



## Issue description

Committee: Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee  
Issue of: The problem of ageing societies  
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### Introduction:

The ageing of societies is one of the most significant issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Due to the highly developed healthcare over the world the average life expectancy has risen, especially in more developed countries. A growing percentage of these populations are over 60. This causes a problem both in familial and national matters. As the number of pensioners rises it is more and more difficult for the younger generations to provide for them and support them.

In addition to the rise in average life expectancy another factor that contributes to the problem is the decrease in birth rate (also most significant in more economically developed countries (MEDCs)). An increasing amount of young adults decide on not having a family, therefore there are less and less working people to counterweight the pensioners.

The rate of citizens over 60 is accelerating, and is expected to more than double by 2050 and more than triple by 2100. This means, that the current number of older people globally, which is currently about a billion will rise to more than two billion by 2050 and more than three billion by 2100. By 2050 the number of persons above 80 is projected to be five times the present number, and by 2100 the sevenfold.

It is an important issue as it affects nearly all sectors of society such as labour, financial markets, the demand of goods and services like housing, transportation and social protection. A solution has to be found, one that would be beneficial both for the elderly population and the nations themselves.

### Definition of key terms:

**MEDC:** More economically developed country.

**LEDC:** Less economically developed countries.

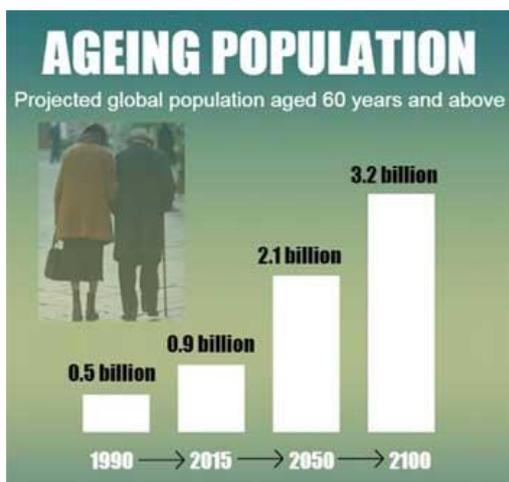
**Birth rate:** the proportion of births to the total population in a place in a given time usually expressed as a quantity per 1000 of population.

**Death rate:** the number of deaths in a population divided by the whole population.

**Life expectancy:** the length of time that a living thing, especially a human being is likely to live.

## General overview:

Ageing of societies is a huge issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in MEDCs, but LEDCs are just a few decades behind. Due to the high life expectancy both at birth and at advanced ages on account of the medical advances, and the lower fertility rates caused by the possibility of usage of birth control, and the fact that less and less people from younger generations decide on having a family. An additional cause is migration, as many young people decide to leave their home country due to factors such as better payment. A good example is Central and Southern European where many migrate into more fashionable countries, and not much foreigners choose those countries to settle in. Because of this the elderly stay in the country, and a huge portion of the youth leaves.



The country with the oldest population is Japan, with 27% of her citizens above 65. In 2015 it was only 25.8%, and this shows that the number is steadily increasing. Italy is in the second place with 23%. The next ten in order are Portugal, Germany, Finland, Bulgaria, Greece, Sweden, Latvia, Croatia, France and Denmark from 22 to 20 percent.

The increase in the number of people above 60 years is constantly increasing, while in 1990 it was just 0.5 billion, and by 2100, only 110 years later it is expected to be 3.2 billion, more than six times as many.

This issue has an impact on many aspects of society including labour market, healthcare, and the protection, and pension of elderly people. These problems are strongly connected, but all need to be separately considered.

The main issue in the labor market is the lack of workforce. It is strongly due to the decrease of the number of people being born, since as the new generations grow up there will be less and less people for the same amount of jobs. This leads to declining productivity, delayed business expansion, reduced international competitiveness, and higher labor costs. There are also several jobs that less and less people are willing to do, since an increasing amount of people get such education that they hope to work in a “more intellectual” and more profitable fields. In many countries for the kind of work that many are not willing to do, mainly physical work, they rely on immigrant work force. Still, in many cases previous work experience or education is not recognizes especially when it was outside the country in question.

A controversial thing is that, though since life expectancy has increased so much people would work until an older age than before. And many people do if they have the opportunity, most importantly to secure themselves financially, but it is difficult to convince employers to keep older workers. In areas that are very popular mostly, employers tend to choose to employ people from the younger age group instead of employing older people, or even instead of keeping them.

The question of healthcare, pension, and protection of old people are very closely connected to each other, and all can be connected the problem of the lack of workforce, and the ratio of



active workers and pensioners. Since there are fewer and fewer people in the working age group (14-64), there are less people to support, protect and provide for the pensioners. This is especially a problem in countries where healthcare is public-funded or government-administrated. If there are fewer workers, then that means fewer tax-payers, less money for the government, less money that could be spent on healthcare and pension. Many countries cannot afford to put more money and resources into healthcare that is although already high in MEDCs, could be improved. It is difficult for them to ensure that care improves and other social needs do not deteriorate. The decreasing working-age population leads to health care costs are growing, and unsustainable pension commitments. In Italy for example pensions take 16% of the GDP of the country, compared to 11% in the rest of the European Union.

The problem of ageing populations is a very important one, and we need to take action if we don't want these issues to undermine the high living standard enjoyed in many MEDCs, and for LEDCs to follow.

### Major Parties Involved:

**Japan:** She has the most aged population in the world and the issue affects and will further affect her concerning many areas. Attempts had been made for example to consolidate smaller towns and villages into larger municipalities to maintain local administrative functions. Still the situation will require more fundamental resolving such as plenty of other areas affected by the problem of ageing.

**Italy:** Right behind Japan, Italy has a very high percentage of old people. Spending on the elderly requires a huge part of Italy's budget, which is getting harder and harder as the young are leaving, and many think the government should take care of the elderly.

**Portugal:** Portugal's aged citizens have the worst health in the whole of Europe, while they are in the top three most aged countries of the world.

**Germany:** She has a rapidly ageing society, the population shrinks and many people retire. The burden of the pensions might cause a huge financial problem for the country in a couple of years if things continue the same way.

**Finland:** The decreasing working-age population is the main problem in Finland. Many believe that they should promote employment-based immigration, but due to discriminatory factors and language barriers many think Finland is not the most attractive destination for foreign workforce.

**Bulgaria, Greece, Sweden, Latvia, Croatia, France and Denmark** are the next couple countries following the ones above in the aspect of ageing population, and the list continues, as the issue is a world-wide problem. All countries face similar problems concerning workforce, financial factors of both citizens and the government, business, economy, private life, society, etc.

### Previous attempts to solve the issue:

1982 - The General Assembly held the first World-Assembly in which produced a 62-point Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing

1991 - United Nations Principles for Older Persons



2002 - Second World Assembly on Ageing, it adapted a Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing – dealt with advancing health and well-being in older age and ensuring enabling and supportive environment

### Possible solutions and approaches:

Working is an important thing in life, not just to provide financial security, but also physiological benefits. Older people could be encouraged to stay in work for longer. A retirement scheme allowing older people to remain in work but lower their working hours would be beneficial both for them and the country as well, since they would still be paying taxes.

The other cause of the issue, the decline in fertility rate should be addressed as well. Some countries for example give financial support to families with a certain number of children. That could also encourage young couples to have a family if they had fears about not having the proper financial background.

Still, these measures have only been taken in some places, there must be other solutions to help solve the issue.

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Annex:

The expected rise of the elderly until 2050, compared to data from 2015.

