

Attitudes to increased longevity and how we make it happen

Prepared for: TISA 'Looking to
the Future' Seminar

Paul Flatters, Managing Partner

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the futures partnership



Presentation structure

1. Why "how we make it happen"?
2. Issues to confront
3. What a world with older people might look like

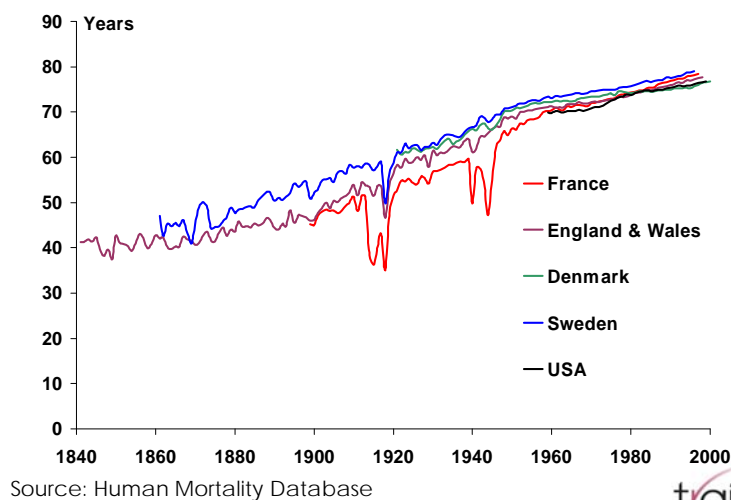
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Why 'how do we make it happen'?

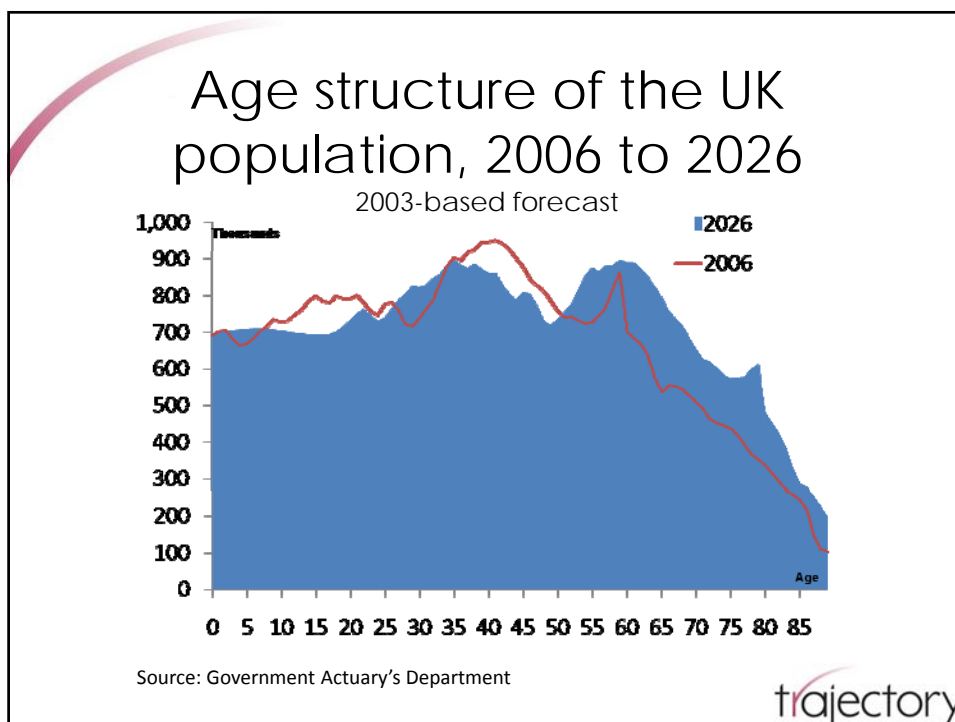
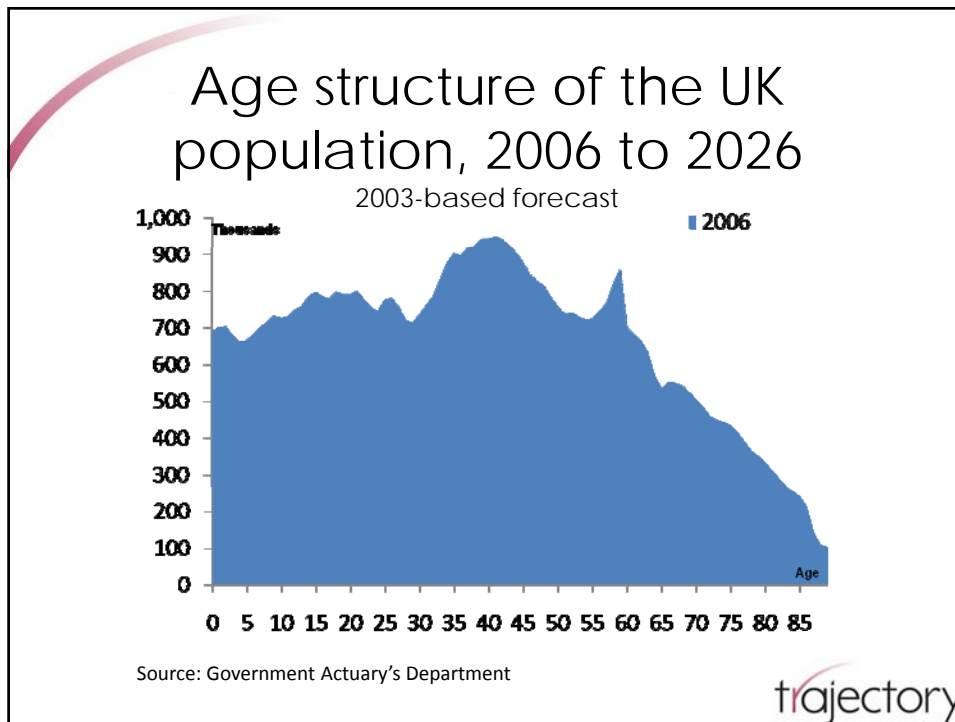
- Public opinion on increased longevity not that obvious
- Support for scientific/medical interventions cannot be guaranteed
- Public not yet fully aware of increased longevity
- Attitudes generally positive, but increased longevity raises both practical and ethical issues

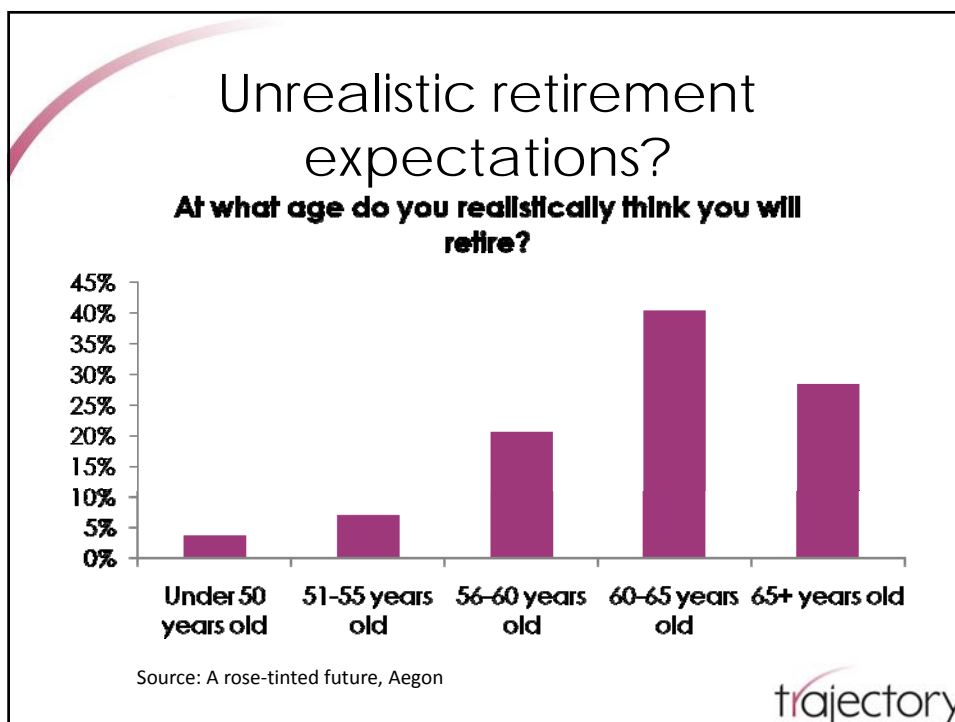
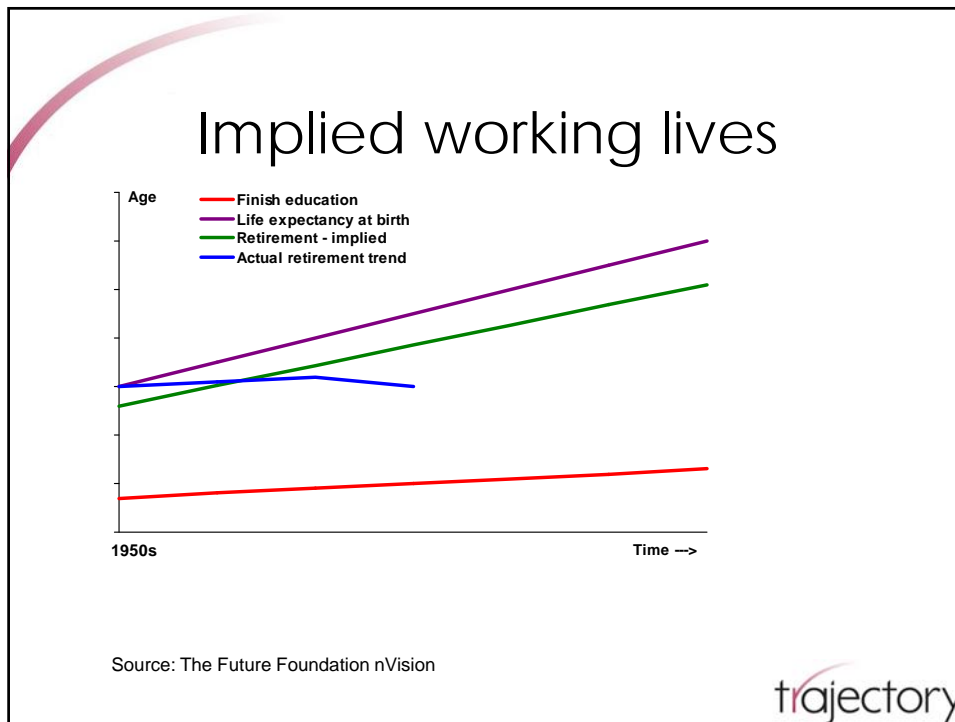
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Life expectancy rising in the developed world



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Ethical issues

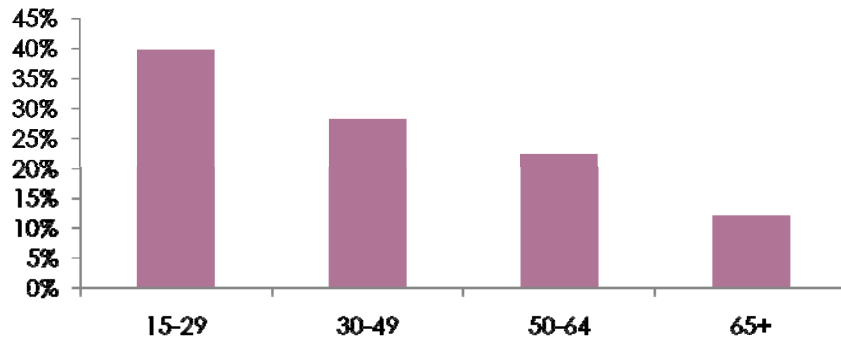
- There were 57 individual interviews, and 8 focus groups (totalling 72 focus group participants) conducted with community members in Brisbane, Australia. Community attitudes to life extension were more varied and complex than have been assumed by some biogerontologists and bioethicists.
- While some participants would welcome the opportunity to extend their lives others would not even entertain the possibility.
- The findings also highlight the relationship between Christianity, in particular belief in an afterlife, and attitudes to life extension technology.
- Overall, the study raises questions about the relationship between interest in life extension, the medicalisation of ageing and the increasing acceptability of enhancement technologies that need to be addressed.

[Underwood M](#), [Bartlett HP](#), [Partridge B](#), [Lucke J](#), [Hall WD](#).
School of Population Health, The University of Queensland,



Greater acceptance of cosmetic surgery in future?

If it available free under the NHS, I would be prepared to undergo cosmetic surgery to make myself look better

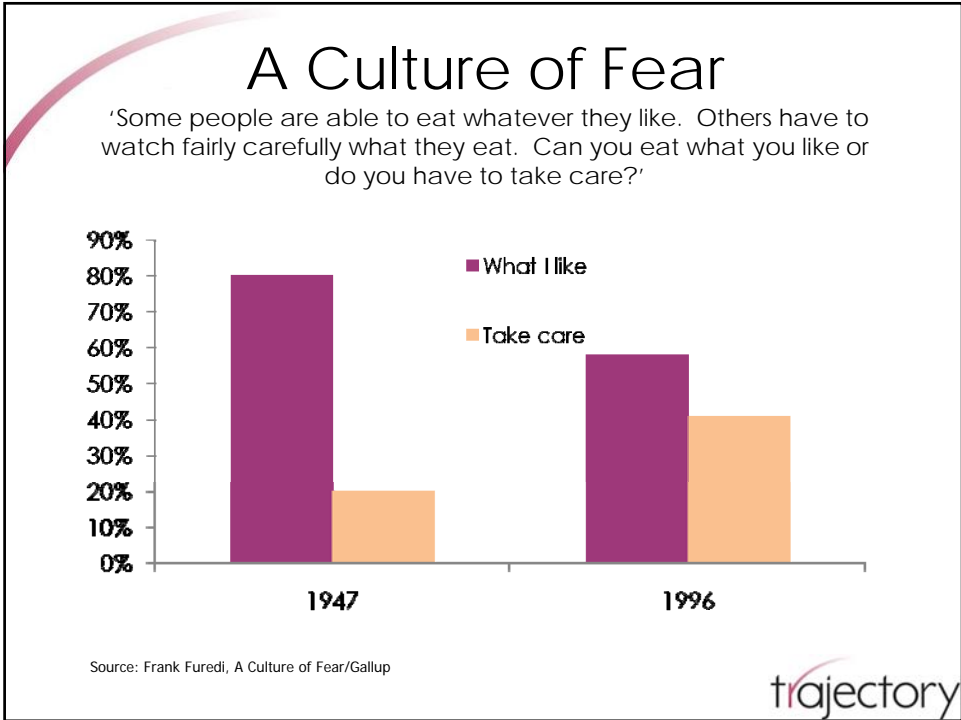


Source: *Real Trends*, Ipsos Mori – note: Don't know and not stated excluded



Issues to confront

- The culture of fear
- Reputational issues for key stakeholder groups
- Acceptance of 'significant' increases in longevity

What's driving the 'culture of fear'?

- Politicians
- The media
- Advocacy groups

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The power of advocacy

Lobbying by Greenpeace and other pressure groups has led to a ban on the use of certain plastics in soft toys on the basis of tests on rats. Yet ...

" .. half of all chemicals (including natural ones) ever tested cause cancer in rats – largely because of the doses used. On this criterion, orange juice, nutmeg and broccoli should all be banned because of natural carcinogens they contain."

" Under pressure from media and public concern (inspired and driven by lobbying groups) products that have been used since the 1950s without causing any known damage are to be banned with immediate effect."

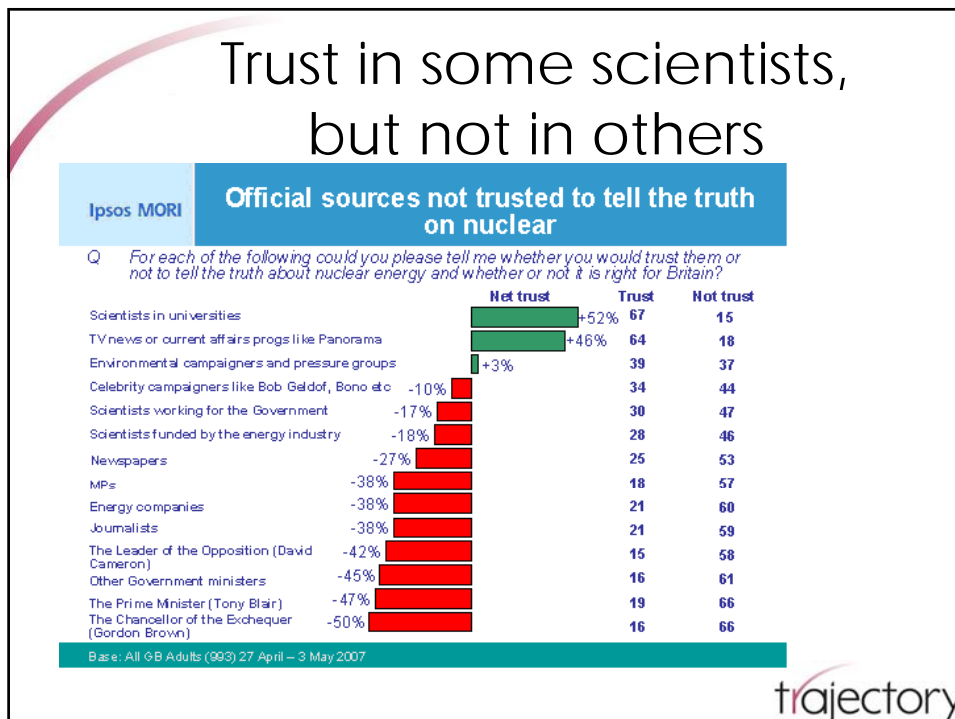
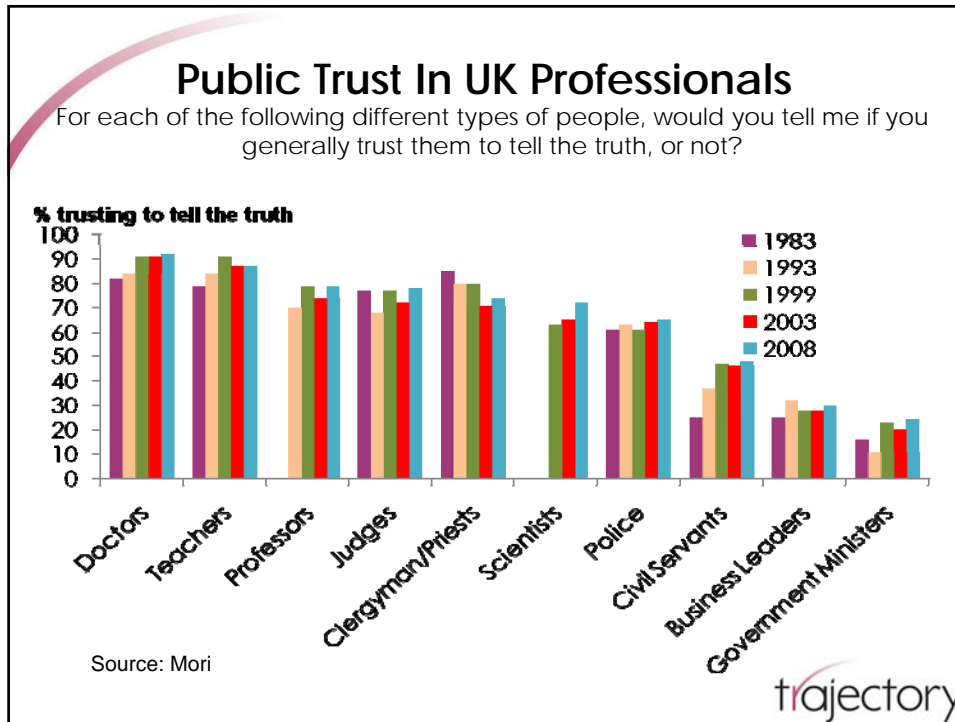
A ban is also being sought by Greenpeace on the use of the plastic in medical products. Yet this ...

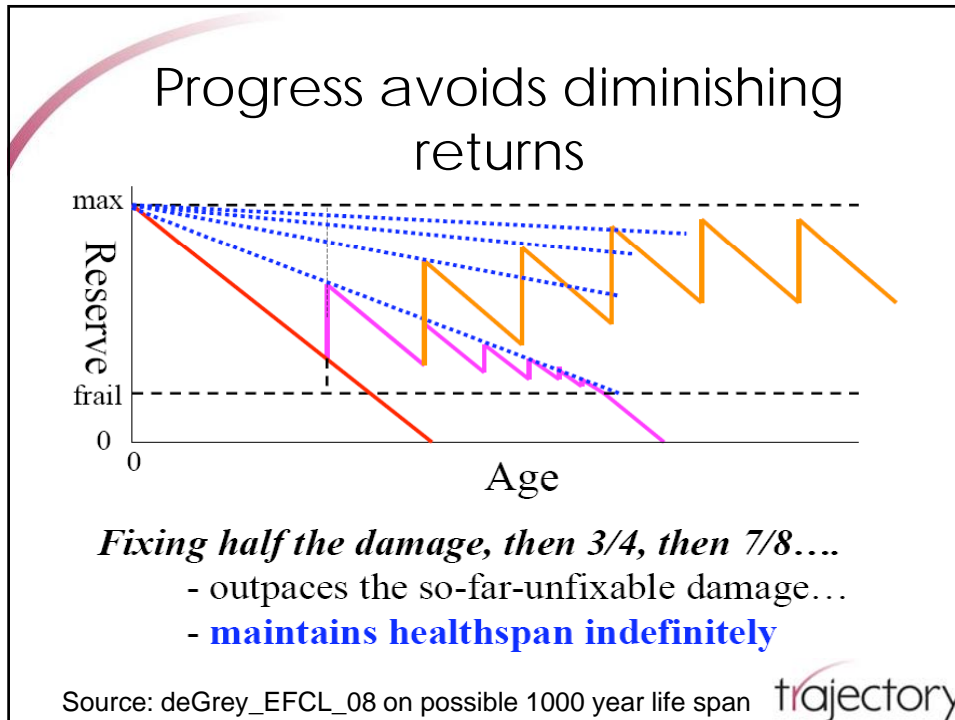
" ..could pose a significant health risk to some individuals unless a suitable substitute is found."

" A ban on medical use would be illogical, counterproductive, expensive and a retreat from scientific reason."

Roger Bate, *Financial Times*, 23 November 1999


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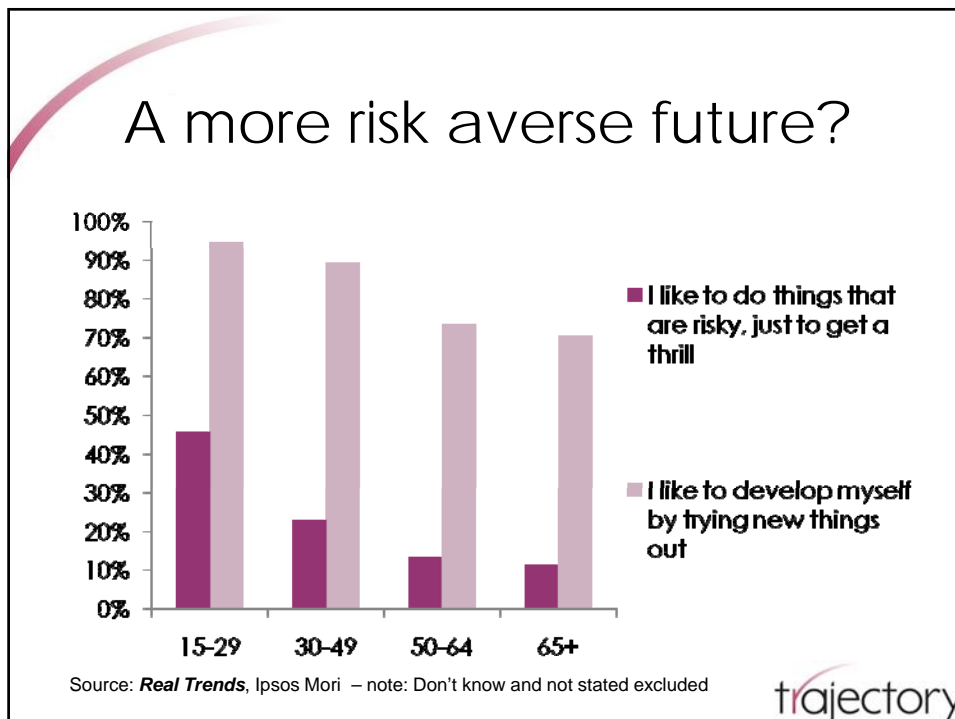
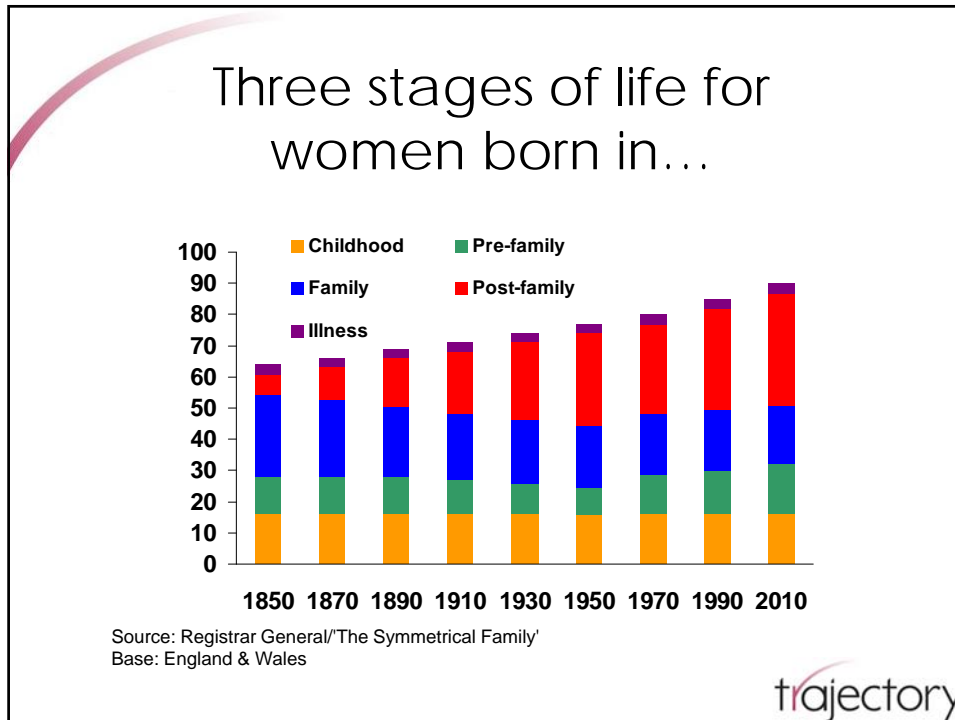




What this means:

*The first 1000-year-old
is probably less than
20 years younger than
the first 150-year-old*

Source: deGrey_EFCL_08 on possible 1000 year life span 



Summary

- Public still not aware of these issues – cannot guarantee their support when they are
- People still have faith in science and medicine and welcome progress
- People are surprisingly positive about technology
- The growth in cosmetic surgery suggests that we are increasingly willing to manipulate our bodies
- No one knows how the public will react to a 200, 300 or 500 year lifespan...
- ...how would it affect attitudes to work and play?
- How would society cope with a rapid transition from a set life course to a rapidly expanded one?

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