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Prospective Longevity

A New Vision of Population Aging

Warren C. Sanderson and Sergei Scherbov

“Prospective Longevity is Sanderson and Scherbov’s magnum opus. Its pages speak to all of us, no matter how old we are or where we live in the world, through its provocative new way of defining what it means to age.”

—Steven Petrow, contributing columnist for the *Washington Post*

Aging is a complex phenomenon. We usually think of chronological age as a benchmark, but it is actually a backward way of defining life-span. It tells us how long we’ve lived so far, but what about the rest of our lives?

In this pathbreaking book, Warren Sanderson and Sergei Scherbov provide a new way to measure individual and population aging. Instead of counting how many years we’ve lived, we should think about the number of years we have left, our “prospective age.” Two people who share the same chronological age probably have different prospective ages, because one will outlive the other. Combining their forward-thinking measure of our remaining years with other health metrics, Sanderson and Scherbov show how we can generate better demographic estimates, which inform better policies. Measuring prospective age helps make sense of observed patterns of survival, re-orient understanding of health in old age, and clarifies the burden of old-age dependency. The metric also brings valuable data to debates over equitable intergenerational pensions.

Sanderson and Scherbov’s pioneering model has already been adopted by the United Nations. *Prospective Longevity* offers us all an opportunity to rethink aging, so that we can make the right choices for our societal and economic health.

Warren C. Sanderson is Professor Emeritus of Economics at Stony Brook University and Research Scholar at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. **Sergei Scherbov** is Deputy Program Director of the World Population Program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Director of Demographic Analysis at the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital, Leader of the Population Dynamics and Forecasting Research Group at the Vienna Institute of Demography, and Head of the International Laboratory on Demography and Human Capital at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.