

Elderly worldwide

a challenge …

not a problem

Key facts

- Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12% to 22%.
- In 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older outnumbered children younger than 5 years.
- The number of persons aged 80 years or older is expected to triple between 2020 and 2050
- In 2050, 80% of older people will be living in low- and middle-income countries.
- All countries face major challenges to ensure that their health and social systems are ready to make the most of this demographic shift.

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Which challenges elderly face?









Elderly in India

- A 70-year-old domestic worker tells:
  - *"I spent decades cooking, cleaning and caring for other people's families. My earnings helped me educate my children and maintain my household; Now i am suffering from joint pain and cannot work as many hours as before, So my income decreases, but expenses for food, rent and medicines continue. I am depending on occasional assistance from relatives.*
    My concern is not simply growing old; it is the fear of becoming financially dependent after a lifetime of hard work."

Elderly in India

- Depend on children or relatives for food, medicine and other basic needs. Some continue working even when their health no longer permits it.
- The cost of medicines, medical investigations, transport and hospital visits can be e heavy burden
- Many older people live alone while their children work in other cities or countries, There is nobody with whom they can share their feelings, worries or everyday experiences
- Some experience verbal abuse; others are excluded concerning their own lives, property, healthcare or money

Elderly in Bolivia

- Juan, a 76-years-old construction worker from a village near Sucre:
  - *'I lost the small land we had with our family. It helped us cultivate some vegetables to nourish our family members. I am the only cost-winner in the family, so that land is of extreme importance for our daily life. That's the main reason we could not fulfill the expectations and communal tasks from the union. So the community leaders – mostly young union leaders – made a note, signed by all of them, presented before a judge who issued a document that makes possible the annulment of the property title.*
    This is more and more common, particularly in rural areas.'

Elderly in Bolivia

- 69% of Bolivian migrants had to leave their children; 27% of these are under the care of grandparents. But 40% of them do not receive any support from their family members that have left the country
- Many rural older women in Bolivia are denied access to their rights because they do not have identity documentation which proves their eligibility for entitlements.
- In addition lack of identity documentation prevents older women exerting other rights related to citizenship: they are excluded from democratic processes, are unable to vote, to stand for or be elected to public office

Elderly in DR Congo

- *36% of the people, aged 80-plus, remains active*
- *2/3 of man and 4/5 of woman remain active in the agriculture sector → so only 5% of the 60-plus-population is retired*
  - Fabien, a 68-years-old farmer: *'In our country old age looks like a jail of which the only way to come out and be free is the death.'*
  - Elyse, social worker: *"Once 60 years old, older people are confronted with several health related problems, but also with isolation, insults, abandonment, infantilisation, lack of respect …"*
  - Liévin, researcher: *"It should be noted that while older people in Africa have traditionally enjoyed respect and the attention of those around them, this situation is changing negatively"*

Elderly in Bangladesh

- Dulal, 64-years-old, had an accident and is sitting in a wheelchair: *"Dhaka is a very busy city. The roads are overcrowded and there are a lot of very bad roads; full of holes. People like me with a reduced mobility, cannot move comfortable through the city. For me in my wheelchair it is quite impossible."*
- Shoban Ali is over 100 years old. *"I don't know exactly how old I am. Of the 8 children I had, only 3 sons are still alive. I live in with each of them for two weeks. That helps to share the living costs."*
- Moyfol, 63 years old, is suffering a broken wrist: *"What I would do if I found €10? I would get medication and buy a double breakfast, since I am always hungry."*

Elderly in Bangladesh

- Dr Manzur Kadir is a leader of the homebased ngo Gonoshasthaya Kendra, partner organisation of OKRA
  - *"The majority of elder people are seriously stricken by poverty, suffering from ill health and malnutricion, inadequate health care services, lack of employment and income, social isolation and loneliness, loss of social status and position, depression, frustration and stress."*
  - *"Moreover recreational facilities, transport facilities, community based carrying facilities, and social security for elder are so limited in rural and urban areas that makes them more vulnerable in the society."*

Elderly in war zones

- Anatole from DRCongo explains:
  - *'Older people face hunger, illness, and violence with little to no support. They are among the most vulnerable in this crisis, yet they are too often invisible to the world. Many are left behind when their families flee, unable to move quickly or too frail to make the journey. We must ensure they are not forgotten in this humanitarian response.'*
- Older people in Ukraine are asking for their basic human rights to be upheld: to be safe, to eat, to have medicine, to live in dignity.

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Elderly in war zones



Millions of older Ukrainians continue to suffer after three years of war

"I can't walk well. I haven't applied for disability status – it's too difficult and means travelling to the hospital and standing in queues. I'm too weak for that."

Valentyna, 97 years old

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Elderly in war zones



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Limited mobility, chronic health conditions, and the collapse of health and support systems on which they previously depended all contribute to their vulnerability during the conflict



Elderly in USA

- 1 in 4 Americans is 60+
- 1 in 2 older adults living alone can't afford basic needs
- 94% of adults age 60+ have at least one chronic condition
- Main challenges:
  - Health issues + accessibility of services - mobility
  - Financial hardship
  - Hunger and malnutricion
  - Social isolation and loneliness

Elderly in Europe

- rapid ageing of the EU population:
  - aged 65+ from 19,7% in 2018 to 28,5% in 2050
  - Group of 85+ will double
  - Challenging housing, health care, social protection, labour market but also family structures and intergenerational ties
- The financial situation is the biggest problem for the majority of European elderly,

Elderly in Europe



María del Carmen Abascal, symbol of Spain's housing protests, dies aged 87

Florence's 'Maricarmen': 94-year-old faces losing her home of 60 years as rent nearly triples

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Elderly in Europe

Heat killed over 50,000 people in Europe in summer 2026, making it deadliest on record





- The study found people over the age of 85 made up almost half of the death toll

Elderly in Europe Belgium

- Magda De Meyer, president Flemish Elderly Council:
  - False perception: Senior people are not a cost; look at what they contribute
    - Informal care: worth 22 billion in Belgium
    - Volunteering: worth 5,4 billion
  - Loneliness
  - Living and residential environment
  - Health and care
  - Mobility and accessibility of services
  - Digitalisation of society

Different context … but Challenges are same

- Income
  - Living costs
- Health
  - Diseases
  - Affordable care
- Mobility
  - accessibility
- Role in society
  - loneliness

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Common challenges
(according to ChatGTP)

health	Loneliness	Financial security	Digitalisation
Chronic diseases	Social isolation and lack of contacts have an influence on the well-being	Insufficient pensions and poverty threaten a dignified old age	The digital divide exclude older persons from important services
Limited access to care			
High care costs			

What do elderly expect?

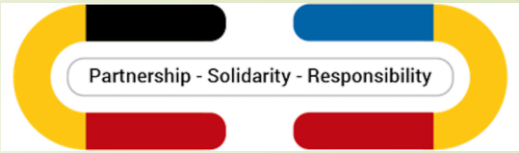
- Older people want to keep:
  - Independancy – authonomy
  - Needed: Pension schemes and social security systems
- Older people want to keep:
  - Their dignity
  - The feeling of being respected
  - Needed: Involvement in decision making
- Older people want to keep:
  - Contributing in their society
  - With theis wisdom and experience

How to respond?

- At local level:
  - Support the self-organisation of elderly
  - Collaboration with all like-minded organisations
  - Invest also in intergenerational initiatives
  - Stimulate social cohesion and community building initiatives
  - Enlarge digital capacities and access
  - Fight age discrimination
  - Involve older people in policy and decision making
  - Build age friendly cities

How to respond?

- Supra-local:
  - Invest in accessible and affordable care
  - Advocacy for enough and fair pension schemes and social security
  - advocacy to implement the UN-principles for older persons (adopted by UN General Assembly - 16 december 1991)
- At international level:
  - support for a specific UN-convention on the rights of older persons



UN Decade of Healthy Ageing

- 2021–2030
- Aim: to reduce health inequities and improve the lives of older people, their families and communities
- How: through collective action in four areas:
  - changing how we think, feel and act towards age and ageism;
  - developing communities in ways that foster the abilities of older people;
  - delivering person-centred integrated care and primary health services responsive to older people;
  - providing older people who need it with access to quality long-term care.