



# Is Boston Ready for an Aging Population? New Local Survey Reveals Bostonians' Concerned About Their City and Themselves as They Get Old; New Website, Healthy Aging "By the Decades" Checklist and Aging Communities Toolkit Offers Help

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## **Pfizer and Generations United challenge people and communities to define how they want to Get Old**

NEW YORK, N.Y., July 11 - More than eight out of ten people who live in the Boston area believe they will live a long life but only about one-third of Boston-area residents feel their community is very prepared to support an aging population. And while two-thirds of Boston-area residents think the quality of life for seniors is better now than in the past, there is an overall feeling of unpreparedness around Boston-area infrastructure, according to a new survey commissioned by Pfizer Inc. and Generations United, an intergenerational advocacy organization. The general feeling of lack of preparedness is seen across all generations - from Millennials to the Greatest Generation. With more than 10,000 people expected to turn 65 every day through 2030, community concerns reflected in the survey centered on inadequate transportation, housing and caregiving for

older people. Only a small portion of respondents feel their communities are very equipped in terms of healthcare facilities, home caregiving, transportation, and housing for older people.

Aging well means living in a community prepared to support people as they age. But 50 percent of respondents feel Boston is not at all prepared to provide appropriate employment opportunities for an aging population and more than four out of ten feel being old is something to fear. On a more positive note, 72 percent of survey respondents believe that people who work past retirement age stay healthier longer and are happier.

“While we’ve seen many improvements in our society for aging populations in recent years, there are still many hurdles that need to be overcome,” says Dr. Freda Lewis-Hall, Chief Medical Officer for Pfizer. “The good news is that there is a lot we can do to protect and enhance our quality of life as we age, simply by committing today to healthy behaviors that help prevent or delay chronic disease.”

Chronic diseases are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and according to the World Health Organization, eliminating three risk factors – poor diet, inactivity and smoking – would prevent 80% of heart disease and stroke, 80% of type 2 diabetes and 40% of cancers. Indicating an awareness of the importance of healthy choices, only 50 percent of Boston-area residents are very comfortable with their current physical health although 68% are generally comfortable with their current age. Fewer than half (48%) are very comfortable about their future and only about four in ten (42%) are very comfortable with getting older in general. Interestingly, more Bostonians feel comfortable telling people their age (77%) than talking about politics (44%) or religion (57%).

To encourage more people to take a more active role in their health at every age, Pfizer is working with Generations United and others to ask Bostonians to consider: how do you want to Get Old? Get Old is an initiative created by Pfizer to encourage productive conversation and actions around aging and living better. Bostonians can visit a new Pfizer-sponsored website at [www.GetOld.com](http://www.GetOld.com) to join the conversation and to find information about healthy aging. Pfizer has also developed a Healthy Aging Checklist, organized by the decade, that provides simple health tips on everything from skin care to preventive care for men and women from their 20s to their 60s. Grantmakers In Aging has also created a series of toolkits, with the support of the Pfizer Foundation, that can be accessed here: *Age-Friendly Communities: The movement to create great places to grow up and grow old in America*; *Aging Power Tools* and *Age-Friendly America* for communities which want to develop strategies to ensure their citizens have the transportation, housing, health care and employment opportunities needed to Get Old in

their own community.

“Our communities should be places where we can grow up and grow old and where, no matter what our age, we feel connected and engaged,” says Donna Butts, Executive Director of Generations United, an advocacy organization focused on improving the lives of children, youth and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs and public policies. “Good communities, like lives well lived, don’t just happen. They require careful planning and nurturing. Let’s start thinking ahead to what Boston needs to do to prepare for a healthy, older America.”

“The key to vitality at every age is being connected to each other and to our community. Together we make a difference,” says Maureen Power, PhD Executive Director of the Intergenerational Urban Institute at Worcester State University. The IUI channels the energies of elder and traditional students in service to the community. Its motto is “educated, engaged energized.”

“Jumpstart’s Community Corps program offers a unique opportunity for adults of any age to get involved in service,” said Naila Bolus, President and CEO of Jumpstart, a national early education organization headquartered in Boston, that recruits and trains older adults and college students to serve preschool children in low-income neighborhoods. “Our program helps older adults improve their physical and mental well-being through the direct service they provide to preschool children living in poverty. We offer them rigorous training courses and give them a forum to build meaningful relationships with the communities they serve, inspiring children, parents, teachers and their peers.”

#### Other key survey findings

66% of respondents in the Boston area agree their workplace values diversity of age but their top work related fear is not being able to retire when planned (61%), followed closely by a fear of not being able to get a new job (56%). Only 30% of respondents feel the community is very prepared to provide appropriate healthcare facilities for older people and just 21% feel the community is very prepared to provide home caregiving. Only 33% feel the Boston area is very prepared with transportation options for older people and just 17% see Boston as very prepared to provide housing for this population. 63% of Boston-area respondents feel U.S. politicians portray older generations in a positive way and more than half (51%) feel the media does, too. A huge majority (92%) agree that technology allows you to stay connected with the people in your life but that it’s a lot of work to keep up with (69%).

The 2013 Get Old survey was fielded by Harris Interactive and included 300 respondents in Boston, ages 18-plus. The survey was conducted between March 25 and April 12, 2013.

### **About Pfizer, Inc.**

Pfizer employs 2,112 in Massachusetts and has Research and Development sites in Cambridge and Andover. At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value the discovery, development and manufacture of health care products. Our global portfolio includes medicines and vaccines as well as many of the world's best-known consumer products. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time. Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For more than 150 years, Pfizer has worked to make a difference for all who rely on us. To learn more, please visit us at [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com).

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