Nordic countries – trends relevant for Western Europe
The burden of dependency perspective

To the extent that the ... economic contexts will be clarified and generally understood, this displeasure with the all too many old people will seek for justification in a reproach which will not be able to reject: this heavily weighing generation of geriatrics has been a burdening generation already in its vital days.

(Myrdal & Myrdal 1935, 127-127; The Population Crisis, free translation)

Demographic bomb? (SE)
Percentage of pensioners 65+ of the population

Prognosis of the development of pensioners (% of total population)
The Swedish population 1750-2050
Age Groups 0-14, 15-64, 65+

Graphics Lars Tornstam
Demographic dependency ratio
Total population / Population 20–64 (SCB 2003)

Dependency ratio for the work force
Total population / Population in the work force (SCB 2003)
“Will there be a helping hand?”

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increased childbirth
- Increased participation in the work force among immigrants
- Influx of foreign labour
- Decrease of early exit from the labour market

Finnish Men and Women in different ages who think they have ”Very good” or ”Good” possibilities for new employment in case of unemployment (%).
(Andersson & Oberg)
Ideal types of social structures
(Riley & Riley 1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AGE DIFFERENTIATION</th>
<th>AGE INTEGRATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>LEISURE</td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-Aged</td>
<td>WORK</td>
<td>WORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>LEISURE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imagined and experienced problems among elderly (%) (Finns 60+, Old Age Barometer 1998)
1) Illness and functional incapacity
2) Social difficulties
3) Economical difficulties
4) Violence and criminality
5) Shortage of social services
6) Shortage of health services
7) Too much youth idealization
8) Shortage of activities
9) Something else
Percentage of 60-90 year old Swedes ‘often’ feeling lonely (Tornstam)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of living:</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other city (&gt;10,000 inhabitants)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other place (&gt; 3,000 inhabitants)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside/Sparsely-populated area</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conflicts or solidarity between generations?

- ”Young people get it harder – older people better and better” (*Metro 2005*)
- Integration at the micro level will prevent conflicts at the macro level
“Brisk elderly make the housing shortage worse”

(Pigga äldre förvärrar bostadsbristen)

Ageing of the population

- Reflecting long term decrease in both fertility and mortality
- More people live into old age
- How ageing of the population changes social relations
- Changes during the 20th century of both the experience of ageing and the meaning of ageing
- Changes in the life course and the relations between generations
- Cultural and life-style changes of old age
Ageing and family life

- Increase of households with one and two persons
- The "verticalisation" of the family
  - More grandparents – less grandchildren
- Relations based on increased equality (emotional bonds, free choices instead of tradition and obligations)
  - ‘Equity model’ in child care – not in eldercare
- Decreased feminization of old age

Ageing and family life

- Postponing of timing and "ageing" of family transitions
  - Increased time in marriage
- Increase of men in elderly care institutions
- Increase of divorced older people
  - Affects potentials for informal care
  - Divorced men have smaller social networks than widowed men and higher mortality
- Increase of new forms of intimacy
  - LAT and cohabitation
  - Homosexual relations more visible
Percentage divorced people 60+ in Sweden 1970–2004 (SCB, Öberg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60–69 years</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(39.034)</td>
<td>(97.136)</td>
<td>(181.643)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–79 years</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17.190)</td>
<td>(52.254)</td>
<td>(86.922)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.099)</td>
<td>(16.901)</td>
<td>(37.052)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes in Marital Status over Time for Men 65+ in England and Wales, 2001–2021 (%)
(Davidson 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEN 65+</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>Change 2001–2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>− 5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>− 4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+ 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Married</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+ 1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Changes in Marital Status over Time for Women 65+ in England and Wales, 2001–2021

(Davidson 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WOMEN 65+</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>Change 2001–2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>+ 5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>− 13 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+ 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>− 1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Theory of the Third Age

(Peter Laslett)

1) **FIRST AGE**
   - Dependency, socialisation, immaturity, education

2) **SECOND AGE**
   - Independency, maturity and responsibility, earnings and savings

3) **THIRD AGE**
   - Personal self-fulfilment, “crown of life”

4) **FOURTH AGE**
   - Dependency, decrepitude and death
WILL OLD AGE BE HEALTHIER?

1) Compression of morbidity
   - “Healthy life expectancy” increase more than life expectancy

2) Extension of morbidity
   - “Healthy life expectancy” constant – increase of ill years of life
   - Medical paradox: the more people saved to life – the more health care problems (“Survival of the unfittest”)

3) Postponement of morbidity
   - Increase in life expectancy corresponding to increase in “healthy life expectancy”
   - Decrease in mortality corresponding to decrease in morbidity
   - Support from studies in Norway, Sweden and Finland
   - Both ADL and IADL has improved for all age groups 65+ in Sweden 1988/89-2002/03
   - “Heroic medicine” not only saves lives – but also reduces the effects of the chronic disease on illness and functional capacity

The important issue for health care costs is not how old one is – but how many years of life one has ahead
Prognosis for the number of 80+ people in Sweden 2010
(National Statistics of Sweden)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Prognosis</th>
<th>Number of people 80+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>340.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>430.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>500.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of 75-84 year old men and women with ”bad” or ”very bad” health experience (1980–2003)

Figur 1. Andelen personer i åldersgruppen 75–84 år som bedömer sitt allmänna hälsotillstånd som »dåligt« eller »mycket dåligt«, enligt Statistiska centralbyråns riksrepresentativa undersökningar av levnadsförhållanden (ULF) [13].
Percentage with IADL-impairment among Swedish Women 65+ (1988/89-2002/03)
(cleaning, cooking, buying food, laundry)

Percentage with IADL-impairment among Swedish Men 65+ (1988/89-2002/03)
(cleaning, cooking, buying food, laundry)
### Percentage with higher education (>3 years) among 60-74 year old Swedes 1985–2004 (SCB, Öberg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60–64 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65–69 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–74 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Percentage of Finnish households having a car according to the age of the reference person 1985-2001/2002

(Reference person: the highest income in the household)
### Toothless 70 year old people (H70; Sweden)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>52 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Smoking among 70 year old Swedish men and women (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Men %</th>
<th>Women %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I consider myself a youthful person” (%) (Öberg & Tornstam 2003)

“It is important for me to be sexually active” (Percentage in different ages who agree) (Öberg & Tornstam 2003)
Image of Elderly i Nordic Countries
(Eurobarometer)

- Have a good economy
- Are active and participate in society
- Typical “Old age home” is the own apartment or house
- Are treated with respect
- Are not particularly religious

Norwegian study on life course, ageing and generations

1) Will tomorrow’s elderly have other preferences, opinions or values than elderly today?
2) Will changes in family structure affect the potential for informal care and support?
   - 5,600 individuals in 30 municipalities
   - 40-79 years old
Tomorrow’s elderly (NO)

- Elderly care users will be less modest, more demanding, and expect more autonomy
- Have more individualistic values
  - personal achievement, pleasure, new experiences
  - More consuming instead of saving for children
- Less likely to hold traditional values
  - conformity and modesty
- Fourth age decrease possibilities for individualistic values

Tomorrow’s elderly (NO)

- More divorced elderly parents may receive less care from their children
  - Less children, more childless couples, more living alone, more co-habitation
- New gender roles
  - “Modern” elderly men partake more in household and care work (may lessen the demand on social service)
- Differences in health behaviour between men and women declining