

THE AGING OF MAGAZINE AUDIENCES

The adult population is slowly aging due to both the influx of baby boomers into the 40-60+ year age groups and to the smaller numbers of young adults moving into the 18-34 category to replace them. According to GfK MRI, the median age of the adult population rose from 43.4 years in the spring of 2002 to 45.9 years in 2012, an increase of 6%. How is this trend impacting magazine audiences? The answer, according to an analysis of GfK MRI data for 100 publications between 2002 and 2012, is that magazine audiences are aging at a faster rate than the population as a whole. On average, the 100 magazines studied saw the median age of their adult readers increase from 39.7 years to 43.7 years—a 10% jump.

The accompanying table presents a detailed breakdown of our analysis with median age trends for 26 separate genres of magazines as well as the all-book averages. At this point there is little need for panic, for the aging process is probably having a positive impact on magazine demographics. Middle aged adults tend to have higher incomes than the very youngest and oldest segments; as a magazine finds more of its readers in the 40-55 year age block, its median income will probably rise.

The long-term implications are worth noting, however. With more and more young people being acclimated to the computer as a primary source of information, will this cause them to be less disposed to read magazines than past generations, as they enter their twenties and thirties? If this proves to be the case, the prognosis for publications that are currently having difficulty maintaining the quality of their demographics may be grim. While some subjects (sports and fashion, particularly) seem capable of drawing an influx of young adult readers even from “the computer generation,” this may not be true for the home and women’s service categories or the science, nature and outdoor fields, unless the editors of those publications find new ways to lure younger readers, thereby regenerating their demographic vitality and momentum. ■

Continued

MEDIAN AGE AND HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF AVERAGE ISSUE ADULT READERS OF 26 MAGAZINE GENRES

	MEDIAN AGE			% CHANGE 2002-12	MEDIAN H.H. INCOME			% CHANGE 2002-12
	2002	2007	2012		2002	2007	2012	
Airline (3)	42.8	44.2	45.1	5	94851	105282	115398	22
Automotive (5)	35.0	38.5	42.2	21	56526	61481	66464	18
Baby (2)	29.9	30.9	30.5	2	42646	43098	41111	-4
Black Interest (4)	38.6	38.5	42.2	9	42456	45364	43527	3
Brides (2)	29.5	31.8	33.2	13	49379	51395	59904	21
Business (6)	43.3	44.1	47.6	10	90523	100243	97276	7
Celeb-Entertainment (7) ¹	35.3	37.5	40.8	16	55611	57301	59684	7
Computers (2)	37.7	42.2	40.9	9	72479	78491	84321	16
Epicurian (3)	45.9	47.5	48.5	6	72291	75262	80878	12
General Mass Audience (4)	43.9	45.8	47.4	8	54174	56807	58905	9
Golf (2)	45.0	48.2	49.9	11	74366	82213	88081	18
Guns/Hunting (3)	40.7	45.4	43.8	8	50481	54757	61041	21
Health/Fitness (3)	42.9	43.9	45.5	6	55073	60056	60534	10
Home Service (9) ²	44.9	49.1	50.8	13	65100	66968	70220	8
Men's Interest (6)	34.5	36.8	40.9	19	57501	61526	64460	12
Outdoor (2)	42.8	45.4	44.6	4	49926	56845	63629	27
Parenting (2)	33.4	33.3	34.5	3	51596	56160	56348	9
Personal Finance (3)	47.1	48.7	50.9	8	78653	81838	92746	18
Regional (5)	49.6	52.4	52.8	7	64488	70317	73790	14
Sci-Mech (2)	41.9	43.8	44.4	6	56942	61364	63809	12
Sci-Nature (4)	45.9	47.4	48.6	6	59927	67229	70810	18
Sunday Mags (2)	45.8	48.4	53.1	16	56199	60339	62891	12
Tabloids (2)	41.8	39.8	42.1	1	41259	46578	53707	30
Travel (3)	46.2	48.9	48.7	5	76137	87821	88593	16
Women's Fashion (7)	33.0	35.1	36.9	12	55924	67781	70387	26
Women's Service (6)	46.8	50.0	52.3	12	53663	55834	61744	15
All Magazines (100)	39.7	41.8	43.7	10	59499	64546	67823	14
<i>U.S. Population Profile</i>	<i>43.4</i>	<i>44.7</i>	<i>45.9</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>49463</i>	<i>54359</i>	<i>59102</i>	<i>19</i>

¹TV Guide is classified under celeb-entertainment and general mass audience.

²Better Homes & Gardens is classified under home service and women's service.

Source: Media Dynamics, Inc.'s compilation from GfK MRI spring reports for each year.