

More baby boomers will be single in their golden years because, as a generation, they have been less likely to re-marry and more likely to divorce. As people's attitudes toward marriage and singleness change, more individuals choose to stay single or get married later in their lives. By 2020, it is projected that 28.6% of all households will be composed of single persons.<sup>5</sup> Combine this with the fact that singles spend more on themselves than those living with others; the future looks bright for leisure markets.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the main purchasers of Lonely Planet guides are single, middle-class females.<sup>7</sup> For some companies, such as the Explore Worldwide, single travelers are their core market. Research shows that most solo travelers actually have friends and family with whom they can travel, but they prefer to travel by themselves.<sup>8</sup> When traveling by themselves, single travelers often feel a sense of freedom and strong urge to take part in activities, such as adventure holidays and extreme sports, that they would not do if traveling with others.<sup>9</sup>

A **single traveler** is defined by the U.S. Travel as a person who lives alone and travels with or without a companion. Single travelers literally come in all shapes, sizes, and life circumstances. An 18-year-old college student on spring break in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, qualifies as a single traveler, as does an 80-year-old widow enjoying a luxury barge tour on the great rivers of Europe. As suggested by research, even married people sometimes prefer to holiday on their own to escape the other half!

Single travelers may not travel alone because traveling alone can be extra costly. Most tours, all-inclusive resorts, and cruise lines charge a **single supplement** that ranges from an additional 25% to 100% more than the per-person price a couple would pay. The Internet is now making it possible for single travelers to find acceptable roommates so they can avoid the single supplement premiums and meet new friends.

Baby boomers will continue to use travel to meet other single people and to fulfill social needs. Savvy tour companies and travel agents will set up travel companion matchmaking services so that boomers do not forgo travel for lack of a travel buddy or owing to expensive single supplement prices for cruises and tours. Grand Circle Travel, a tour operator, has already taken steps to aid the single traveler by offering shoulder season tours that have no single supplements.

Research has shown that senior baby boomers' main travel motivations in descending order were to experience Sun/beach location, visit family and friends, and then participate in nature adventures. These were followed by secondary drivers including wellness, spa and health treatments, and city trips. It is also interesting to note from this research that these seniors having good income and health are likely to travel more extensively in the initial years, and then for long distance travel and international travel to decrease as they age. As the aging process continues, the number of short trips associated with health and well-being will increase.<sup>10</sup>

Another demographic shift, which will have an impact on international travel especially, has been the shift in the ethnic mix of North America. During the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, most immigrants to the United States and Canada were Europeans by birth. These ethnic groups enjoyed traveling to their mother countries and fueled transatlantic tourism in the 20th century. But the majority of immigrants during recent decades have come from Latin and Central America, Asia, and former Soviet Union nations (see Figure 14.2). These individuals, as they become more affluent, will also want to visit the lands of their heritage, generating a substantial increase in travel to their homelands.

These demographic shifts are bad news for some tourism suppliers. Snow holiday resorts will experience a double negative effect. Baby boomers and their parents who have been ski resorts' mainstay market segment are giving up skiing as they age, and unfortunately, many did not turn their children on to the sport. In addition, winter sports have been primarily the pastime of Northern and Western European ethnic groups. These ethnic groups are shrinking as a percentage of the population of the world. Unless members of the growing Asian and Hispanic ethnic groups can be enticed to learn and participate frequently in winter sports, substantial shrinkage in participation rates will occur in the next 25 years.