

Trends of Aged Population in Nepal

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Abstract

Population ageing is the dynamic process of demographic & socio-economic transformation which reflects the increase in the share of the elderly on the total population, which is considered as natural phenomenon. There are 2.97 million older people in Nepal as of the 2021 census older population reached 10.21 percent population of Nepal. Average growth rate is 0.92 percent and the older population growth rate is 3.29 percent per year. Nepal's total fertility is 1 percent below replacement level, infant mortality is around 23 per thousand live births and average life expectancy is now around 71 years. These indicators show ageing is increasing rapidly and the caregiving burden may increase rapidly in the future due to the tendency of migration of the young population to foreign countries. In this context, the Nepal government needs to focus on how to manage the ageing population and provide quality services and social security for the growing older people of Nepal.

Keywords: Ageing population, older population, the index population & Nepal

Introduction

There is no one definition of old age; aging is a universal occurrence. It differs with time and geography, as well as between and within cultures. For far too many, becoming older just entails becoming physically older over time. There is, however, another social component where the significance of the process outweighs the chronology. Ageing on a human level entails socially constructed variances. Depending on the gender and age group, distinct cultural norms and societal expectations are applicable. In a similar vein, the state of elderly individuals is influenced by their physical well-being, employment, socioeconomic status, family support, and governmental regulations. Thus, ageing issues encompass not only the situations of the elderly but also the social environment that generates them (Chalise, 2012). As the proportion of the old in the population rises, a dynamic process of demographic and socioeconomic change is known as population ageing. The procedure is seen as natural. Migration is the third main factor contributing to the aging of the population, along with declining fertility and rising life expectancy. Concern over the global

population aging issue is growing, as both rich and developing nations are seeing an increase in their aging populations (Acharya, 2011).

Global population aging has been regarded as one of the most significant demographic trends, with the number of elderly people rising nearly everywhere. The dynamic process of demographic and socioeconomic change is what accounts for the growing proportion of the senior population—those over 60 in the overall population. It is regarded as a natural occurrence. Reduced fertility along with increased longevity and health have led to an increase in the global population's number and share of older people. Global population aging is a problem that both industrialized and developing nations are facing, and concerns about it are becoming more widespread about the population ageing in the world (UNFPA, 2012).

The rate at which the population ages varies throughout time between nations and communities. In most nations, 65 years of age and older is considered elderly. For this reason, several age restrictions have been established in Nepal. For instance, 58 years are set aside for mandatory retirement from the civil service, 62 years for UN workers, 63 years for college instructors, 65 years for constitutional bodies, and 75 years for the receipt of 150 rupee social security benefits (Bisht, 2003), which have since been increased to 500 and have an age restriction. In Nepal, however, it is generally accepted that 60 is the cutoff age for old age.

Priority is given to defining the age classification of senior citizens because knowledge of the features of the aged population is important when creating policies to establish economic efficiency and effectiveness. More specifically, there are three categories of aged people:

The three age groups are as follows:

- The Young Old (those in the 60–69 age range);
- The Old Old (those in the 70–79 age range); and
- The Oldest Old (over 80 years old) (Bhandari, 2018).

There's no single definition of "old age" that fits everyone. It's a complex concept that varies across cultures, time periods, and even within societies. Many people see aging as simply getting older chronologically. But social factors also play a big role. How people experience aging depends on cultural values, social expectations that differ by gender and age, physical health, employment status, economic situation, family support, and government policies. So, understanding aging isn't just about the elderly themselves, but also the social context that shapes their lives.

Aging Populations: A Global Issue

The increasing percentage of older individuals within a population is referred to as population aging. It is a logical result of three primary factors:

- Extended lifespans: Individuals are living longer.
- Falling fertility rates: The number of people bearing children is declining.
- Migration trends: Age distribution can be impacted by population mobility.

Concerns have been raised about this trend's potential effects on societies around the world because it is present in both developed and developing nations.

"Ageing" is defined in Nepal

Even within a single nation, the definition of "old" is fluid. While many nations define elderly status as being 65 years of age or more, Nepal takes a more complex approach. The government establishes retirement dates, which vary by profession and range from 58 to 75. But in general, 60 is seen as the beginning of old age in Nepal for all intents and purposes.

There's no universally applicable definition of "old age" It is a multifaceted idea that differs among nations, cultures, and historical eras. A common misconception about aging is that it only means growing older. However, social forces also come into play. A person's experience of aging is influenced by their cultural beliefs, gender- and age-specific societal expectations, physical health, work position, financial circumstances, assistance from family members, and governmental regulations. Therefore, a comprehensive knowledge of aging encompasses not only the aged.

The study's objectives

Examining Nepal's aging population patterns is the primary goal of this study. This study's specific goal is to evaluate how the senior population is distributed

Methodology

This study uses data from Nepal's census taken in 2021 as well as historical data that the country's Central Bureau of Statistics has released. The trend of Nepal's aging population is investigated using the data from various sources. Additionally, a large number of papers with an emphasis on Nepali older people's problems have been published.

Data and Results Interpretation

Since, Nepal's fertility rate has begun to decline recently, ageing is becoming a more significant socioeconomic concern. In Nepal, the life expectancy for both men and women

is continuing to rise and the death rate is dropping much more quickly. Every year, the elder population growth rate exceeds the overall population growth rate. The table below displays the total population growth rate of Nepal for various years.

Table 1: Rate of population increase and aging population, 1961–2021

Census year	Population growth rate (%)	Older population growth rate (%)
1961	1.65	1.79
1971	2.07	2.42
1981	2.62	3.26
1991	2.10	2.26
2001	2.24	3.50
2011	1.35	3.15
2021	0.92	3.29

Source: CBS, 2003, 2012, 2021

In Nepal, the rate of population growth due to aging is consistently higher than the population growth rate of 0.92 percent in the census year 2021. The years 1971–81 saw the highest rates of growth for both the overall population and the elder population (Table 1). In Nepal, the number of older people has grown more quickly over time

Table 2: Life expectancy at birth and the percentage of the senior population (60+)

Census year	Proportion of total population aged 60+	Life expectancy at birth (in years)	
		Male	Female
1961	5.19	37	39.9
1971	5.62	42	40.0
1981	5.74	50.9	48.1
1991	5.80	55.0	53.5
2001	6.50	60.8	61.0
2011	8.14	66.6	67.9
2021	10.21	71.0	73.0

Source: CBS, 2003, 2012, NSO, 2021

It is evident that the proportion of the senior population (those over 60) rose from 5.19 percent in 1961 to 8.14 percent in 2011. A significant element influencing the rise of the aging population is life expectancy at birth. Life expectancy at birth and the aging population grow together in a beneficial way. In 2021, 10.21% of the population was 60 years of age or older. The truth is that the proportion of the population that is older rises

with increasing life expectancy at birth and vice versa. In 1961, the average life expectancy for males and females in Nepal was 37 years and 39.9 years, respectively, at birth. In 2021, it has been raised to 71 years for men and 73 years for women (Table 2).

Nepal is experiencing a sharp decline in fertility, a notable reduction in mortality, and a large-scale exodus of its economically engaged population abroad. This led to the creation of a scenario where a decrease in the working-age population is required to offset the population's increasing aging. Elderly persons require assistance in a variety of areas, such as social, economic, and medical (Uprety, 2006). In 1952, Nepalese people could expect to live for about 27 to 28 years on average. By 2021, that number had risen to almost 72 years. It indicates that in the past 70 years, Nepalese people have lived an extra 42 years. Every 3.5 years, Nepalese people live an additional two years longer. Upon analyzing the most recent life expectancy data from 1991 to 2021, it has increased by about 18 years in the last 30 years. due to declining fertility, migration, medical advancements, hospital facilities, and technology developments.

Nepal's Population Aging Measurement

The percentage of older persons in the population as a whole is the most widely used and easily understood of them. The dependency ratio, the aging index, and the median age are further metrics. The changes for the percentage of older adults, the dependence ratio, the aging index, and the median age between 1981 and 2021 are displayed in Table 3. The percentage of the population that is older is steadily rising, while the percentage of older women is currently higher than that of older.

The number of elderly individuals who are normally not employed (60 years of age and older) divided by the total number of individuals in the working age group (15 to 59 years of age), given as a ratio per 100 persons, is known as the old-age dependence ratio. Evidence indicates that above 14 years of age, dependence on social services has increased steadily over the past 40 years. Within a given population, the Ageing Index measures how many people over 60 (60 years of age and older) there are for every 100 people under the age of 14. The population consequently gets older as the index rises. The index of aging was 13.8 in 1981, went up to 23.3 in 2011, and is currently at 36.7. It demonstrates the concerning trend of an increase in the elderly population and a decline of youngsters under the age of fifteen. The population is divided into two equal-sized segments by the median age, meaning that there are the same number of people in each age group that are older than the median. Growing the median age also closely correlates with growing the older population. The Nepalese median age is predicted to be around 25 years old, as the table below demonstrates that it has been rising with each census.

Population aging is defined in demographic studies as an increase in the population's mean or median age. The population as a whole may age or rejuvenate in this manner, depending on whether the average age has increased or decreased, in contrast to the age of an individual, which grows constantly.

However, estimating the index of aging—which is defined as:

$$\text{Index of ageing} = \frac{\text{Persons of aged 64+ years and over}}{\text{Children under 15 years}} \times 100$$

It is assumed in the definition of the above index of ageing that old age starts at age 65. The U.N. convention is in line with this idea. Every year, the United Nations publishes World Data Sheets that list the major age groups of the population in every country: those under 15 and those 65 and older. Thus, U. N.'s criterion should be used to compare the aging trends of various nations. However, any age above 55 is acceptable for the beginning of ageing for the purposes of cross-sectional research. For example, in Nepal, ageing is defined according to various ages. Government public officials' retirement age is set at 58 years old. Thus, the ageing process for civil servants is expected to begin after they reach the age of 58. However, university administrators and instructors have a 63-year-old retirement age. Thus, for them, the onset of aging occurs beyond the age of sixty-three. However, the legal age of 75 is the cutoff point for eligibility for legal activities and the general public's pensions. Furthermore, there are two main categories for old age: 60–74 years old for young old and 75 years old or older for elderly.

Table 3: Age-median population aging measurement for Nepal

Year		% 60+ Population	Dependency Ratio	Index of Aging	Median Age
1981	Both	5.7	10.8	13.8	19.9
	Male	5.9	11.2	13.9	
	Female	5.5	10.3	13.6	
1991	Both	5.5	11.2	13.7	18.9
	Male				
	Female	5.6	11.6	13.5	
2001	Both	5.4	10.8	13.8	19.3
	Male	6.5	12.0	16.5	
	Female	6.6	12.3	16.3	
2011	Both	6.4	11.7	16.7	21.7
	Male	8.1	14.3	23.3	
	Female	8.2	15.1	22.6	
2021	Both	8.0	13.6	24.0	24.6
	Male	10.21	14.19	36.7	
	Female	10.13	14.33	34.1	
		10.29	14.06	39.5	

Source: CBS, 2003, 2012 NSO, 2021

Nepal is seeing a sharp rise in its aging population. As they get older, older people are more susceptible to many diseases due to their weakened immune systems. Given the country's rapidly growing senior population, Nepal may see difficulties in the near future with regard to social, demographic, economic, health, and elder care. Due to high rates of

crude death and infant mortality in the 1950s, Nepal had a relatively short life expectancy (approximately 28 years). Nonetheless, Nepalese newborn babies now have a longer life expectancy due to a persistent decline in the infant mortality rate. As a result, Nepal's life expectancy rose from 27 to 60 years throughout the second part of the 20th century, and it currently hovers around 70 years. To put it another way, a Nepalese baby born in 2021 will live for over 40 years longer than a kid born 65 years earlier. The twentieth century saw improvements in nutrition, health care, and access to antibiotics, all of which may have led to this development.

In Nepal, families serve as the primary social institution for providing care and support for their elderly members, offering them various forms of assistance and assistance with daily tasks. By promoting Dharma, Hinduism enriches Nepali culture and values. The word "dharma," which translates to "duty," describes the obligations that each person has in accordance with his or her developmental stage. Hinduism is a religion with deeply ingrained morals. Not only do family members require adherence to customs and norms, but the surrounding community also expects knowledge of these practices.

Policymakers in Nepal do not take the declining fertility rate seriously. According to the most recent estimates, Nepal's total fertility rate (2021 Census) is 1.8 percent below replacement level. Numerous national studies demonstrate that naturally occurring fertility begins to diminish as soon as it falls below replacement level. It can mean that the number of children will begin to decrease immediately. The demographic pyramid of Nepal similarly shows a sharp decline in the number of children compared to twenty years ago. Additional diverse metrics pertaining to the elderly population also suggest that aging is occurring quickly or is on track to occur quickly. With the younger population quickly leaving the country and the percentage of older people rising, older individuals may have certain difficulties when adopting the traditional care system.

There is a correlation between an increase in various diseases in later life stages and longer life expectancy. In addition to suffering from many chronic ailments and having a poor quality of life, older people in Nepal struggle with issues such as depression, sleep disorders, loneliness, assault, and functional incapacity. The propensity toward functional restrictions in daily life activities is linked to a variety of health problem categories. Seniors will have to provide more care as a result of this. There has also been a shift in the customary way of life for the elderly in Nepal. In Nepal, an elderly person's living arrangement depends on the amount of support they receive. Availability of care from a spouse or kid, in particular, may be critical to the health of very old or fragile seniors. In Nepal, elderly individuals rely on their offspring, especially their sons, for stability and assistance during their later years. Furthermore, because Nepal's social security system is

underdeveloped, the country may encounter further difficulties in maintaining the high standard of living that senior Nepalese citizens enjoy.

Conclusion

In Nepal, both the fertility and death rates are falling quickly. However, the percentage of the population that is getting older is rising quickly. According to the Census of 2021, Nepal's overall fertility rate is 1.8 percent below replacement level and is predicted to decline even more in the days ahead. The average family size is 4.4 percent (2021 Census), and the exodus of young people has led to a crisis in conventional living arrangements and support networks. It is anticipated that older adults will have more caregiving responsibilities in the future. The government of Nepal must develop policies for the provision of care for the elderly in order to ensure their long-term health and well-being.

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