

**CHANGES IN THE
AGEING POPULATION**

**A CASE STUDY: IRAN
(1956- 1996)**

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AUSTRALIA. SYDNEY

1-4 OCTOBER 2002

INTRODUCTION:

The proportion of people aged 65 and over will increase from 6.8 per cent in 2002 to 15.1 per cent by 2050. This trend will have significant differences in terms of development level in countries. The largest increase will take place in less developed regions so that this proportion will increase from 5.0 to 13.8. Then, in the least developed countries, it will reach to 7.7 by 2050 (from 3.0 in 2000) and finally, in more developed region, it will have the least increase (from 14.2 to 24.7 per cent)*.

Indeed, this study has focused on one country of the first group, namely Iran. In this study, the aged people are men and women who are 60 years and over. The data of this was obtained from censuses of 1956 to 1996.

1. GENERAL TREND

In general, the rate of the ageing population during these years was less than 7.00 per cent, so that in the best situation, this rate is about 50 % of the rate in the developed countries. On the other hand, there were some significant differences in this regard in different provinces in Iran. At the peak of these differences, there was a gap about two times.

Table 1 : The number and rate of the aged people in Iran (1956- 96)

Years	1956	1966	1976	1986	1996
Number	751607	1638042	1770614	2686350	3978127
Rate (%)	3.97	6.53	5.25	5.43	6.92

* United Nations World Population Prospects. 1996. Revision.

2. SEX RATIO

The results of this study show that the ratio of male aged people is more than female aged people. On the basis of the 1996 census, although there is not any remarkable difference in this regard between rural and urban areas, the gap between male and female aged people in the urban areas is more than rural areas (124 in the urban areas and 110 in rural areas).

Table 2: Sex Ratio, Urban & Rural Rates in the Iranian Aged People (%)

Years	1956	1969	1976	1986	1996
Sex Ratio	109.05	110.37	106.58	112.10	115.95
Urban Rate	27.72	36.56	44.68	51.68	56.86
Rural Rate	72.28	63.44	55.32	47.79	43.14

3. URBAN / RURAL RATES

The study of the population aged 60 and over by the place of residence shows that although more than half of the aged people live in urban areas now, the average rate of rural aged people was more than the average rate of urban aged people during 1956-96 years.

On the other hand, the trend of changes in the ageing population by the place of residence during these years was very similar to the changes in the total population, that is, more than half of them lived in rural areas by 1976 but after that more than half of them lived in urban areas.

4. MARITAL STATUS

On average, the ratio of celibacy for the aged people in relation to celibates in the total population from 1956 to 1996 was 0.25 per cent. This ratio is extremely low. This pattern underlines the fact that marriages and families are directed by very strong socio-cultural factors.

On the other hand, there was a significant difference in 1986 so that it had increased to 0.424 per cent. It seems that because of some remarkable changes in social value (such as marriages and families) following the Islamic Revolution in 1978, a lot of young people, who included a significant part of the total population, married.

In addition, the divorce rate in the aged people by gender indicates an important point. In 1996, the divorce rate in female aged people was about two times more than male aged people. On the other hand, the socio-cultural limitations for a divorcee were great, so that she could not marry again easily while they are comparatively flexible for a divorce man, therefore, he was able to marry again and count as married not as divorced. At the same time, this reflects the fact that women of this age group are less likely than men to have a second husband.

Table 3: The Rates of Nuptiality, Divorce and Employment & divorce Ratio and Employment Ratio (%). 1996.

Index/ Variable	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Nuptiality Rate	98.7	99.1	98.2	98.5	98.9
Divorce Rate	0.67	0.46	0.91	0.83	0.59
Divorce Ratio*	15.7	17.4	14.9	14.9	17.7
Employment Rate	91.6	91.5	93.5	87.0	95.5
Employment Ratio**	8.6	9.3	3.3	6.2	12.2

* in relation to the divorced people in the total population

** in relation to the employees in the total population

5. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The study of population in terms of economic activity focuses usually on the population aged 15-64 years. However, the results from this study show that the aged people were still economically active so that, on average, the employment ratio of the aged people in relation to employees in the total population from 1966 to 1996 was 7.42 per cent. This ratio for male aged people was about three times more than female aged people and in rural areas it was about two times more than urban areas.

6. LITERACY AND ILLITERACY RATES

Results from this study indicate that there are three important points in this regard: First, the illiteracy rate in the aged people from 1956 to 1996 was significant so that 2 out of 3 of the aged people were illiterate. On average, their illiteracy rate was 85.29 per cent.

Secondly, the overall illiteracy rate in the aged people has had a decreasing trend during these years.

Thirdly, the ratio of illiteracy rate in the aged people in relation to illiterates in the total population was remarkable, its average was about 17 per cent. Also, this indicator has had an increasing trend during these years. In addition, this increase has been dramatic in the two recent decades. It seems that it has arisen from a new government policy regarding improvement and development of formal education, especially in rural areas in these years. It is obvious that the new strategy has mainly emphasized on the younger people rather than aged people.

Table 4: Illiteracy Rate and Illiteracy Ratio among the Iranian Aged People (%)

Year	1956	1966	1976	1986	1996
Illiteracy Rate	92.18	88.06	88.05	82.08	77.05
Illiteracy Ratio*	6.52	11.28	11.00	15.09	28.61

* In Relation to the illiterates in total population

It must be said that in 1996, the illiteracy rate in female aged people was more than it was in male aged people (88.18 and 67.54 per cent, respectively). This rate for aged people who lived in rural areas was more than aged people who lived in urban areas (89.68 and 67.35 per cent).

CONCLUSION

On average, about 7 per cent of the Iranian population during 1956- 1996 were aged people. According to the sex ratio among this group, there were always more men than women. Similar to the situation of total population, more than half of the aged people lived in rural areas by 1976 and then half of them lived in urban areas.

The ratio of celibacy among the aged people in relation to celibates in the total population was extremely low (0.25 per cent). The divorce rate among the aged people by gender shows that it is strongly under influence of socio-cultural factors.

On average, the employment ratio among the aged people in relation to employees in the total population was significant (7.41 per cent). More than 85 per cent of the aged people were illiterate, on average.