

Taiwan's future is 'super-aged': DOH

By Grace Soong, The China Post July 12, 2011

1. Taiwan's population has been aging, and it is estimated that in 14 years, Taiwan would have evolved from “aging” to “aged,” and eventually, “super-aged” according to the Department of Health (DOH), which released a Taiwan aging map yesterday.
2. Research done by the Bureau of Health Promotion (BHP) shows that, as those born during the 1946 post-war baby boom turn 65 this year, the Taiwanese population has officially joined the aging trend.
3. Taiwan has been regarded as an aging society since 1993 when the number of the elderly — those who are 65 years of age and above — reached seven percent of the entire population. Judging from that growing trend, the Council for Economic Planning and Development estimated that in six years (by 2017), the number of the elderly would reach 14 percent, and the Taiwanese population could be described as an “aged society.” In another eight years, by 2025, Taiwan would be a super-aged society, with over 20 percent of its population being the elderly.
4. Chiu Shiu-ti, director-general of the BHP, pointed out yesterday that the Taiwanese population is aging more rapidly than the western countries: while France is taking 115 years to gradually age, Sweden taking 85 years, and the United States taking 73 years, Taiwan has greatly aged within 24 years.
5. On top of the fact that the post-war baby boomers have recently joined the elderly crowd, the drop in fertility rate also acts as a major factor to such rapid aging, Chiu said.
6. The most direct impact an aging population poses on a nation's economic development is the change in its productive forces.
7. According to research statistics, the ratio between Taiwan's productive population (those aged between 15 and 64) and the elderly is currently 7:1; in 11 years (2022), the ratio would drop to 4:1, and in another six years (2028) it would drop to 3:1. By 2039, 28 years from now, the ratio of productive to elderly would have dropped to 2:1.

23 Cities and Counties 'Super-aged' in Taiwan

8. According to the Taiwan aging map the BHP released yesterday, 23 cities and counties in Taiwan are considered “super-aged,” with one out of every four to five residents being elderly.

9. Chiayi County, Yunlin County, and Penghu County are “elderly counties,” with 14 percent of their populations elderly, while the New Taipei City Pingxi District is the most aged district in Taiwan, with 25.8 percent of residents elderly.
10. Taoyuan County, New Taipei City, Taichung, Hsinchu, and Lienchiang County are the “youngest” areas in Taiwan, with less than 10 percent of their populations being elderly. That New Taipei City has, overall, the second-youngest population in Taiwan, yet it also hosts three super-aged communities, including the Pingxi District, demonstrates the need for local governments to provide more detailed planning on demographic policies to cope with district aging differences, the BHP said.
11. Unless precautions are carefully taken so the elderly can function healthily and independently, in the years to come, Taiwan's competitiveness will be in great danger due to rapidly diminishing productivity and a growing retirement crowd, Chiu said.

Prevalent Chronic Disorders Found in the Elderly

12. It is also noted by the BHP that 88.7 percent of the elderly have at least one kind of chronic disorder, while almost 50 percent of the elderly report that they suffer simultaneously from three or more chronic disorders. High blood pressure, cataract, and cardiovascular disorders are the three most prevalent chronic disorders found in the Taiwanese elderly.

Q1: How come the ratio of elderly people is likely to increase? (What causes a society to become aged?)

Q2: What are the benefits and disadvantages of a society with many elderly people?

Q3: How can we help the elderly ‘function healthily and independently, in the years to come’?