

Theme: Generational Impacts

Future Societal Trend #1

Baby Boomer retirement and un-retirement; talent shortages

Description of Future Societal Trend

The aging of the U.S. Baby Boomer (born 1946-1964) workforce could redefine our notions of retirement and workforce demographics as older people choose a wide range of postretirement employment and leisure options to address personal needs and financial pressures. The U.S. population will continue to age, with the annual growth rate of the 55-and-older group projected at 4.1%, nearly four times the rate of growth of the overall population. It is assumed that many potential retirees may continue to work out of financial necessity or for reasons of professional and personal fulfillment. A recent study by the University of Michigan Retirement Research Center found that “nearly one-half of retirees followed a non-traditional retirement path that involved partial retirement and/or un-retirement and that the un-retirement rate among those observed at least five years after their first retirement is 24 percent. The un-retirement rate was even higher among those retiring at younger ages (as high as 36 percent among those retiring at ages 51 to 52).” Although an overwhelming 76% of Baby Boomers intend to continue working past the traditional retirement age of 65, many are looking for second careers as entrepreneurs or temporary employees.

Future Societal Trend #2

Generation Y (Millennials): digital, “civic”, and connected

Description of Future Societal Trend

The Millennial generation (born 1980-1999) is the most observed and studied generation in U.S. history. Often referred to as “Digital Natives,” they are said to be “always on, always connected” – constantly exchanging messages, surfing the Web, and participating in social networks via their computers, mobile phones, or game consoles. Raised to be active team members in structured recreational and academic activities, Millennials are also expected to be a civically engaged generation focused on institution building and positive social change. Connectivity is a major lifestyle trait for the Millennials. Millennials are often described as confident, having received parenting in a style aimed at building self-esteem at an early age. They are comfortable living more transparent lives on the Web with individual profile pages on social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook and video testimonials on YouTube. Much of their Web use revolves around connecting with friends. Millennials are expected to be a major force for social change as they enter their young adult and family stage of life development.

Theme: A Diverse Future

Future Social Trends #1 and #2

Increasing political and economic impact of diversity – minorities now one third of U.S. population – and future U.S. growth fueled by rising immigration

Description of Future Societal Trends

An increasing diverse population will continue to affect every aspect of U.S. society and could have a significant influence on the nation's political and economic outlook. In 2007, the U.S. minority (non-White) population passed the 100 million mark and now makes up one third of the U.S. population. Some forecasts suggest that Hispanics could rise to one of every four members of the U.S. population by 2016. According to U.S. Census Bureau figures published in May 2007, Hispanics remain the largest minority group, with 44.3 million in July 2006, representing one in seven (14.8%) of the total population. African-Americans were the second largest minority group, totaling 40.2 million in 2006. They were followed by Asians (14.9 million), Native Americans and Alaska Natives (4.5 million), and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (1 million). The United States is moving closer to an era of majority-minority population in which no single ethnic or racial group will hold a majority percentage.

The United Nations estimate that a total of 2.2 million migrates will emigrate from poorer to richer countries every year until 2050. This includes up to 1.2 million Asians and 377,000 Africans migrating to developed economies annually. In 2006, foreign-born workers accounted for 15% of the U.S. labor force. If current trends continue, nearly one in five Americans (19%) could be an immigrant by 2050, compared with one in eight (12%) in 2005. By 2050, the immigrant, or foreign-born, share of the population is expected to surpass the peak reached during the last great wave of immigration a century ago. The most recent U.S. census found that "immigrants accounted for over half the growth in the nation's labor force in the past decade, filling openings in factories and textile mills, restaurants and other blue-collar industries, according to a private analysis of government data." The study of Census Bureau figures between 1990 and 2001 also found that recent immigrants helped fill openings that required more education, such as those in engineering firms and high-tech industries. Immigration also plays a key role in the overall population growth within the United States. A recent report from the Pew Research Center projected the immigration could push the U.S. population beyond 438 million by 2025 (up from 303 million in 2008). The immigrant influx has been felt throughout the country but was especially vital in the Northeast, where the new U.S. residents made up nearly all the net increase in the labor force. Over 22% of immigrants who arrived since 1990 worked in service occupations, compared with 19% of the total foreign-born population and 13% of native-born workers.

Future Societal Trend #3

Redefining work-life balance

Description of Future Societal Trend

As life expectancy rises and the length of the working day for many of us increases, individuals and organization are constantly re-evaluating what constitutes the right work-life balance or “work-life blend.” The tradeoff between income, consumption, and working hours is becoming an increasing choice point for many adult workers. As concerns over working hours and sustainable consumption increase, nearly a third of U.S. workers recently polled said they would prefer more time off rather than more hours of paid employment. A 2007 Monster.com work-life balance survey found that 89% of polled employees placed importance of work-life balance programs such as flex-time and telecommuting when evaluating new jobs. However, only about half the HR professionals polled considered their companies’ work-life balance initiatives important. Workers’ priorities are changing, and more people are trading long work hours and financial rewards for increased time for themselves, their families, and leisure activities. Some specialists believe that because of “always on, always connected” technology, work-life balance has diminished as employees are continuously available, connected and expected to work 24/7. Concerns exist that work-life balance may be taking a back seat because of increasing pressures from global economic competition, the economic downturn, and organizations downsizing or freezing hiring.

Theme: Clinical Population Outlook

Future Societal Trend #1

Rising life expectancy, aging global populations

Description of Future Societal Trend

Alongside population growth, the world's aging population will be the demographic story of the 21st Century. Since 1945 the life expectancy of citizens living in the wealthier countries around the world has increased by 1 year every 5 years. Expanded access to basic health care, nutrition, and safe water supplies has increased the global life expectancy. The American Life Extension Institute believes that average life expectancy in the United States will reach 100 by 2029. Some scientists, such as Cambridge geneticist Aubrey de Grey, argue that aging is a disease curable in our own lifetimes. As a result, they say that the life expectancy of even mature adults could extend to 500 or even 1,000 years. Aging has wide-ranging implications related to wealth distribution, pensions and social services, health care, financial services, consumer spending, industry sector makeup, labor markets, and political policies.

Excerpts taken from:

Lemke, A. & Dublinske, S. (2010). Designing ASHA's future: Trends for the association and the professions. Retrieved from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website: <http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/Designing-ASHAs-Future.pdf>