

A PORTRAIT OF
NEVADA'S SENIORS

a collaborative study



2010

Study hunts for trends among seniors

Demographic studies are a statistician's dream. Numbers and percentages provide the basis for formulating generalities about a segment of society and an opportunity to provide rationale for policymakers to base decisions. One of the least studied population-based segments of Nevada is the population group over the age of 50. The Cannon Survey Center at UNLV was commissioned in 2005 to conduct multiple surveys over several years on a variety of issues affecting our older Nevadans.

While it may be a stretch to call a 50-year-old a senior citizen, the long-term goal of the study (with subsequent annual surveys) is to establish trends within the aging population, with a strong focus on the "Baby Boomers" as they progress into the era of "Aging Boomers."

Rarely has there been such a comprehensive study. Findings from the previous reports, along with the results from the 2010 data collection, will provide empirical data on our growing senior (and about to be senior)



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citizen population. The "Baby Boomers" will continue to impact society as they age in the same way they did as they entered public schools, colleges, the workforce and adulthood as parents and consumers. The "Boomers" have been compared to a bulge in a water hose as they have moved through the years impacting every aspect of society.

In the original study, residents age 50 and older from across the state were asked to respond to between 80 and 100 questions. Due to budget constraints, the length of the 2010 survey was shortened

to between 60 and 70 questions. Furthermore, the total sample size was reduced from 2,500 to 1,200. To be eligible to take the phone survey, the respondent had to be at least 50 years old and a resident of Nevada.

Topical areas that affect this segment of the population include but are not limited to: income, housing, transportation, physical health, mental health, health insurance coverage, work/

retiree status, caregiving, crime and social well-being. The survey questions covered almost every aspect of aging issues, from "how do you self-rate your health?" to "do you still drive your personal vehicle to get around?" and "have you been a victim of a crime?" The survey included economic data, education levels, current workforce status and income levels. The state-wide survey attempted to balance the results among the two urban areas of the state and the rural areas. Balance among respondents including race/ethnicity, gender and age categories was

an important factor in weighing the results. Cross-tabulating the results of specific responses is an invaluable resource for policymakers, marketers, grant recipients and the general public.

Data have been available since August 2006 and have been used by a variety of academics and legislators, including the seventy-fifth session of the Nevada State Assembly, as a supplemental tool in the decision-making process concerning the future of the State's public programs and services.

Over the course of the study, over 5,000 Nevada residents have been surveyed. The current report will provide a comprehensive view of the



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self-reported answers from over 1,200 Nevada residents over the age of 50. The emerging trends reported in this commentary provide statistical

verification to many assumptions held by policymakers and valuable insight into some less obvious “givens” about Nevada’s aging society. This age group represents nearly 29% of Nevada’s total population and must be viewed as a formidable presence in the future of our state. The needs of an aging society are dependent upon the health and well-being of those within the ages surveyed.

While there are many variables that could be extrapolated, the following sections include the highlights from the study. By providing the basic characteristics of the over-50 population, this report will allow interested parties the opportunity to formulate inquiries into more specific conclusions based on varying combinations of the demographics within a particular area of interest. It is our hope that this study

will also provide valuable insight and guidance to the many important questions that Nevada’s policy makers will have to address as Nevada ages.