

FOCUS ON



Rent-a-Grandpa

Italy has one of the lowest birth rates in the world. With a TFR of just 1.3, Italy is projected to have its population shrink by 10 percent between 2004 and 2050. Partially responsible for this low level of growth is the fact that Italy's population is also one of the oldest in the world, with 18.6 percent of its population age 65 or older. Combined with these demographic changes is the fact that more Italian women than ever work outside the home for an income.

Given that the Italian culture does not embrace the institutionalization of the growing ranks of their elderly, and faced with the reality that there are few women willing or able to stay at home full time to care for them, Italians have gotten

creative. Elderly men and women can apply for adoption by families in need of grandfathers or grandmothers. One such man, Giorgio Angelozzi, recently moved in with the Rivas, a Roman family with two teenagers. Angelozzi said that Marlena Riva's voice reminded him of his deceased wife, Lucia, and this is what convinced him to choose the Riva family. Dagmara Riva, the family's teenage daughter, says that Mr. Angelozzi has helped her with Latin studies and that "Grandpa is a person of great experience, an affectionate person. We're very happy we invited him to live with us."

Adapted from D'Emilio, 2004

ment havens for the elderly; parts of Arizona and Florida, for example, have populations far above the average age. Communities such as Sun City near Phoenix, Arizona, legally restrict residence to the elderly. In Great Britain, coastal districts have a much higher proportion of elderly than does the interior, causing the map to resemble a hollow shell and suggesting that the aged often migrate to seaside locations when they retire.

A very useful graphic device for comparing age characteristics is the **population pyramid** (Figure 7.10 on page 230). Careful study of such pyramids not only reveals the past progress of birth control but also allows geographers to predict future population trends. Youth-weighted pyramids, those that are broad at the base, suggest the rapid growth typical of the population explosion. Those that have more of a cylindrical shape represent countries approaching population stability or in demographic decline.

Geography of Gender

Although the human race is divided almost evenly between females and males, geographical differences do occur in the **sex ratio**: the ratio between men and women in a population (Figure 7.11 on pages 232–233). Slightly more boys than girls are born, but infant boys have slightly higher mortality rates than infant girls. Recently settled areas typically have more males than females, as is evident in parts of Alaska, northern Canada, and tropical Australia. At the latest census, males constituted 53 percent of Alaska's inhabitants. By contrast, Mississippi's population was 52 percent female, reflecting in part the emigration of young males in

search of better economic opportunity elsewhere. Some poverty-stricken parts of South Africa are as much as 59 percent female. Prolonged wars reduce the male population. And, in general, women tend to outlive men. The population pyramid is also useful in showing gender ratios. Note, for instance, the larger female populations in the upper bars for both the United States and Sun City, Arizona, in Figure 7.10.

Beyond such patterns, gender often influences demographic traits in specific ways. Often *gender roles*—culturally specific notions of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman—are closely tied to how many children are produced by couples. In many cultures, women are considered more womanly when they produce many offspring. By the same token, men are seen as more manly when they father many children. Because the raising of children often falls to women, the spaces that many cultures associate with women tend to be the private family spaces of the home. Public spaces such as streets, plazas, and the workplace, by contrast, are often associated with men (see Chapter 10). Some cultures go so far as to restrict where women and men may and may not go, resulting in a distinctive geography of gender. Falling fertility levels that coincide with higher levels of education for women, however, have resulted in numerous challenges to these cultural ideas of male and female spaces. As more and more women enter the workplace, for instance, ideas of where women should and should not go slowly become modified (see Culture in a Globalizing World on page 231).

Other forces also influence the geography of gender. A disturbing tendency exists in certain countries, most