

AGING

Now 65 is the new young, population scientists say

New study suggests it's not your age, but how independent you feel that shows if you're old

LESLEY CIARULA TAYLOR
STAFF REPORTER

The population gurus who proved scientifically that 40 is the new 30 are proposing another radical rethink: 65, 70 or even 80 is not old.

The Western world's panic over a greying population is wrong, Sergei Scherbov and Warren Sanderson contend in their latest study in Friday's *Science* magazine.

It's not how old you are, they say, it's how independent you are.

"If you look at aging with the traditional indicators, you say people are old at 65," Scherbov told the *Star*.

"But a person who today is 60 years old may be around for another 25 years or even more.

"So they are at a different stage of their life than someone who was 60 years old 50 or 100 or 200 years ago."

Societies think about age based on markers supplied by statistics agencies at the United Nations, he said. They use an Old Age Dependency Ratio to figure out the burden on society of supporting elderly people.

That means everyone 65 and over is counted as being dependent on the younger, working-age population to support them.

Out of date, say the authors.

They advocate an Adult Disability Dependency Ratio, which measures aging based on the ratio of people who need care as opposed to the people who can give care.

"My father was age 80 and he was caring for my mother," said Scherbov.

"Some people are dependent when they are 40."

Looked at in this new way, the population is a lot longer than we think it is, he said.

"For people who are providing care at age 65 or 75, there is no reason for the state to support them."

The scientists use "internationally harmonized data" to develop a computer model that provides numbers for high income OECD countries.

In 2005, Sanderson, of Stony Brook University in New York and Scherbov, of the Vienna Institute of Demography, used scientific data in a study called *Rethinking Age and Aging* to prove why 40 is the new 30

or why our way of thinking about age was antiquated.

"We need now to take the next step," said Scherbov.

Their new study is *Re-measuring Age and Aging*.

But speaking as demonstrators in France protested raising the retirement age, he acknowledged it can't be sudden.

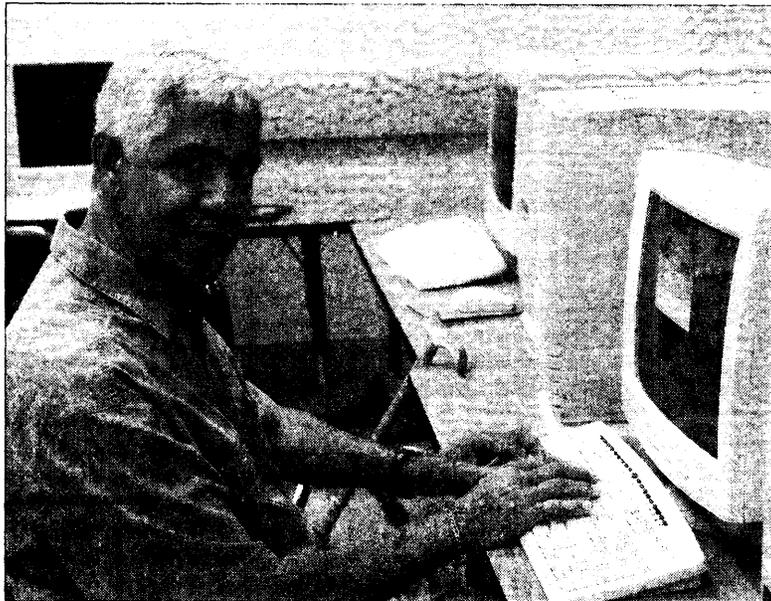
"It's a very slow process and people need to understand why. But there is no other way.

"People are not old at age 65 and they can't be considered old any longer."

Scherbov himself is 58.

"I will work up to retirement, which formally in Austria is 65, and then as long as I can move.

"But not every work is like mine. Governments must realize that as well."



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"A person who today is 60 years old may be around for another 25 years or even more," says Scherbov, calling for a rethink of how we look at age.

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