

Baby boomers push median age of Americans up as births decline

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The American population is older than it used to be, according to new

U.S. Census data.

With fewer young children, more baby boomers and even more centenarians, the country's median age is higher—at 38.8—and the share of people aged 65 and up more substantial, the [report](#) showed.

Among the most notable numbers is that the share of people 65 and older grew by more than one-third between the 2010 census and the 2020 census, and that the number of people reaching age 100 grew from more than 53,000 to more than 80,000. Meanwhile, millennials became adults or aged into their 30s, and fewer children were born between 2010 and 2020.

What does that all mean?

"Many more people who have the [genetic makeup](#) and environmental exposures that increase one's chances of getting to 100, but who would have otherwise died of what are now readily reversible problems, are able to fulfill their survival destiny," [Thomas Perls](#), a longevity expert and professor of medicine at Boston University, told the *Associated Press*.

The share of men living into old age is also larger, which can be attributed to improvements in [medical care](#).

Some of the declines in [younger people](#) are attributed to women having babies later and to [birth rates](#) slowing during the 2007 to 2009 Great Recession and not recovering.

"In the short run, the crisis of work-family balance, the lack of affordable child care, stresses associated with health care, housing and employment stability, all put a damper on birth rates by increasing uncertainty and making it harder to decide to have and raise children,"

[Philip Cohen](#), a sociologist at the University of Maryland, told the *AP*.

The 2020 data was delayed by nearly two years as the Census Bureau began a new privacy protection method that obscures respondent identity. The agency also had some trouble gathering information because of the pandemic, the *AP* reported.

The United States now has 331 million people. Those aged 65 and up comprised 16.8% of the U.S. population in 2020, a share that is still lower than other countries like Japan, Greece and Italy.

White people are the oldest cohort, with a median age of 44.5. Median age for Asian people was 37.2. Black Americans had a median age of 35.5. The youngest were Hispanic people with a median age of 30.

Age also varied by state, with Maine showing a median age of 45.1. Puerto Rico had a median of 45.2. These facts are attributed to [baby boomers](#) aging out of the workforce and people leaving Puerto Rico because of hurricanes and government mismanagement, the *AP* reported.

It matters that the country is getting older because there will be fewer working-age adults to support older Americans on Social Security and Medicare.

"In the long run, immigration is the only way the United States is going to avoid [population decline](#)," Cohen said.

More information: The Urban Institute has more on the [aging](#) U.S. population.

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