



# Taiwan

**The 2018 Aging Readiness & Competitiveness Report:  
Small Innovative Economies**

# Overview

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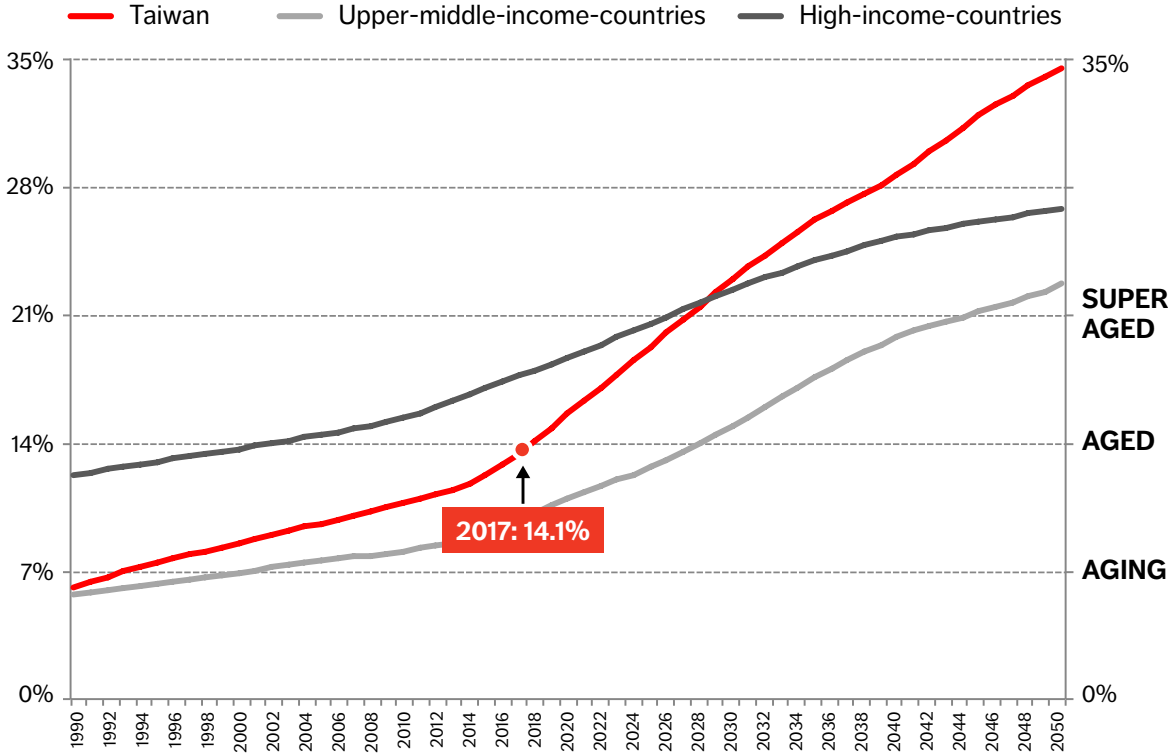
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Today, Taiwan stands at a demographic turning point for which it is proactively adapting through both policy and social innovations.

It became an aged society in 2018—defined as when the number of people age 65 and older exceeds 14 percent of its total population—and Taiwan is projected to become a super-aged society within the next decade. By 2050, close to 35 percent of the population will be age 65 and older, with nearly 20 percent of that group age 80 years and older (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> This demographic transformation is driven mainly by the aging of baby boomers coupled with low fertility rates. Baby boomers, born between 1945 and 1965, account for one-quarter of Taiwan's total population, and its fertility rate, among the world's lowest, has shrunk by 80 percent since 1950.<sup>2</sup>

# Figure 1. People Age 65 and Older as Percentage of Total Population

Becoming an aged society this year, Taiwan is projected to be a super-aged society within the next decade, faster than it took Japan to complete the transition.



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division

Taiwanese society’s ability to adapt to its demographic shift lies in a strong government commitment coupled with extensive grassroots engagement. In 2015, the government released its first ever White Paper on Aged Society, stressing a proactive approach to unleash the hidden potential of older adults and focusing on building a “healthy, happy, vigorous, and age-friendly” society.<sup>3</sup> A tradition of

community empowerment has also fostered a network of community organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are active in both social support provisions and policy advocacy.

Taiwan’s social infrastructure on the community level is one area of strength. Built on collaboration between the public and private sectors, a national network

of Community Care Stations is in place to engage older adults in social activities and to provide support for aging in place. Taiwan is also the world's first society where all its cities are committed to age-friendly initiatives, and it has extended that movement down to the smaller, local community level. Despite these successful efforts, physical infrastructure, particularly accessibility, remains a key challenge.

Economic participation is an area of tremendous untapped potential. Though it has slowly increased in recent years, the labor force participation rate of older adults age 65 and older remains well below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average. Facing a shrinking population of those at the traditional working ages of 15 to 64, the government has intensified efforts to streamline older adults' access to employment assistance and is providing tailored services, attempting to capitalize on the skills of a rapidly expanding—and increasingly better-educated—older demographic.

Thanks to its world-class information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, Taiwan is well positioned to harness the power of digital technology to meet the needs of older adults. The government has integrated the development of ICT innovation for aging into its industrial competitiveness strategy and promotes collaboration across academia, research institutions, and businesses. More effort is needed, however, to improve older adults' digital skills, ensuring that they fully benefit from technological advances.

The rapid aging of Taiwan's population and a related increase in the prevalence of chronic diseases, including dementia, demands a robust health system to support healthy and active aging. While the universal health system allows for easy access to affordable health care, the system is currently fragmented, and innovative efforts are needed to provide older adults with integrated care. Recognizing that the changing family structure is weakening a traditional source of care for many older adults, the government has stepped up to build a formal long-term care system that is achieving early success.

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# Ecosystem for Policy and Social Innovation

While Taiwan became an aged society just this year, it is setting itself apart with a proactive approach to aging and an openness to policy innovation and experimentation.

Local experts cited three key elements that are enabling Taiwan's policy and social innovation:

- The unique cultural mix of traditional Chinese values and a historic engagement with the rest of the world;
- Long-standing empowered nongovernmental forces at the grassroots level; and
- Strong cross-sector collaboration.

Building on these elements, Taiwanese society is seeking to promote an active, healthy population, through a rigorously

evidence-based approach that combines national goal-setting with strong bottom-up engagement.

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### Key Enablers

Taiwan's ability to adapt to demographic shifts through innovation builds on its unique culture, empowered local forces, and collaborative networks across sectors.

**Confucianism** is deeply rooted in Taiwan's culture, and the country's geographic location and history have bred a long-standing **openness to—and engagement with—foreign cultures and customs.**

Having been colonized by Portugal, Spain, Holland, and Japan, Taiwan has been heavily exposed to diverse cultures and customs. Since the 1950s, the government has encouraged young people to study abroad, especially in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Those students later return to Taiwan with new experiences and connections. As a result, its society retains close contact with the rest of the world, keeping abreast of international movements and staying active in exchanges with international partners.<sup>4</sup> This, combined with Confucianism's emphasis on respect for older generations and powerful cultural value of filial obligation, has enabled Taiwan to quickly take up aging-related international initiatives.

There is also a strong tradition of **community empowerment** to push for

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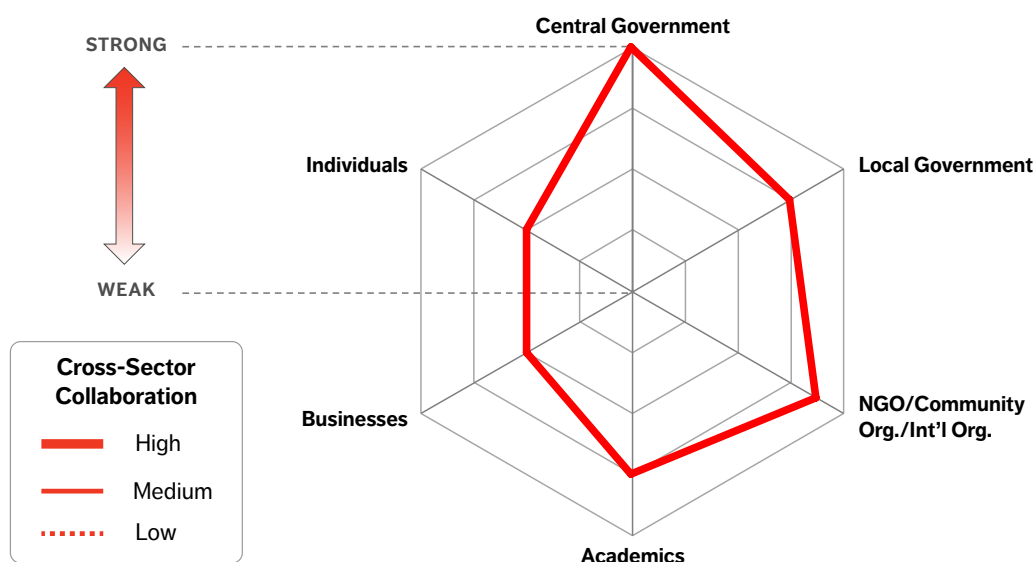
**“The community empowerment movement has helped to establish a solid community base and strengthened their capability to enable strong support for aging in place, including the effort to build age-friendly cities and communities.”**

– HSIEN-WEN KUO, Secretary-General of Alliance for Healthy and Age-Friendly Cities

policy and social change and to drive innovation. Inspired by the community-involved approach to urban planning adopted in Japan, the government launched the Comprehensive Community Development movement in 1994, seeking to meet various needs at the neighborhood level. This movement gained real prominence during the reconstruction following the devastating Chi Chi earthquake in 1999. Since then, the government has invested significant resources in empowering communities to create their own identities, and it has established training and funding systems for community-owned initiatives.

As a result, community awareness and collective action from the grassroots level have grown significantly. According to Hsien-Wen Kuo, Secretary-General of

**Figure 2. Driving Forces of Innovation and Cross-Sector Collaboration**



Alliance for Healthy and Age-Friendly Cities, “the community empowerment movement has helped to establish a solid community base and strengthened their capability to enable strong support for aging in place, including the effort to build age-friendly cities and communities.”<sup>5</sup> Leveraging the momentum of the community empowerment movement, Taiwan began to develop Community Care Stations in 2005 by mobilizing community organizations and volunteers. To date, it has established nearly 2,850 stations nationwide that engage older adults in social activities as well as provide them with assistance.

The impact of Confucianism on Taiwan’s social and policy innovation is also manifested in a **collaborative network across sectors**. Confucianism’s great emphasis on social harmony, which is built on interdependence and mutual trust,<sup>6</sup> has led to relatively high levels of trust shared across society,<sup>7</sup> facilitating joint efforts among stakeholders to support aging. The central government plays the leading role in cultivating a robust ecosystem for policy and social innovation, with a focus on encouraging and facilitating cross-sector collaboration.

Exemplifying this approach are government grants to research and development (R&D) projects jointly conducted by academia and businesses, including those related to older-age care. The government has also worked with research institutions, such as Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI), to provide capacity-building support for businesses in the silver-economy sector and matched major universities with Senior Citizen Learning Centers to assist with staff training and course design. At the local level, cross-sector collaboration is the norm in testing and deploying innovative projects. In the Age-Friendly Community Banking certification program first emerging out of Hsinchu city, the local authority worked with scholars from National Yang Ming University to develop a set of certification criteria, consulted representatives from local industry, and engaged older adults in the process of approving certified banks.

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### **Attributes in Aging-Related Innovation**

Building on this strong, enabling ecosystem, Taiwan has adopted an approach that combines both national top-down and bottom-up pushes, and it is seeking to better inform policy and decision-making while scaling up innovative models by emphasizing evidence-based approaches.

One distinctive element of Taiwan's aging policy is its decision to tackle this

demographic challenge with a national strategy. As Ying-Wei Wang, Director-General of Health Promotion Administration, commented, "Globally, there have been individual cases of successful practices that tackle aging but few are on the national level, and Taiwan is striving to establish a national model."<sup>8</sup> This is demonstrated in Taiwan's nationwide promotion of the age-friendly cities (AFC) initiative: the central government has established a comprehensive set of guidelines to direct city- or county-level efforts led by municipalities, which covers actions ranging from the establishment of a special committee that involves multiple sectors to outcome evaluation and performance improvement. Each year, the Alliance of Healthy and Age-Friendly Cities, a leading NGO, gives awards for leading age-friendly cities and communities with the goals of facilitating best-practice sharing and incentivizing the expansion of successful initiatives. This approach has proved effective. Within just three years after the first pilot program launched in Chiayi city, Taiwan had all its 22 cities and counties committed to age-friendly initiatives in 2013, the only economy in the world to achieve that feat.

The national strategy is complemented by grassroots engagement, mainly driven by NGOs along with local authorities, academia, and think tanks. Perhaps the best example to demonstrate how an NGO-initiated movement can turn into a national



policy and affect government actions comes from Taiwan Alzheimer Disease Association. The organization's advocacy led directly to Taiwan's launch of its first national plan on dementia in 2014—the 13<sup>th</sup> economy in the world to do so—and its pioneering community-based assistance program offered to people with dementia and their families became the model for the government's latest program on care support for those with dementia.

A similar approach was also observed in the early promotion of the World Health Organization's Health City initiative and the launch of the Taiwan Alliance for Healthy Cities in 2008. While the launch was championed by a number of senior officials from the central government as well as mayors, the organization was intentionally established as an NGO, rather than a government agency, to avoid potential uncertainty caused by administration shifts and to better facilitate cooperation and exchanges across cities. The alliance later incorporated a focus on the AFC initiative in 2011 and was renamed as the Alliance of Healthy and Age-Friendly Cities, becoming a strong grassroots force that contributes to the extensive uptake of AFC initiatives in Taiwan.<sup>9</sup>

While moving fast, Taiwan has recognized that progress will require greater evidence and metrics to enable informed policy making and the optimal use of

resources. With support from academia, the government is increasingly focusing on an evidence-based approach. In 2015, under the direction of Health Promotion Administration (HPA), a major research program named Construction of International Leading Monitoring and Decision-Making System for Active Aging was launched by a group of major universities, with the goal of developing a system to better integrate data from various sources and enable value-added analysis. Starting in 2018, the HPA is working to shorten the cycle of evaluation of programs from the previous one to three years to three months, enabling stepwise assessment and faster replication of effective practices.<sup>10</sup> While in their early stages, such efforts signal the society's continued commitment, and their effectiveness warrants close attention by others seeking to test and deploy successful policies and programs.

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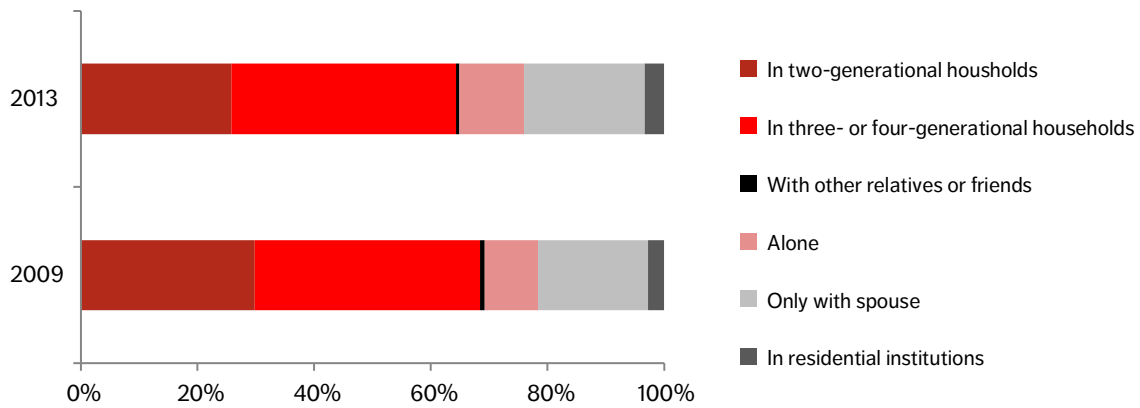
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Taiwan's society fosters opportunities for older adults to age actively in place, built on a traditional focus on filial piety that encourages strong family ties and support.

Outside the family, a national network of Community Care Stations provides opportunities for older people to participate in and contribute to society. Collaboration between public and private entities further strengthens the country's supportive social infrastructure by creating age-friendly cities and local communities. While this places Taiwan at the global forefront of the age-friendly movement, challenges related to physical infrastructure remain.

**Figure 3. Living Arrangements of People Age 65 and Older, in Percentage**



Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare

### Social Connection

Strong family ties shape the social lives and living arrangements of older adults in Taiwan. At the heart of its culture is Confucianism, which emphasizes filial piety, encouraging respect, reverence, and care for the older generation. Today, 97 percent of people age 65 and older live at home and nearly two-thirds of them live with their children or other family members; 39 percent live in a three- or four-generational household (Figure 3).<sup>11</sup>

Those close family ties contribute to high levels of life satisfaction among the older population. The 2013 Senior Citizen Condition Survey by the Ministry of Health

and Welfare found eight in 10 people age 65 and older were satisfied or highly satisfied with life.<sup>12</sup>

As elsewhere around the world, economic development and urbanization are driving changes in family structures, potentially undermining the traditional family support system for older adults. Between 2009 and 2013 alone, the percentage of older adults living in multi-generational households in Taiwan shrank by 6 percent.<sup>13</sup>

“The family structure and support system is changing due to declined fertility and a shift toward smaller and nuclear families. As a result, the responsibility for caring for older family members can no longer be shared by siblings and their spouses as much as was

traditionally done,”<sup>14</sup> explained Hui-Juan Chien, Director of Social and Family Affairs Administration.

Recognizing that family structures were changing, the government developed in 2005 a national network of Community Care Stations focused on supporting aging in place and on promoting active aging. In addition to organizing activities that promote health and social interaction, stations provide home visits, telephone check-ins, and meal services for older adults. To empower community organizations and mobilize volunteers, the government is<sup>15</sup>:

- Subsidizing community organizations that provide services and volunteers, and providing training sessions and materials;
- Sponsoring field visits and annual achievement exhibitions among community organizations to facilitate the sharing of experiences;
- Having local governments play a central role in coordinating collaboration among local welfare, education, and health authorities as well as community organizations and charities;
- Incentivizing local efforts and promoting best-practice sharing by granting special annual awards to organizations, individuals, and cities and counties that make the greatest achievements or contributions.<sup>16</sup>

The effort has paid off. To date, there are nearly 2,850 stations across Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> In

2016 alone, 3.6 million home visits and telephone check-ins were made; 6.2 million meals were provided; 218,680 activities promoting health were held; and more than 142,000 people—mostly older adults—served as volunteers.<sup>18</sup> Older adults either who volunteered to participate in the stations’ activities or who themselves received services reported better wellness, improved social relations, and stronger self-identity.<sup>19</sup>

To encourage intergenerational ties, the government introduced Grandparents’ Day in 2011, which falls annually on the fourth Sunday of August. Grandparents’ Day activities focus on older adults and their grandchildren celebrating together to strengthen intergenerational bonds. Initiatives from the private sector, such as History Alive (Box 1), have also emerged to promote intergenerational engagement.<sup>20, 21</sup>

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### Age-Friendly Cities

Taiwan’s widespread efforts to adapt its cities to the World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) age-friendly guidelines have made it a standout leader in the age-friendly movement. In 2010, Chiayi City became Taiwan’s first city to pilot an age-friendly initiative, setting an example for the rest of the country that quickly bore fruit. By 2013, all of Taiwan’s 22 cities and counties combined had committed to building age-friendly cities. Since 2017, the effort has expanded, focusing on individual, smaller communities. So far, some 99 community

## Box 1. History Alive

The History Alive initiative is built on the concept of “creative aging” and integrates it with intergenerational activities. Inspired by the practice of Elders Share the Arts in New York, Shin Kong Life Foundation first introduced the model to Taiwan in 2003 and operates it in collaboration with Godot Theater Company. Under the initiative, older adults are recruited to join art performance courses and later play live shows on campus or in theaters, typically together with young students. This way, older adults can share their life stories through performance, countering negative connotations of aging and strengthening ties across generations. To date, more than 90,000 students have experienced History Alive performances.

organizations are working to build age-friendly neighborhoods subsidized by the government.<sup>22</sup> The rapid and widespread embrace of age-friendly initiatives is driven by the combination of top-down and bottom-up efforts, and it is enabled by close collaboration between public and private stakeholders.

A driving force in the introduction of age-friendly city initiatives to Taiwan, the central government has since been active in further promoting the age-friendly movement.

**Internally**, its efforts are focused on vertical coordination between local municipalities and the HPA, which focuses on three functions:

- Advocating for policy action and seeking support from political leaders;
- Enabling local governments to develop and implement initiatives by providing a set of guidelines and training, promoting

experience exchange, and conducting evaluation; and

- Mediating municipalities’ annual age-friendly proposals through subsidies while promoting exchange activities with international cities.<sup>23</sup>

At local levels, municipalities develop and implement their own initiatives by coordinating policies and collaborating with stakeholders in the health, social services, and education fields.

**Externally**, the government seeks to capitalize on resources and expertise from the private sector—in particular, from NGOs and academia. Both are major forces in advancing age-friendly initiatives and work with the central government to develop programs, assess their implementation and outcomes, and share best practices. In 2010, the HPA entrusted National Cheng Kung University to develop Chiayi city’s

age-friendly pilot program; in 2015, it commissioned China Medical University to undertake a four-year program to monitor the age-friendly environment and to develop an evaluation framework adapted to Taiwan to facilitate long-term tracking and improvement.<sup>24</sup>

Among the most active organizations is the Alliance for Healthy Cities and Age-Friendly Cities (the Alliance). When it launched in 2008, the Alliance focused primarily on promoting healthy cities, but in 2011 it expanded its focus to age-friendly initiatives. Since its inception, the Alliance has focused on promoting partnerships among government agencies, municipalities, academia, NGOs, community organizations, and citizens. Each year, by incentivizing efforts and sharing best practices, the Alliance recognizes those practices that most creatively build healthy, age-friendly cities.<sup>25</sup>

Among the most innovative practices to emerge at the local level are Age-Friendly Community Banks, originating in the city of Hsinchu (Box 2).<sup>26</sup> Because the collaborative certification model has proved to be an effective one for age-friendly service providers, it has since been replicated in other service industries such as the retail sector. In 2016, the local government of Nangang District in Taipei used the bank model to develop a set of criteria for age-friendly supermarkets, certifying Carrefour's Nangang store as Taiwan's first such store.<sup>27</sup>

While speaking highly of the government's leading role in promoting age-friendly

initiatives, experts also advocate for efforts to streamline cross-function collaboration at the central government level. "Policy action related to age-friendly cities is still limited to collaboration between the HPA and local governments, and cross-function collaboration among central government agencies is missing, leaving room for better integration of resources at the central government level," said Te-Jen Hung, Former President of the Alliance for Healthy Cities.<sup>28</sup>

Hsien-Wen Kuo, Secretary-General of Alliance for Healthy Cities, added, "Building age-friendly cities is a national-level policy, and promoting the initiative at a higher administrative level—such as through the National Development Council—would achieve better effects. As age-friendly initiatives cover a broad scope of issues related to the responsibilities of transportation, education, labor, and other agencies, a cross-function mechanism or a dedicated authority to coordinate these agencies could better integrate various resources."<sup>29</sup>

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## Accessibility

Despite Taiwan's notable achievement in advancing the age-friendly initiative, physical infrastructure represents a major challenge to mobility and convenience for older adults. In a 2016 survey conducted by China Medical University, among the eight domains outlined in the WHO's guiding framework on age-friendly cities, physical infrastructure—including transportation,

## Box 2. Age-Friendly Community Banks in the City of Hsinchu

The Age-Friendly Community Banks initiative, first launched in the city of Hsinchu, presents a successful example built on collaboration among the local government, academia, and business stakeholders.

- The initiative was founded and led by the local health authority, which intended to incorporate the protection of older adults from financial fraud into the city's age-friendly initiative.
- The authority partnered with academic experts from National Yang Ming University to develop criteria for age-friendly banks, such as physical infrastructure, service quality, operation and management, and preferential policies.
- Representatives from the local banking industry played a crucial role in the process, ranging from initial discussion of the proposal to finalizing certification criteria.
- When a bank applies for the certification, a team made up of academic experts, older adult representatives, and local officials pays a field visit and together decides the outcome.

Since the launch, 18 local businesses that provide cash management services have become certified Age-Friendly Community Banks. Typically, a special area is set aside in these businesses for older customers, where they can chat with the staff and socialize with each other. Magnifying glasses, first-aid toolkits, wheelchairs, and barrier-free facilities are also provided. Because of its success, the model has also been replicated in the postal network.

housing, and public spaces—is the area with which older adults are least satisfied.<sup>30</sup>

Accessibility in public transportation and public buildings is one area that has witnessed increased government efforts and notable progress in recent years, but further improvement is needed<sup>31</sup>:

- Since 2010, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications has subsidized the deployment of low-floor buses. As of 2015, more than 46 percent of city buses around Taiwan were low-floor buses, up from 7.2 percent in 2009.
- In the seventh car of every high-speed rail train, exclusive areas are set up for

people with disabilities and mobility limitations, and special wheelchair-accessible restrooms are available. Wheelchair-accessible elevators are available at 47 percent of railway stations, with the government working to raise this figure to 83 percent by 2021.

- Since 2012, accessibility has been required of all new construction and additional construction to existing buildings—both public and private. By 2015, just over half of existing public buildings had been renovated to be barrier-free.

In 2007 Taiwan passed the People with Disabilities Rights Protection Act, which requires ensuring accessibility for disabled people both in public transportation and in the built environment. Despite this law and the regulations to implement it, enforcement has been an impediment, though an opportunity for improvement has emerged: in 2014, Taiwan ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD) and legislated the Act on

the Implementation of CPRD. To facilitate its enforcement, Taiwan's executive branch of government established in 2014 a special committee comprising senior officials from related ministries, representatives from NGOs, and academic experts.<sup>32</sup> Experts are hopeful that the establishment of the committee will act as a catalyst for greater enforcement efforts to create more accessibility.<sup>33</sup>



# Productive Opportunity

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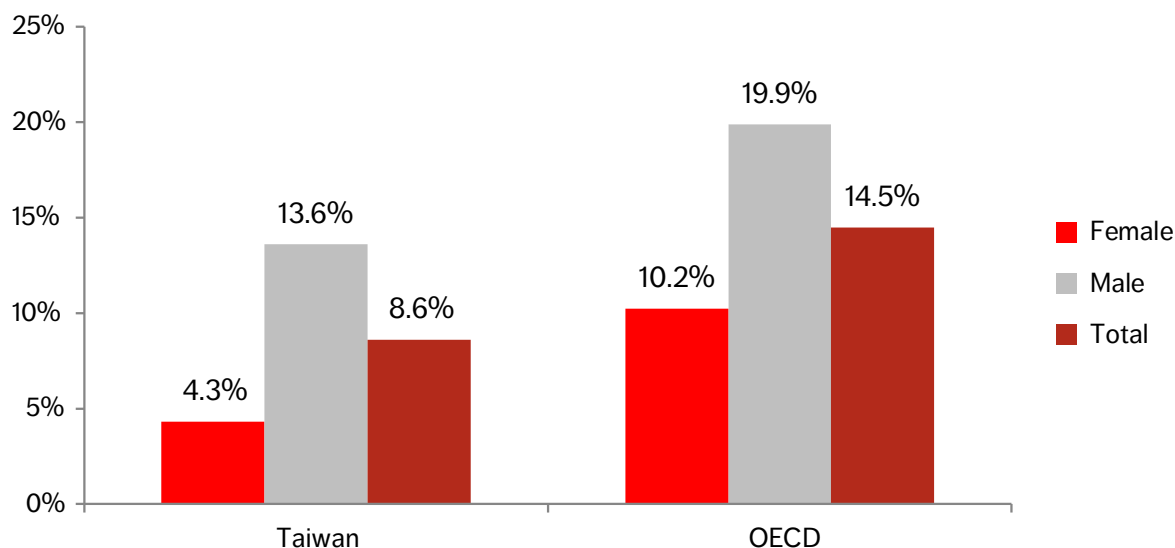
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Taiwan is facing a looming labor shortage, as its traditionally defined working-age population (ages 15 to 64) is projected to almost halve by the year 2061.

In that context, Taiwan is looking to older adults as one part of the solution, with initial efforts focused on raising retirement and pensionable ages, as well as a new focus on providing greater access to employment assistance for older adults. In tandem with these efforts is continued expansion of the national network of learning centers where older adults can develop marketable skills.

**Figure 4. Labor Force Participation Rate, as of 2016**



**Source:** OECD Statistics; International Labor Organization Statistics

### Labor Force Participation of Older Adults

Older adults in Taiwan tend to be less active in the labor force than their counterparts in other advanced economies, though their labor force participation (LFP) rate has increased slightly over the past decade. As of 2016, 8.6 percent of people age 65 and older participated in the labor force, up from 7.6 percent in 2006. Less than two-thirds of the OECD average, Taiwan's LFP is the second-lowest among countries covered in this study, after the Netherlands (Figure 4).<sup>34</sup>

The LFP rate is particularly low among older women. As of 2016 only 4.3 percent

of women age 65 and older were active in the labor force. While the gender gap in the LFP is common across countries, it is much larger in Taiwan. In 2016, the LFP of women age 65 and older in Taiwan was less than one-third that of men in the same age group; in comparison, in OECD countries the LFP of older women on average was half of that of older men.<sup>35</sup> This can be partially attributed to many women withdrawing from the labor market in their 30s, and few returning to work. According to a 2014 government study, while the LFP of women ages 25 to 34 was higher than that of their counterparts in Korea, Japan, Germany, and the United States, it began dropping after age 34 due to marriage, childbirth, and

family caregiving responsibilities. Roughly 40 percent of married women ages 15 to 64 left their jobs after getting married or having children, according to government statistics.<sup>36</sup>

As in most countries, economic necessity is the primary motivator for older adults to work. People age 65 and older account for 37.7 percent of those with income levels below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile.<sup>37</sup> According to the 2013 Senior Citizen Condition Survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, sustaining their family's livelihood was the primary reason older adults gave for continuing to work, cited by 48.6 percent of respondents who were age 65 and older and working at paid jobs. The second and third most important reasons were "passing time," cited by 24.8 percent of respondents, and "achieving financial independence," which accounted for 19.2 percent.<sup>38</sup>

Taiwan's traditionally defined working-age population—those ages 15 to 64—has been shrinking consistently since 2015. It is projected to almost halve through 2061, with its share in the total population dropping from 74 percent to 52 percent.<sup>39</sup> In 2008, Taiwan raised the mandatory retirement age from 60 to 65 and encouraged people to extend their time in the labor force by providing pension incentives. In 2018, the government raised the eligible age for receiving earnings-related public pension benefits from age 60 to age 61, and will continue to raise the age every two years until it reaches age 65 in 2026. An extra benefit is provided for those who defer

receiving pension—an additional 4 percent for each year deferred, up to a total of five years.

However, governmental efforts to help older people continue working or to re-enter the job market have fallen short, and barriers such as age discrimination and lack of job opportunities continue to hinder older adults' workforce participation.

- **Ageism** is the primary barrier to older adults' participation in the labor force. According to a 2011 survey by the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, 84 percent of unemployed job-seekers age 45 and older had no confidence in finding appropriate jobs, with 60 percent citing age discrimination as the most important reason.<sup>40</sup> Employers' willingness to hire older workers also declines as those workers grow older. According to a 2017 survey by the New Taipei municipality, 65.4 percent of employers reported willingness to retain people age 55 to 60, but that percentage decreased drastically to 28.5 percent for adults age 61 to 65, and dropped to 6.2 percent for those age 65 and older. Declines in physical capability, health, and productivity were cited by employers as the top three concerns about older workers.<sup>41</sup>
- **A lack of appropriate job opportunities** presents another major barrier. According to the 2015 Age-Friendly Survey conducted by the HPA,

respondents age 60 and older were the least satisfied with job availability, in addition to physical infrastructure.<sup>42</sup> In a 2011 survey by the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, more than 25 percent of respondents age 45 and older reported feeling unconfident in finding a job, citing a lack of appropriate opportunities as their biggest concern.<sup>43</sup>

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### **Facilitating Employment and Job Placement for Older Adults**

Realizing the limitation of solely relying on retirement and pension policies, the government has increased its efforts to facilitate older adults' participation in the labor force, through new legislation and dedicated employment services. To that end, the government made the Ministry of Labor responsible for employment services for people age 65 and older. Previously, the ministry was focused only on employment services for those up to age 65.<sup>44</sup> To address this gap, through a 2015 amendment to the Senior Citizens Welfare Act, the government declared the ministry responsible for promoting employment of people older than 65 years and preventing age-related discrimination.<sup>45</sup>

Legislative efforts continue today. Taiwan's government began drafting the Act on Employment of Mid-aged and Senior Persons in October 2016, hosting workshops and roundtable discussions with subject matter experts, NGOs, citizens,

and other stakeholders.<sup>46</sup> The act will focus on such key issues as prevention of age discrimination, employment opportunities for employed and unemployed older people, retirees' re-entrance into the job market, and incentives for employers to hire older workers.<sup>47</sup>

While the act has yet to be finalized, experts speak highly of its potential significance. "The Act will incorporate the spirit of cross-generational collaboration and unification. Through appropriate job redesigns and diverse employment opportunities, it would facilitate experience passed through generations at the workplace, support older workers with caring responsibility and retain them in the workforce, and encourage collaborative entrepreneurship between older and younger adults,"<sup>48</sup> said Wen-Chi Chou, Professor of Department of Labor Relations, National Chung Cheng University.

In addition, Taiwan has also piloted job placement assistance programs dedicated to older adults. In October 2014, the Ministry of Labor launched the first Senior Workforce Development Service Center under its Taipei-Keelung-Yilan-Hualian-Kinmen-Matsu Regional Branch. This was followed by a second center in the Kaohsiung-Pingtung-Penghu-Taitung Region in 2016.

The centers provide career planning along with courses in entrepreneurship and skills training for those age 55 and older. They reach out to potential employers to collect information on job openings,

recommend qualified older job-seekers, and provide subsidies of NTD 12,000 (USD 400) per month—up to 12 months—to those hired.<sup>49</sup> The centers also launched an online portal to facilitate older adults' access to information on job and volunteer opportunities, training course schedules, and learning resources.<sup>50</sup>

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### **Generating Job Opportunities in Community**

While the launch of Senior Workforce Development Service Centers signals the government's commitment to strengthening job placement for older adults, experts suggest the services also be integrated with support for aging in place, allowing easier exploration and uptake of job opportunities in the communities where older adults already reside. According to Professor Chou, these centers, although still at the pilot phase, could look to the United States' Senior Community Service Employment Program and Japan's Silver Human Resource Center as models—both of which have effectively supported older adults' productive engagement by matching them with various job opportunities on community levels.<sup>51</sup>

Prior to government efforts, these experimental practices emerged led by NGOs and academia. They focused on creating job opportunities in communities where older adults reside—and adapting to local resources. An early success is the

Barn Restaurant project established in 2011 in Sigang, a rural district of Tainan city. The Barn Restaurant project was initiated by academic experts from National Chung Cheng University, who originated the idea during field study.

The project utilized the venue of an idling barn to operate a restaurant that sells food and handcrafted items made of local materials. Because the rural region produces high-quality sesame oil, the restaurant uses sesame oil in many dishes, including its featured sesame oil chicken.<sup>52</sup> It also markets soaps made of residues from the refinery of sesame oil, as well as leather carvings that are designed and made by people with disabilities, then painted by older adults. Older adults are also hired by the restaurant, where they work two or four hours per day in a variety of jobs. Some serve customers, others deliver dining-out orders, wash dishes, or educate patrons on local culture and history.<sup>53</sup>

The project also creates substantial benefits for older adults by cultivating social awareness of the value older adults bring both to themselves and to the larger community. "The project provides opportunities for older adults to work, socialize, and earn. Particularly when they interact with other older adults, they feel happier and no longer depressed. Although the work is not full time, they can make some pocket money and use it to help their families or buy gifts for their grandchildren and can enjoy a sense of

**“The project provides opportunities for older adults to work, socialize, and earn. Particularly when they interact with other older adults, they feel happier and no longer depressed. Although the work is not full time, they can make some pocket money and use it to help their families or buy gifts for their grandchildren and can enjoy a sense of accomplishment.”**

– WEN-CHI CHOU, Professor of Department of Labor Relations, National Chung Cheng University

accomplishment,”<sup>54</sup> said Professor Chou, one of the architects of the Barn Restaurant project.

Although the Barn Restaurant received some grants from the government in the first three years, mainly for the purposes of compensating older adults, it eventually became financially self-sustaining. This model was so successful that it inspired similar practices in other cities. Examples include the Private Kitchen established by the HONDAO Senior Citizen’s Welfare Foundation in Taichung in 2016, and the Gourd, Apple & Cat<sup>55</sup> Restaurant launched

in 2017 in Chiayi by ChiaYi Christian Hospital and Double Bliss Welfare and Charity Foundation. In both programs, older adults work as chefs and wait tables.<sup>56, 57</sup>

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### Education for Older Adults

Though employment support for older adults is a recent focus, the Taiwanese government has long considered education for older adults a key remedy for prospering in an aged society. In 2006, the Ministry of Education released the White Paper on Senior Education—the first official document specifying the government’s stance on this issue. The white paper suggested a shift away from the previous and outdated mindset that older adults were vulnerable and that education was offered purely as a social benefit; rather, it emphasized the significance of education for healthy, active, and successful aging, including enabling continuous social and productive engagement.<sup>58</sup>

The government is also consciously seeking to fulfill the fiscal benefit of using education to sustain a healthy older population. In 2016, education offered to healthy older adults or those in suboptimal health<sup>59</sup> cost the government only NTD 69 (USD 2.4) per capita, a fraction of its fiscal health expenditure on those with disabilities at more than NTD 5,000 (USD 170) per capita.<sup>60</sup>

Since 2008, in an effort to facilitate older adults' access to educational opportunities, the government has empowered stakeholders including local authorities, community organizations, NGOs, and schools to develop a national community-based learning network. The goal is to establish at least one Senior Citizens Learning Center in every township. At these centers, older adults can participate in learning activities free of charge.

The centers also provide core courses focused on knowledge and skills crucial to older adults' safety, health, and quality of life, such as financial fraud prevention, memory improvement, and use of digital technology. In addition to core courses, centers offer courses customized to meet the interests of local older adults. The centers are also encouraged to establish extension stations, dispatching learning materials and lectures to remote and rural regions.

At the same time, the government is seeking to leverage human and physical resources at the university level. To ensure quality of education at learning centers, Taiwan has entrusted four major public universities to form special tutoring teams. Each tutoring team oversees a designated region and develops courses adapted to local older adults' needs and their learning behavioral patterns. In addition, the teams host training workshops for lecturers, evaluate the performance of learning centers, and promote sharing of best practices. The

government also encourages universities to provide education programs for older adults and to create opportunities for them to experience on-campus study and to interact with younger generations.

All of these efforts have expanded rapidly and effectively boosted older adults' participation in learning. As of 2016, 339 Senior Citizens Learning Centers had been established, covering 91.3 percent of the 368 townships in Taiwan, and 103 universities had provided courses for older adults. The participation rate of adults age 65 and older in learning activities doubled from 11.4 percent in 2008 to 22.6 percent as of 2014. According to a 2015 government survey, 86 percent of participants were satisfied with learning centers.<sup>61</sup>

Financial strains, however, remain a major challenge. Learning centers rely primarily on government grants, though they are sometimes supplemented by private-sector donation and sponsorship. "Although the total fiscal budget has increased, it has not caught up with the older population growth, resulting in decreases in per capita expenditure," said Ya-Hui Lee, Professor of Department of Adult and Continuing Education of National Chung Cheng University.<sup>62</sup>

As a result, learning centers have addressed the lack of funding with creative solutions that incorporate older adults' skills. The Chiayi learning center, for instance, encourages older participants

with expertise on a variety of subjects to volunteer as lecturers to offset costs. It also organized a program in which older adults produce and sell traditional cuisine to raise funds that, in turn, support the center's operation.

In addition, integrating learning centers, operated by the Ministry of Education, with social programs offered by health and welfare authorities could result in a more streamlined and efficient use of public resources. "There are overlaps in services provided by learning centers and other government programs, which are unnecessary and avoidable—for example, both local welfare authorities and learning centers provide courses for health promotion," said Yi-Ping Huang, Director of Shueishang Senior Citizens Learning Center in Chiayi.



# Technological Engagement

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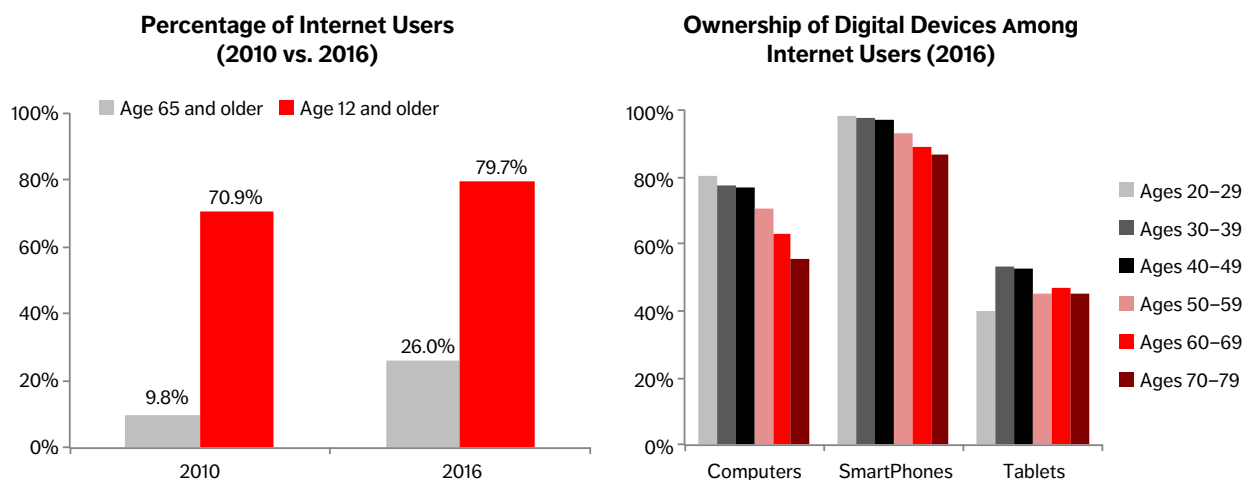
VI

Health Care  
and Wellness

With world-class ICT infrastructure and manufacturing clusters, Taiwan is well positioned to use technology to improve the lives of its aging population.

To tap into the tremendous market of aging-related products and services both domestically and overseas, the government is promoting in its competitiveness strategy the development of ICT-based solutions for aging. However, relatively low penetration of digital technology within the older population represents an obstacle for older adults to enjoy the benefits of technological advances.

**Figure 5. Adoption of Digital Technology, by Age Group**



Source: National Development Council

### Digital Divide and Inclusion


As in most countries, older adults in Taiwan lag behind the general population in the adoption of digital technology. As of 2016, only 26 percent of adults age 65 and older had used the internet, amounting to less than one-third that of the general population (age 12 and older) at 79.7 percent (Figure 5).<sup>63</sup> A lack of related knowledge and skills forms the primary barrier to older adults' adoption of digital technology, and the 2013 Survey Report on Digital Opportunity among People Age 50 and Above cited it as the most important reason for older people not to use the internet.<sup>64</sup>

That divide is slowly shrinking, however, driven partly by the prevalence of mobile devices. Over the period of 2008 to 2016, the percentage of internet users among the older population had more than doubled, but usage rose only by 12 percent among the general population.<sup>65</sup> According to a 2016 survey by the National Development Council, 37 percent of people age 65 and older reported first accessing the internet via smartphone in the previous three years, higher than any other age group except those ages 40 to 49, at 40 percent. In fact, more than 22.4 percent of internet users age 65 and older started using the internet before using computers, higher than any other age groups, ranging from 1.2 percent to 5 percent for the 15 to 49 age group. Indeed, the cross-generational gap in

mobile device ownership among internet users is much smaller than that of computer ownership (Figure 5).<sup>66</sup>

Having developed physical infrastructure for ICT, the government is now focused on improving digital inclusion, with the goal of ensuring equal access to benefits and opportunities generated by advanced technologies. As of 2016, Taiwan was ranked No. 19 on the World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index and held fifth place in Asia, following Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, and Korea. However, it tied for No. 1—with Norway—in terms of the development of ICT infrastructure and the availability of digital content, and Taiwan has achieved 100 percent mobile network coverage.<sup>67</sup>

The national network of Digital Opportunity Centers (DOCs), supplemented by Senior Citizen Learning Centers, is a major platform used by the government to enhance digital literacy and to promote digital inclusion. Since 2005, more than 200 DOCs have been established in 160 townships. With the support of government grants and volunteers, these DOCs offer free classes and learning materials to the local community on how to use computers and the internet. So far, nearly 23,000 classes have been offered to more than 350,000 residents, with almost 30 percent of trainees being age 45 and older.<sup>68</sup> In addition, Senior Citizens Learning Centers also offer custom courses to improve digital skills based on the needs of local participants.

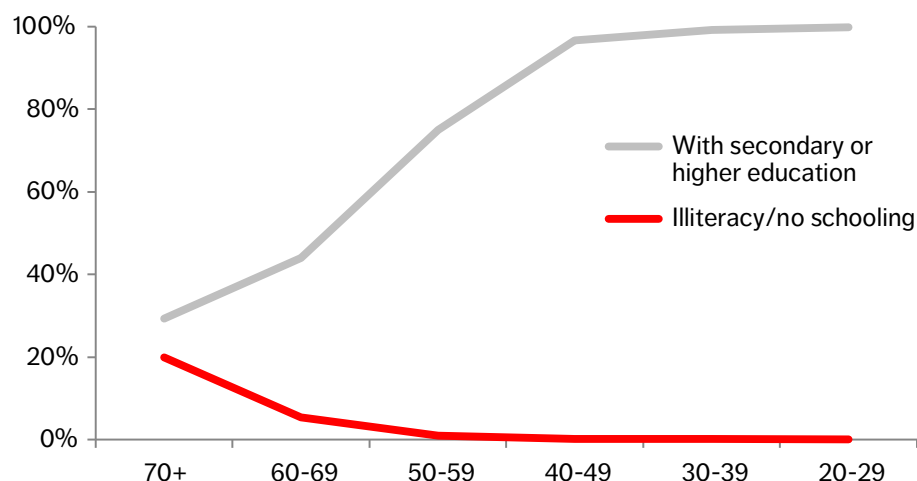


**“In early days, it was very difficult to promote digital learning among older adults, as many of the older population were illiterate. But in recent years, older adults who have joined learning centers have higher education attainment and show more interest in learning digital skills.”**

– YI-PING HUANG, Director of Shueishang Senior Citizens Learning Center in Chiayi

Lack of interest or time remains a major challenge to engage older adults in digital learning. According to the 2013 Survey Report on Digital Opportunity among People Age 50 or Above, 29.4 percent of non-internet-users age 50 and older reported lack of learning and motivation as the reason for not using the internet; 13.8 percent cited “busy and lack of time,” which ranked as the second and fourth most important factors, respectively.<sup>69</sup> Particularly in rural areas, traditionally dominated by agriculture economic activity, the general population and older adults tend not to recognize the need for learning digital skills.<sup>70</sup>

**Figure 6. Education Attainment, by Age Group**



Source: Barro R. & J.W. Lee 2016

As more-educated generations are aging (Figure 6),<sup>71</sup> interest in digital technology among older adults is growing. “In early days, it was very difficult to promote digital learning among older adults, as many of the older generation were illiterate. But in recent years, older adults who have joined learning centers have higher education attainment and show more interest in learning digital skills,” said Yi-Ping Huang, Director of Shueishang Senior Citizens Learning Center in Chiayi County. Although the older generation is focused on learning how to use social media sites like Facebook and LINE to contact family members, the younger generation of older adults has an additional interest in learning how to use multiple mobile applications, including those for hospital visits, travel, and filmmaking.<sup>72</sup>

### Promoting ICT-Based Innovation

To pursue prosperity in an aging society, Taiwan has long incorporated this demographic shift into its economic development and competitiveness strategy. By promoting the development of ICT-based innovations, the government aims to tap into the rising silver economy—both domestically and globally—primarily focusing on health and caregiving. According to the ITRI, the total economic value directly and indirectly created by industries that supply products and services to older adults is estimated to grow by 831 percent from NTD 77.1 billion (USD 2.6 billion) in 2011 to NTD 718.1 billion (USD 24.5 billion) in 2020.<sup>73</sup> The export-dependent economy also sees a

tremendous overseas market for products related to aging. “Taiwan is at an advantage to introduce its aging-related products into the Chinese world, as it is entering an aged society ahead of [most of] other Chinese societies. And Taiwan is capable of taking this lead, given its robust manufacturing clusters,”<sup>74</sup> said Keen Chang, Founder and Chairman of L’elan Enterprise.

The government’s effort to promote ICT-based innovation has been driven primarily by dedicated programs—complemented by other general funding programs for innovation—with a common emphasis on cross-sector collaboration. “Research and development of tech products is often focused on the maturity of technology but overlooks the need of users. This approach can’t work in the development of products for older adults. Collaboration among researchers, aging experts, care professionals, and businesses is necessary to develop solutions that meet older adults’ needs,”<sup>75</sup> said Jhing-Fa Wang, President of Tajen University, explaining the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in innovating technology for older consumers.

An early program dedicated to promoting ICT-enabled services for older adults was the three-year Technology-Based Health and Caregiving Innovative Services Program launched by the Ministry of Economic Affairs in 2006. The program was focused on services ranging from chronic disease prevention and health management to caregiving and living assistance.

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This program provided funds to approved pilot projects and specifically encouraged collaboration between technology companies and care providers. “The 2006 program was a turning point because it introduced ICT into the health care sector and in particular led to enthusiasm among the private sector to develop remote home-based care technology,”<sup>76</sup> said Yeh-Liang Hsu, Director of the Gerontechnology Research Center of Yuan Ze University.

The program successfully met its objective of setting the stage for health care technology development. A total of 57 companies participated in the program, and the investment totaled NTD 580 million (USD 20 million), with 64 percent funded by private companies and the rest by government grants. Associated technologies were applied to 30 hospitals and clinics and to two caregiving institutions.<sup>77</sup>

A more recent initiative is the four-year Health and Welfare Innovative Services Promotion Program, launched in 2017. This program aims to stimulate the incorporation of ICT into services for older adults and expand the focus beyond those who need care to those who are healthy in order to support active, independent aging. To leverage the knowledge and resources of multiple stakeholders, the government brought together research institutions—including ITRI, the Commerce Development Research Institute, and the Institute for Information Industry—as consultants for selected companies.<sup>78</sup> To qualify for this support, a company must be local and cooperate with NGOs focused on social services.

In the first year of the program, six businesses received support. These companies concentrated on online platforms enabling online-to-offline commerce, or one-stop access to diverse information, services, and products.<sup>79</sup> One example is the one-stop platform developed by Chunghwa Senior Care Corporation, a company specializing in home-care businesses. The Chunghwa Senior Care platform enables older adults and their family members to place orders for services ranging from daily life assistance to doctor visit accompaniment, to dementia and hospice care.<sup>80</sup> Another example is I Long-Term Care, a portal that aggregates information and provides consultancy on disease, long-term care skills, public policies, and available resources for older adults and their families.<sup>81</sup>

Aside from these ICT-based solutions for older adults, the government is also funding programs to promote general innovation, which plays a crucial role in stimulating technology that benefits older adults. In 2015, the Ministry of Economic Affairs launched the Industrial Value Creation Program for Academia. This program aims to integrate R&D capacities between universities and the ICT industry and to promote commercialization of academic research outcomes. It also provides funding to universities—up to NTD 20 million (around USD 647,000) each within two years—that work to establish a joint business entity with corporations or research institutions; the corporations or research institutions must make an investment into the joint entity equal of at least 30 percent of the government grant. Over the past three years, 39 projects have received funding from this program.<sup>82</sup>

One interesting business emerging from this program is SEDA G-Tech, which focuses on smart home solutions supporting the comfortable and safe living of older adults. The company was jointly established in 2016 by the Gerontechnology Research Center of Yuan Ze University and SEDA, a local manufacturer of bedding products. Since its launch, the company has developed a series of “Internet of Things”-connected products including carpets, mattresses, and lights, which enable real-time location tracking from mobile devices, mobility monitoring, and communication between older adults and caregivers.<sup>83</sup>

# Health Care and Wellness

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Health Care and Wellness

Taiwan has seen significant improvement in the health status of older adults over the past two decades thanks to the introduction of a universal health care system and a focused effort by the government to build age-friendly health care institutions.

Lack of access to integrated health care, however, remains a significant gap in the system. Nonetheless, the government continues to make strides to improve the health and wellness of older adults, including creating a formal long-term care (LTC) system and focusing on increasing and integrating community-based care services, including dementia care.

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## Health Status and Health System

Both life expectancy (LE) and healthy life expectancy (HALE) of older adults in Taiwan have significantly improved since 2000,

**Figure 7. Life Expectancy (LE) and Healthy Life Expectancy (HALE) at Ages 60 to 64, in Years**



**Source:** Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation

though they are still below the OECD average. As of 2016, an average 60-year-old could expect to live for another 23.5 years, an increase of 2.6 years from the year 2000. Of those additional years, 18.3 could be expected to be healthy, a two-year gain from the 2000 level. During the same period, the increase in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for OECD countries was 2.1 years and 1.5 years respectively (Figure 7).<sup>84</sup>

Chronic diseases remain the primary cause of health decline in older adults. In 2013, some 86.3 percent of people age 65 and older had at least one chronic disease, 68.6 percent had at least two, and 47.3 percent had three or more.<sup>85</sup>

The improvement in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy is driven at least in part by Taiwan's introduction in 1995 of a universal health insurance system, known as the National Health Insurance (NHI). Previously, a range of separate insurance schemes covered slightly more than half of the population.<sup>86</sup> NHI is a government-administered, insurance-based health care system. Enrollment in NHI is mandatory for all citizens and covered close to 100 percent of the population as of 2016.<sup>87</sup> NHI is characterized by:

- **Comprehensive benefits:** It covers almost all medical benefits that can be provided by a health care system, including inpatient and outpatient care, dental,<sup>88</sup>



home health care, and end-of-life care. It also covers both Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine.<sup>89</sup>

- Accessibility and affordability: According to a 2017 survey by the NHI Bureau, only 2.2 percent of older adults who were economically disadvantaged reported unmet medical care needs due to financial reasons, remote distance, or long waiting times; by comparison, the OECD average was 7.4 percent.<sup>90</sup>
- High satisfaction: In a 2017 survey by the NHI Bureau, 86 percent of respondents reported satisfaction with the health care system.<sup>91</sup>

Because of Taiwan's aging population, the government places great emphasis on providing older adults with easy access to quality care to prevent disease, postpone physical dysfunction, and support aging in place. Key measures include the accreditation of age-friendly health care institutions. "We see accreditation as an important administrative strategy and tool. It enables us to systematically integrate standards into institutions that provide care for older adults. To ensure care quality, re-accreditation is carried out every four years,"<sup>92</sup> said Ying-Wei Wang, Director-General of Health Promotion.

The HPA introduced its accreditation program in 2011, the first in the world initiated by a national government.<sup>93</sup> Accreditation criteria were developed based on WHO's age-friendly principles for primary health care<sup>94</sup> and recommended

**"We see accreditation as an important administrative strategy and tool. It enables us to systematically integrate standards into institutions that provide care for older adults."**

– YING-WEI WANG, Director-General of Health Promotion

standards for health-promoting hospitals.<sup>95</sup> The comprehensive criteria cover four dimensions of health care: administration policy, communication and service, care procedures, and physical environment. With the program beginning with hospitals, it was expanded in 2012 to include public health centers (PHCs),<sup>96</sup> clinics, and long-term care institutions. By the end of 2017, 469 institutions were certified, and 90 percent of surveyed older adults reported satisfaction with services provided at these institutions.<sup>97</sup>

As the original criteria were developed primarily based on hospital practices, the government continues to optimize and adapt them to different types of institutions. In 2016, it updated criteria to be specialized for PHCs.<sup>98</sup> As of October 2017, 96 centers received their accreditation based on these new standards. The government aims to certify all of Taiwan's 370 PHCs by the end of 2018. The HPA has also developed new

criteria for long-term care institutions, which it began testing in 2017.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the effort to build age-friendly care institutions, the health system has a long way to go to achieve integrated care that best serves older adults. “The treatment by most physicians is still disease-focused, and practices of integrated geriatric care and comprehensive assessment are not common,” said Liang-Kung Chen, Director of Taipei Veterans General Hospital Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology. Chen further noted that because health care institutions operate on a fee-for-service basis (i.e., their revenues are tied to the quantity of services provided),<sup>100</sup> they do not see strong financial incentives to promote integrated care.<sup>101</sup> Promoting the provision of integrated care requires fundamental changes in payment models and physician education and training.

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## Long-Term Care

Demand for long-term care is growing with Taiwan’s aging population. According to 2010 census results, 12.7 percent of people age 65 and older need LTC.<sup>102</sup> The government projects that the number of older adults needing LTC will increase 50 percent over the next decade (Figure 8). Meanwhile, Taiwan’s changing family structure is undermining the traditional, predominant source of caregiving by family members, creating the urgency for external sources of care. The average family size in Taiwan has shrunk 22 percent, falling from

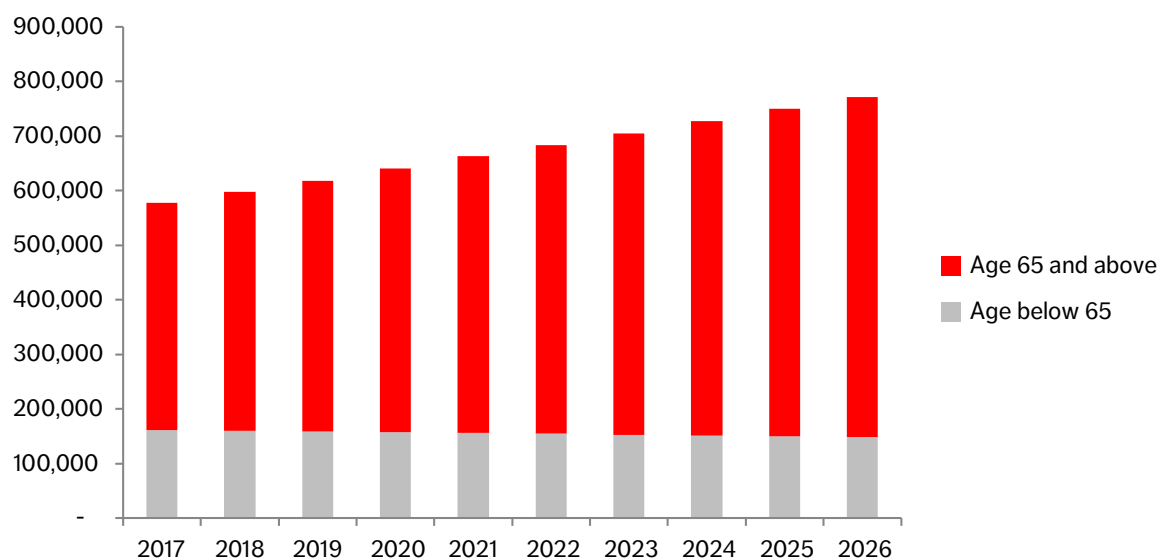
3.57 persons in 1996 to 2.77 persons as of 2015.<sup>103</sup>

In response, the government is continuing to build a formal LTC system and has enacted the Long-Term Care Service Act, which took effect in June 2017. The act formalized the framework of Taiwan’s LTC system, defining the scope of LTC services; a tax-based financing mechanism; the rights of LTC recipients; and the administration of LTC institutions.<sup>104</sup>

To implement the act, the government launched the LTC Ten-Year Plan 2017-2025 (LTC 2.0), following the original plan, LTC 1.0, which covered the years 2007-2016. LTC 1.0 focused on the development of basic service provision models, ranging from residential care institutions to day care centers, to home-based care. Early success was achieved during the LTC 1.0 period, with the number of home- and community-based service providers rising by 23 percent to more than 2,800 as of 2015. As of 2016, there were more than 1,000 residential care institutions with nearly 65,000 beds—with a capacity utilization of 77 percent indicating a sufficient supply.<sup>105</sup>

Building on LTC 1.0’s achievement and experience, the government expanded the scope of beneficiaries who qualify for subsidized LTC<sup>106</sup> and the coverage of subsidized services.<sup>107</sup> It aims to create a person-centered, community-based system that provides a continuum of care to meet diverse needs among older adults.

**Figure 8. Projection Population Needing Long-Term Care, 2017–2026**



Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare

To this end, the government is promoting a three-tier model that integrates diverse care services to allow older adults who are frail or have functional limitations to access the care they need within a 30-minute drive. The three tiers include<sup>108</sup>:

- Tier 1: A neighborhood-based LTC Station, providing respite care and preventive care to older adults and their family members;
- Tier 2: A Complex Service Center, offering diverse services including day care centers, home-based nursing care and assistance, rehabilitation care,

transport services, housing improvement, and assistive technology; and

- Tier 3: A Community Integrated Service Center, responsible for coordinating resources of service supply, identifying local needs, developing associated services, and providing relevant information.

While it is still too early to evaluate LTC 2.0's effectiveness, challenges are anticipated. There remains a shortage in community-based care facilities, such as day care centers, and a shortage in professional caregivers due to low standards for work conditions and compensation.<sup>109</sup> In addition,

while LTC 2.0 includes subsidized support for family caregivers (e.g., respite care and care skills training), other benefits for family caregivers remain insufficient. Currently, those who care for family members are allocated a combined total of only seven days of annual paid leave to provide care for both older parents and children by government mandate.

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## Dementia Care

Taiwan shares the challenge of a growing prevalence of dementia with other rapidly aging or aged societies. As of 2017, almost 260,000 people age 65 and older in Taiwan live with dementia—a figure that accounts for 7.9 percent of the older population. The total number of those suffering from dementia is expected to grow by 70 percent to 460,000 by 2031.<sup>110</sup> Over the past decade, NGOs in Taiwan have led a strong effort to address dementia. This has resulted in making dementia a priority on the government’s health policy agenda.

In 2014, Taiwan released the Dementia Prevention and Care Policy Guideline and Action Plan 2014-2016 (Dementia Plan 2014), becoming the 13th economy in the world to introduce a national strategy on dementia. The Taiwan Alzheimer’s Disease Association (TADA), a leading NGO established in 2002, is the driving force on dementia policy creation. TADA’s recommendations on dementia policy, cosigned by an additional 38 NGOs and submitted to the Department

of Health, served as the basis for Taiwan’s Dementia Plan 2014.<sup>111</sup>

The government’s commitment was renewed through the second Dementia Plan 2018-2025 (Dementia Plan 2018). Dementia Plan 2018 outlines a comprehensive set of measures—ranging from raising social awareness to reducing the risk of dementia, to improving diagnosis and treatment. It also explicitly states that the central government will prioritize dementia plans in its public health policy and that every municipality will have a dementia action plan by 2020.<sup>112</sup>

The LTC 2.0 also illustrates the government’s elevated efforts in addressing dementia. For example, the LTC 2.0 deems adults age 50 and older with dementia eligible for subsidized LTC services. It also integrates dementia care into its ongoing effort to build a community-based care system by leveraging successful existing models.<sup>113</sup> One such model, The Family of Wisdom project, was introduced in 2010 by TADA. This project serves people with light- or medium-level dementia and their family members, providing them with a venue to entertain, socialize, and offer each other mutual support. And it has proved to be very effective.

“It provides some respite for family members as well as [a] social participation opportunity for those with dementia, creating cognitive stimulus [that benefits their health],” said As Li-Yu Tang, Secretary General of TADA. To date, 10 Families of Wisdom have been established around Taiwan.<sup>114</sup>

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