

## THE MACARTHUR RESEARCH NETWORK ON AN AGING SOCIETY

---

*The MacArthur Research Network on an Aging Society is an interdisciplinary group of scholars who are conducting a broad-based analysis of how to help the nation prepare for the challenges and opportunities posed by an aging society. Research focuses on how major societal institutions, including retirement, housing and labor markets, government and families, will have to change to support the emergence of a productive, equitable aging society.*

### AT A GLANCE

- By the middle of the next decade, the United States will become an aging society, with more Americans over age 60 than under age 15.
- The 76 million members of the baby boom generation will reach retirement age over the next decade.
- In the past century, U.S. life expectancy at birth has climbed from 47 to 77 years. After age 65, life expectancy has continued to rise for most Americans, as seniors experience healthier and more vital lives due to biomedical and technological advances.
- The Network seeks to help policy makers understand the impact of these demographic changes and develop policies and strategies to optimize the opportunities for all ages and socio-economic groups in an aging America.



### BACKGROUND

Tomorrow's America will be a unique aging society forged by two critical forces: the increase in disability-free life expectancy in the 20th century, and the retirement of the baby boom generation over the next decade. While some analysis and much political discussion has circulated around the sustainability of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds, less work has been done on the many critical issues surrounding the social, economic, and institutional implications of an aging society. Questions include:

- What will life be like for the elderly as well as the middle-aged and younger generations?

- How will the aging of America affect society's key institutions, including retirement, education, housing and labor markets, churches, local communities, political parties, government, and families?
- How will aging impact those in various socioeconomic groups disparately?

The MacArthur Research Network on an Aging Society was created in 2008 with a \$3.9 million grant from the Foundation. The Network is chaired by Dr. John Rowe, former CEO of Aetna and a professor at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. Previously, Dr. Rowe led the groundbreaking MacArthur Research Network on Successful Aging, which helped

change America's concept of aging from a period of inevitable decline to a more nuanced and positive view of life beyond 60 and published the best-selling book, *Successful Aging*.

### RESEARCH THEMES

The Research Network on an Aging Society seeks to help policy makers understand the impact of the demographic changes and develop policies and strategies at the local and national levels that will optimize the opportunities for all ages and socioeconomic groups in an aging America.

Network members represent a wide range of disciplines, including gerontology,



psychology and health behavior, macro-economics and public policy, social epidemiology, cognitive neuroscience, demography, and aging policy. Drawing on the collective expertise of its 12 members, the Network focuses on three themes:

- The positive and negative impact of key intergenerational issues on families and society;
- The development of meaningful roles for older people; and
- The potential effects that the various sources of diversity and inequalities may have on the structure, economy, and overall health of an aging society.

## SELECT RESEARCH FINDINGS

Network research published in *The Milbank Quarterly* finds that current government projections may significantly underestimate the future life expectancy of Americans. By 2050, Americans may live 3.1 to 7.9 years longer than official government projections, resulting in sharply higher costs for government programs that serve older citizens.

Network research published in *Contexts* magazine debunks seven common myths about aging, including that policy makers must choose between investments in youth or the elderly and that being old entails being frail.

Network research published in the *American Journal of Public Health* explores how effective prevention could substantially improve the health of older Americans. Despite increases in longevity, such benefits could be achieved with little or no additional lifetime medical spending.

To read the articles, go to:  
**[www.macfound.org/aging](http://www.macfound.org/aging)**

## NETWORK MEMBERS

### **Dr. John Rowe** (Chair)

Professor, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University

### **Dr. Lisa Berkman**

Director, Center for Population and Development Studies, Harvard University

### **Dr. Robert Binstock**

Professor of Aging, Health, and Society, Case Western Reserve University

### **Dr. Axel Börsch-Supan**

Director, Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Aging, University of Mannheim, Germany

### **Dr. John T. Cacioppo**

Tiffany & Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor and Director, Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience, University of Chicago

### **Dr. Laura L. Carstensen**

Professor of Psychology and Director, Stanford Center on Longevity, Stanford University

### **Dr. Linda P. Fried**

Dean and DeLamar Professor of Public Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University

### **Dr. Dana P. Goldman**

Director, Health Economics, Finance, and Organization, RAND

### **Dr. James S. Jackson**

Daniel Katz Distinguished University Professor of Psychology, Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education, School of Public Health, Director of the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan

### **Dr. Martin Kohli**

Professor of Sociology, European University Institute, Florence, Italy

### **Dr. S. Jay Olshansky**

Professor, School of Public Health, University of Illinois at Chicago

### **John Rother**

Executive Vice President for Policy and Strategy, AARP





#### **For More Information**

##### **John Rowe**

Chair, MacArthur Research Network  
on an Aging Society  
jwr2108@mail.cumc.columbia.edu

##### **Michael Stegman**

Director of Policy and Housing  
mstegman@macfound.org

#### **About The MacArthur Foundation**

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In addition to selecting the MacArthur Fellows, the Foundation works to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society.

**For more information or to sign-up for our free electronic newsletter, please visit [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org).**

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation  
140 South Dearborn St., Suite 1200, Chicago, Illinois 60603-5285  
Telephone: (312) 726-8000 Fax: (312) 920-6258  
[www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org)  
TDD: (312) 920-6285