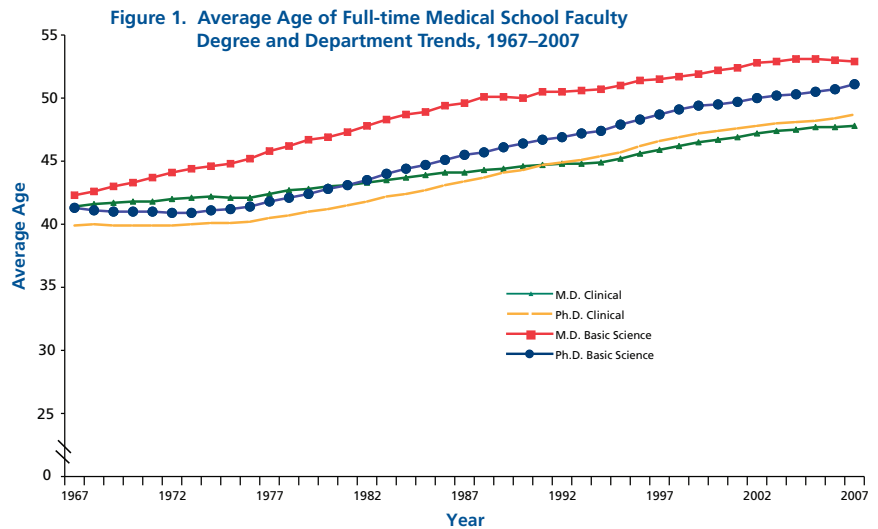


The Aging of Full-time U.S. Medical School Faculty: 1967-2007

This *Analysis in Brief* documents an increase in the average age of medical school faculty, a finding that holds regardless of degree, department type, rank, or demographic characteristic. These data on aging should inform a number of policy issues regarding the training, recruitment, retention, and financing of medical school faculty. In addition, the results of this analysis seem consistent with certain expectations about the effects of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (whereby Congress abolished mandatory retirement before age 70 in 1978 and abolished mandatory retirement altogether in 1986).

Methodology

The study used the AAMC Faculty Roster, the only comprehensive national database of U.S. medical school faculty. The findings reflect the age of full-time faculty members active as of December 31 in 1967, 1987, and 2007, respectively. During this 40-year period, the number of faculty increased from 17,584 individuals to 119,018 individuals, a nearly seven-fold increase influenced (in part) by an increase in the number of medical schools as well as by an increase in their typical size. The analysis ended with 2007 because that is the last year for which complete information is available due to reporting lags. The following Table and Figures show department, degree, rank, and demographic breakouts that are similar to those in the June 2008



Analysis in Brief on long-term faculty retention and attrition.

Results

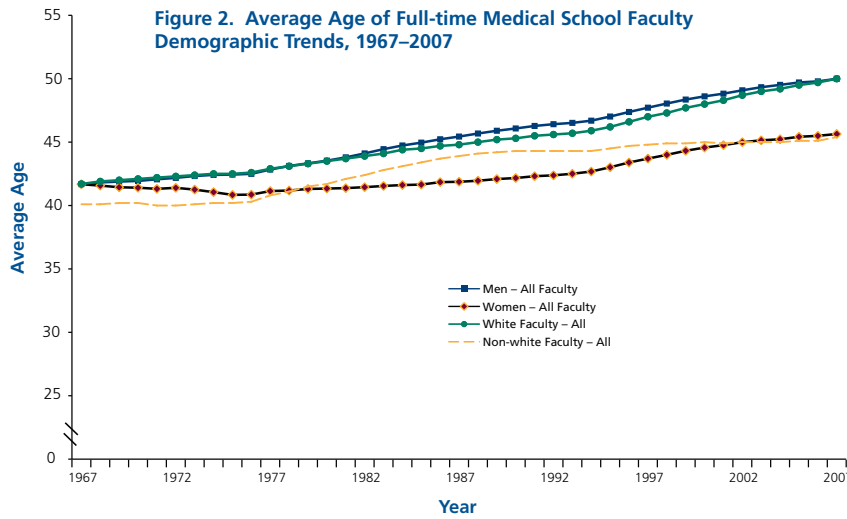
Aging examined over 20-year intervals. Table 1 shows the average faculty age was 41.7 in 1967, 44.7 in 1987, and 48.5 in 2007. The percentage of all faculty over 55 years old was 9 percent in 1967, 19 percent in 1987, and 29 percent in 2007. Over these decades, the average age of first-time assistant professors pursuing research increased from 33.6 years old to 39.3 years old.¹ The average age of all first-time faculty, regardless of entering rank, increased from 35.3 years old in 1987 years old to 37.8 years old in 2007.²

Aging examined year-by-year. Figure 1 illustrates that the average age of M.D.s and Ph.D.s has been consistently higher for faculty in the basic sciences than it has been for faculty in the clinical sciences. In 2007, for instance, the average age of M.D.s in basic sciences was 52.9 years old, while the average age for M.D.s in clinical departments was 47.8 years old.

Figure 2 shows that the average age of men faculty diverged from the average age of women faculty and that the average age of white faculty has been always higher than has the average age of other faculty. The average age for men increased from 41.7 years old in 1967 to 50.0 years old in 2007. Over

¹ We defined likely research faculty to be all individuals with Ph.D.s or M.D.s and Ph.D.s as well as all M.D.s in basic science departments. Also, additional data on median age and percentages of study groups at selected ages are in the supplemental materials at www.aamc.org/data/aib.

² Since the AAMC Faculty Roster was launched in 1966, there has been inadequate historical information to accurately identify whether an appointment in 1967 was the first appointment for a faculty member. The problem seems to be especially great for individuals in 1967 who were associate professors or full professors.



might have to manage the financial implications of increasingly older (and higher-paid) faculty postponing retirement. Moreover, the increasing age of first-time assistant professors pursuing research has implications for issues surrounding the length of training programs and the difficulty “young” researchers may experience in obtaining faculty appointments.

Furthermore, these findings may inform faculty retention issues. Despite the almost seven-fold increase in the total number of faculty, this study documents that the recruited faculty have not been young enough to offset the overall aging due to continuing (i.e., retained) faculty. In addition, the older ages of men in comparison with women and of white faculty in comparison with other faculty may tie into diversity issues. Although women and minorities have increased as a percentage of the faculty, it may be that their relatively higher attrition rates contribute to their relatively lower ages (see the *Analysis in Brief* from June 2008 on long-term retention and attrition patterns). Moreover, the differential ages of women and minorities may reflect the late arrival of women and minorities to the faculty in appreciable numbers.

Table 1. Age Statistics of Full-time U.S. Medical School Faculty, 1967-2007

Faculty Group	Study Group Size			Average Age			Percentage of Faculty Age >=55		
	1967	1987	2007	1967	1987	2007	1967	1987	2007
All Faculty	17,584	64,513	119,018	41.7	44.7	48.5	9	19	29
Clinical Departments									
M.D. or Equivalent	8,577	37,836	74,116	41.4	44.1	47.8	8	18	26
Ph.D. or Equivalent	1,375	7,964	16,162	39.9	43.4	48.7	6	13	30
M.D. and Ph.D. or Equivalent	748	3,025	7,540	43.1	45.6	49.5	10	20	27
Basic Sciences									
M.D. or Equivalent	1,247	1,981	2,193	42.3	49.6	52.9	10	36	41
Ph.D. or Equivalent	2,779	8,983	12,445	41.3	45.5	51.1	10	19	38
M.D. and Ph.D. or Equivalent	444	832	1,414	43.5	48.0	51.3	14	28	31
First-time Assistant Professors Pursuing Research	423	1,234	1,739	33.6	36.0	39.3	0	1	4
First-time Faculty (All Ranks)		5,387	8,721		35.3	37.8		2	4
Men	15,375	51,590	78,841	41.7	45.4	50.0	9	20	34
Women	2,194	12,798	39,717	41.7	41.9	45.6	10	12	19
White (Not Hispanic/Latino)	15,143	53,868	81,353	41.7	44.8	50.0	9	20	34
Non-white	1,214	8,390	27,442	40.1	43.9	45.4	5	14	17

this time, the average age for women increased from 41.7 years old to 45.6 years. The average age of white faculty members increased from 41.7 years old in 1967 to 50.0 years old in 2007, while the average age for non-white faculty members increased from 40.1 years old to 45.4 years old.³ Separate analyses indicate differences by sex and race/Hispanic origin at each academic rank, although the differences at a given rank tend to be less pronounced than are the overall differences.

Discussion

Differences among medical schools in the ages of their faculty and in the retirement plans of their faculty will shape how medical schools address these issues. Nevertheless, this *Analysis in Brief* may provide insight into a number of policy issues. Should a large proportion of faculty decide to retire in the coming years, some medical schools may need to consider how best to meet the challenges associated with recruiting and integrating unusually large numbers of faculty. Other medical schools

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³ The non-white faculty category are individuals with Hispanic/Latino ethnicity as well as Alaska Natives, American Indians, Asians, blacks, Native Hawaiians, and Other Pacific Islanders. The average age for each group increased over the time period studied, although the small number (or even absence) of faculty in certain groups provided for some fluctuation in the average ages.