**Population and Vital Statistics, Republic of Mauritius, Year 2019**

(Extract on Population Ageing)

**9. Ageing**

Population ageing is not a new phenomenon. It started in the developed world and is taking place in nearly all the countries of the world. Ageing is a triumph of development. People are living longer because of better nutrition, sanitation, health care, education and economic well-being. The population of Mauritius as well is ageing.

Population ageing is defined as the rise in the median age of the population (defined as the age which divides the population into two equal size groups, one of which is younger and the other older than the median) as a result of the shifting of the age structure of the population towards the upper end of the age distribution. The median age increased from 19.0 years in 1972 to 36.9 years in 2019 (Figure 9.1).

**Figure 9.1 – Median Age of the population, Republic of Mauritius, 1972 – 2019**

For statistical purposes the elderly is taken to be those aged 60 years and above. The population aged 60 years represented 5.9% in 1972 compared to 17.4% in 2019 (Figure 9.2).

**Figure 9.2 – Percentage of the population aged 60 years and above, Republic of Mauritius, 1972 - 2019**

**9.1 Why the population is ageing?**

The ageing process can be explained by increased longevity and lowering levels of fertility. The number of births per 1,000 population decreased by 75% over the past 60 years. Low levels of fertility have resulted in a decreasing share of young people in the total population. This is visible through a shrinking of the base of age pyramids from 1972 to 2019 (See Figure 8.4.1).

In the 1970’s, on average, a man was expected to live up to 61 years and a woman up to 66 years; in 2018 they are expected to live up to 71 and 78 years respectively.

**9.2 Characteristics of older population**

Another aspect of population ageing is the progressive ageing of the older population itself. Older people are the fastest growing group. The “oldest, old people” that is the population aged 80 years and above is increasing more rapidly than any younger age group within the older population. The proportion of “oldest, old people” increased from 7.9% in 1972 to 11.3% in 2019 (Figure 9.3). In absolute terms, a fourfold increase was observed among the number of people in the age group 60-69 years and 70-79 years between 1972 and 2019.

**Figure 9.3 – Age distribution of the elderly, Republic of Mauritius, 1972 – 2019**

There is also a difference in the gender composition by age of the older population. Women tend to live longer than men, with the result that there are more older women than older men, the so-called “feminization” of ageing. In 2019, for every 100 women in the age group 60-69, there were only 90 men. Their number dropped to 74 in the age group 70-79. For the oldest old (80+ years) the sex ratio reached 54 men for every 100 women.

**Table 9.4 – Sex Ratio by age, for the Republic of Mauritius, 1972 – 2019**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Age Group**  | **1972** | **2000** | **2019** |
| 60-69 | 92.2 | 85.1 | 89.7 |
| 70-79 | 66.6 | 73.8 | 74.1 |
| 80+ | 37.5 | 48.9 | 54.1 |

**9.3 Implications of ageing**

The implications of ageing are numerous and some of them are highlighted. Ageing will affect pension schemes; beneficiaries will be more numerous and they will claim benefits over a much longer period than at present. Population ageing is also correlated with an increase in the prevalence of a number of long-term chronic conditions as well as physical and mental disability. The other concern will be an increased demand for health care, keeping in mind that women will predominate among the elderly and other age-related government expenditures. Living arrangements, including housing and transportation will need to be made age-friendly, to ensure that older persons can remain independent for as long as possible.

**9.4 International Comparison**

While overall the world is ageing, there are differences in the speed of population ageing. It is happening fastest in the developing world. Declining fertility rates and increasing survival at older ages have led to population ageing. Life expectancy at birth has risen substantially across the world.

**Table 9.5 – Demographic ageing indicators for selected countries**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Countries  |  | % of Population aged 65+ | Total Fertility Rate  | Life Expectancy at birth  | Life Expectancy at 65 years  | Median Age\*  |
| ***Africa*** |  | ***3.5*** | ***4.35*** | ***63.2*** | ***13.6*** | ***19.7*** |
| Australia |  | 15.9 | 1.82 | 83.4 | 21.5 | 37.9 |
| Finland |  | 22.1 | 1.48 | 81.9 | 20.6 | 43.1 |
| Germany |  | 21.6 | 1.60 | 81.3 | 20.0 | 45.7 |
| India |  | 6.4 | 2.20 | 69.7 | 14.7 | 28.4 |
| Italy |  | 23.0 | 1.31 | 83.5 | 21.2 | 47.3 |
| Japan |  | 28.0 | 1.37 | 84.6 | 22.3 | 48.4 |
| ***Mauritius***  |  | ***12.0*** | ***1.37*** | ***75.0*** | ***17.2*** | ***37.5*** |
| Seychelles |  | 7.8 | 2.43 | 73.4 | 16.0 | 34.2 |
| Singapore |  | 12.4 | 1.22 | 83.6 | 21.3 | 42.2 |
| South Africa  |  | 5.4 | 2.38 | 64.1 | 13.4 | 27.6 |
| ***World***  |  | ***9.1*** | ***2.45*** | ***72.6*** | ***17.1*** | ***30.9*** |
| *Source: World Population Prospects 2019* |  |  |  |  |
| *\* refer to Year 2020* |  |  |  |  |  |

Statistics Mauritius

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Port Louis

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**Contact person:**

**Mrs. C. Martial, Statistician**

**Mrs. N. Fatha Mahomed, Senior Statistical Officer**

**Demography Unit**

**Statistics Mauritius**

**LIC Centre**

**John Kennedy Street**

**Port Louis**

**Tel: (230) 208 0859**

**Email: cso\_demography@govmu.org**