



Dan Kadlec @dankadlec 9:00 AM ET April 26, 2016

We need a national discussion of five age-related questions.

No presidential campaign can dive into the issues that are top of mind for every interest group. Yet it's fair to ask: In the current cycle, where is the discussion on aging and retirement security?

McKinsey calls aging one of four megatrends reordering the world. Many populations are shrinking, threatening to leave the likes of Germany and China with a smaller workforce and an exploding number of elders that will strain their respective retirement systems. The U.S. is hardly immune. Boomers are now turning 70 and calling it quits in large numbers.

The candidates have waded at the aging issue with modest proposals and discussions around Social Security. Donald Trump has said Alzheimer's is a top priority and Hillary Clinton has said she'd like to double funding for dementia research. Yet there probably has been more discussion about the size of Donald Trump's hands than about how to secure guaranteed lifetime income, the kind of topic that is top of mind with just about all boomers.

Ken Dychtwald, CEO of Age Wave, is trying to kick the conversation into a higher gear. Age wave consults with businesses on aging issues and the firm generally promotes an engaged, active elder population as part of the solution to the economic burden of aging populations. On a recent press call, he said he had listened to every presidential debate in this cycle and lamented the scant attention paid to the aging megatrend.

He isn't alone. Nearly 68% of American workers say the current crop of presidential hopefuls have not been talking enough about ensuring a secure retirement, according to a poll from the Financial Services Roundtable. Maybe that will change when the parties have finally chosen their candidate. Dychtwald notes five big areas ripe for discussion:

How old is old? If 80 is the new 65, it makes no sense to hold on to policies and practices that institutionalize retirement in your middle 60s. We need a national discussion on how to encourage people to work longer. Questions for the candidates might include: Would you support funding the retraining of older workers for new careers? Would you incentivize employers to hire older workers?

Is dementia on your radar? Alzheimer's and other costly age-related diseases are soaring as more people live longer. Dementia is now the nation's scariest illness and sufferers will grow from

five million to 15 million by 2050. Yet we have 10 times more pediatricians than geriatricians. Few in power seem to be taking it seriously. Questions might include: what bold steps do you have for beating Alzheimer's? Where do you stand on assisted suicide?

Is mass elder poverty unavoidable? Half of those older than 55 have no savings and half of our population have no pension beyond Social Security. It may be too late for many to fix the problem. But we can beat elder poverty in the long run by taking steps now to help young people prepare. Questions might include: What are you doing to make financial literacy an important goal of education? How will you ensure that Americans save enough to support themselves in later life?

Is ageism baked into our culture? Our institutions are geared at young people, from urban planning and education to employment practices, housing and transportation. We need to make the country work for older people too—more no-stairs entries, pedestrian friendly crosswalks and flexible work schedules, for example. Questions for the candidates might include: What is the up side of aging? How would you capitalize on that?

Can we harness the power of maturity? Old people have a wealth of experience, wisdom and skill. These are assets employers would pay dearly for in younger workers. Why not with elders? It's time to unleash the productive side of aging through job reinvention and exciting volunteer options. Questions might include: what is your biggest idea for engaging elders? Do we ask too little of them? By asking the right questions now we may be able to find answers before our aging population becomes a drag on the global economy.

Original URL: <http://time.com/money/4307241/presidential-candidates-ignoring-aging-retirement/>