

EGYPT - AGEING POPULATION

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Egypt is the most populous country in the Middle East and the third-most populous on the African continent (after Nigeria and Ethiopia). One of the main features of the Egyptian population over the last few decades is the gradual increase in the absolute and relative numbers of older people. This trend is expected to continue over the next decades. The Egyptian census is carried out every 10 years, last one was in 2006. The percent of older people” defined as 60 yrs of age and more” was 4.4% in 1976, 5.66% in 1986, 5.75% in 1996, and rising to 6.27% in 2006, to be 7.2% in 2013. The percentage is projected to be 8.1% in 2016, and 9.2% in 2021, and it is expected to reach 20.8% in 2050. This means that, around 20 million Egyptians will be categorized as elderly by that time, this is a big number that resembles a full nation at some parts of the world. There is an urgent need for the implementation of a national policy for elderly care. Although such policies exist, the effectiveness of existing policies and the role of national committees need to be evaluated in order to revive and mobilize the resources available. Older people, as stakeholders, are expected to participate in the implementation of the national policy through all phases of planning, intervention, and evaluation.

Demographic Data

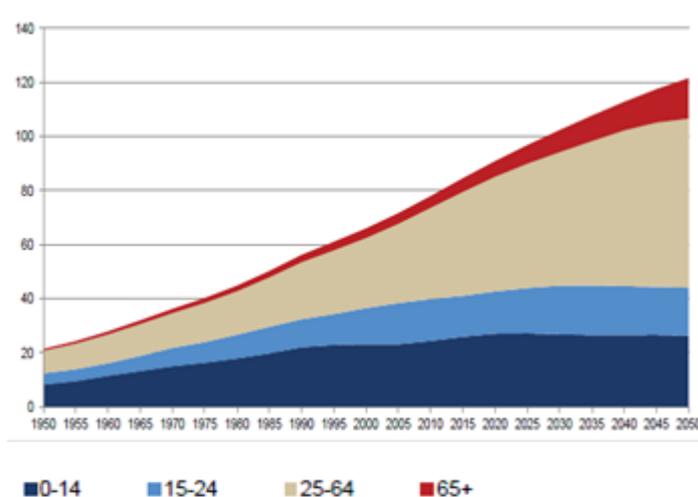


Figure (1): Population Estimates & Projections of Egypt (1950-2050)

(Source: world population prospects. Revised 2012)

A distinctive feature of the elderly population throughout the world is the preponderance of women over men “feminization” of population aging (because of longer life expectancy among women). The greater improvement in female life expectancy than that for males will not only result in lower sex ratios for the elderly population as a whole, hence a predominance of females, but for the individual elderly females, greater longevity will very often result in loss of support from spouse, and greater economic deprivations. Current sex ratio in Egypt is 83 men for 100 women.

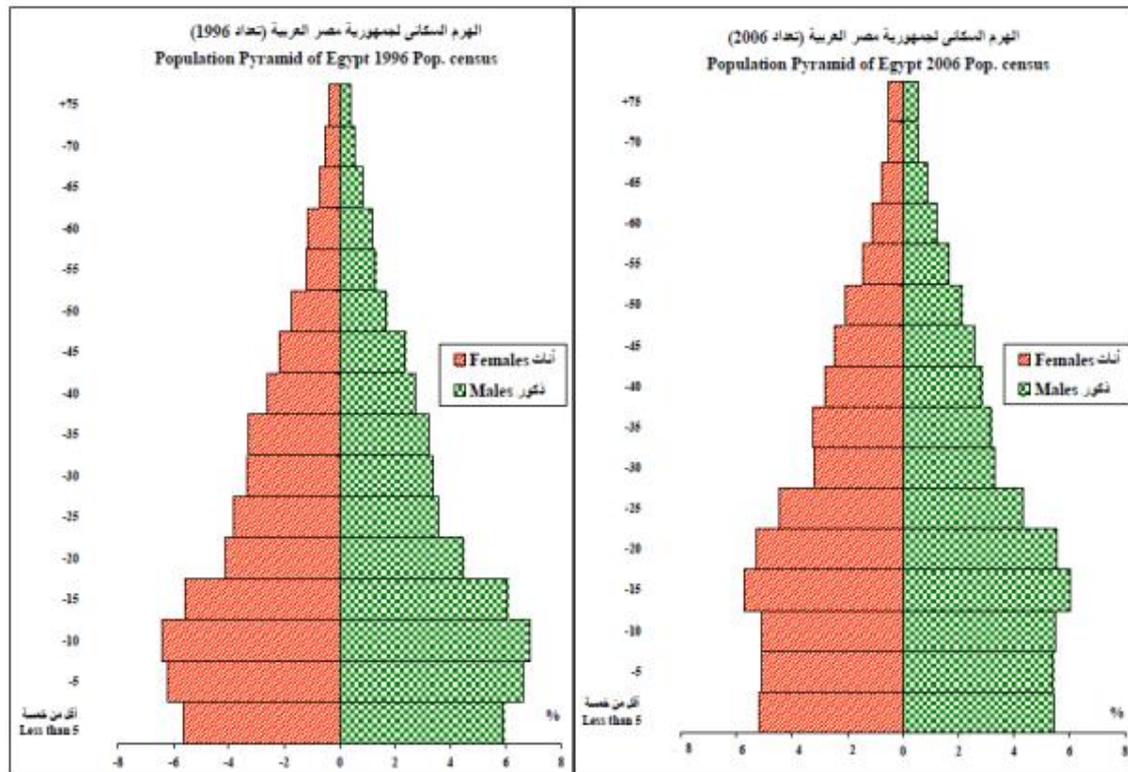


Figure (2): Population Pyramid of Egypt

Implications of population ageing and Policy response:

While population aging represents, in one sense, a success story for mankind (massive survival to old ages has become possible), it also poses profound challenges to public institutions that must adapt to a changing age structure. The rapid ageing of the population can be considered a great threat to the preservation of the society welfare .It presents challenges for public health as well as for economic development especially in developing countries.

Detailed and accurate data on elderly population size and characteristics is the essential first step to describe real situation, to conduct effective development planning and help project future needs of elderly in context with other sectors of population and to determine gaps that need to be closed and achievements that need to be sustained. **Table (1): Egyptian Elderly population and services:**

Characteristic	Value
Total population	83.667 million
Males	42.727 million
Female	40.940 million
Percentage of population aged 60+	7.2%
Illiteracy (age 60+)	
Males	55.9%
Females	82.7%
Life expectancy at birth	
Men	69.1 years
Women	72.2 years
Widows (age 60+)	
Men	12.4%
Women	62.5%
Elderly dependency ratio	9.1 %
Health care expenditure (% of gross national product)	4.9% of GDP
Physicians density	2.83 physicians/1,000 population
Hospital bed density	1.7 beds/1,000 population
Elderly houses	161 concentrated mostly in Cairo
Elderly clubs	173 concentrated mostly in Cairo
Elderly beneficiaries of Social Solidarity system	1,254 million
Percentage of NGOs working in elderly care	1.55%

In addition, there is the migration within the country from rural to urban areas, leaving the elderly behind. This causes variation in the distribution of the aged population within the Egyptian governorates. According to the last Egyptian census, the absolute total number of the elderly is greater in rural areas than urban ones, in spite the fact that their percentage is more in urban (7.18%) than rural (5.6%).

The policy making bodies in Egypt, mainly the Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of social Solidarity, the universities and the academic institutions have been long acting to cope with the population ageing.

Social highlights

The family has been and still the main social institution, which offers support and services to the aged. However, social changes e.g. rural-urban migration with older people left behind, Egyptian women increasingly being employed outside homes,

changing in housing stock (nuclear instead of extended family) and decreasing family size with fewer people in the ‘young generation’ available to take care of larger numbers of people in the ‘old generation’, have created some demands for extra-familial services.

According to the Egyptian constitution, the government is obliged to provide services of medical and social security for aged. Legislation, laws, resolutions and programs on the protection and promotion of seniors’ human rights were laid down for the social and medical security systems aiming to give the elderly the maximum support they need.

Social insurance law: The law adjudicates disbursing security pensions - through the .Social Insurance Fund for the governmental sector and the Insurance and Pensions Fund for the public and private sectors in the following cases: (aging, disability and death– work injuries– illness– unemployment– social welfare for pension beneficiaries) a top of this pension beneficiaries’ list come elderly. .

The ministry of social solidarity also has laid a number of laws and regulations over the past years supporting the elderly. In 1990 the Ministry laid down the internal regulations of the geriatric clubs, in 1992 set a committee for celebrating with the day of the elderly, and in 1997 established the higher committee for the geriatric care. Law 84/2002 on regulating the work of NGOs and private foundations, allowed elderly to participate in the management of some NGOs, run projects and utilizing their capabilities, it is worth noting here that most NGOs boards in Egypt consist of seniors

Health care services;

Population aging is a great challenge for the health care systems. Although the health status of older people is improving over time now and the life expectancy is increasing, still, with aging, the prevalence of disability, frailty, cancer, and chronic diseases (Alzheimer’s disease, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, etc.) is expected to increase, especially with the large growth in the oldest old group (+70yrs old) that constitutes 31.73% of the Egyptian elderly. The older the person is, the more likely to face a compounding of multiple health, psychological and social problems that make accurate medical diagnosis and proper medical management difficult.

Elderly people have high risk for functional impairments with inability to perform ordinary activities of daily living (ADL) and activities related to household management termed instrumental activities of daily living (IADL).

In addition to the general health services, whether governmental or private, that are available for the use by the elderly, there are other special services for the older people that have developed in Egypt.

Ministry of Health:

* 13 Two-floor geriatric healthcare centers(offering health care services to elderly people through specialists from different branches) have been set up by the Ministry of Health distributed all over the governorates

*Clinical Diagnostic Service to the dementia (Memory clinic in hospitals) The service included assessment service, counseling and family support.

Governmental Universities :

1-Ain Shams University Geriatric medicine department(The department involves 23 inpatient plus 9 ICU beds, an osteoporosis Unit which offers diagnostic and therapeutic services, and daily outpatient clinic.

It is the only academic institution offering master and doctorate degree in geriatric medicine

2- Alexandria University (Faculty of medicine contain a Geriatrics Unit, geriatrics Outpatient clinic. Postgraduate Program in Geriatric Nursing in the Faculty of Nursing)

3- Helwan University Center for Elderly Social & Health Care (A self-financed unit under the umbrella of the center for community development in Helwan University. Services offered include; 10 inpatient beds, day care services and out-patients clinic.in addition to long term care unit for functionally dependent elderly)

In addition to Cairo University, Assuit University, Tanta University, Suez Canal University and Sohag University which offer either health care services for elderly or educational services for health care professionals.

Other health care settings:

Including private sector, military hospitals and NGOs.

Training programs for health professionals

With the graying of the population, geriatric medicine specialty was developed and well established in Egypt with continuous education and training programs for the health professionals dealing with elderly patients.

Geriatric education

- *The Geriatrics and Gerontology Department at Faculty of Medicine- Ain Shams University*

The Geriatrics and Gerontology Department at Ain Shams University is the only academic department in Egypt that offers Diploma, Master Degree and Doctoral Degree in geriatric medicine connected to a specialized residency program and clinical training courses.

- *Geriatric Physical therapy education*

Physical therapy education is available in three Physical therapy colleges. The study of geriatrics is introduced at the third year undergraduate for two terms. Higher degree studies are available to attain higher diploma, Master and Ph.D. degrees.

- *Geriatric Nursing education*

At the colleges of nursing, there is a module in geriatrics nursing both at the undergraduate level as well as postgraduate level at the diploma level, M.Sc., and Ph.D. in geriatric nursing.

- *The Higher Institute for Public Health-Alexandria university:*

This is a postgraduate institute for public health. There are 9 academic departments of which one is the department of Health at old age. This department offers postgraduate training in geriatric health at the diploma level, Master degree level and Ph.D. degree level in public health.

- *Colleges of Social Services:*

In Helwan, and Assiut Universities, they provide Diploma, Master degree and Ph.D. in geriatric care. Also in the other Universities, geriatric care is included in the undergraduate curriculum with training courses and field training.

The ministry of health and population started from 2001 to develop health programs targeting older people within its structure. These include;

- Short term training program for family physicians held with the collaborations of experts from Ain Shams University. These programs are held twice a year and aim to train such physicians to acquire skills in geriatric practice.
- Short term training program for community nurses held with the collaborations of experts from Ain Shams University. These programs aim to train such nurses in geriatric nursing skills.

Training courses for professional caregivers

Different governmental and non-governmental organizations are involved in training of professional caregivers. These programs are very variable in term of method of training, length of training, and course objectives. Some of these programs would link such training with mechanism to employ the trainee either in long term units or home care programs, but others would just offer the training. Organizations offering these courses include; Geriatric Department at Ain Shams University, college of nursing at Cairo University, CEC, and the Red Crescent.

Recommendations

-Aging is a mass phenomenon, international and regional cooperation is needed for creating supportive community for the aged worldwide. Regional and inter-country dialogues need to be established to lay down joint strategy and plan of action.

-Adopting WHO program “Ageing and Life Course” to reflect the importance of the life-course perspective , in addition to ensuring that older people have adequate security, protection and care when they require assistance.

There are the principles and recommendations for action of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982, and the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in 1991, which provided guidance in areas of independence, participation, care, self fulfillment and dignity.

-Research on ageing and age related issues must be encouraged as an

Important instrument for the formulation of policies on ageing. The results of these researches should be taken into consideration in planning the strategy and policy of health care for ageing

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