

Understanding and Reaching The New Senior Adult

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT AGING?

1. The life expectancy of an average American citizen is:
a) 65 years b) 70 years c) 75 years d) 80 years
2. The percentage of the American population 65+ years old is:
a) 5% b) 8% c) 13% d) 19%
3. What percentage of Americans 65+ years old are married?
Women a) 35% b) 45% c) 55% d) 65% e) 75%
Men a) 35% b) 45% c) 55% d) 65% e) 75%
4. Approximately what percent of people 65+ years old live in convalescent hospitals or nursing homes?
a) 5% b) 10% c) 20% d) 30%
5. The percentage of senior adults living alone in the U.S. is:
a) 14% b) 26% c) 38% d) 51%
6. Most women over 65 years old are widows. TRUE FALSE
7. According to research, where do older adults turn for help when feeling depressed?
Women a) spouse b) relative c) professional
Men a) spouse b) relative c) professional
8. The reported percentage of the population attending weekly religious services is:
Population at large a) 15% b) 28% c) 42% d) 56%
Senior adults a) 15% b) 28% c) 42% d) 56%
9. When you look at your church and see an increasing number of gray-haired adults, what is your response? a) "we need more young families;" b) "this is a serious problem;" c) "this is a great opportunity."
10. Does your church intentionally reach out to: a) the young families in your community; b) the older adults in your community; c) anyone at all?

WHY FOCUS ON OLDER ADULTS?

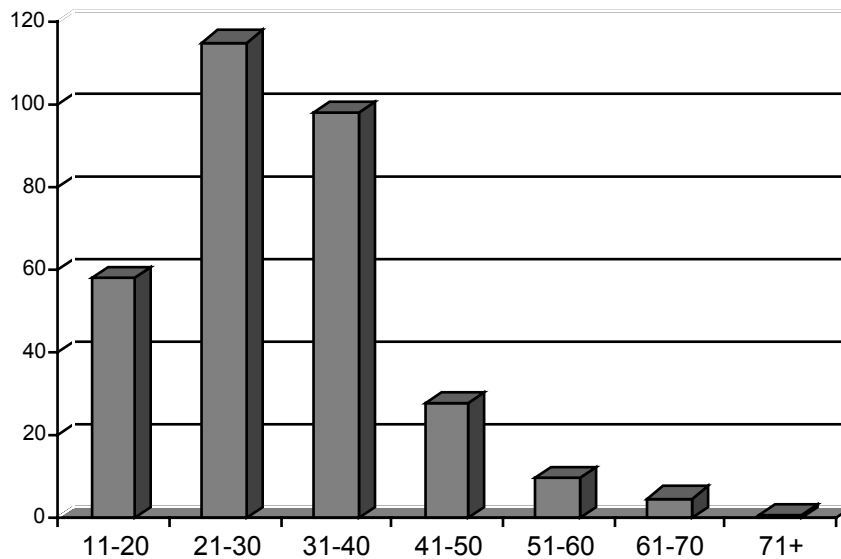
<i>Common Church Problems</i>	<i>SENIOR ADULTS: The "Hidden Treasure"</i>
1. A survey conducted by Church Growth, Inc. among pastors indicated that their most common frustration is a lack of dedicated lay people to do the work of the church.	1. A separate study found senior adults average 2 - 3 times as many available hours for church-related activities as any other age group.
2. Financial shortfalls are the most common reason for not adding buildings, programs, and/or staff.	1. In a given year, one senior adult church member will give seven times the amount of money that a baby boomer member will give in the same church.
3. Members transferring jobs and/or moving to another community account for 3-5% membership loss.	2. Senior adults change address an average of once every 12 years, compared to the national average of once every 7 years.
1. Low institutional loyalty is a common characteristic of baby boomers. Most churches find it difficult to solicit membership or even long-term commitment from this age group.	4. High institutional loyalty is a common characteristic of senior adults. When they join, they stay and they are committed.
5. Biblical "illiteracy" is common among laity in many churches. As a result, pastoral teaching often remains at the elementary level.	5. Most senior adult members have been Christians for years. Having experienced life's mountains, as well as valleys, they have a wealth of wisdom they can share.

WINDOWS OF OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY
FOR SENIOR ADULTS

Life Event	Rank
1. Death of a spouse	100
2. Divorce.....	73
3. Move to nursing/retirement home	70
4. Marital separation	65
5. Death of a close family member	64
6. Major physical problems	53
7. Marriage or remarriage	50
8. Realizing a personal lack of dreams/purpose	47
9. Financial loss of retirement money	47
10. Forced early retirement	46
11. Unable to drive	45
12. Marital reconciliation.....	45
13. Retirement.....	45
14. Spouse confined to retirement home.....	45
15. Change of health of family member	44
16. Gain a new family member.....	39
17. Change in financial state	38
18. Death of a close friend	37
19. Difficulty in getting medical insurance	36
20. Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
21. Mortgage over \$100,000	31
22. Foreclosure of mortgage/loan.....	30
23. Sense of not being needed.....	29
24. Outstanding personal achievement.....	28
25. Spouse begins or stops work	26
26. Significantly decreased contact with children or friends.....	25
27. Revision of personal habits	24
28. Significantly less contact with support group/s.....	24
29. Trouble with the boss	23
30. Minor physical problems	20
31. Change in recreation habits	19
32. Change in church activities.....	19
33. Change in social activities	18
34. Loans of less than \$100,000	17
35. Change in sleeping habits	16
36. Change in number of family get-togethers.....	15
37. Change in eating habits	15
38. Vacations	13
39. Christmas	12
40. Minor law violation.....	11

WHY AREN'T MORE SENIOR ADULTS BEING REACHED?

Age at Conversion



The Fiction

1. Most senior adults are already in church.
2. Older adults have become “hardened” to the Gospel.

The Facts

1. The church’s outreach has traditionally focused on youth and young adults.
2. Outreach to seniors does not take into account “windows of receptivity.”
3. Most senior adult programs do not provide an adequate number or diversity of options for seniors to become involved.

A MODEL FOR OLDER ADULT EVANGELISM (notes)

TOWARD AN EVANGELISM STRATEGY FOR SENIOR ADULTS

<i>How Seniors Decide</i>	<i>Appropriate Evangelism Strategy</i>
They rely on people they trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use existing networks of relationships • Plan friendship-building events
They resist “hard sell”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize “relational” style rather than “confrontational” • Provide multiple exposures to the Gospel message (i.e. books, sermons, Bible study, etc.)
They must clearly understand the benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message relevant to senior life issues • Identify and communicate the attractive qualities of faith and community
They require assurance of quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and improve quality of meetings and printed material • Be sure time spent in senior activities is meaningful, not superficial
They resist dramatic change in lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Christian formation and discipleship • Create small groups open to non-members
They value peer recommendations and involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present role models • Use seniors to evangelize seniors
Their decision is based on “need” rather than “want”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create ministry teams to people with special needs • Show how faith meets needs seniors face