

**REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS**

# **Population Ageing and The Elderly in Mauritius**

**CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE**

**Ministry of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development**

## **FOREWORD**

This report is about the issues of population ageing and the elderly in the Republic of Mauritius. It deals with the demographic processes that have brought, and continue to bring about changes in the age structure of the Mauritian population. It also presents a profile of the elderly and examines the implications of the changing population structure.

An attempt has been made to bring together, in a single report, available statistics on the socio-economic characteristics of the aged in the Republic of Mauritius, i.e. in both the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues. Most of the data presented have been obtained from past national censuses and surveys. The figures used are the latest available as at end of December 1998.

In this International Year of Older Persons, it is hoped that the information published in this report will be of assistance to the public at large, in particular planners and policy makers, to assess better the implications associated with population ageing.

I wish to thank here all those who have contributed to the production of this report, including the general public without whose collaboration this exercise would not have been possible.

S.BASANT RAI  
Director of Statistics

Central Statistical Office  
Ministry of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development  
Port Louis  
MAURITIUS

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### 1. Definition of terms

<u>The elderly</u>	The population aged 60 years and above
<u>Total fertility rate</u>	The average number of children born to a woman assuming that she survives to the end of her child-bearing age and is subjected to a fixed schedule of age-specific fertility rates
<u>Crude death rate</u>	The number of deaths occurring in a year per 1,000 mid-year population
<u>Life expectancy at birth</u>	The average number of years that a new born child would be expected to live if subjected to the mortality conditions expressed by a particular set of age-specific death rates
<u>Emigrant</u>	A person who has obtained a permit to migrate to another country
<u>Immigrant</u>	A person who has obtained a permit to reside in the country
<u>Median age</u>	The age that divides the population into numerically equal parts of younger and older persons
<u>Index of ageing</u>	The number of elderly persons per 100 children aged below 15 years
<u>Sex ratio</u>	Number of women per 100 men
<u>Household</u>	A household can be a person living on his own and making his own provision for food and other essentials for living. It can also be a group of related or unrelated persons who live together and make common provision for food and other essentials for living.
<u>Income</u>	The income of the elderly refers to his/her individual income. This comprises regular income (in cash or in kind) from all private sources such as employment, self-employment, investments, rent and other direct payments like pensions and social benefits
<u>Consumption expenditure</u>	Consumption expenditure refers to the acquisition of goods and services for final consumption by the household by means of purchase, own production, or obtained free of charge. It excludes goods and services for other purposes like trade or business. In this report, it also excludes the free government services like healthcare and education.



<u>Food consumption ratio</u>	Food consumption as a proportion of the total household consumption expenditure
<u>Youth dependency ratio</u>	The number of young persons aged below 15 years per 100 persons of working age 15-59 years
<u>Elderly dependency ratio</u>	The number of elderly persons per 100 persons of working age 15-59 years
<u>Total dependency ratio</u>	The combined number of young persons (below 15 years) and elderly persons per 100 persons of working age 15-59 years
<u>The oldest old</u>	The population aged 75 years and above
<u>Parent Support ratio</u>	The number of persons aged 75 years and over per 100 persons (both men and women) aged 45-59 years
<u>Parent Support ratio for females</u>	The number of persons aged 75 years and over per 100 women aged 45-59 years
<u>Basic Retirement Pension</u>	<p>The pension paid by government to every Mauritian citizen aged 60 years or over. The amount paid in 1996/97 was: -</p> <p>Rs1,055 to those aged 60-89 years</p> <p>Rs4,120 to those aged 90-99 years</p> <p>Rs4,220 to those aged 100 years and above</p> <p>An additional pension of Rs745 was given to those elderly who were suffering from a severe disability.</p>

## 2. Source of data

The analysis in this report is based on

- Population data from past censuses
- Data collected from the 1996/97 Household Budget Survey (1996/97 HBS)
- Medium variant population projections for 1997-2037 prepared by the Central Statistical Office. The underlying assumptions of the projections are: -

### (a) Fertility

A decline in the total fertility rate of the Republic of Mauritius from 2.21 in 1992-1997 to 2.10 in 2032-2037 as follows: -

Period	1992-1997	1997-2002	2002-2007	2007-2012	2012-2017	2017-2037
T.F.R	2.21	2.16	2.13	2.11	2.10	2.10

(b) Mortality

Improvement of the sex and age-specific survival ratios of the Republic of Mauritius from current levels in accordance with the Coale and Guang 'New Regional Model Life Tables at High Expectation of Life'. The implied life expectancies at birth are: -

Period	Male	Female
1992-1997	66.53	74.14
1997-2002	67.69	75.28
2002-2007	68.76	76.28
2007-2012	69.80	77.06
2012-2017	70.80	77.77
2017-2022	71.75	78.32
2022-2027	72.62	78.70
2027-2032	73.42	79.02
2032-2037	73.95	79.30

(c) Migration

The assumed average annual net migration for the Republic of Mauritius is: -

Period	1997-2002	2002-2007	2007-2012	2012-2037
Male	-300	-150	-100	nil
Female	-500	-250	-100	nil
Both Sexes	-800	-400	-200	nil

# Chapter 1

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## 1. DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF POPULATION AGEING

### 1.1 Introduction

Population ageing is a change in the age-structure of the population resulting in an increasing proportion of elderly people in the population. The implications are manifold. On the social side, the housing and health sectors have to make provision for the special needs of an increasing number of senior citizens. On the economic side, the cost of providing pension, health-care and housing will increase, whilst labour productivity will be affected.

### 1.2 Demographic background

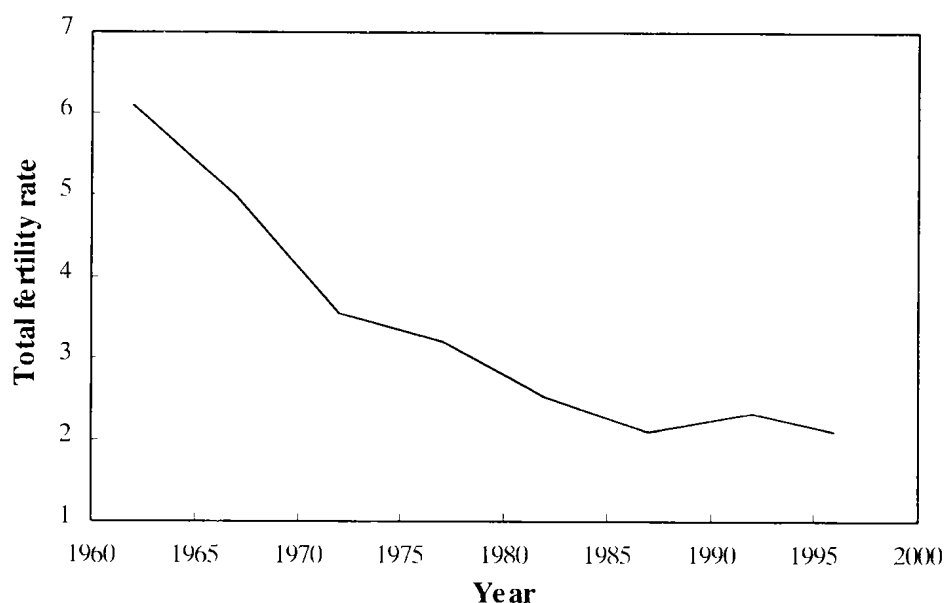
In mid-1998 the population of the Republic of Mauritius was estimated at 1,160,000 of whom 579,800 were males and 580,200 females. The population annual growth rate was around 1% during the year 1998.

Fertility in Mauritius was very high up to the early sixties. The total fertility rate, which was above 6 births per woman in the reproductive ages in the early sixties, decreased to around 3.5 in the early seventies due to postponement of marriages. A second major decline in fertility occurred between the late seventies and the mid eighties (Figure 1). During that period, the total fertility rate declined from 3.2 to about 2, due essentially due to widespread use of family planning methods by the population. Subsequently, fertility increased to an average of 2.3 in the early nineties. Slight decreases have been recorded since then; the total fertility rate was around 2 in 1997.

**Table 1 - Total fertility rate, Republic of Mauritius, 1960-1997**

Period	1960-64	1965-69	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-97
Total fertility rate	6.1	5.0	3.5	3.2	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.1

**Figure 1 - Total fertility rate, Republic of Mauritius, 1960-1997**



Mortality was very high at the beginning of the century with a crude death rate of around 37 deaths per 1,000 population. It has gradually gone down over time - the crude death rate was around 7 in 1997. Between the early forties and the mid nineties, life expectancy at birth rose from 32 years to 66 for men (a gain of 34 years) and from 34 years to 74 for women (a gain of 40 years) as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Life expectancy at birth by sex,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1942-1997**

Period	Male	Female
1942-1946	32.2	33.8
1951-1953	49.8	52.2
1961-1963	58.7	62.0
1971-1973	61.0	65.9
1982-1984	64.4	71.7
1989-1991	65.6	73.4
1995-1997	66.4	74.4

Emigration had some impact on the size of the population in the sixties. Between 1960 and 1964, a total of some 3,600 long-term emigrants (annual average of 700) left the country. In the period around 1968, the year Mauritius gained independence, long-term emigration increased significantly to about 2,000 annually. The number of persons leaving the country on a long-term basis then decreased to less than 500 annually in the late seventies. However with the sharp rise in unemployment during the eighties, emigration again increased to more than 2,000 annually. In the nineties, the economic conditions improved and long-term out-migration decreased (Table 3). Immigration has been negligible from the beginning of the century to the eighties. Since 1989, the number of immigrants has been on the increase, the majority of them being foreign workers coming to Mauritius to work for a period not exceeding three years. The number of foreign workers which was around 9,000 in 1997 rose to over 10,000 in 1998.

**Table 3 - Average annual official long-term emigrants by sex, 1960-1994**

Year	Male	Female	Both Sexes
1960-1964	458	260	718
1965-1969	1,015	1,123	2,138
1970-1974	909	1,178	2,087
1975-1979	159	291	450
1980-1984	748	332	1,080
1985-1989	1,096	1,140	2,236
1990-1994	447	371	818

### **1.3 Age-structure of the population**

The age-structure of the population has undergone significant changes since the beginning of the century. Table 4 gives a few indicators on the population age-structure.

**Table 4 – Selected age-indicators, Republic of Mauritius, Censuses of 1911-1990**

	1911	1921	1931	1944	1952	1962	1972	1983	1990
Median age	21.8	21.8	21.0	21.6	20.2	17.6	19.0	22.6	25.7
% aged 60 years & above	4.6	4.6	5.1	5.4	5.6	5.4	5.9	7.0	8.3
% aged below 15 years	36.2	36.6	37.7	35.4	40.4	45.3	40.4	32.5	29.7
Index of ageing <sup>1</sup>	12.8	12.6	13.6	15.2	13.7	11.9	14.7	21.6	27.9

<sup>1</sup> Number of persons aged 60+ per 100 children aged 0-14 years

As indicated by the index of ageing, which compares the total number of elderly persons with the number of children below 15 years, population ageing was relatively slow between the twenties and the mid forties. Some rejuvenation took place during the fifties and sixties, with the index of ageing decreasing from 15 in 1944 to 14 in 1952 and to 12 in 1962. Thereafter and until the nineties, rapid ageing has been observed, with the index reaching as high as 28 in 1990. At the same time, the median age (the age that divides the population into numerically equal parts of younger and older persons) went up from 18 in 1962 to 26 in 1990.

Based on population projections, summary indicators for the future age-structure of the population have been computed and are given in Table 5. These indicate a further ageing of the population in the future. The median age will rise by 9 years to reach 37 years in 2037. The major increase will occur between 1997 and 2017 when the median age will rise by nearly 6 years, from 28 to 34 years. Also, there will be 1 elderly person for every child under 15 years by 2037 compared to 1 elderly for every 3 children in 1997 (Figure 2).

**Table 5 – Selected age-indicators based on population projections  
Republic of Mauritius, 1997-2037**

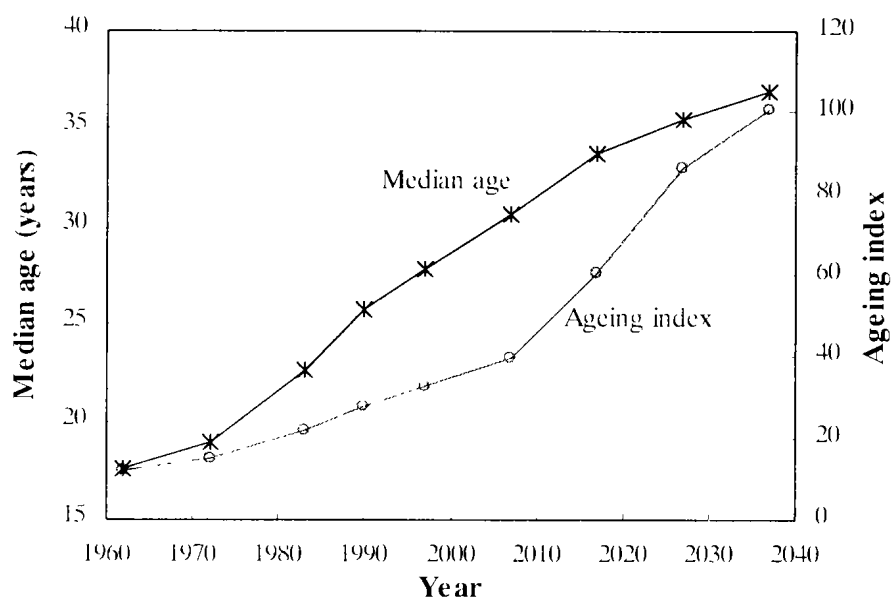
	1997	2007	2017	2027	2037
		← <i>Projected estimates</i> →			
Median age	27.8	30.6	33.7	35.5	36.9
% aged 60 years & above	8.6	9.7	13.7	18.5	20.8
% aged below 15 years	26.5	24.7	22.6	21.4	20.7
Index of ageing <sup>1/</sup>	32.6	39.5	60.7	86.4	100.6

<sup>1/</sup> Number of persons aged 60+ per 100 children aged 0-14 years

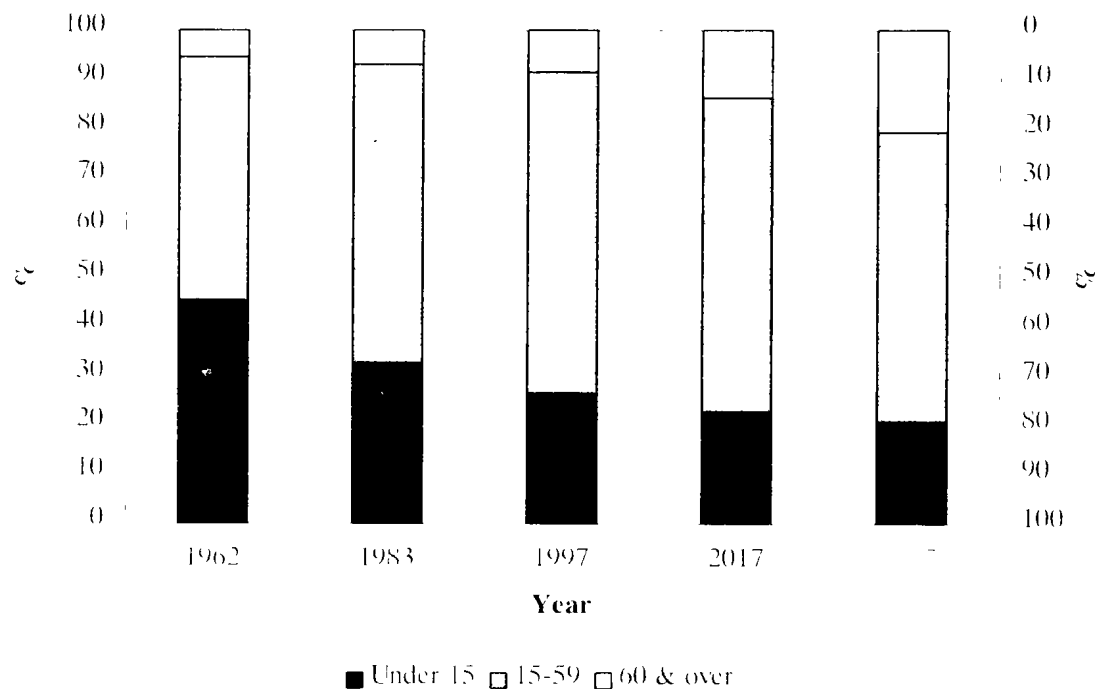
Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrate transition in the age structure of the population. From 1962 to 2037, the shape of the pyramids in Figure 4 changes over time, from one with a wide base and narrow top indicating predominance of the younger component of the population to a steeply sloped pillar-shaped form where the older component of the population becomes increasingly important.



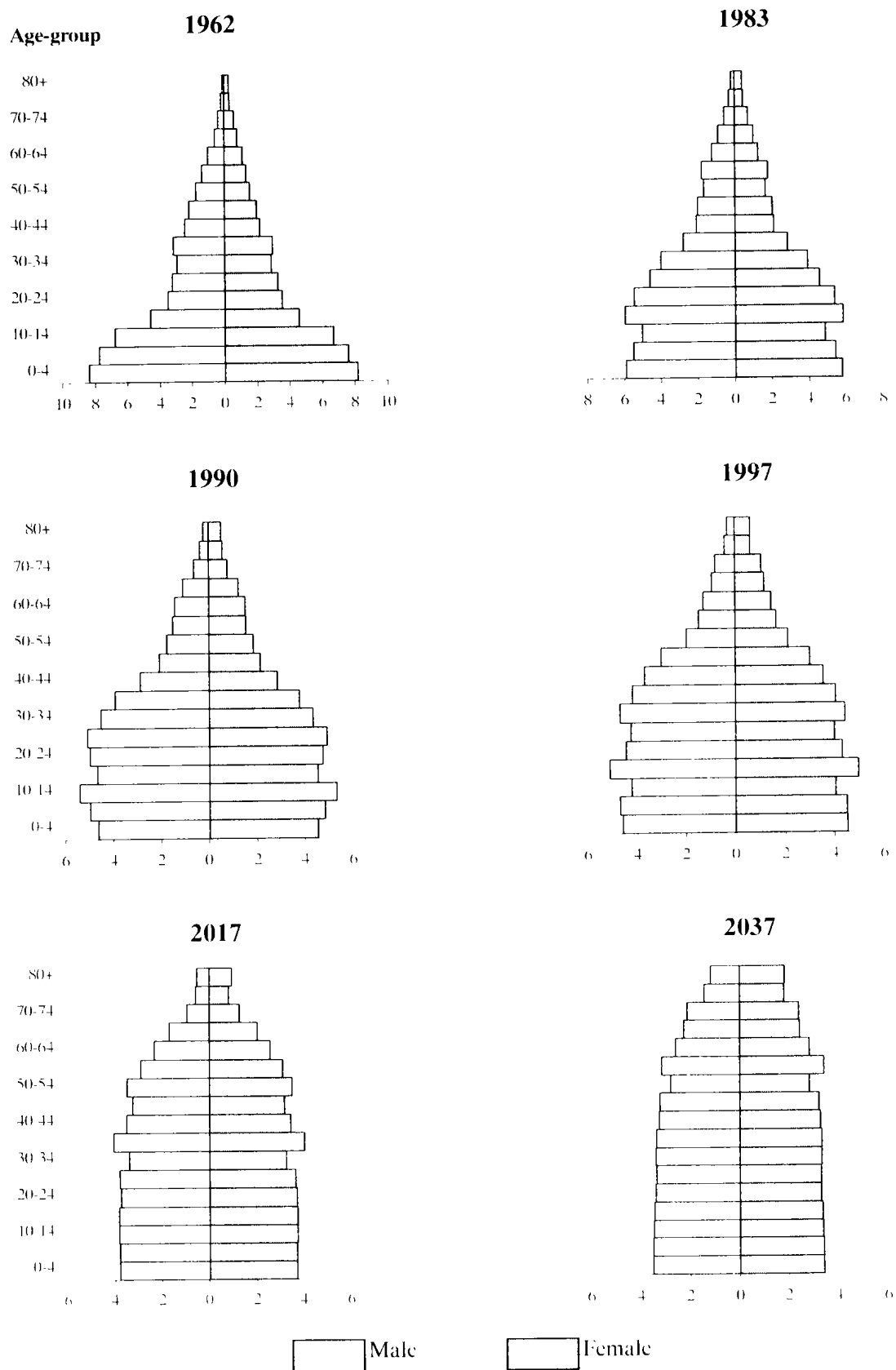
**Figure 2 - Evolution of the median age and of the ageing index  
Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**



**Figure 3 - Distribution (%) of the population by broad age-group  
Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**



**Figure 4 - Population pyramids, Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**  
(Percentage of total population by sex)



#### **1.4 Contributions of fertility, mortality and migration to population ageing**

Population ageing is the result of a shift from high to low levels of fertility and mortality. Fertility decline reduces the proportion of children, thereby increasing the proportion of the elderly. A decline in mortality affects all ages and the effect on the age-distribution of the population will depend on the age structure of that decline. International emigration increases the proportion of the elderly, as outmigration is normally concentrated within the younger, working-age groups.

To assess which components of population change have greater bearing on the current ageing situation in the Republic of Mauritius, four population projections were made for 1997, using 1962 as the base year. The first projection (scenario 1) varied fertility according to the actual rates prevailing during 1962-1997 and assumed mortality to remain constant at the 1962 level. The second projection (scenario 2) held fertility constant at 1962 rates and varied mortality. The third (scenario 3) held both mortality and fertility constant at 1962 rates and the fourth varied both variables. For all four projections, migration was assumed to be nil. For each scenario, various age-indicators were computed for the projected 1997 population and compared with the actual (observed) 1997 population figures. The results are shown in Table 6.

The table shows that fertility is the major determinant of the current ageing situation. A comparison of projection scenario 1 with scenario 3 indicates that fertility changes only, have raised the median age by 11 years and that the ageing index has almost trebled.

The effect of mortality on the ageing of the Mauritian population since 1962 is negligible. A comparison of scenario 2 with scenario 3 indicates that the shifts in the age-structure of the population due to mortality changes only are not significant. This is so because mortality has declined both at the young age-groups (particularly during infancy) and at the older ages.

International migration has played a minor role in the ageing of the population. Its effect can be assessed by comparing the indicators obtained under projection scenario 4 with those obtained from the actual population estimates for 1997 (observed indicators). This shows an increase in the ageing index of around 3.4.

**Table 6 - Comparison of observed with expected age-indicators using different fertility, mortality and migration assumptions, Republic of Mauritius, 1997**

Scenario	Assumptions for projection period 1962-1997			Expected 1997 age-indicators			
	Fertility	Mortality	Migration	Median age	60 & above (%)	below 15 (%)	Index of ageing
1	actual rates	constant	nil	28.2	7.2	25.9	27.8
2	constant	actual rates	nil	16.5	4.5	46.7	9.7
3	constant	constant	nil	17.0	4.2	45.6	9.3
4	actual rates	actual rates	nil	27.8	7.8	26.8	29.2
				Observed 1997 age-indicators			
				27.8	8.6	26.5	32.6

Note: 'Actual rates' mean that the rates prevailing during 1962-1997 were used  
'Constant rates' mean that the rates were kept at the 1962 level

# Chapter 2

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## 2. THE ELDERLY POPULATION

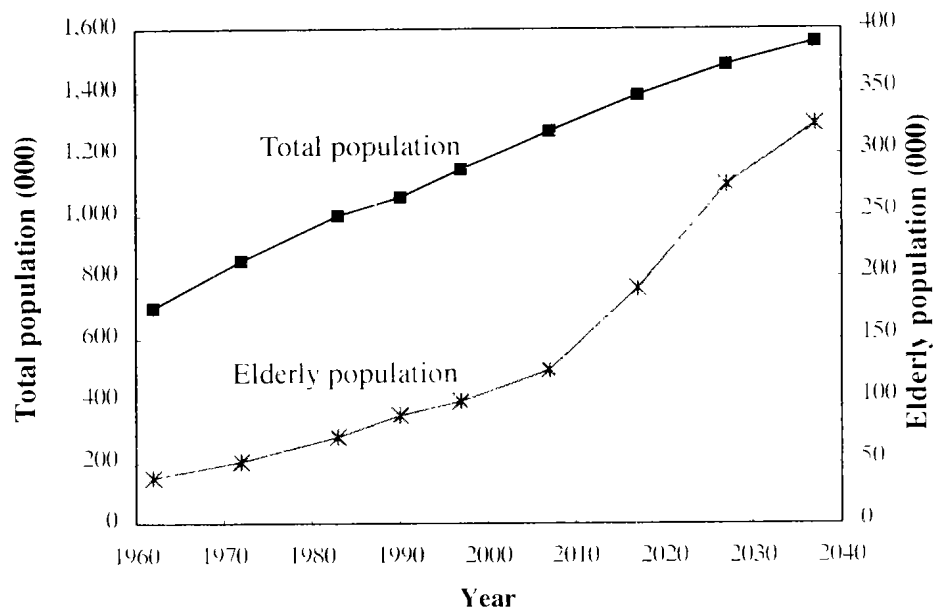
### 2.1 Introduction

The elderly population (defined as the population aged 60 years and above) numbered 99,300 or 9% of the total population of 1,147,700 as at mid-1997 in the Republic. Elderly women were more numerous: 56,100 compared to 43,200 elderly men.

### 2.2 Growth of the elderly population

The elderly population has increased significantly from 37,600 in mid-1962 to 99,300 in mid-1997, an average annual growth rate of 2.8%. During the same period, the total population of the Republic grew at an average annual rate of only 1.4%. Consequently, the elderly who accounted for 5% of the total population in 1962, made up 9% in 1997.

**Figure 5 - Evolution of total and elderly population, Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**



According to population projections, the elderly population will more than triple between 1997 and 2037, to reach around 325,000 (21% of the total population). Most of this growth will occur in the period around 2007 to 2027 when the annual growth

rate will average 4.0% compared to 2.3% during 1997-2007 and 1.7% during 2027-2037 (Figure 5).

## 2.3 Age and sex-structure of the elderly population

The age and sex-structure of the elderly population is an important consideration when planning for social services, since health and other support-related problems and requirements vary sharply with age and gender at this stage of life.

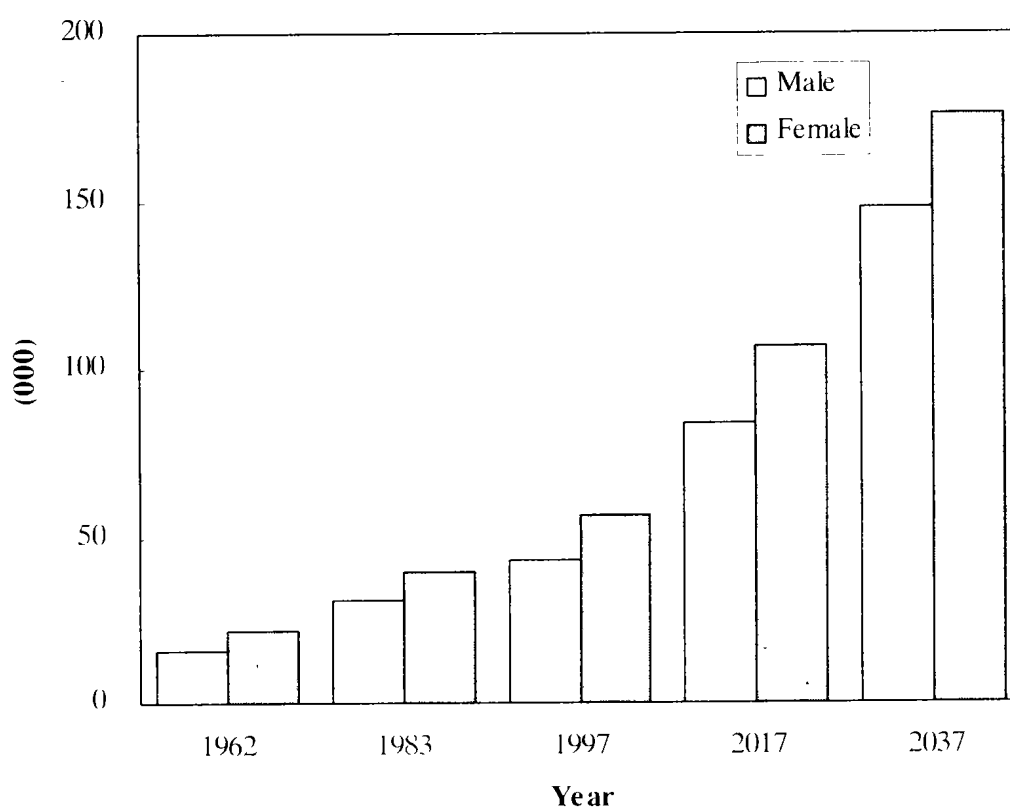
**Table 7 - Elderly population by broad age-group and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**

Age-group (years)	1962	1983	1990	1997	2017	2037
						<i>Projected estimates</i>
Both Sexes						
60-74	31,619	56,965	69,853	77,216	150,856	227,268
75+	5,960	13,312	17,674	22,056	39,687	96,447
60+	37,579	70,277	87,527	99,272	190,543	323,715
Male						
60-74	13,949	26,447	32,541	35,097	68,972	107,806
75+	1,748	4,453	6,164	8,054	14,845	39,856
60+	15,697	30,900	38,705	43,151	83,817	147,662
Female						
60-74	17,670	30,518	37,312	42,119	81,884	119,462
75+	4,212	8,859	11,510	14,002	24,842	56,591
60+	21,882	39,377	48,822	56,121	106,726	176,053

Table 7 gives a breakdown of the elderly population by broad age-group and sex (see appendix for a detailed breakdown by five-year age group). The table shows major increases over time in the number of elderly men and women. Also, since men generally have higher death rates, elderly women outnumber elderly men (Figure 6).

This predominance of women among the elderly increases with age. In 1997, there were 120 women for every 100 men aged 60-74 years whereas for those aged 75 years and over, there were 174 women for every 100 men (Table 8). However, the proportion of women among the elderly has been declining. As shown in Table 8, the sex ratio of the elderly declined from 139 women per 100 men in 1962 to 130 in 1997. According to population projections, this ratio could decrease further to 119 by 2037.

**Figure 6 - Elderly population by sex,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**





**Table 8 - Sex ratio<sup>1</sup> of the elderly population by broad age-group,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**

Age-group (years)	1962	1983	1990	1997	2017	2037
<i>Projected ratios</i>						
60-74	126.7	115.4	114.7	120.0	118.7	110.8
75+	241.0	198.9	186.7	173.9	167.3	142.0
60+	139.4	127.4	126.1	130.1	127.3	119.2

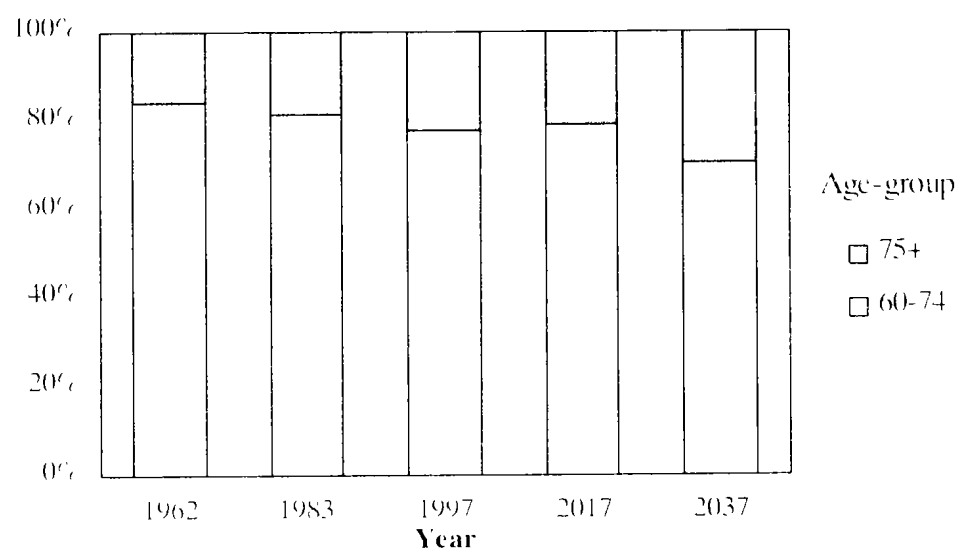
<sup>1</sup> Number of women per 100 men

The elderly population has grown continuously older. Among the elderly, the proportion aged 60-74 years declined from 84% in 1962 to 78% in 1997 and is expected to decline further to 70% in the next 40 years. By contrast, the proportion aged 75 years and over increased from 16% in 1962 to 22% in 1997 and is projected to reach around 30% over the next 4 decades (Table 9). Figure 7 illustrates the ageing of the elderly population itself. It shows a gradual decline in the proportion of those aged 60-74 years except for the period around 2017. This is the result of the high-fertility cohorts of the mid forties to the mid fifties who will be above 60 years at that time.

**Table 9 - Distribution (%) of the elderly population by broad age-group,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**

Age-group (years)	1962	1983	1990	1997	2017	2037
<i>Projected percentages</i>						
60-74	84.1	81.1	79.8	77.8	79.2	70.2
75+	15.9	18.9	20.2	22.2	20.8	29.8
60+	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Figure 7 - Distribution of the elderly population by broad age group,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037**



# Chapter 3

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### **3. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ELDERLY**

#### **3.1 Marital status**

From the results of the 1996/97 HBS, around 80% of the elderly men were married in 1996/97 and 13% were widowers. In contrast, only 32% of elderly women were married and 62% were widows (Table 10).

The proportion of married men was significantly higher than that of married women at all elderly age-groups. In fact, the difference between the proportions of married men and married women increases with age. There are several reasons for this gender disparity, the most obvious one being that women live longer on average than men. In addition, women tend to marry men older than themselves, which increases the likelihood of women outliving their spouses. Furthermore, widowed men are more likely to remarry than widows.

Widowhood was thus more prevalent among women. The proportion of elderly widows (62%) was nearly five times that of elderly widowers (13%). Here also, the sex differential with respect to widowhood increases with age. It thus appears that women are more disadvantaged than men in terms of companionship and assistance in their old age.

The proportion of never married, divorced or separated persons among the elderly was around 6% for both men and women.

**Table 10 - Distribution (%) of the elderly population by marital status, age and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Age-group (years)	Married	Widowed	Other	Total
<i>Both Sexes</i>				
60-74	59.5	34.4	6.1	100.0
75 & over	32.0	62.7	5.3	100.0
60 & over	53.7	40.4	5.9	100.0
<i>Male</i>				
60-74	83.4	10.6	6.0	100.0
75 & over	67.6	26.1	6.3	100.0
Total	80.6	13.4	6.0	100.0
<i>Female</i>				
60-74	38.7	55.1	6.2	100.0
75 & over	11.0	84.3	4.7	100.0
Total	32.0	62.1	5.8	100.0

**Figure 8 - Married and widowed elderly (%) by sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**



### **3.2 Educational characteristics**

From the 1996/97 HBS data, 72% of elderly men had attended school in the past compared to 47% of their female counterparts. Regarding educational attainment, only 6% of the elderly had post-primary education - 8% for men and 4% for women.

Data on literacy were not collected at the HBS; most recent data on this characteristic are available from the 1990 Census. This shows that only 52% of the elderly were literate in 1990 i.e. could, with understanding read and write a simple statement. The literacy rate was 67% for elderly men and 41% for women.

### **3.3 Position in the household**

The head of household is defined as any adult member who is acknowledged as such by other members. At the 1996/97 HBS, over 50% of the elderly were reported as heads of household. Around 25% were parents of the head or of his spouse and nearly 16% were the spouses of the head of household.

Table 11 indicates that elderly men and women held different positions within a household. When an elderly man was present in a household, he was four times more likely (81% of cases) to be reported as head than not. In contrast, if an elderly woman were present in a household, she would be reported as head in only 31% of cases. She was more likely to be reported as parent or spouse of the head of household.

**Table 11- Distribution (%) of the elderly population by relationship to head and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Relationship	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Head	53.6	81.4	31.2
Spouse of head	15.6	2.0	26.5
Parent of head	21.2	10.9	29.5
Parent of spouse	4.4	2.2	6.1
Other relative	5.2	3.4	6.7
Non-relative	0.0	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

### 3.4 Living arrangements

According to the 1996/97 HBS, one in every two elderly persons lived in towns. Some 34% of them lived in rural areas and 16% in semi-urban regions.

**Table 12- Distribution (%) of elderly persons by living arrangement and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Living arrangement	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Living alone <sup>1</sup>	8.1	4.1	11.4
Living with spouse only	11.8	15.9	8.6
Living with spouse & unmarried children	19.2	31.3	9.5
Living with unmarried children only	6.3	2.6	9.2
Other living arrangements	54.5	46.1	61.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>1</sup> The person lives on his/her own and makes his/her own provision for food and other essentials for living but may be sharing the housing unit with other persons

Data from the same source indicate that more than 1 out of 2 elderly persons were living in either extended or mixed households in 1996/97. Around 37% were living with their spouse and/or unmarried children and the remaining 8% were living alone (Table 12). Elderly women were more likely than their male counterparts to be living alone. Around 11% of elderly women were living on their own compared to only 4% among elderly men. In fact, nearly 8 out of every 10 elderly persons who lived alone were women.

Up-to-date statistics on the number of elderly residing in collective quarters such as infirmaries and retirement homes are not available. Estimates have been attempted from 1990 Census data by subtracting the resident population living in private households from the total resident population. The results are shown in Table 13.

**Table 13 - Elderly living in communal households,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1990 Census**

Age-group (years)	Number			Rate (per 1,000 population)		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
60-74	365	160	205	5	5	6
75+	354	65	289	20	11	25
Total	719	225	494	8	6	10

Thus in July 1990, around 700 elderly persons, or nearly 1% of all those aged 60 and above, were living in communal households. As indicated in Table 13, the likelihood of an elderly person living in an institution increases with age. Also, elderly women were more likely to be living in an institution than elderly men.



### 3.5 Health status

#### 3.5.1 Disability

Out of 99,300 elderly persons in mid-1997, almost 11,000 or 11% were reported to be suffering from a severe disability and were benefiting from an additional pension from the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity. These persons are either totally blind or suffer from total paralysis or need the constant care of another person. As shown in Table 14, the proportion reportedly suffering from a severe disability was higher for women (12%) than for men (10%). This pattern however is not the same among all the elderly age groups. For those aged below 70 years, men appear to be worse off than women whereas for those aged 70 years and above, the reverse situation prevails.

**Table 14 - Elderly persons reported as severely disabled & disability rates by age group and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1997**

Age-group (years)	Number			Rate (per 1,000 population)		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
60-64	1,134	584	550	36	40	33
65-69	1,622	760	862	67	69	65
70-74	2,264	973	1,291	105	103	106
75-79	2,042	763	1,279	175	163	182
80+	4,019	1,092	2,927	388	323	419
Total	11,081	4,172	6,909	112	97	123

#### 3.5.2 Deaths

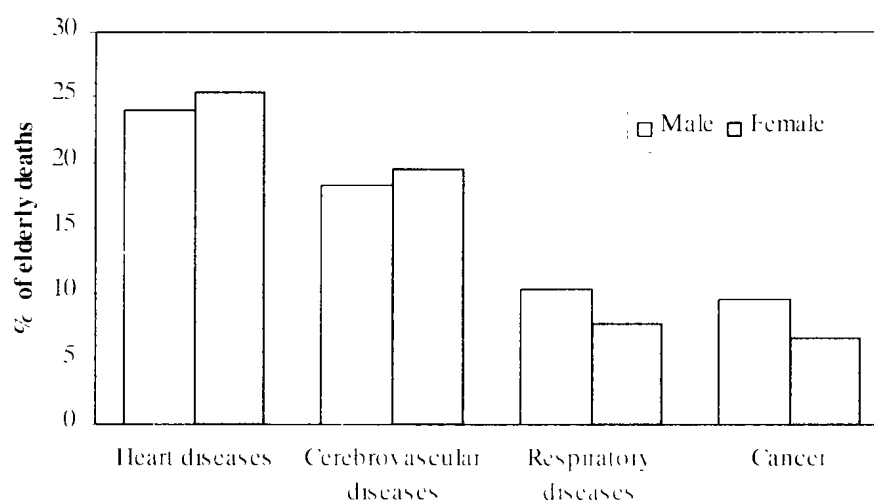
Deaths among the elderly totalled nearly 5,000 in 1997, giving an overall death rate of 50 per 1,000 elderly population - 60 per 1,000 for men and 43 per 1,000 for women. Women had lower death rates than men at all elderly ages (Table 15).

**Table 15 - Deaths and death rates of the elderly by age group and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1997**

Age-group (years)	Number			Rate (per 1,000 population)		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
60-64	710	439	271	23	30	16
65-69	865	515	350	36	47	26
70-74	1,040	636	404	48	68	33
75-79	905	479	426	77	103	61
80+	1,475	540	935	142	160	134
Total	4,995	2,609	2,386	50	60	43

Diseases of the circulatory system (of which heart and cerebrovascular diseases are major components) constituted the most prominent cause of death among the elderly, accounting for more than half of all deaths. Next ranked diseases of the respiratory system and cancer, respectively causing 9% and 8% of all elderly deaths (Figure 9). Table 16 indicates that there is no major sex differential with respect to cause of death. The distribution of deaths by cause is almost the same for elderly men and women.

**Figure 9 - Leading causes of death among the elderly, Republic of Mauritius, 1997**



**Table 16- Deaths of the elderly by cause and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1997**

Cause	Number			%		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Infectious and parasitic diseases	74	39	35	1.5	1.5	1.5
Neoplasms (Cancer)	406	249	157	8.1	9.5	6.6
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases and immunity disorders	208	93	115	4.2	3.6	4.8
<i>of which : diabetes</i>	(202)	(91)	(111)	(4.0)	(3.5)	(4.7)
Diseases of blood and blood-forming organs	10	5	5	0.2	0.2	0.2
Mental disorders	12	10	2	0.2	0.4	0.1
Diseases of nervous system and sense organs	12	6	6	0.2	0.2	0.3
Diseases of the circulatory system	2,836	1,417	1,419	56.8	54.3	59.5
<i>of which : heart diseases</i>	(1,232)	(627)	(605)	(24.7)	(24.0)	(25.4)
<i>: stroke</i>	(939)	(475)	(464)	(18.8)	(18.2)	(19.4)
Diseases of the respiratory system	455	271	184	9.1	10.4	7.7
Diseases of the digestive system	125	86	39	2.5	3.3	1.6
<i>of which : cirrhosis</i>	(50)	(43)	(7)	(1.0)	(1.6)	(0.3)
Diseases of the genitourinary system	241	132	109	4.8	5.1	4.6
Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	1	-	1	0.0	-	0.0
Injury and poisoning	56	44	12	1.1	1.7	0.5
Systems, signs and ill-defined conditions	559	257	302	11.2	9.9	12.7
Total	4,995	2,609	2,386	100.0	100.0	100.0

### ***3.5.3 Life expectancy***

Under the mortality conditions of 1996, at age 60 a man can expect to live a further 15 years on average and a woman an additional 20 years. Life expectancy among men was lower than among women at all the elderly ages (Table 17). However, the gap between male and female life expectancy narrows down at the oldest ages. This gap which was 4.3 years at age 60 reduces to 1.5 at age 80.

**Table 17 - Life expectancy at selected ages by sex,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1996**

Age (years)	Male	Female	Difference
60	15.3	19.6	4.3
65	12.4	16.1	3.7
70	9.9	12.9	3.0
75	7.7	9.9	2.2
80	6.0	7.5	1.5

# Chapter 4

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## 4. ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

### 4.1 Activity status and employment

From the results of the 1996/97 HBS, around 11% of the elderly were reported as being employed or self-employed. The majority reported themselves either as retired and/or too old to work (43%) and as homemakers (41%). A breakdown by sex (Table 18) indicates that only 4% of the elderly women were employed compared to 20% of their male counterparts.

**Table 18 - Distribution (%) of elderly persons by activity status and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Activity status	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Employed	11.2	20.0	4.1
Homemaker	41.2	8.2	67.7
Retired/too old	43.4	68.8	22.9
Other	4.3	3.0	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Among the employed elderly, around 27% had elementary occupations. Another 19% were engaged in agricultural jobs and 18% were performing at the administrative, professional or technical level. The remaining were mostly service, sales, craft and related trade workers (Table 19).

Elderly women are more disadvantaged than men with regard to occupation. Only 10% of employed elderly women were working at the administrative, professional or technical level compared to 20% for elderly men. In addition, over 50% of employed elderly women were engaged in unskilled elementary occupations against 21% for men.

**Table 19 - Distribution (%) of employed elderly persons by occupation and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Occupation	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Legislators, senior officials and managers	11.6	14.6	0.0
Professionals	2.8	3.5	0.0
Technicians & associate professionals	3.6	2.0	9.8
Clerks	1.6	1.0	3.9
Service workers, shop & market sales workers	12.9	10.1	23.5
Skilled agricultural & fishery workers	18.9	22.2	5.9
Craft and related trade workers	13.3	15.2	5.9
Plant & machine operators & assemblers	8.4	10.6	0.0
Elementary occupations	26.9	20.7	51.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

## **4.2 Income**

### ***4.2.1 Average monthly income***

The results of the 1996/97 HBS show that the average income of an elderly person was around Rs3,300 per month in the financial year 1996/97. For the elderly man, the average monthly income was almost Rs5,000 compared to Rs2,000 for the elderly woman. This is because a higher percentage of the elderly women did not work and therefore did not receive employment income. In addition, most elderly women did not take up employment when they were young and consequently do not benefit from employment-related pensions, as do their male counterparts.

Data from the same source indicate that the average income of the elderly varies according to their living arrangement. The elderly living in households with only elderly members had an average monthly income of nearly Rs3,600. The elderly living alone in single-member households had a corresponding revenue of Rs3,500, probably because they were in the younger elderly age-group and thus benefited from lower old-age pensions. For those elderly living in households with both young and aged members, the average income was around Rs3,200 per month.

#### 4.2.2 Source of income

Table 20 presents information on income sources of the elderly during the financial year 1996/97. Transfer income, consisting mainly of old-age pensions and retirement benefits, was the major source of income for the elderly and represented around 56% of total income. Income from employment/self-employment was the second largest source of income (22% of total income) followed by 'other income' which consisted mainly of withdrawals from savings and gifts in cash (18%).

**Table 20- Average monthly total income of the elderly by source of income, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Source of income	Rs			%		
	B. Sexes	Male	Female	B. Sexes	Male	Female
Income from employment	721	1,434	142	21.8	28.8	7.3
<i>of which : Wages &amp; salaries</i>	(234)	(423)	(81)	(7.1)	(8.5)	(4.2)
<i>from self-employment</i>	(487)	(1,011)	(61)	(14.7)	(20.3)	(3.1)
Transfer income	1,852	2,299	1,489	56.1	46.2	76.7
Property income	145	282	33	4.4	5.7	1.7
Other income	586	966	277	17.7	19.4	14.3
Total	3,304	4,981	1,941	100.0	100.0	100.0

A breakdown of the data gender-wise indicates that elderly women seem to be more economically vulnerable than their male counterparts. Around 90% of the women's income (compared to 66% for men) was derived mainly from social security benefits, withdrawals from savings and gifts in cash. Income from employment accounted for only around 7% of total income whilst for men the corresponding share was nearly 30%.



As shown in Table 21, the state-administered social security system, which is a comprehensive system, provides old age pensions to all Mauritians aged 60 and over. 'Other income' (mainly withdrawal from savings and gifts in cash) was the second most common source of revenue followed by income from self-employment.

**Table 21- Proportion (%) of the elderly receiving income from selected sources, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Source of income <sup>1/</sup>	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Wages and salaries	4.6	6.7	2.9
Income from self-employment	6.8	13.4	1.5
Property income	3.8	6.4	1.7
Transfer income	100.0	100.0	100.0
Other income	26.5	36.3	18.5

<sup>1/</sup> The percentages do not add to 100 since each person may have more than one source of income

#### ***4.2.3 Share of elderly's income to total income***

According to the 1996/97 HBS, income obtained by the elderly constituted nearly 9% of the total income of all income earners. Also, an elderly person was the main income earner in 11% of all households sampled.

Among those households with both young and aged members, the share of the elderly's income to the total household income was 28%. In such households, an elderly person was the main income earner in 28% of cases.

### **4.3 Expenditure**

Household consumption expenditure refers to the acquisition, for current use of the household, of goods and services by purchase, own production, or obtained free of

charge. It excludes income tax, social security contributions, life and other personal insurance and other outlays considered as transfers not directly related to consumption. The data used here are from the 1996/97 HBS and do not include the services provided free by government departments like health, education, etc. During the HBS, it was not possible to collect expenditure data pertaining to each individual member of the household. Instead, consumption expenditure data were obtained for the household as a whole. It is not therefore possible to obtain the average expenditure of an elderly person as such. However an idea of the average expenditure of the aged can be obtained by looking at the per capita consumption expenditure of the following types of households: -

- All-elderly households, i.e. with elderly members only
- Non-elderly households, i.e. without any elderly members
- Households of mixed type, i.e. containing both elderly and non-elderly members

Thus all-elderly households were found to have the highest consumption expenditure per member possibly because of the increased need for medical care and energy for light. The average monthly consumption expenditure per capita was around Rs2,700 for the all-elderly households compared to Rs1,900 for the non-elderly households and Rs1,800 for those of mixed type.

Members of all-elderly households had a pattern of consumption significantly different from those living in other households (Table 22). A higher proportion of their overall expenditure was allocated to food, medical care, household operations, fuel and light - 78% against 63% for those in mixed households and 61% for those in non-elderly households. In fact, the expenditure incurred on these items for each person in all-elderly households was nearly double that in households of the mixed and non-elderly types. As regards clothing, recreation, entertainment, transport and communication,

all-elderly household members were found to devote a smaller share (16%) of their overall expenditure on these items than those living in households of the non-elderly (30%) or mixed types (29%).

**Table 22 - Distribution (%) of household consumption expenditure by commodity and household type, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Commodity	All-elderly households	Non-elderly households	Mixed households	Total
Food, beverages & tobacco	46.9	39.9	41.2	40.4
Clothing and footwear	3.7	8.5	7.3	8.1
Fuel and light	6.4	4.5	4.9	4.6
Housing and household operations	17.2	14.1	12.1	13.7
Medical care and health expenses	7.0	2.9	4.9	3.5
Transport and communication	10.0	14.4	16.6	14.8
Recreation, entertainment, education, etc	2.4	6.8	4.9	6.2
Miscellaneous goods and services	6.3	8.9	8.1	8.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

#### **4.4 Standard of living**

##### **4.4.1 Housing occupancy**

The 1996/97 HBS showed that most of the elderly (84%) lived in houses owned by them or by the fellow members of their household. Another 9.5% lived in rented dwellings while for the remaining 6.5%, accommodation was free.

**Table 23 - Total and elderly population (%) by type of housing occupancy,  
Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Housing occupancy	Total population (all ages)	Elderly persons			
		Total	living in mixed households	living with other elderly persons <sup>1</sup>	living alone
Owned	82.3	84.0	86.7	75.0	69.7
Supplied free	9.0	6.5	5.4	9.5	13.5
Rented	8.7	9.5	7.9	15.5	16.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>1</sup> in households with elderly persons only

As shown in Table 23, house ownership was highest among the elderly living in mixed households (87%) and lowest among those living alone (70%). This may be an indication that those living together with the younger generation are better off while those living alone are the most economically vulnerable (Table 23).

Some 84% of the elderly population lived in houses owned by them or by the fellow members of their household. The corresponding rate for the total population was 82%.

#### ***4.4.2 Availability of household items***

Another way of assessing the living standard of a person is to look at selected items in his household. Table 24 illustrates the situation of the elderly in this respect in 1996/97. Nearly 87% of them had radio sets and 88% had television sets. Close to 5% of the aged had neither of these devices, probably due to economic destitution. Also, around 56% of the elders had access to telephones while 67% had a refrigerator.

**Table 24 - Total and elderly population (%) having selected items in their household, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

Item	Total population (all ages)	Elderly population			
		Total	living in mixed households	living with other elderly persons <sup>1</sup>	living alone
T.V set	89.6	87.8	91.9	84.9	51.1
Radio/audio set	90.0	86.6	90.3	78.2	60.7
Video	63.3	55.8	63.7	30.6	11.8
Refrigerator	70.2	66.8	72.1	53.2	31.5
Washing machine	26.1	25.8	28.3	20.2	8.4
Telephone	52.9	56.0	60.9	43.3	24.2

<sup>1</sup> in households with elderly persons only

Marked differences were found among the elderly living in mixed households, living with other elderly persons and those living alone regarding access to the above items. Those living in mixed households seemed to be better off whilst those living alone were found to be the worst off of the group. For instance, nearly 92% of the elderly in mixed households had a television set in their household compared to only 51% among those living alone.

Compared to the overall population, the elderly were found to be slightly disadvantaged as regards the availability of the items listed in Table 24, except telephone. Some 56% of the elderly had telephones as against 53% for the total population. The need for the elderly to communicate through telephone on account of their difficulty to move physically could be the explanation.

#### 4.4.3 Food consumption

The food consumption ratio can also be used as an indicator of economic well being.

The household food consumption ratio is defined as the food consumption expenditure as a proportion of the total household consumption expenditure.

**Table 25 - Total and elderly population (%) by food consumption ratio  
Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97 HBS**

	Food consumption ratio <sup>1</sup>					
	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%	Total
Total population	4.7	35.9	45.9	12.7	0.9	100.0
Elderly population	3.3	31.7	46.3	17.4	1.4	100.0
- in mixed households	3.4	33.4	47.8	14.3	1.1	100.0
- living with other elderly persons <sup>2</sup>	2.4	25.8	40.5	30.6	0.8	100.0
- living alone	3.4	22.5	39.3	29.2	5.6	100.0

<sup>1</sup> Consumption expenditure on food as a percentage of total consumption expenditure

<sup>2</sup> in households with elderly persons only

To satisfy its consumption needs, a household will generally start with the basic needs such as food, housing and clothing. If the financial resources of the household are limited, its total consumption will mainly consist of these commodities with priority for food. In such a situation, food consumption expenditure as a percentage of total household consumption expenditure will be very high - the higher the share of food expenditure, the worse off is the household economically.

According to the 1996/97 HBS, nearly 19% of the elderly incurred over 60% of total household expenditure on food against 14% for the total population. Among the aged persons living in all-elderly households, and those living alone, the proportions of persons with such high food budget stood at 31% and 35% respectively (Table 25). More than 1 out of every 3 elderly living alone had a food consumption ratio exceeding 60%.

# Chapter 5

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## 5. COROLLARIES OF AGEING

### 5.1 Introduction

Government planning for the allocation of resources is often affected by changes in the numbers and proportions of persons in different age groups. Ageing brings along changes in the age-structure of the population and also in the relative number of people who need support from others as well as those who can provide that support. The statistics presented in this chapter may give an idea of the patterns of social relationships and societal expenditures in the future. However, it must be pointed out that not all elderly people require support and that not all working-age people actually work or provide direct support to the older members of their family. Thus these statistics are only rough indicators of the situation; their interpretation depends significantly on the health and economic resources of the aged in the future.

### 5.2 Societal dependency ratios

Dependency ratios are constructed to indicate the number of youth and/or elderly persons per 100 persons of working age (here defined as those in age-group 15-59 years).

**Table 26 - Dependency ratios - Republic of Mauritius, 1997-2037**

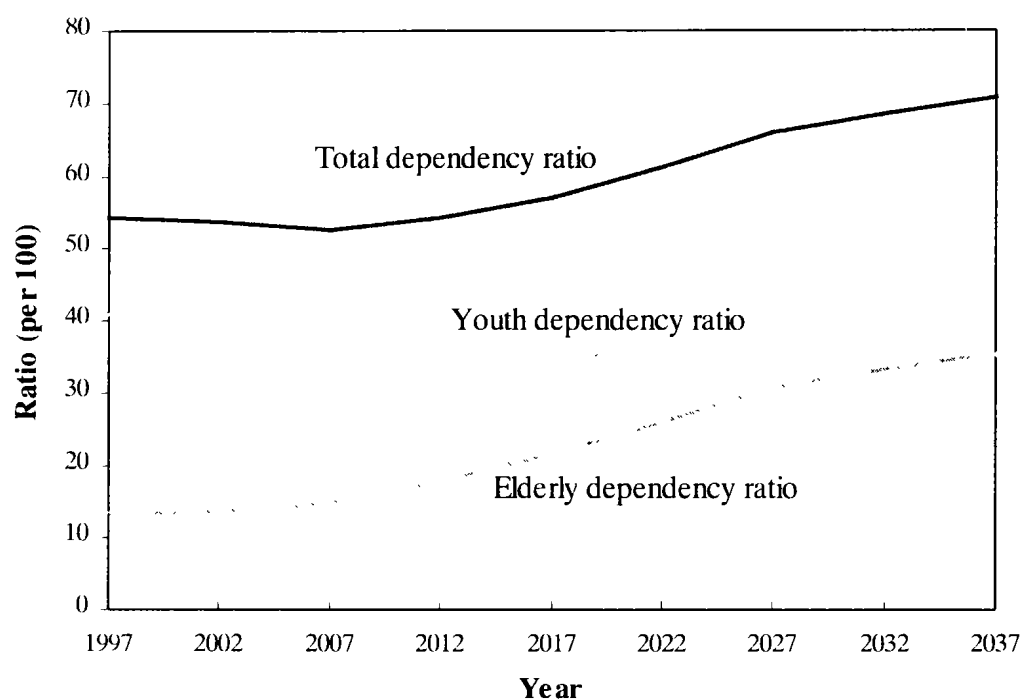
Support ratio	1997	2007	2017	2027	2037
Elderly dependency ratio	13.3	14.9	21.6	30.7	35.5
Youth dependency ratio	40.9	37.6	35.6	35.5	35.3
Total dependency ratio	54.3	52.5	57.2	66.1	70.7

The elderly dependency ratio is expected to rise from 13 in 1997 to 36 over the next 4 decades as a result of declining fertility and increasing longevity (Table 26). The increase will be more pronounced in the period 2017 to 2027 when the high-fertility cohorts of the 1950's and the 1960's will be reaching 60 years and above.

Young people also depend on the working population for support. The youth dependency ratio is defined as the number of persons under age 15 per 100 persons of working age. This ratio is projected to decline from 41 in 1997 to around 35 in some forty years' time.

The total dependency ratio (youth plus elderly dependency ratio) is a gross indication of the overall support burden on working-age adults. During 1997 to 2012, this ratio is expected to remain at around 54. Thereafter, the total dependency ratio will rise significantly to reach above 70 by 2037, as the rapidly increasing number of the elderly counters the effect of the declining youth component (Figure 10).

**Figure 10 - Dependency ratios, Republic of Mauritius, 1997-2037**



### 5.3 Parent support ratios

The 'oldest old', i.e. persons aged 75 years and over, are the most likely to have pressing needs for physical and family support in addition to economic support. One indicative measure of the need for family support for the oldest old is the Parent Support Ratio (PSR). The PSR is defined here as the number of persons aged 75 years and over per 100 persons in the age bracket 45-59 years which, in a general sense, relates the oldest old to their immediate offspring. However, since persons in the numerator are not necessarily in the same families as those in the denominator, the PSR is only a rough indicator of the need for family support.

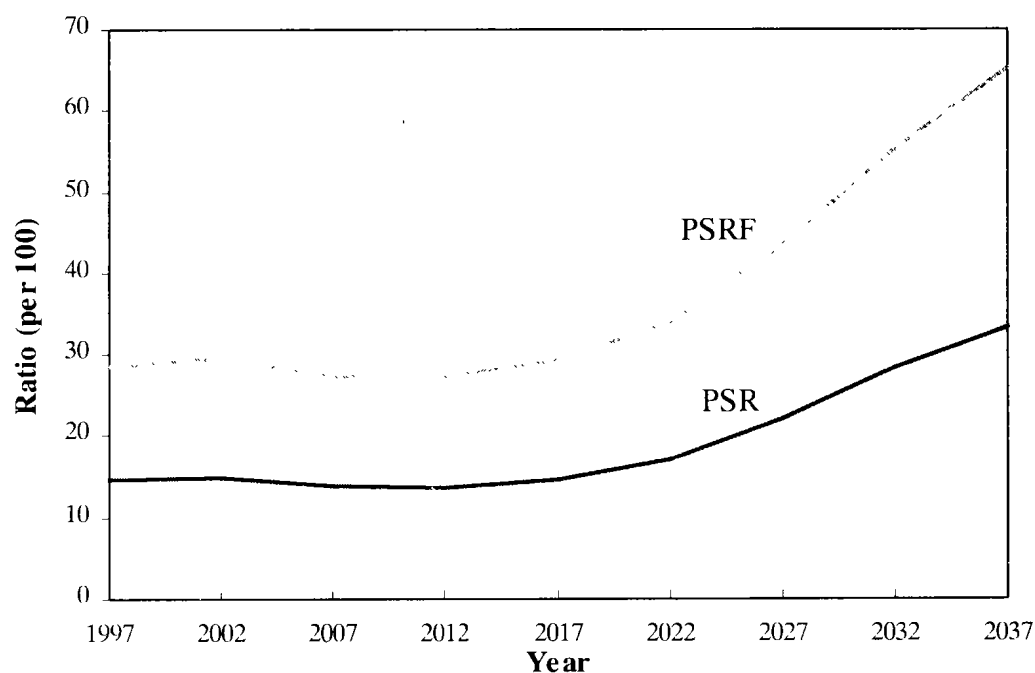
As shown in Table 27, there will be slight changes in the PSR during the next 20 years in the Republic. In the period 2017-2037, however, the PSR is projected to more than double from 15 to 33.

**Table 27 - Parent support ratios, Republic of Mauritius, 1997-2037**

Support ratio	1997	2007	2017	2027	2037
Parent support ratio (PSR)	14.5	13.8	14.7	22.1	33.3
Parent support ratio for females (PSRF)	28.4	27.3	29.2	43.4	65.3

Given that adult daughters and daughters-in-law are generally the ones to provide most of the personal care and help to the elderly, it may be more relevant to calculate the PSR by females (PSRF). The PSRF is defined as the number of persons aged 75 years and over per 100 women aged 45 to 59 years. As seen in Figure 8, the pattern is similar to the PSR but at a higher level. The population projections suggest that there will be 65 persons aged 75 years and over per 100 women aged 45 to 59 in 2037 compared to a corresponding ratio of 28 in 1997.

**Figure 11 - Parent support ratios, Republic of Mauritius, 1997-2037**



#### 5.4 Cost of old-age pensions

As people live longer, more persons will become entitled to old-age pensions (basic retirement pension). Thus, government expenditure on social security will become increasingly heavier. Assuming that the pension rates of 1996/97 are maintained in the following forty years, it is projected that the cost of old-age pensions will nearly double between 1996/97 and 2016/2017 - from Rs1,583 million to Rs2,942 million. By 2036/2037, the total cost of old-age pensions could exceed Rs5,000 million, or more than three times that of 1996/97.

**Table 28 - Cost of old-age pensions, Republic of Mauritius, 1996/97-2036/37**

Financial year	1996/97	2006/07	2016/17	2026/27	2036/37
	Actual amount	Estimated future costs at 1996/97 pension rates			
Amount (Rs million)	1,583	1,915	2,941	4,201	5,020

### **5.5 Elderly also provide support**

Many elderly get support from their adult children but support is not one-way. In Mauritius, it is not uncommon for our older people to provide support to their adult children. This includes financial help, housing facility, babysitting, childcare and the wisdom of experience. Unfortunately, statistical data are not yet available to illustrate and support this important aspect of the elderly.

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# Appendix

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## APPENDIX

### Elderly population by age-group and sex, Republic of Mauritius, 1962-2037

Age-group (years)	1962	1972	1983	1990	1997	2007	2017	2027	2037
← Projected estimates →									
<b>Both Sexes</b>									
60-64	15,079	19,310	25,183	30,848	31,320	40,438	68,411	86,328	84,186
65-69	9,907	13,402	19,143	24,255	24,313	28,788	51,761	70,904	72,615
70-74	6,633	8,955	12,639	14,750	21,583	22,829	30,684	54,169	70,467
75-79	3,373	4,846	7,492	9,975	11,685	15,531	19,292	35,848	50,106
80+	2,587	3,979	5,820	7,699	10,371	16,537	20,395	26,932	46,341
<b>60+</b>	<b>37,579</b>	<b>50,492</b>	<b>70,277</b>	<b>87,527</b>	<b>99,272</b>	<b>124,123</b>	<b>190,543</b>	<b>274,181</b>	<b>323,715</b>
<b>Male</b>									
60-64	7,189	9,456	12,182	14,759	14,706	18,546	32,446	41,460	40,352
65-69	4,218	6,234	8,887	11,302	10,973	12,819	23,623	33,079	34,725
70-74	2,542	3,779	5,378	6,480	9,418	9,737	12,903	24,212	32,729
75-79	1,107	1,736	2,798	3,904	4,670	6,057	7,719	14,982	21,923
80+	641	1,086	1,655	2,260	3,384	5,648	7,126	9,675	17,933
<b>60+</b>	<b>15,697</b>	<b>22,291</b>	<b>30,900</b>	<b>38,705</b>	<b>43,151</b>	<b>52,807</b>	<b>83,817</b>	<b>123,408</b>	<b>147,662</b>
<b>Female</b>									
60-64	7,890	9,854	13,001	16,089	16,614	21,892	35,965	44,868	43,834
65-69	5,689	7,168	10,256	12,953	13,340	15,969	28,138	37,825	37,890
70-74	4,091	5,176	7,261	8,270	12,165	13,092	17,781	29,957	37,738
75-79	2,266	3,110	4,694	6,071	7,015	9,474	11,573	20,866	28,183
80+	1,946	2,893	4,165	5,439	6,987	10,889	13,269	17,257	28,408
<b>60+</b>	<b>21,882</b>	<b>28,201</b>	<b>39,377</b>	<b>48,822</b>	<b>56,121</b>	<b>71,316</b>	<b>106,726</b>	<b>150,773</b>	<b>176,053</b>

**CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE**  
LIC Centre, John Kennedy Street, Port Louis  
Republic of Mauritius

Tel: 212 2316/17  
Fax: (230) 211 4150  
E-mail: [cso@intnet.mu](mailto:cso@intnet.mu)  
Web Page: <http://ncb.intnet.mu/medrc.htm>

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