

# The Dual Challenge: Sierra County

Senior Population  
Senior Population

Health Status  
Health Status

Financial Standing  
Financial Standing

Service Demand  
Service Demand

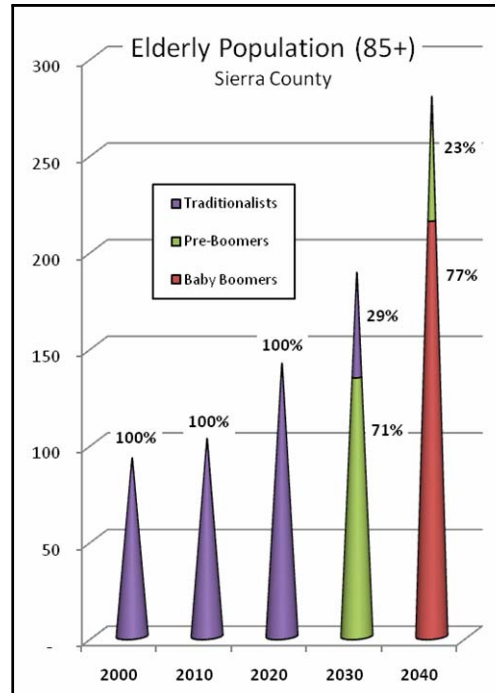
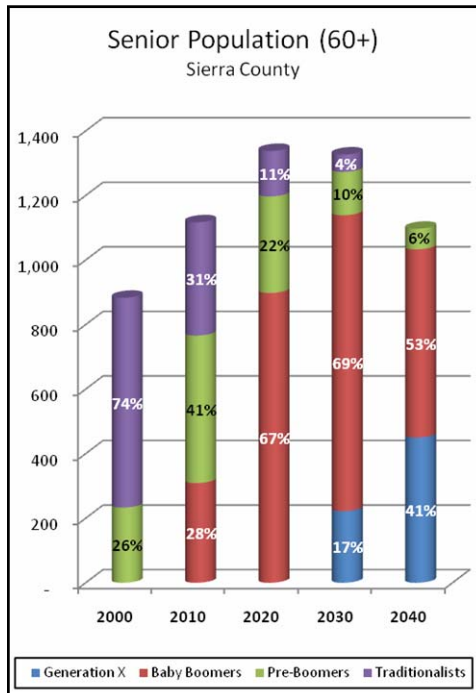
Aging Network  
Aging Network

## Senior Population

We are witnessing a dramatic and unprecedented increase in senior population, and it is driven largely by the aging of the Baby Boomers (shown in red on the charts below).

By 2020, just over 1,300 people age 60 and older are projected to be living in Sierra County. That figure is roughly 1.5 times the number of seniors in 2000; it represents a growth rate of 52% for the twenty year period. Subsequently, the senior population is expected to fall again, apparently because relatively few members of Generation X live in the area and inward migration of retirees is not anticipated at this time.

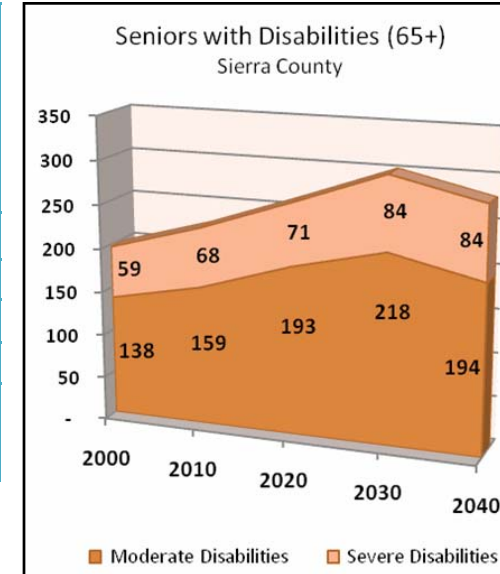
The 85 and older population is of particular concern, for they represent the most frail and vulnerable age group, and they utilize a sizeable share of all elder care services. Here, the situation is more alarming. The number of elderly people in the county is projected to triple (from 92 to 279) between 2000 and 2040.



Traditionalists (born 1900-1935); Pre-Boomers (born 1936-1945); Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964); Generation X (born 1965-1980)

Types of Disabilities Among Persons 65+ (2000 Census)	Sierra County	PSA 4	CA
Any Disability (Persons with 1 or more types of disabilities listed below)	36.4%	41.7%	42.2%
Sensory Disability	16.8%	14.8%	14.5%
Physical Disability	22.6%	28.5%	28.4%
Mental Disability	4.4%	11.7%	12.2%
Self-Care Disability	5.6%	9.2%	9.9%
Difficulty Going Outside the Home Disability	16.6%	19.3%	20.8%

Moderate Disabilities = 1 or 2 Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) or Instrumental ADLs (IADLs)  
Severe Disabilities = 3 or more ADLs or IADLs



## Health Status

In most categories, disability rates in Sierra County are notably lower than those in PSA 4 and in California as a whole. Coincidentally, the blue table is exclusive to Traditionalists, and the county total was 585. Thus in 2000, 213 people 65 and older (36.4%) had some type of disability. By definition, older people with a "Self-Care" disability are reliant on others for meeting one or more of their personal needs; this describes 33 seniors in Sierra County. The "Difficulty Going Outside the Home" category is used to estimate the number of homebound seniors; 16.6% equates to 97 older people in the area who must rely on others for transportation.

Experts predict the overall disability rate for older people will decline until 2020, then begin to rise as the Baby Boomers approach their 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays. The net effect in Sierra County (shown in the orange chart) will be an increase in the number of older people with physical limitations that peaks in 2030. The initial increase in the local senior population will translate into a total increase of about 100 older persons with functional limitations over those three decades.

Continued on back ->

# The Dual Challenge: Sierra County

Senior Population  
Senior Population

Health Status  
Health Status

Financial Standing  
Financial Standing

Service Demand  
Service Demand

Aging Network  
Aging Network

## Financial Standing

The federal poverty rate for older adults has fallen fairly steadily since 1959. Many experts have been critical of the official federal measure which is based on the consumer price index and does not account at all for the costs of transportation, housing or health care. Researchers at the Urban Institute have devised an alternate variable, called the Relative Poverty Level, which is indexed to wages. Applying their model, 73 Sierra County seniors age 62 and older will officially be in poverty in 2020, but by then 172 seniors will “feel” as though they are living in poverty.

In February 2008, the Insight Center for Community and Economic Development released findings from their California Elder Economic Security Initiative which used a new method to determine how much income older people need to meet their basic living costs. A condensed table for the county is shown below.

Insight utilizes the Elder Standard figures to demonstrate, in actual dollars, that older adults fall well short of the average costs of living when their only source of income is either SSI or standard Social Security benefits. In Sierra County in 2007, the average elder person received an annual Social Security payment of \$12,076; the average elder couple received \$20,287. Even with this modest budget, seniors must have additional sources of retirement income in order to make ends meet.

### Sierra County, Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index, 2007

Monthly Expenses	Elder Person		Elder Couple	
	Owner with Mortgage	Renter, 1 Bedroom	Owner, No Mortgage	Owner with Mortgage
Housing	\$1,495	\$636	\$417	\$1,495
Food	231	231	427	427
Transportation	202	202	323	323
Health Care (Good Health)	378	378	756	756
Miscellaneous @ 20%	246	246	385	385
<b>Monthly Elder Standard</b>	<b>\$2,552</b>	<b>\$1,693</b>	<b>\$2,307</b>	<b>\$3,385</b>
<b>Annual Elder Standard</b>	<b>\$30,623</b>	<b>\$20,314</b>	<b>\$27,688</b>	<b>\$40,623</b>

(Adapted from the California Elder Economic Security Initiative, Insight, 2007)

## Estimated Number of Seniors by Chances of Being Dependent, 2006

Non-institutionalized population 65+ (N = 669 persons)

Source: Author's Calculations of American Community Survey data

Low Ability = “self-care disability”  
Middle Ability = “physical disability”  
High Ability = no disabilities

Assets based on household income:  
Low Assets = Less than \$20,000/yr  
Middle Assets = \$20,000 – \$45,000/yr  
High Assets = \$45,000 or more/yr

		FINANCIAL ASSETS		
		LOW	MIDDLE	HIGH
PHYSICAL ABILITY	LOW	Highest Risk <b>24</b> (3.6%)	High Risk <b>15</b> (2.2%)	Moderate Risk <b>0</b> (0%)
	MIDDLE	High Risk <b>95</b> (14.2%)	Uncertain Risk <b>60</b> (9.0%)	Low Risk <b>4</b> (0.6%)
	HIGH	Moderate Risk <b>102</b> (15.2%)	Low Risk <b>191</b> (28.6%)	Lowest Risk <b>178</b> (26.6%)

## Service Demand

At the most basic level, individuals who seek home and/or community-based care services generally have a physical limitation, an economic limitation, or both. To illustrate the subtle complexity of this concept, we have developed the Assets-Ability Matrix (see red chart above). Over time, people tend to move toward the highest risk category.

Using a combination of interrelated data sets from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, we have computed estimated numbers of persons 65 and older in Sierra County in each of the nine Matrix categories. As shown in the chart, 24 local citizens are in the highest risk group (darkest red). One-hundred and ten additional seniors are in the high risk categories (red). Another 102 are classified as moderate risk (pink corner squares). Some 60 individuals have uncertain risk (center). Just under 27% of all people age 65 and older in the county are in the lowest risk box (white), therefore, about 73% of seniors had some risk of dependency in 2006.

## Aging Network

How do we revamp programs and services for tomorrow’s elders without compromising vital services for those with the greatest needs today? That is the dual challenge.

Want to help improve services for current and future generations of seniors? Contact Inc. Senior Citizens of Sierra County at: (530) 993-4770