

UPSTATE NEW YORK AT-A-GLANCE

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF NEW YORK, BUFFALO BRANCH

NUMBER 1

JULY 2006

The Aging of Upstate New York

The United States is in the midst of a powerful demographic trend: the aging of its population. Advances in medical technology and lifestyle changes have lengthened life expectancies while birth rates have declined. Moreover, the elderly share of the population will rise quickly once the 76 million-strong baby-boom generation—those born between 1946 and 1964—begins turning 65 in just a few years. The rapid aging of the population is expected to have profound effects on all aspects of American society. This issue of Upstate New York At-a-Glance outlines the pattern of aging in the region and suggests some implications.

What are the population trends?

In upstate New York,¹ as in the nation, the share of the population aged 65 and over has been increasing steadily. However, upstate New York has been aging faster than the United States and a greater share of its population is elderly. Both the U.S. and upstate New York populations will age rapidly as the baby-boomers move into elderhood between 2011 and 2029, after which the trend will subside (Chart 1).

- In 1970, the share of the population aged 65 and over was only slightly

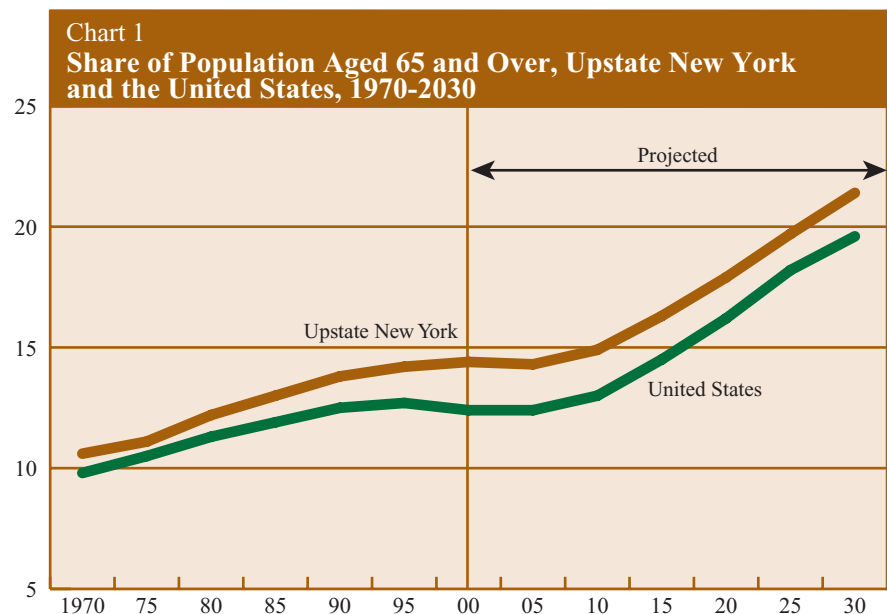
higher for upstate New York than for the nation as a whole, 10.6 percent compared with 9.9 percent.

- By 2000, the share of the upstate New York population aged 65 and over had risen to 14.4 percent, almost two percentage points higher than that of the nation.
- While some regions have aged more rapidly than the nation due to the in-migration of retirees, upstate New York's trend has been driven by the out-migration of non-elderly adults, especially those aged 20 to 34.
- The U.S. Bureau of the Census projects that by 2030, 20.8 percent of upstate New York's population will be aged 65 and over, a share still slightly higher than for the nation as a whole.

How is the proportion of working age to older adults changing?

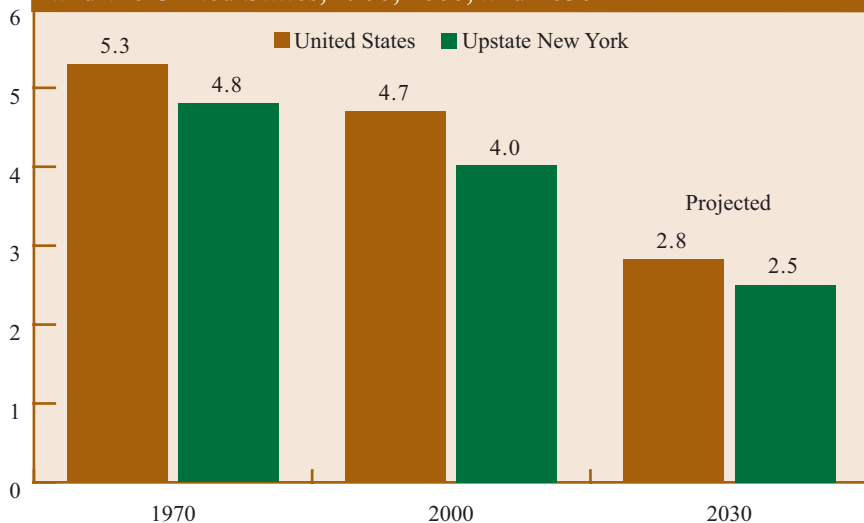
As upstate New York's population has become older, there has been a decline in the *support ratio*, that is, the number of working-age adults per older adult (Chart 2). A declining support ratio may identify regions with a weakening ability to support their dependent elderly populations.

- From 1970 to 2000, the number of adults aged 20 to 64 in upstate New York available to support each older adult decreased from 4.8 to 4.0, figures somewhat lower than those for the nation.
- The support ratio is projected to decline considerably by 2030, reaching 2.5 for upstate New York and 2.8 for the nation as a whole.



Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Economy.com.

Chart 2
Working-Age Adults per Older Adult, Upstate New York and the United States, 1970, 2000, and 2030



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

How are the elderly distributed across the region?

While the share of the population that is elderly is above the U.S. average in more than 80 percent of upstate New York's counties, age structures vary considerably across the region (see map).

- The share of the population aged 65 and over ranges from a high of 20.0 percent in Hamilton County (North Country Region) to a low of 9.6 percent in Tompkins County (Southern Tier Region).
- By 2030, over three-fourths of upstate New York's counties are projected to have a 20 percent or greater share of elderly.²
- Upstate New York's oldest counties tend to be located within metropolitan areas that have experienced significant out-migration, such as Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Elmira, Jamestown, and Utica.

What are the implications?

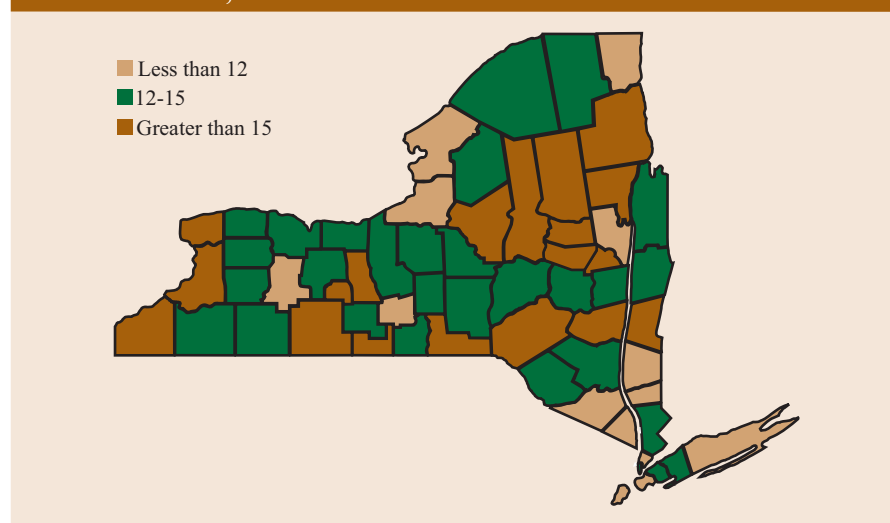
The aging of upstate New York's population has significant implications for the region and its counties.

- A considerable share of services and infrastructure for the elderly, such as supportive housing, special

transportation, health care and social services, are provided and funded by local governments and institutions. The number of elderly with special needs is likely to increase over the next few decades.

- The need for services among the elderly may be greatest in older upstate New York counties that have experienced the slowest economic growth.
- The declining support ratio suggests that the region has fewer working-age adults to support the need for locally provided services and infrastructure.
- With the rise in the average age of the population, there is likely to be an increase in the use of age-related services such as health care and social services, which could stimulate new job opportunities in these areas. Additionally, as a greater percentage of the population retires, a larger demand will emerge for travel, tourism, and other services related to recreation and leisure.

Map
Percentage Share of Population Aged 65 and Over by County, New York State, 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

For more information on this and other regional issues, see www.newyorkfed.org/buffalo.

Buffalo Branch, Federal Reserve Bank of New York (716) 849-5014

¹ Upstate New York refers to a 49-county region of New York State encompassing all but the downstate counties of Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Westchester, Rockland, Bronx, New York, Richmond, Kings, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk.

² Readers can view additional maps showing projected population changes from 2000 to 2030 at <http://www.newyorkfed.org/aboutthefed/buffalo/presentation/>.