AARP Public Policy Institute

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Research Report

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AARP's Public Policy Institute informs and stimulates public debate on the issues we face as we age. Through research, analysis and dialogue with the nation's leading experts, PPI promotes development of sound, creative policies to address our common need for economic security, health care, and quality of life.

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Generations of Struggle[*]

Deborah Thorne, Elizabeth Warren, and Teresa A. Sullivan[1]

Debt has become the common denominator of American life. From young people taking on student loans to older Americans struggling to pay for prescription medications, worry over debt has become a constant companion. Last year, more than a million people declared themselves unable to deal with their debts by filing for bankruptcy. Because it is a public manifestation of the most extreme financial trouble, bankruptcy offers one view of the economic health of Americans across the age spectrum.

This is the first report of data collected from the 2007 Consumer Bankruptcy Project (CBP). We have analyzed the age distribution of bankruptcy filers over the past 16 years, and we present three crucial findings. Since 1991,

- Americans age 55 or older have experienced the sharpest increase in bankruptcy filings.
- Americans age 34 or younger have experienced the greatest decrease in bankruptcy filings.
- The influence of Baby Boomers on bankruptcy filings has moderated substantially.

The story from these data is one of rising risk with age. The average age for filing bankruptcy has increased, and the rate of bankruptcy filings among those ages 65 or older has more than doubled since 1991. The corresponding decline in filing rates among young Americans might signal better financial security than that of their earlier counterparts. But the fact that previous generations show a sharp rise in filings in their early middle age may signal instead that people are living with financial stress for years, putting off the day of reckoning in bankruptcy for as long as possible.

Methods and Sample

The data reported here come from three major bankruptcy studies: The 1991 Consumer Bankruptcy Project, the 2001 Consumer Bankruptcy Project, and the 2007 Consumer Bankruptcy Project. The 1991 CBP age data were collected from 2,400 debtors in 16 districts from five states: California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas.[2] The 2001 CBP data came from 1,247 debtors in five districts in the same five states.[3]

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[*] Forthcoming in the *Harvard Law and Policy Review*, January 2009.

This is the first report of data from the 2007 Consumer Bankruptcy Project. Space does not permit a detailed explanation of our methods and sample, but a few points are critical. Thanks to advances in technology, we have our first national random sample of debtors.[4] In early 2007, we mailed questionnaires to 5,251 Americans who had filed for bankruptcy within the previous month. We received 2,435 responses.[5] With a response rate of about 50 percent,[6] we have increased confidence in the accuracy of efforts to generalize from our sample to the entire nation.

To measure age differences among those who file for bankruptcy, we count *all* debtors, whether they filed for bankruptcy singly or as part of a married couple in a joint petition. In 2007, 29 percent of bankruptcy cases were joint petitions, declaring the bankruptcy of both husband and wife.[7] This means that the 783,823 noncommercial cases filed that year represent about 1,011,132 adults who declared bankruptcy.

We also situate these data within the context of other studies that are broadly consistent with our findings. Studies from the Office of the United States Trustee reported age distributions among Chapter 7 debtors whose cases were closed in 2000 that were similar to those we reported for debtors filing in 2001.[8] Similarly, a study by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts compared filings between 1994 and 2002.[9] Those findings also support our earlier conclusions regarding age distributions among bankruptcy filers. The first age analysis of debtors after the 2005 amendments to the bankruptcy law, conducted by the Institute for Financial Literacy, was based on information gleaned from people completing prebankruptcy credit counseling.[10] These data suggested a substantial increase in the number of older filers, a point upon which we expand below.

The Filing Numbers and the 2005 Amendments[11]

In anticipation of the 2005 amendments to the bankruptcy law, some consumers rushed in ahead of the effective date, and filings shot past the two million mark that year.[12] Once the new law went into effect, consumer bankruptcy filings dropped even more precipitously than they had risen. By 2007, however, filings were on their way back up. The daily filing rate rose for most of the year, ending with 783,823 households in bankruptcy.[13]

We cannot know all the ramifications of such a major change in the law. It is possible that some age groups were disproportionately affected by the changes, although there is no obvious reason that would happen. Even so, we approach the post-2005 data with the caveat that changes in observed age distributions could be related to changes in the law that differentially affected access to the bankruptcy system for different age groups.

There is one other substantial difficulty with pre- and post-2005 comparisons. The steady increases in the number of families filing for bankruptcy between 1991 and 2005 were consistent with other indicators of financial distress, such as increased consumer debt loads and credit card defaults, and rising costs of basic goods such as mortgages, health insurance, and child care.[14] The sharp reversal in the number of bankruptcy filings in 2006 was not accompanied by any evidence that families were experiencing less financial strain. Indeed, both consumer debt and mortgage debt continued to increase, and the number of families contacted by debt collectors remained high.

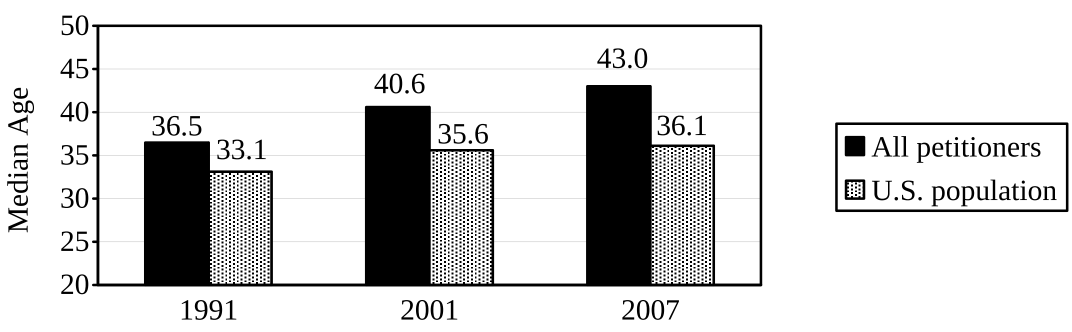
It is a reasonable inference that changes in the law—and the collateral impact of the changes, such as news reports about the difficulty of filing for bankruptcy and rising attorneys' fees—sharply cut the number of filings. If the effect of the new law was felt evenly across age groups, then comparisons of the proportional age distributions in 1991, 2001, and 2007 are useful for understanding the distress among families, even if comparisons of the raw numbers of filings are distorted as an artifact of the legal change.

Who Files for Bankruptcy?

As the elderly died, babies were born, and immigrants arrived, the U.S. population showed no abrupt age changes during the short period from 1991 to 2007. The median age of the entire population ticked up from 33.1 to 36.1, a three-year increase across this 16-year period.[15] Census data cover all people, including children, so a direct comparison with the bankruptcy population is not easily made. Nonetheless, the direction and magnitude of the change in the national age figures provide some backdrop for evaluating the changes in the bankruptcy numbers.

The bankruptcy population has aged faster than the general U.S. population. As illustrated in figure 1, in 1991 the median age for filing bankruptcy was 36.5.[16] By 2001, the median age had risen to 40.6. By 2007, the median age had reached 43—more than seven years older than their counterparts who filed in the early 1990s.[17] This increase is more than double the increase in the average age across the U.S. population.[18]

Figure 1. Median age, all petitioners and U.S. population, 1991, 2001, and 2007



Sources: Consumer Bankruptcy Projects 1991, 2001, and 2007.
U.S. Census at www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2007/NC-EST2007-01.xls

To provide a more nuanced picture of the aging of the bankrupt population, debtors were categorized into seven age groups, which are summarized in table 1. As these figures illustrate, in 1991, 45.4 percent of all bankrupt debtors were under age 35; by 2007, that proportion had dropped to 26.1 percent. This represents a 42 percent decline in the proportion of bankruptcy filers in this age group.

On the other end of the age spectrum, in 1991 only 8.2 percent of debtors were age 55 or older. By 2007, the proportion of bankrupt debtors age 55 or older had nearly tripled to 22.3 percent. As the last column of table 1 makes apparent, the shift in the age distribution of filers has been pronounced. Of course, because older filers are a small proportion of the total sample, any interpretation of these findings must be made with caution. But the fact remains that a much larger fraction of the people filing for bankruptcy in 2007 were retirement age or older than in 1991.[19]

Table 1. Percentage distribution of all petitioners and relative percentage change by age category, 1991, 2001, and 2007.

	Sample Years			
Age group	1991	2001	2007	Relative percentage change, 1991–2007
	(percent)			
18–24	8.7	5.3	4.2	-51.7
25–34	36.7	26.1	21.9	-40.3
35–44	30.6	33.7	28.1	-8.2
45–54	15.8	23.2	23.5	+48.7
55–64	6.1	7.2	15.3	+150.8
65–74	1.8	3.0	5.0	+177.8
75 or older	0.3	1.5	2.0	+566.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Consumer Bankruptcy Projects 1991, 2001, 2007.

To be sure, the majority of filers is—and always has been—in their middle years. But the shifts at the two ends of the age spectrum have altered the overall composition of bankruptcy filers. As a group, the 2007 filers were considerably older than their 1991 counterparts.

What Is the Likelihood of Filing?

As we noted at the beginning of this analysis, the 2005 amendments have strongly influenced the total *number* of bankruptcy petitions filed in the United States. As table 2 shows, the *rate* of bankruptcy filings was also affected. Specifically, the rate of filings per 1,000 Americans climbed from 6.5 in 1991 to 9.6 in 2001, but by 2007 the rates were less than half of the 2001 rates. We also report the filings per thousand of the population in each age group. These same data are summarized graphically in figures 2 and 3.[20]

Table 2. Bankruptcy filing rates per 1,000 U.S. population, by age category, 1991, 2001, and 2007.

Sample years	Age group								Filing rate, all ages
	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75–84	85+	
	--------------------------------(rate per thousand) ----------------------------------								
1991	3.9	10.2	9.3	7.3	3.5	1.2	0.3	*	6.5
2001	3.7	12.7	14.4	11.4	5.5	3.1	2.3	*	9.2
2007	1.4	5.5	6.5	5.5	4.9	2.7	1.6	*	4.6
Relative percentage change, 1991–2007	-64.1	-46.1	-30.1	-24.7	+40.0	+125.0	+433.3	*	-29.2

*Rates shown by an asterisk were found to be negligible.

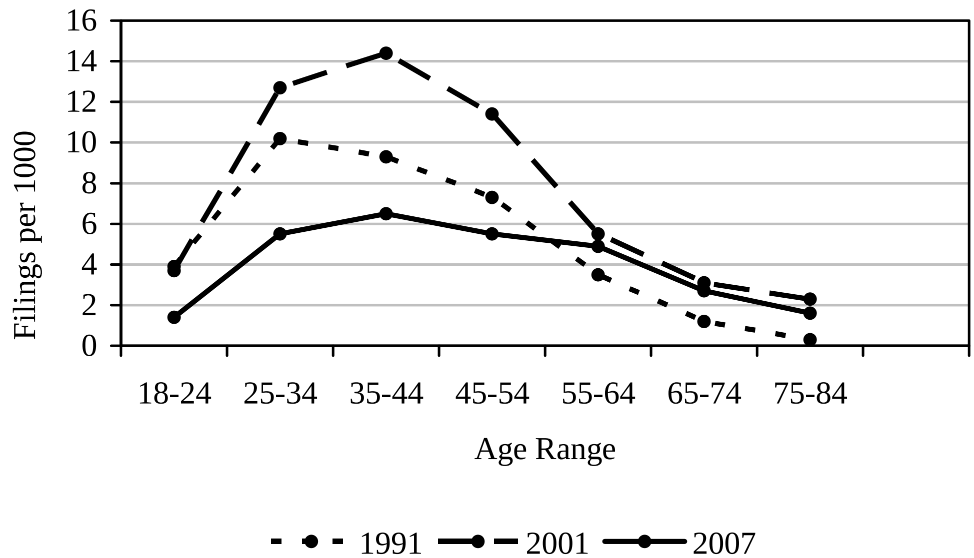
Sources:

1991 statistics: Consumer Bankruptcy Project 1991; Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Tables F-2, F2F, and F2E (12 months ending December 31, 1991), available at www.uscourts.gov/bnkrpctystats/Bk2002_1990Calendar.pdf (last consulted April 11, 2008); U.S. Census, Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1992, page 15, Table 13.

2001 statistics: Consumer Bankruptcy Project 2001; Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Tables F-2, F2F, and F2E (12 months ending December 31, 2001), available at www.uscourts.gov/bnkrpctystats/Bk2002_1990Calendar.pdf (last consulted April 11, 2008); U.S. Census, Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 2002, pages 16–17, Table 14.

2007 statistics: Consumer Bankruptcy Project 2007; Automated Access to Court Electronic Records (AACER); U.S. Census, "Monthly Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000, to July 1, 2006," Release date May 17, 2007, www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2006-sa.html (last consulted April 18, 2008).

Figure 2. Bankruptcy filing rates per 1,000 U.S. population, by age category, 1991, 2001, 2007.



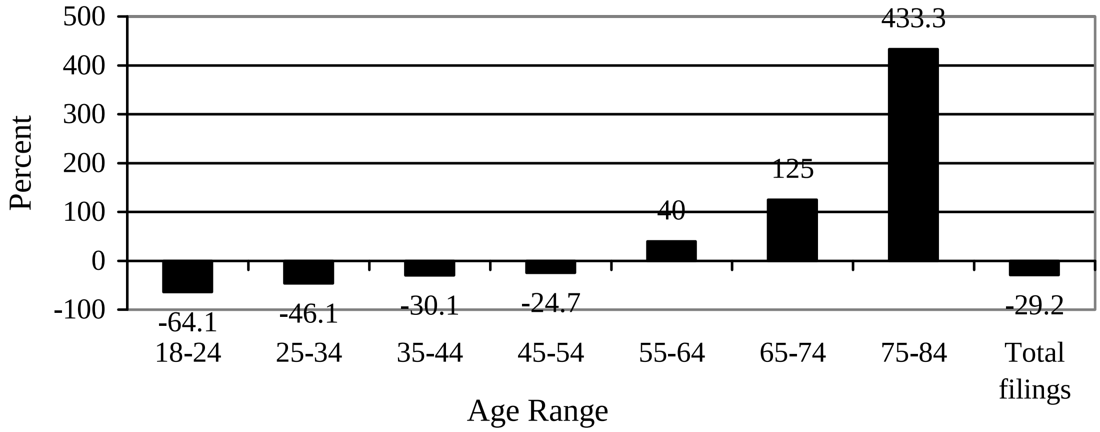
Source: Table 2

The filing rates provide a critical snapshot of the financial vulnerability of Americans by age group, and suggest that older Americans, now more than ever, are confronting serious financial challenges. For example, in 1991, Americans ages 18–24 filed for consumer bankruptcy at a rate of 3.9 per thousand. By 2007, that rate had dropped by more than half, to 1.4 per thousand.[21] While the 2005 amendments affected all age groups, our data suggest there was a relatively steeper drop-off in filings among younger groups of debtors than among older ones.

Although older Americans followed all other age groups with a contraction in filings from 2001 to 2007, the decrease in the wake of the 2005 amendments was relatively small. Over the entire 16-year period from 1991 to 2007, the filing rates among debtors age 55 or older actually increased, so that by 2007, the number of older Americans per thousand filing for bankruptcy exceeded the filing rates for those same age groups in 1991. This is evident in figure 2 where the 1991 and 2007 age lines cross.

Figure 3 illustrates the percent change in the rate of filing between 1991 and 2007. The results suggest that in the general population, younger Americans are notably less likely to file for bankruptcy than they were in the early 1990s. However, the rates of filing among older Americans, particularly those at or beyond retirement age, have increased sharply.

Figure 3. Relative percentage change in filing rates, 1991–2007, by age category



Source: Table 2.

There are a number of ways to combine the data to illustrate the changes among older Americans over time. Using the broadest grouping, ages 55-84, the increased risk of bankruptcy is clear. In 1991, this age group comprised 8.2 percent of all filers, with a filing rate of 1.97 per thousand Americans. In contrast, by 2007, this group comprised 22.3 percent of all filers, with a filing rate of 3.5 per thousand. For this age group, the change in filing rates represents an increase of 78 percent.[†] Among the subset of older Americans, those aged 65-84, the change was even more pronounced. In 1991, this group was 2.1 percent of all filers, with a filing rate of 0.88 per thousand. By 2007, the group had grown to 7 percent of all filers, with a filing rate of 2.2 per thousand. This represents a rate increase of 150 percent for bankruptcy filings among Americans aged 65-84. [‡] Among the very oldest subset of filers, ages 75-84, the proportion of filers increased from 1.8 percent in 1991 to 5.0 percent in 2007, and the filing rate per thousand increased from 0.3 to 1.6. As table 2 shows, the rate filings for people aged 75-84 increased by 433.3 percent. All variations on these data show that since 1991, the bankruptcy risk for older Americans has increased substantially.

The Declining Influence of Baby Boomers

Social scientists' division of Americans into age cohorts has been popularized in the media, and despite the attention paid to Baby Boomers, they are just one of the named generations. We have adopted the widely used terms for the generations, with accompanying birth dates as commonly used by demographers, as follows: [22]

[†] This age grouping is not shown in table 2, but it is derived from the same data.
[‡] This age grouping is not shown in table 2, but it is derived from the same data.

Group	Birth year
Millennials	1982–
Gen X	1965–1981
Boomers	1946–1964
Silent	1925–1945
GI	1916–1924

Because of their unusually large numbers, Baby Boomers have driven many economic and social phenomena, so it is no surprise that they have also had a considerable role in the rates of bankruptcy filings. Their effects on bankruptcy, however, were due not just to their greater numbers, but also to a higher propensity to file bankruptcy, at least in 1991 and 2001. As table 3 illustrates, in 1991 Boomers were filing at a rate nearly twice that of any other group. And it was the Boomers who led the steep increase in bankruptcy filings from 1991 to 2001—filing at rates that far outstripped those of both their younger and older counterparts.

As bankruptcy filings declined following changes in the law, however, the rate of Boomer filings showed a more pronounced reversal, decreasing faster than the filing rates for either the younger Gen X or the older Silent generation. By 2007, Boomers had slipped into second place, filing at a rate that was substantially lower than that of their Gen X counterparts, the oldest of whom were now entering their 40s. As figure 4 illustrates, the impact of Boomers on bankruptcy filings has shrunk considerably.[23]

Table 3: Bankruptcy filing rates per 1,000 U.S. population, by generation, 1991, 2001, 2007

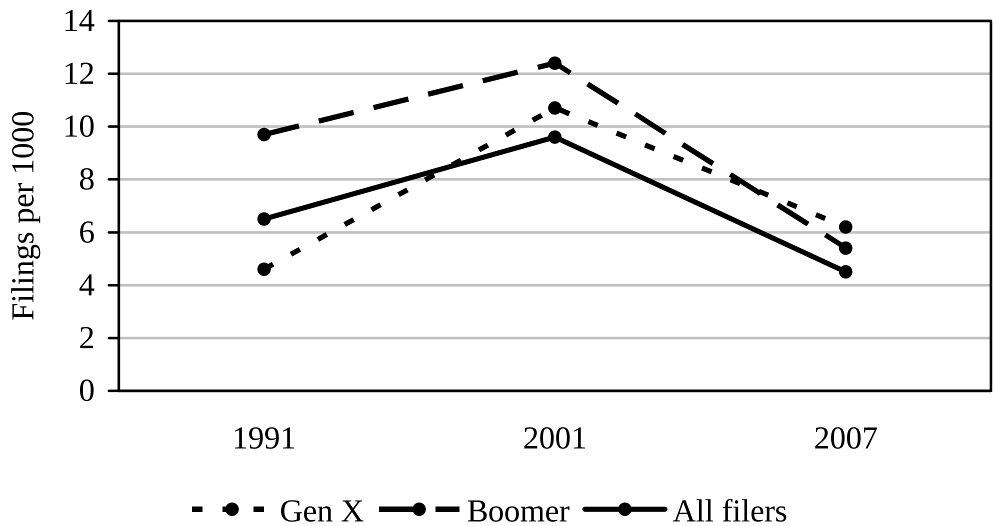
	Generation group					
	Millennial[1]	Gen X	Boomer	Silent	GI	Rate of total filings
	--------------------(filing rates per thousand) --------------------					
1991	*	4.6	9.7	5.1	0.7	6.5
2001	*	10.7	12.4	4.4	2.5	9.6
2007	1.7	6.2	5.4	2.6	0.7	4.5

Source: Consumer Bankruptcy Projects 1991, 2001, 2007

[1]Millennials were not yet adults in 1991 and 2001.

One way to understand this phenomenon is to measure the impact of the Boomers' much higher filing rates. For example, if the Boomers had had the same bankruptcy filing rate as the overall rate per 1,000 adult Americans in 1991 (6.5 per 1,000), bankruptcy filings for that year would have fallen by 260,496. That would have resulted in an overall decrease of 21.8 percent of all petitions filed. Similarly, in 2001, the Boomers' filing rate (12.4 per 1,000) resulted in 220,284 more people in bankruptcy than there would have been if Boomers had experienced the overall average rate of bankruptcy in that same year filings would have dropped by 11.5 percent. By 2007, the trend is clear. If Boomers had filed at the same rate as all other debtors in 2007, there would have been 68,517 fewer people in bankruptcy. That would have decreased bankruptcy filings by only 6.1 percent. This strongly suggests that the Boomer influence is rapidly fading.

Figure 4. Rate of bankruptcy filings per 1,000 U.S. population, by Gen Xers, Boomers, and all filers, 1991, 2001, and 2007



Source: Table 3

For years, commentators have celebrated and blamed Boomers for virtually every American phenomenon, including a staggering rise in bankruptcy filings. Now Boomers are aging, and the bankruptcy population is aging along with them. The award for the most filings no longer goes to the Boomers. Instead, Gen Xers in their late 30s and 40s now supply the greatest number of filers.

But the data hold a more subtle clue to Americans' collective financial health. As in earlier years, the bulk of filers are in their middle ages—30s and 40s—but the ends of the age spectrum have changed considerably. Fewer young people file, while the rates among older filers have increased rapidly. The data suggest that older Americans across the board are under increasing financial stress.

Conclusion

The 2005 amendments to the Bankruptcy Code slashed consumer bankruptcy filings. Among all age groups, fewer people filed in 2007 than in 2001. But the overall decline should not mask important changes in the composition of the groups filing for bankruptcy.

The data reveal interesting changes at both ends of the age continuum. The rate at which younger Americans file for bankruptcy has steadily declined since the early 1990s. Two quite different scenarios could be driving these changes. Lower bankruptcy filing rates for younger people may be the result of healthier finances. If so, that is good news. But these bankruptcy data are consistent with a much darker scenario as well: Young people may be juggling debt longer before they file for bankruptcy.[24] If that is the case, we can expect to see more bankruptcies on the horizon as these young people marry, have families, buy homes, and take on other obligations that their financial circumstances cannot support.

The economic news for seniors is consistently grim. Even following the changes in the law in 2005, bankruptcy filings among those age 55 or older have increased from their base rate in 1991 and already approach the filing levels in 2001. Age is increasingly associated with financial distress and seeking protection from creditors through the bankruptcy courts.

These data warn of increasing financial pressure on families as they age. The data take on particular urgency in light of recent research suggesting a relationship between financial strain and health problems for older people, particularly indications that financial problems are linked with declining self-assessments of their health, diminishing ability to care for themselves, and generalized demoralization.[25] The rise in bankruptcy filings may presage increased physical and psychological problems among older Americans.

Our objective with this paper was to describe changes in the age demographics of those filing for consumer bankruptcy. In future publications, we will report on the reasons families of all ages file for bankruptcy, with a particular emphasis on the financial problems facing older Americans. For now, we focus on sounding the alarm about the shifting demographics of bankruptcy and the sharply declining fortunes of substantial numbers of seniors.

APPENDIX

Table A-1. Ages of first- and second-named petitioners combined, by percentages and estimated totals, 1991, 2001, and 2007

	------------1991------------		-----------2001-----------		-----------2007-----------	
Age	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
18–24	8.7%	103,746	5.3%	101,800	4.2%	42,468
25–34	36.7	437,643	26.1	501,315	21.9	221,438
35–44	30.6	364,901	33.7	647,293	28.1	284,127
45–54	15.8	188,413	23.2	445,614	23.5	237,616
55–64	6.1	72,742	7.2	138,294	15.3	154,703
65–74	1.8	21,465	3.0	57,623	5.0	50,557
75–84	0.3	3,577	1.5	28,811	2.0	20,223
85+	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	100.0	1,192,487	100.0	1,920,750	100.0	1,011,132
N	3,298		1,503		2,789	

*The percentage of petitioners age 85 or older was negligible. The number is, however, included in the total number of petitioners.

Primary plus secondary, U.S. filings total people:

1991: 879,365 + 313,122 = 1,192,487 (calendar year ending December 31, 1991)

The total (1,192,487) is the sum of filings in nonbusiness Chapter 7 plus all Chapter 13 cases (879,365) corrected for total of joint nonbusiness filers (313,122) (Tables F2F and F2E from the U.S. Courts).

2001: 1,456,785 + 463,965 = 1,920,750 (calendar year ending December 31, 2001)

The total (1,920,750) is the sum of filings in nonbusiness Chapter 7 plus all Chapter 13 cases (1,456,785) corrected for total of joint nonbusiness filers (463,965) (Tables F2F and F2E from the U.S. Courts).

2007: 783,823 + 227, 308 = 1,011,132 (calendar year ending December 31, 2007)

The total (1,011,132) is the sum of all nonbusiness filings for the year ending December 31, 2007 (783,823) plus estimated proportions of joint cases (29%) (227,308). All data courtesy of AACER.

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[2] For a detailed discussion of the sample and survey techniques, see Teresa Sullivan, Elizabeth Warren, and Jay Lawrence Westbrook, *The Fragile Middle Class: Americans in Debt*, chapters 7–11 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

[3] A detailed description of this study is in Elizabeth Warren and Amelia Tyagi, *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers Are Going Broke*, appendix (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

[4] The national sample was made possible by the generous help of Mike Bickford and his colleagues at AACER (Automated Access to Court Electronic Records), an Oklahoma City-based bankruptcy data and management company.

[5] For later analyses, we also collected a supplemental sample of debtors age 65 or over, but the findings reported here are derived from data from the randomly drawn sample.

[6] We mailed 5,251 questionnaires; 275 were returned for bad addresses. Of the remaining 4,976 respondents, 1.7 percent declined to participate and 49.4 percent failed to return the questionnaires.

[7] Data on joint filings were furnished from a proprietary data source by Mike Bickford of AACER. See note 4.

[8] Ed Flynn and Gordon Bermant, *Filers Most Likely in 24–45 Age Range*, American Bankruptcy Institute (Web posted 12/1/01). The Flynn and Bermant study differed from our work in that it excluded Chapter 13 filers. Among Chapter 7 filers, it had only about a 20 percent response rate on age.

[9] John Golmant and Tom Ulrich, "Aging and Bankruptcy, The Baby Boomers Meet Up at the Bankruptcy Court," *ABI Journal* 26 (May 2007) (examination of 600 cases filed between 1994 and 2002 from 88 of 94 judicial districts, reporting a rise in the proportion of Baby Boomers and older filers).

[10] *Who Went Bankrupt in 2006? A Demographic Analysis of American Debtors* (Portland, ME: Institute for Financial Literacy, Inc., 2007), a survey of 24,038 people who came to the Institute for Financial Literacy for the debt counseling or financial management instruction course required by the 2005 bankruptcy amendments).

[11] For a summary of the 2005 changes to the bankruptcy laws, see Robert Lawless and Elizabeth Warren, *Shrinking the Safety Net: The 2005 Changes to the Bankruptcy Laws,* The Illinois Law & Economics Working Paper Series LE 06 031 (2007).

[12] Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005, P.L. No. 109-8, 119 Stat. 23.

[13] Filings increased from 2,629 per filing day in January 2007 to 3,658 per filing day in December 2007. Filing data from AACER.

[14] The amount of consumer credit as of February 2008 is reported in the Federal Reserve Statistical Release, "Consumer Credit." www.federalreserve.gov/releases/g19/Current (accessed April 14, 2008). The default rate on mainstream credit cards continues to increase. See "Credit Card Default Rate Is Climbing," *New York Times*, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE4DA1338F93BA25750C0A961958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1 (retrieved April 14, 2008). Rates of home foreclosures are at an all-time high. See www.foreclosurepulse.com/archive/2008/03/11/5582.aspx (retrieved April 14, 2008).

[15] Calculated from U.S. Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992,* p. 15, table 13; and U.S. Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2002*, pp. 16–17, table 14.

[16] See Teresa A. Sullivan, Deborah Thorne, and Elizabeth Warren, "Young, Old, and In Between: Who Files for Bankruptcy?" *Norton Bankruptcy Law Advisor* 9A (2001):1–10. Here we report median ages for 1991 and 2001 samples.

[17] Although the reported age trends are similar, Golmant and Ulrich (note 9) report higher median filing ages in 1992 (37.7 years) and 2002 (41.4 years). It is not clear whether they included both first and second petitioners in their analysis, as we did. Because wives are typically listed second on the petition, and they tend to be younger than their husbands, we expect that calculations that include both first and second petitioners would reflect a modestly lower median petitioner age.

[18] The age distributions reported by the 2007 Consumer Bankruptcy Project (CBP 2007) and the Institute for Financial Literacy (IFL) are strikingly similar. The IFL collected age data in 2006 from 23,888 of the 24,038 people who enrolled in financial counseling or financial management instruction mandated by the 2005 amendments. Table 1 below reports the age data for both the IFL and CBP 2007:

Table 1. Percent filing by age category for the Institute for Financial Literacy (IFL) and Consumer Bankruptcy Project (CBP) 2007 studies

Study	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
IFL	3.3	21.0	29.0	24.9	14.0	7.8	100.0
CBP 2007	4.2	21.9	28.1	23.5	15.3	7.0	100.0

Source: Institute for Financial Literacy, *Who Went Bankrupt in 2006? A Demographic Analysis of American Debtors.* Consumer Bankruptcy Project, 2007.

[19] Table A-1 in the appendix provides total numbers of filers by age category.
[20] Readers familiar with our 2001 article, "Young, Old, and In Between: Who Files for Bankruptcy?" (note 15) will note that rates of filing reported in the current article do not match exactly those reported in 2001. This is because we have decided to use calendar year, rather than fiscal year, statistics in our calculations. The differences are minor and the trends remain the same.
[21] One way to conceptualize the notion of rate is as follows: Using the 1991 rates, if a pool of 10,000 people were swimming in shark-infested waters, 39 of them would be eaten. In contrast, if we use the 2007 rates and another 10,000 people were swimming among sharks, only 14 of them would be dined upon by our finned friends.
[22] Definitions and discussions of the different generations can be found in William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584–2069* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991).
[23] The calculation in the text uses as the baseline the filing rate for all debtors. If the Boomers are removed from the average rate of filing, the differences are even more dramatic. In 1991, the overall bankruptcy filing rate would have fallen to 3.9 per thousand, and if that rate were applied to the Boomers, there would have been 316,731 fewer filings, or a 40 percent decline in filings. In 2001, the overall rate without the Boomers would have been 7.8 per thousand, and if Boomers had filed at the same rate, there would have been 361,391 fewer filers, or an 18.8 percent decline in filings. By 2007, excluding the Boomers from the rate calculation would reduce the overall rate to 3.7 per thousand; applying that rate to the Boomers would mean a reduction of 175,319 filers, or a 17.3 percent decline in filings.
[24] See Tamara Draut and Javier Silva, "Generation Broke: The Growth of Debt Among Young Americans" (New York: Demos, 2004), www.demos.org/pub295.cfm (retrieved January 23, 2008). The authors describe how, between 1992 and 2001, the average amount of debt held by young Americans increased by 55 percent.
[25] Ronald J. Angel, Michelle Frisco, Jacqueline L. Angel, and David A. Chiriboga, "Financial Strain and Health among Elderly Mexican-Origin Individuals." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44(4) (2003): 536–551.

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