

# What exactly is an ageing population?

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



An ageing population is one in which the proportion of older people is increasing. This group of elderly people are those who have passed the age of retirement and depend on pensions as their main source of income. The old age dependency ratio is calculated by  $(\text{Elderly Population } 65+ / \text{Working Population } 15-64) \times 100$ .

Ageing populations are a factor of reductions in both birth and death rates due to technological and economic progress.

An ageing population means the proportion of older people is increasing, which causes an increase in the dependency ratio.

Social Impacts:

1. Increased pressure on public services – Greater demand for services such as hospitals and hospices, and therefore more are needed to care for the elderly, so more carers and nurses will need training. Some families will choose to care for their own relatives, putting pressure on them, socially and financially.
2. Unequal distribution of the elderly – e. g. Eastbourne has a high proportion of older people and may have inadequate facilities for young people as a consequence, such as bars and youth clubs.
3. Reduced population growth or population decline – The working population may have fewer children as they already have older dependants, leading to a reduction in birth rate.

4. Longer working life- The state pension is low because there are so many retired people, so therefore some may have to work beyond normal retirement age to build up personal pensions or savings, or to add to their income from their state pension.

Economic Impacts:

1. Reduced work force- Smaller proportion of the population is working, which may slow economic growth
2. Increased taxes – A greater proportion are claiming pensions and support paid for by taxes, therefore this could mean higher taxes for the working population.
3. Spending – The elderly often have savings and pensions to spend within the economy.

Strategies to Manage Ageing Populations:

1. Encouraging larger families – Should result in a larger future working population to provide taxes for better pensions and services
2. Raising retirement age – The working population is made large, so more people contribute to the state pension fund and to personal pensions. People will also claim the state pension for less time.
3. Encouraging the immigration of working-age people – This increases the working-age population; this helps to support the ageing population by paying taxes.

4. Increasing healthcare provision – Helps to ease the problem of poor health in the elderly.

#### UK Case Study

The UK has an ageing population where people over 65 make up a large part of the population.

#### Reasons:

1. Increasing life expectancy – Currently 81.3 for women and 76.9 for men.
2. Baby Booms - Lots of babies were born during 1940's and 1960's and as this generation is beginning to retire and there are an increasing number of elderly people.
3. Falling birth rate – There are few younger people, so the proportion of older people is greater.

#### Problems:

1. Pressure on the pension system – Today 60% of the working population are paying taxes to support a 16% retirement age population, but by 2030 there will be 56% of the working age population to support a 27% retirement age population.
2. More elderly people living in poverty – The state pension is not very large, and many do not have other savings but the working population isn't large enough to provide a larger pension.

3. Pressure on the health service – Older people need more medical care than younger people.

East Devon:

It is an attractive settlement for the elderly due to climate, low crime rates, scenery, other elderly people, with a population of 125, 000 and a dependency ratio of 53. 8%.

The elderly are however putting pressures on more pension payments required, housing needs and health care. East Devon is a dispersed settlement and therefore limited public transport causes isolation amongst the elderly who are unable to travel privately for whatever reason.

The elderly do however make large contributions economically (the grey pound where in 2005 £215billion was spent for particular needs paid by the elderly, such as for travel and leisure), and socially in terms of as volunteers and as carers for relatives who would be unable to afford child care otherwise.

To manage this ageing population the East Devon council has put management strategies in place:

1. Housing - Maintained secure accommodation, warden care, adapted housing (e. g. plugs and taps as hip level to avoid having to bend over), and sheltered housing for the opportunity for socialising.

2. Health Services – Cost effective to keep the less sick at home for many deteriorative type illnesses (which puts additional pressures on care staff

who do low paid work), and there has been some need for sheltered accommodation/therapy created.

3. Services and Amenities – New leisure facilities to keep the elderly healthy in terms of physical and mental wellbeing, and new social environments/clubs. Charities are also vital to supporting this.

4. Transport Services – New buses in rural environments that personally pick up individuals from their homes to take them into town to go shopping.