

► Demographics Role in Planning

COEP 3000

By **Kirsten Harrison** ► For Ed Symons ► 9/27/2013

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Introduction

Demographics, the study of human population, plays a crucial role when planning a community, town or the like. Using demographics from a census or similar can tell us a great deal about the upcoming generation. The sorts of issues that will arise in the future are another matter that can be answered by closely evaluating the demographics of a certain area. Problems such as:

- Should we be expanding our current educational system?
- Should we be increasing our public transportation systems?
- Should retail within the city core be expanding or not?

can all be answered by watching and calculating the populations and the age ranges within a certain region. Knowing the different generations, Pre-World War I, World War I, The Roaring Twenties, The Depression Babies, World War II, The Baby Boom, The Baby Bust, The Baby-Boom Echo and The Millennium Busters, and the history behind them, can aid in the prediction of the future. If planners had given more attention to demographics in the past, then many issues within the planning world that we have to deal with today, would not have been created.

The Baby-Boom Echo

Being born in 1994, I belong to the latter part of the Baby-Boom Echo (1980-1995) which is considered Generation X-II. Issues that my generation (Gen X-II) has to deal with are similar to the issues that my parents had to deal with as being part of Generation X. The children born in the beginning of my cohort are said to have been given an easier ride through life because they had the first opportunity at most things in life, the best careers, and when it is time for Generation X-II to enter the workforce, we will have to settle for what is left, the same as our

parents did. Though, with that being said, we do have an advantage - we have the wisdom from our parents, who have gone through the same predicament when they were our age.

At my cohort's peak in 1990, the relative size of the new generation was approximately 406,000 babies from a population of 27.7 million, compared with 479,000 babies during the Baby Boom cohort from a population of 17.5 million in 1959. In 1997, the calculated amount of the Baby-Boom Echo had reached 6.5 million of the population at that time. (Foot & Stoffman, Boom, Bust & Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium, 1998).

Urban Renewal

Transportation

Transportation within a city is a huge issue that is constantly being addressed within planning offices. One may think that you should always be thinking ahead and into the future about what needs are necessary within the transportation sector, when in all reality, transportation must be planned around the current demographics and the current need from the public. If we begin planning transportation around future predictions we could get into a lot of trouble, issues like public transportation need to be in place where there is demand, not where they are hoping demand will be in the future. (Foot & Stoffman, Boom, Bust & Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium, 1998)

The average age of a public transit rider is between 16 – 20 years old. With little money and lots of time to wait at bus stops, it makes sense that the average age is so. Though, that 20 year old will eventually age and with age comes life changes. If you are 40 years old with children, riding a bus is a difficult thing to do especially if you need to get groceries; therefore it is more logical and it is affordable for that 40 year old to invest in a family vehicle. (Foot &

Stoffman, Boom, Bust & Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium, 1998)

Crime in the City

Demographics have more to do with Crime than anyone could ever imagine. If you think of the different age groups, teenagers, middle aged, and older population, and compare them to the type of crime that they are more likely to commit, you can easily predict the amount of crime that will go up and down. The first age group, teenagers, is more likely to commit a crime that they do not come in contact with their victim, such as break and enter, car theft and other property crimes. The middle aged population is more likely to commit a crime that is more violent and uses guns, such as homicide, whereas the older generation would rather avoid committing a crime that is dangerous, therefore they turn to fraud (Foot & Stoffman, Boom, Bust & Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium, 1998).

Now, knowing this and which years the Baby Boomers were going through these different stages of life, it is no surprise to see the statistics of crime throughout the years. Between the years 1960-1970 there were lots of property damage to be accounted for because the Baby Boomers were in their teenage years, whereas in 1980-1990 more violent crime had spiked and in the late 1990's and early 2000's there was an increase of fraud because the Baby Boomers had finally moved into their later years. (Foot & Stoffman, Boom, Bust & Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium, 1998)

Even though the facts seem obvious and it seems as though crime is very predictable so we should be able to prepare for it, many things can get in the way of the obvious. In 1997, a major stock fraud for a company called Bre-X estimated a \$12 billion annual loss for individuals, companies and government, which accounted for 1.5% of Canada's Gross Domestic Product. Because of this fraud scandal, budget cutbacks were made for the Royal Canadian Mounted

Police. This meant that during the era of violent Baby Boomers, there was not enough policing to keep up to it. In 1997, Toronto Police had a backlog of two years' worth of fraud investigation and had to change their policy that they could only investigate in fraud over \$1 million. (Foot & Stoffman, Boom, Bust & Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium, 1998)

Get Ready for the Small Town Boom

Determining what the average age is, within the urban and non-urban areas in your province is an important start to making decisions about how to market your community to appear more attractive to the appropriate generation. Using Nova Scotia as an example, the “urban” areas would consist of the Halifax/Dartmouth and surrounding areas, whereas the “non-urban” areas would consist of the rest of the province. (Foot, Get Ready for the Small Town Boom, 2008)

Urban areas are more likely to attract a younger generation. Cities and the like are more attractive because of the constant activity and nightlife that urban areas provide. When the citizens of the urban areas start to age, they are more and more aware of the constant daily struggles of commuting in a large urban area and are also more aware of the busyness of the lifestyle. The older generations are close to, or have already retired and are more likely wanting to slow down and relax. Unfortunately, their love for city life will come to an end and they will eventually resort to living in a more non-urban area. (Foot, Get Ready for the Small Town Boom, 2008)

Knowing this information through research of demographics it is easier to market your community by knowing the appropriate age range to pitch it to. Curling arenas, city gardens with walking trails, live theatres, golf courses and fishing clubs are all appropriate, attractive facilities

for the aging population. If we as planners and planning technicians can focus on these facts, then we can bring hope for a promising future for the non-urban areas within our country. (Foot, Get Ready for the Small Town Boom, 2008)

Our World

In the past, researchers and the government have not looked at the demographics of the country close enough and this has resulted in some major issues that could have been prevented. Using what our resources and going through the demographics of Canada and the world, we should be able to prepare ourselves for the future, no matter what. Unfortunately, this won't happen, human error does occur and will occur. Although, we do have an accurate idea of what to expect. (CBC, 2008)

At this current time, we are dealing with the aging population of the Roaring Twenties generation as a major part of our health care system. Soon enough, the Baby Boomers will be moving into the stage of life where health care is necessary more than usual, whether it is for vision care, hearing or just daily aid. Knowing this information, we can determine that within the next 10 to 15 years we need to be improving our health care system to prepare ourselves for the upcoming "boom" of elderly patients. (CBC, 2008)

Having this advance knowledge can help us better prepare ourselves for the future, not just for the Baby Boomers, but also for when the Echo generation comes along as well.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that there should be no excuses for being unprepared for the situations that have been discussed within this report and also within any of David Foot's books.

There is an abundance of information that is available to demographers and researchers alike, we should be using it to its full potential and be able to prepare our economy and also prepare the younger generation for what may lie ahead in the future.

References

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