

Abstract

This paper, which is an extract from a major study conducted by the author, makes an attempt to understand Kenya's changing demographics in the light of burgeoning numbers of the older persons over the 1979-1999 census years¹. With a study population of older persons aged 60 years and above in Lamu, Turkana and Nairobi districts, a sample of 100 older persons from each of the areas was drawn using both respondent-driven and random sampling techniques. The ageing population progression experiences of these districts easily portray the extent and intensity of the ageing phenomenon in Kenya. The paper seeks to answer the question on the extent of the ageing phenomenon and its regional distribution as well as the attendant ramifications. Are the numbers worth considering in Kenya's current policy decisions? The seemingly steady increase of older age groups in national populations across the globe has major consequences and implications in all spheres of day-to-day human life. Such increases are often accompanied by declines in the proportions of younger persons aged 15 years and less. Whereas the declining fertility and mortality are welcome signs of relief for an already overpopulated world, a swelling older population often points to unique challenges both in the economic and social spheres. An examination of the speed, intensity and direction of the ageing phenomenon in Kenya points to a rapid growth in this population segment. This presents the society with the need to re-examine these changes with a view to rethinking and reorienting our paradigms and adequately addressing the inherent challenges for posterity.