

# As baby boomers age, so does New York

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Written by **Jon Campbell** -- [pressconnects.com](http://pressconnects.com)

ALBANY -- New York is getting older.

[U.S. Census](#) figures released Thursday confirmed what many had already suspected, with the state's median age rising to 38 in 2010, a two-year increase from a decade earlier.

The rise appears to have been fueled by the aging of the baby boom generation, with more than 2.3 million New Yorkers now between the ages 55 and 64, a 37 percent jump from 2000. During that same time period, the state's total population increased by about 2 percent.

"We've expected this, and we've been planning for this," said Reza Mizbani, a spokesman for the state Office for the Aging. "We've known about this tsunami of baby boomers joining the ranks of the population, and we've been aware of the change of characteristics in the elderly in this state."

Baby boomers are now in their peak earning years, said Tom Hirschl, a professor who [leads](#) Cornell University's Population and Development Program. That's good news for the state's economy now, but it could turn problematic as they exit the work force.

Brian Sampson, executive director of [business](#) group Unshackle Upstate, said the state's aging population speaks to the need to make New York more business friendly, which would create jobs to entice young people to stay within its borders.

A NY1/YNN-Marist College poll released Thursday found 36 percent of New Yorkers aged 18 to 29 plan to leave the state within five years.

"If we're going to reverse this trend by the next census, what we're going to have to do is control spending, reduce the tax burden on private-sector [businesses](#) and our homeowners, and take those who we are educating in our fine higher-education institutions and find a way to keep them in New York State," Sampson said.

While many focus on keeping the younger crowd within the state's borders, [New York](#) State Association of Counties Executive Director Stephen Acquario said the aging population shouldn't be lost in the shuffle.

"I think this information should be a wake-up call for state policy leaders and local-government leaders to come to some consensus on how to best provide what government can offer to help

keep older adults in our state before they leave and take their assets with them, which they spend and is the backbone of every single corner of this state," Acquario said.

An older community has unique implications for county and municipal governments, especially those located in rural areas, Acquario said. Rural counties have to come up with an effective plan to transport seniors in need of health care. Many live far from the closest provider, he said.

The Census Bureau also released a number of housing statistics, including the vacant unit rate - 9.7 percent -- and the average household size, which was 2.57 in 2010, almost unchanged from a decade earlier. About 53 percent of the state's housing units are owner-occupied, but that number is swayed by renter-heavy New York City.

But it was the age figures that jumped out at Hirschl, the Cornell professor, and the state should expect those trends to continue, he said.

"We're going to start seeing clergy spending more time at funerals than they will at baptisms and birth ceremonies," Hirschl said. "That's the way the business of vital events is going."