

AGEING AND ITS GENDER DIMENSIONS

F. A. AGYEMANG

**Department of Social Work/
Centre for Ageing Studies, University of Ghana,
Legon.**





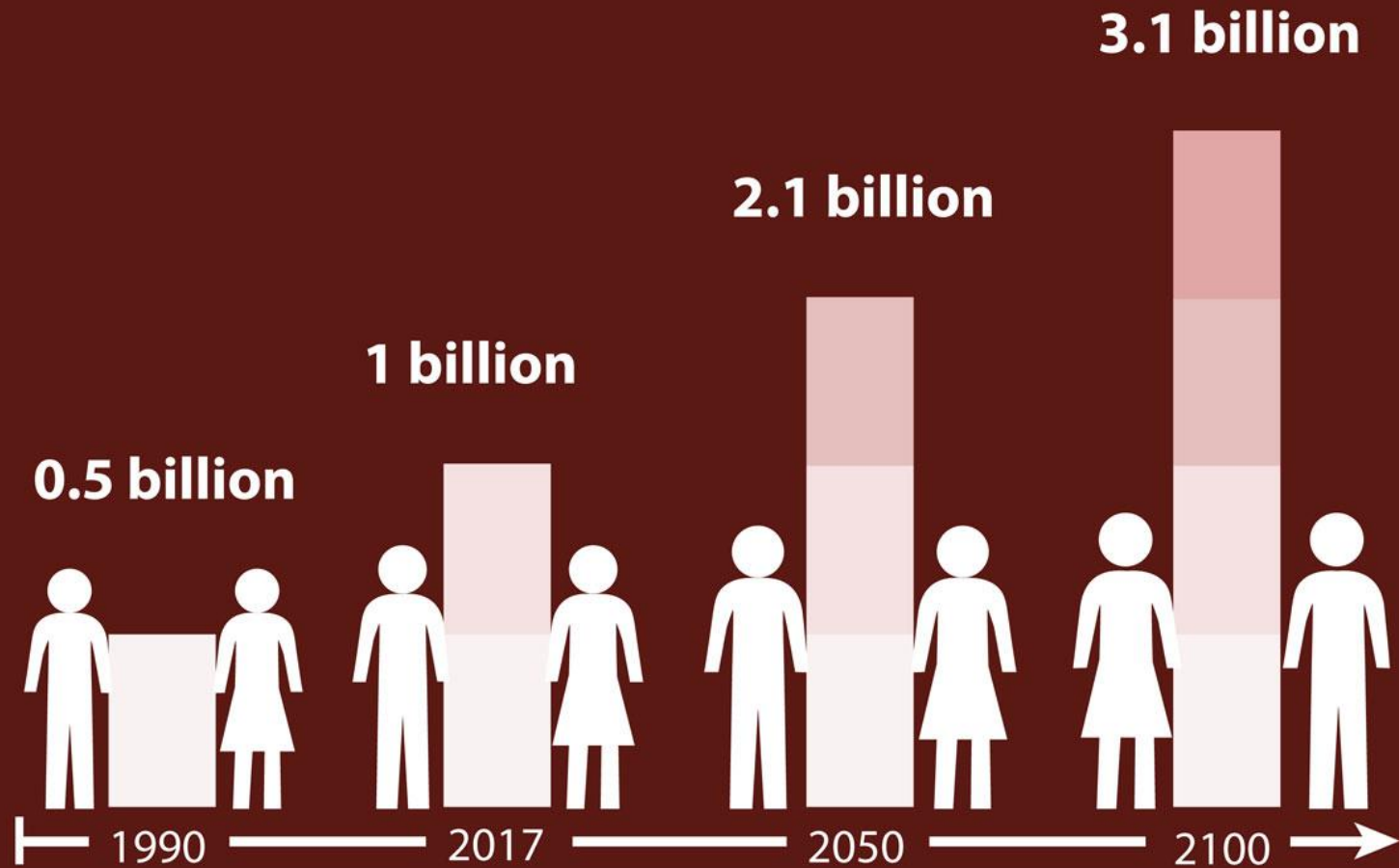
MAP OF GHANA



54% of the elderly population reside in the rural areas.
43% of the elderly population reside in the rural parts of Greater Accra, Eastern and Ashanti Regions (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013).

Ageing Population

Projected global population aged 60 years or over



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*
Produced by: United Nations Department of Public Information



Age structure of Ghana's population, 2010-2050 (%)

YEAR	0-14	15-59	60+
2010	36.9	57.0	6.7
2015	35.2	58.3	7.1
2020	33.3	59.6	7.8
2030	29.4	62.0	9.5
2050	22.3	63.6	15.5

- The current population of Ghana is estimated at 29.46 million (up from the official 2010 census figure of 24.2 million)
- The aged population (60+) is estimated at 1,643,381 (i.e., 6.7%)
- The capital city, **Accra** has an urban population of 2.27 million.
54% of the elderly reside in rural areas.
- 6 in every 10 elderly are economically active
- 9 out of 10 of the economically active elderly are engaged in the private informal sector
- 5.8% are employed in the public (government sector)

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2013

Benefits of Ageing

- Pride of family and community
- Custodians of welfare of family
- Resolve family/community conflicts
- Source of history (oral tradition)
- Respect
- Reciprocity by children
- Not left alone

CHALLENGES OF THE ELDERLY IN GHANA

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

- Government policies
 - Passing of Ageing Bill since 2010?
 - Budget
 - Retirement age
 - Poorly structured pension schemes
 - Neglect of informal sector workers

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHALLENGES

- Shift in cultural trends
 - breakdown of extended family system
 - urbanization (isolation)
- Spirituality/Religiosity
 - increase of charismatic and neo-prophetic churches
- Ageism
- Witchcraft accusations
- widowhood

GENDER DIMENSIONS

1. **Feminization**" of **ageing**. (older people are feminized)
 - On average, women live longer than men. This “**feminization**” of **ageing** leaves many women alone in old **age** or caring for their older partners, which creates challenges as their health declines.
 - Women account for the majority of older persons in almost every country in the world.
 - The main reason for this advantage is the gender gap in mortality.
 - More women survive into late life compared to men.
 - More than two-thirds of the world’s oldest (85+) population are women
 - Living longer means living longer in declining health and disability
 - The risk of chronic disease such as joint pain, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart diseases also rises with age

Dimensions cont'd

2. Widowhood

- In all developed and nearly all developing nations, women are more likely than men to survive the death of their spouse, reflecting men's higher rates of mortality.
- Women also are more likely than men to remain unmarried after their spouse dies. Widowhood has increasingly become an older women's issue.



- low status
- low income status
- poverty
- violence experienced by widows
- discrimination in inheritance
- custom, the patriarchal nature of the society
- domination of oppressive traditional practices and customary codes.

Widowers

- According to Ewelukwa (2002), If a wife dies, the man is confined in the house for a month but the men break the rules.
- It cannot be an abomination if he breaks the rule but people can talk. There are no sanctions.
- Maybe sanction by shunning.
- He remarries, if he so wishes, at will.

Witchcraft Accusations

- Over 1,000 elderly women are branded as witches and kept in witch camps in parts of Ghana –e.g. Gambaga witch camp (Igwe, 2011)
- Causes
 - unseen powers
 - marital status (unmarried women)
 - physical appearanceEboiyehi (2017)

- Religiosity
- Health(men/women have different health behaviours but both should be encouraged to become equally involved in health matters that affect them.
- Culture and tradition
- Inheritance
- Employment (Older women today were mostly engaged in domestic work when they were younger and performed traditional roles as caregivers and nurturers when they are old
- Older women have no “economic values”
- There was little opportunity for involvement in the formal work sector,
- Even if they have economic values, the value is low

Employment opportunities- Men

- Older men are more likely to work for money
- Older women are more likely to work in the household
- Because of experiences during the younger time,
- Older men are less skillful in doing household work
- Older women are less capable in contributing money

Way-Forward

GOVERNMENT

- Pass an ageing bill to guarantee legal support system for the elderly (both men and women)
- Structured pension schemes
 (“pension for all”)
- Increase health benefits
- Reconsider retirement at 60

Socio-cultural

- Encourage family support systems
- Active retirement planning
- Public discourse and dialogue
- Religiosity and Spirituality
- Encourage social engagement

Active/Healthy Ageing

- Fitness/wellness programmes
(e.g. Ball et al., 2002; Mate-Kole et al., 2009).
- Healthy lifestyle
- Education
- Sanitation
- Research



**A section of older people at the Dance and Fitness Programme
– CFAS.**



UN, International Day of Older Persons

SUMMARY

- Challenges of the elderly in Ghana include:
 - Health challenges (health insurance)
 - Socio-economic (retirement, poverty)
 - Socio-cultural (shift in cultural trends, stereotypes)

Conclusion

- Major Challenges facing the elderly in Ghana and globally
- Ageing is a process
- Global and Public engagement is important
- International Collaboration in research and policy
- Advocacy



SANKOFA

“Go back and fetch it”

A return to the past must be guided by critical examination to build a better future (Gyekye, 1996).

- Some of our cultural values have benefitted our society over time
- It is important to examine our cultural systems and adapt values to build a better future that will enhance the quality of life of our seniors and society in general

Me da mo ase

