

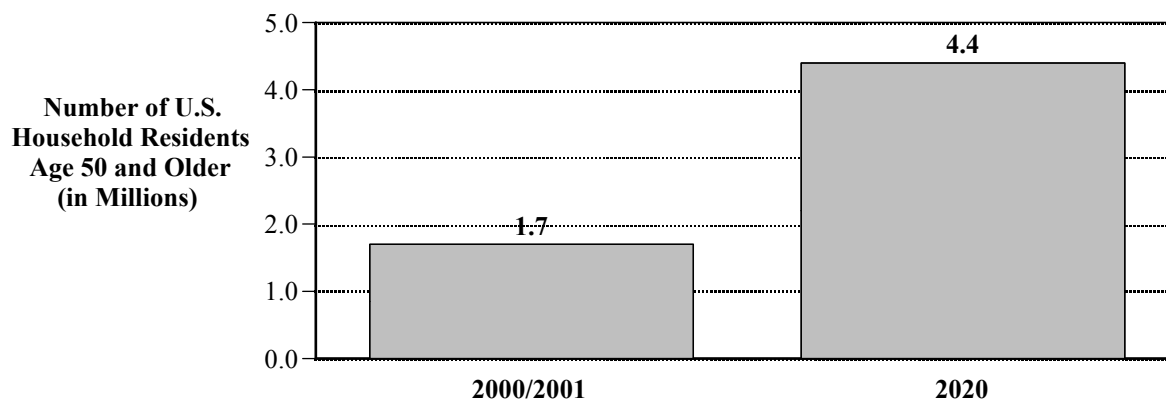
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Substance Abuse Treatment Needs of Baby Boomers Expected to Nearly Triple by 2020

The estimated number of people age 50 or older in need of substance abuse treatment is expected to increase from 1.7 million in 2000/2001 to 4.4 million in 2020, according to a recent analysis of data from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. Individuals born between 1946 and 1964—"baby boomers"—are more likely than previous cohorts to be illicit drug and heavy alcohol users and are therefore more likely to be in need of substance abuse treatment as they age. The study estimates that the rate of treatment need among this population will increase from 2.3% in 2000/2001 to 3.9% in 2020. In addition, the baby-boom cohort is larger than previous cohorts—the number of persons age 50 or older is projected to increase from 74.8 million in 2000/2001 to 112.5 million in 2020. The authors conclude that "these data support the notion that the aging of the baby-boom cohort in the US, with its relatively large size and high rate of substance use, will place increasing demands on the substance abuse treatment system in the next two decades. This will require a shift in focus among treatment planners to address the special needs of an older population of substance abusers" (p. 134).

**Estimated Number (in Millions) of U.S. Household Residents Age 50 and Older
In Need of Treatment, 2000/2001 and 2020**



NOTE: Treatment need is defined as being classified with substance dependence or abuse based on DSM-IV criteria.

SOURCE: Gfroerer, J., Penne, M., Pemberton, M., Folsom, R. "Substance Abuse Treatment Need Among Older Adults in 2020: the Impact of the Aging Baby-Boom Cohort," *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 69(2):127-135, 2003. For more information, contact Joseph Gfroerer at jgfroerer@samhsa.gov.

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