

AGEING: ASSESSMENT OF THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL TENDENCIES FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH

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Population ageing is a global phenomenon that is both inevitable and predictable. It will change society at many levels and in complex ways, creating both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, older people already make a significant contribution to society, whether it is through the formal workforce, through informal work and volunteering or within the family. It is can be foster this contribution by helping them maintain good health and by breaking down the many barriers that prevent their ongoing participation in society. On the other hand, towards the end of life, many older people will face health problems and challenges to their ability to remain independent. It is needed to address these too, and do it in a way that is affordable and sustainable for families and society.

Good health must lie at the core of any successful response to ageing. If it's can be ensured that people are living healthier as well as longer lives, the opportunities will be greater and the costs to society less. This great demographic challenge of the first half of the 21st century therefore demands a public health response, and WHO has identified this as a priority for the Organization.

Population ageing is taking place in every country, although each country is at a different stage of this transition. While the shift to older populations started in wealthy regions such as Europe and North America, it is now low- and middle-income countries that are experiencing the greatest change. By 2050, 80% of older people will live in these countries. Chile, China and the Islamic Republic of Iran will have a greater proportion of older people than the United States of America. These trends are also evident for the oldest age groups.

In the middle of the 20th century there were just 14 million people on the whole planet aged 80 years or older. By 2050, there will be 100 million living in China alone,



and 400 million people in this age group worldwide. For countries such as France and Sweden, population ageing has taken many years. For countries that are now experiencing the same transition, it is taking place much more rapidly. Thus, while it took more than 100 years for the share of France's population aged 65 or older to increase from 7% to 14%, countries including Brazil, China and Thailand will experience the same demographic shift in just over 20 years. This gives them much less time to put in place the infrastructure to address the needs of this older population.

The highest increasing of population to 2020 who 80 years and older is prognosed for Asia and Egypt – more 2 times compared to 2000. The lowest part of aged people for the same period will be in the Northern America region and in Sweden.

The median age of the population in the WHO European Region is the highest in the world and it continues to increase rapidly. Many people enjoy some of the longest life spans in the world: average life expectancy at birth for the 53 countries in the European Region is over 72 years for men and around 80 for women. Yet gaps in longevity and health experiences at higher ages continue to grow. The proportion of people aged 65 and older is forecast to almost double between 2010 and 2050 and no age group will grow faster than those aged 80 and over. Combined with reduced fertility and population growth rates in many countries, increased average life expectancy is leading to higher old-age dependency ratios. While the average in the WHO European Region was almost 26 people aged 65 and over per 100 people of working age in 2010, it is projected to double to around 52 by 2050.

Global population ageing is a by-product of the demographic transition in which both mortality and fertility decline from higher to lower levels. In absolute terms, the number of older persons has tripled over the last 50 years and will more than triple again over the next 50 years. The rights of older persons should not be incompatible with those of other age groups, and the reciprocal relationships between the generations must be nurtured and encouraged.