

# **Celebration of Longevity**

**Terry Martin**

# Introduction

## Quality v Quantity

**Life, if well lived, is long enough.**

*Seneca*

# **Life Expectancy**

**The term *life expectancy* refers to the number of years a person can expect to live on average.**

# Life Expectancy

Figure 1 Life expectancy at birth

England and Wales, 1841–2000

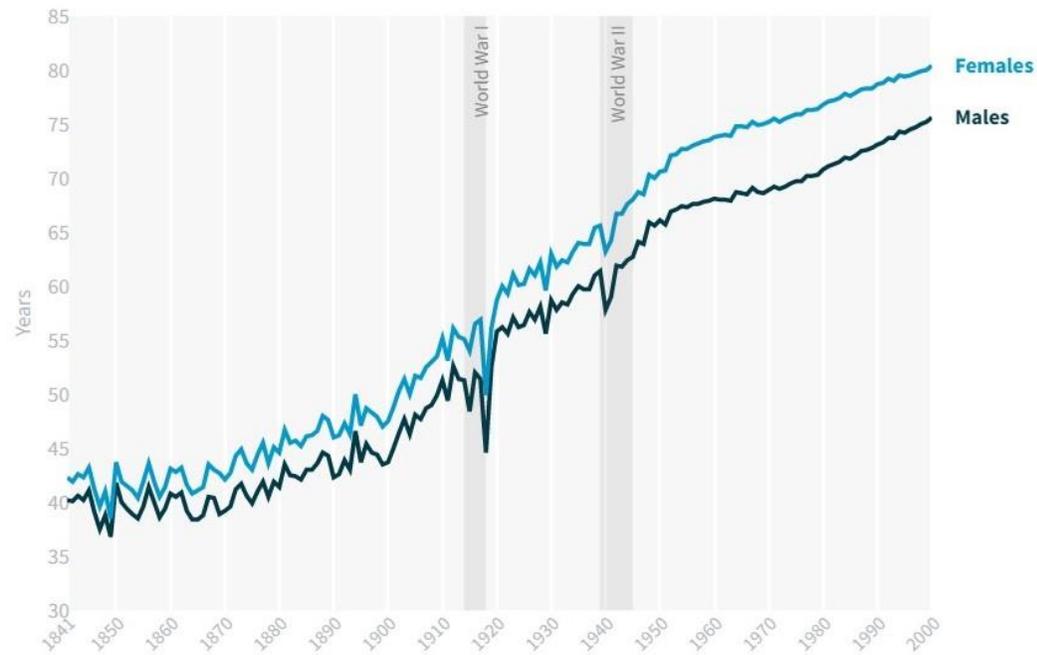
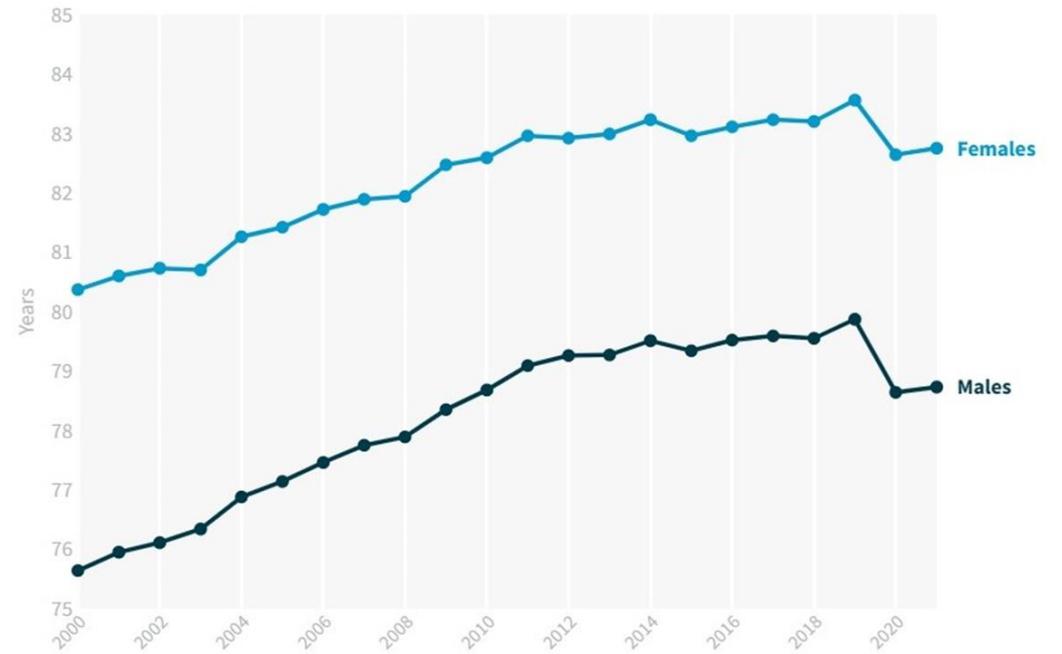
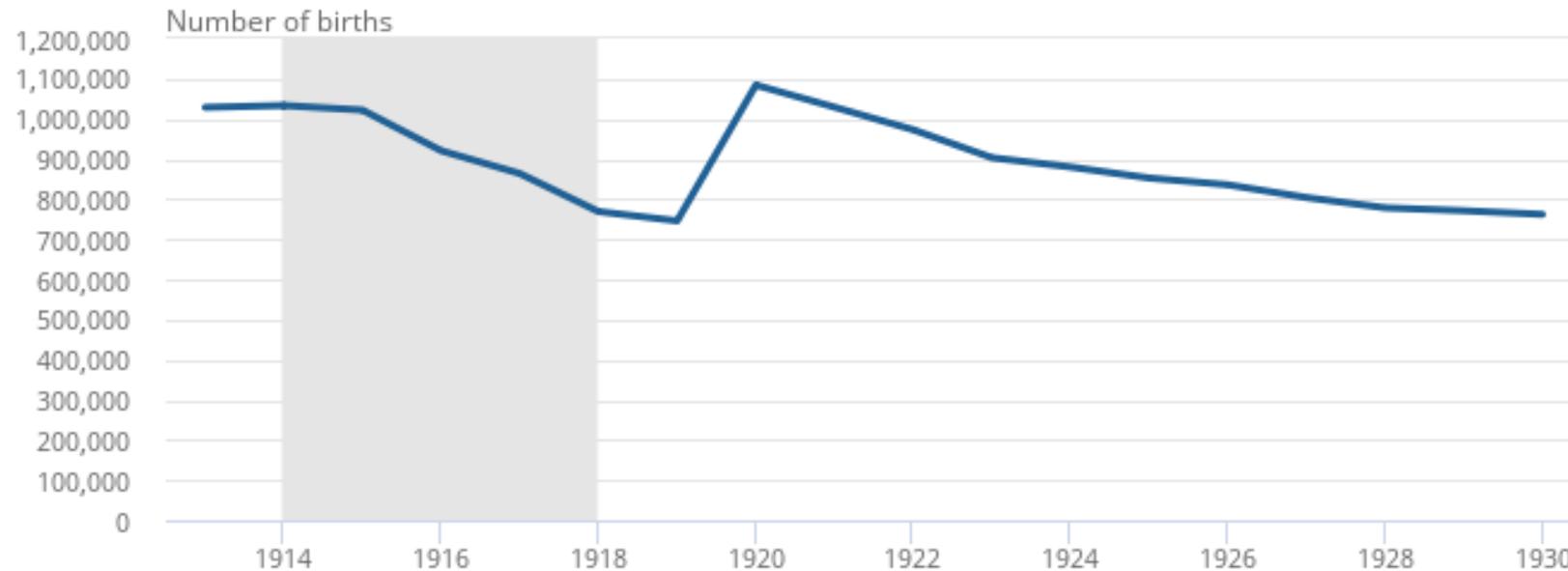


Figure 2 Life expectancy at birth

England, 2000–21



# Life Expectancy



After declining during World War One, birth numbers increased sharply following the end of the War

# Life Expectancy





# Old Age: Chronology v Functionality

*Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion;  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

# Collective Memory and Tradition

Collective memory refers to how groups remember their past. To understand a country's memories is to grasp something essential about their national identity and outlook.

*Roediger and DeSoto (2016)*

# Collective Memory and Tradition

Collective memories are a community's shared renderings of the past that help shape its collective identity (Halbwachs, 1950). From this perspective, they are the collective variant of autobiographical memories, which are individually held memories that help shape personal identity. The identity constructing function of collective memories implies that not all shared memories are collective memories. That is, a memory can only be considered collective if it is widely shared and if it helps to define and bind together a group (Assmann, 1995).

*Brown, Kouri and Hirst (2012)*

# Collective Memory and Tradition

Tradition is not just a pretty thing, much less dead or to be curated – it is the past brought to life, guiding us through the present, offering a roadmap to the future.

*Stanley (2021)*

# Demography

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) defines **Demography** as the statistical study of human populations and examines the size, structure, and movements of populations over space and time.

It is concerned with the key issues of mortality, (death), fertility, (birth) and migration (movements of people).

# Demographic Challenge

One of the most significant demographic challenges today is that many young couples are either deciding to remain childless, or delaying starting a family and having fewer children. This together with increased life expectancy of older people means that a numerically diminished working population is supporting, financially and emotionally, an increasing number of older people.

# Demographic Challenge

This can lead to resentment, the opposite of gratitude, and maintaining intergenerational harmony will be a task for both politicians and community members.

# Demographic Challenge

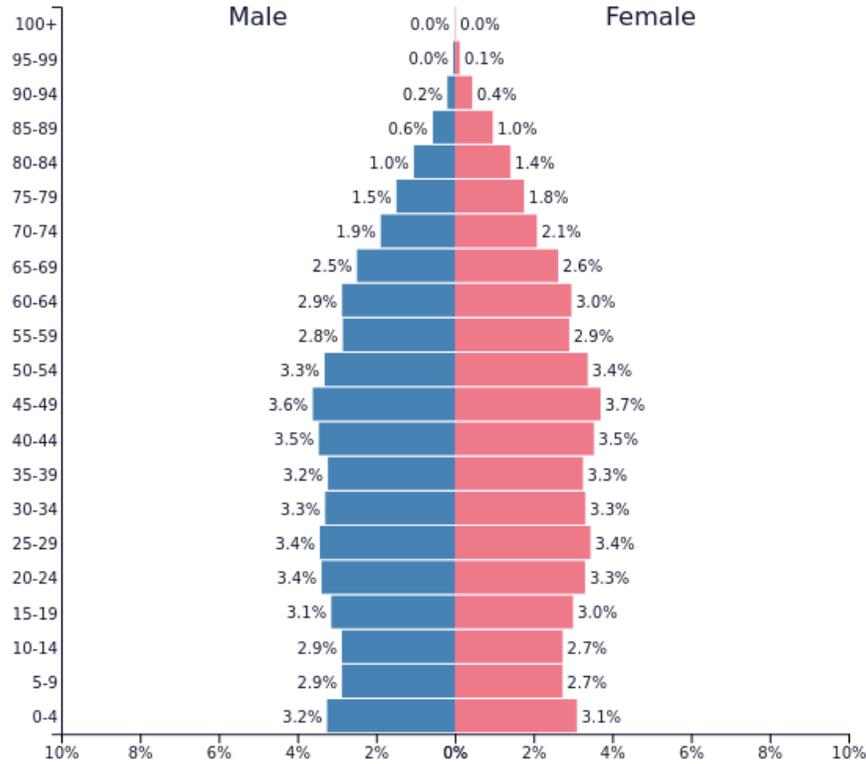
This rhetoric of burden and boomer is sweepingly used to define the same group – older people. The choice of burden or boomer depends on the commentator and their oftentimes politically motivated and biased message.

As an older person, this would appear to be a lose-lose situation.

If you are able to live independently, both in terms of health and wealth, then you are stealing it from younger generations – you are a boomer. If you are unable to live independently, then you are bringing down our health services and our economy – you are a burden.

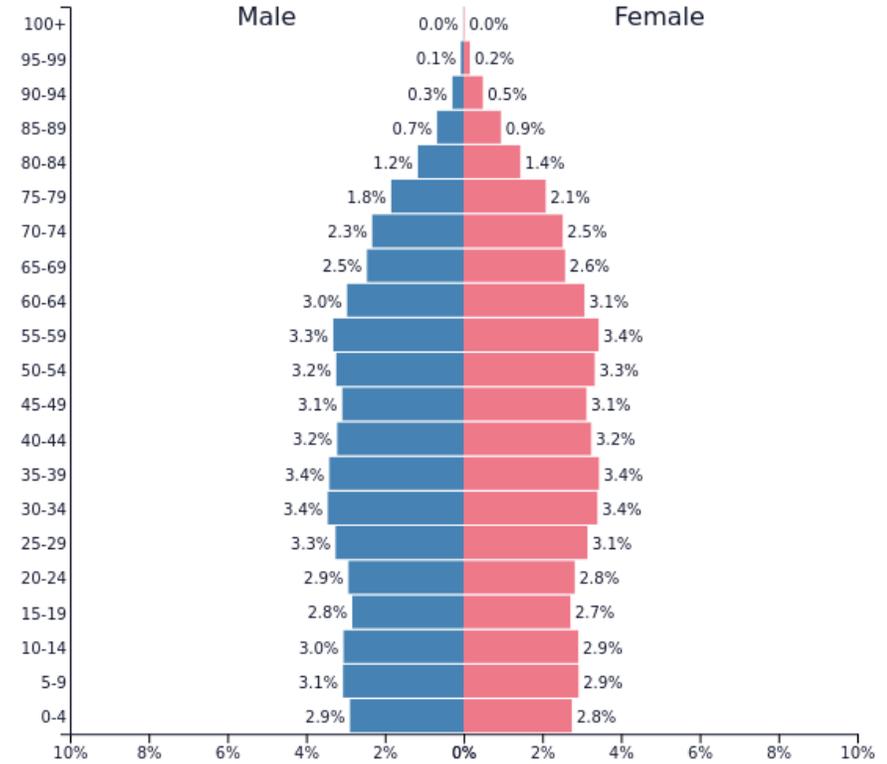
*Leeson (2021)*

# Demographic Challenge



PopulationPyramid.net

United Kingdom - 2012  
Population: 64,525,300



PopulationPyramid.net

United Kingdom - 2022  
Population: 68,497,913

# Conclusion

In the past two decades, there has been a **58% increase** in the number of UK centenarians. However, according to ONS research<sup>12</sup>, life expectancy in the UK for men has fallen for the first time in four decades, to **79 years**, whereas female life expectancy has remained largely unchanged, at **83**.

*Lottie*

# Conclusion

The biggest headache facing families with a very elderly parent or relative is finding a suitable care home, nursing home or retirement living community, when the time arrives. The headache is compounded when the financial implication of such provision becomes apparent.

In certain ethnic communities multigenerational households are the norm, and the shared expectation is that the elderly will be cared for in this way.

My mother is keen to stay in her own home and this is currently enabled by thrice daily visits of carers who pay brief (15 minute) visits at mealtimes.

**Despite the challenges and inconveniences her longevity remains a source of family celebration and gratitude.**