



International collaboration to improve measurement of older people : Introducing the Titchfield City Group on Ageing and Age Disaggregated Statistics

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1. Introduction: A globally ageing population

According to the latest population estimates and projections (UNDESA, 2017) there were 962 million people aged 60 or over, comprising 13 per cent of the global population. By 2030, the number of people aged 60 and over is projected to reach 1.4 billion, over 16 per cent of the global population. By 2030, older persons are expected to account for 30 per cent of the population in Europe, 26 per cent of the population in Northern America, 20 per cent in Oceania, 17 per cent in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 6 per cent in Africa.

While Asia has the world's largest number of people aged 60 or over, (549 million), at 25 per cent Europe has the largest percentage of its population of this age.

Population ageing is known to arise from two demographic effects: increasing longevity and declining fertility. As public health gains advance in most countries, global life expectancy will continue to increase, contributing to a rise in the number of older persons. In countries with low or falling fertility rates the proportion of older persons will also grow rapidly.

2. The need for data

As the proportion of the world's population in the older ages continues to increase, the need for improved information and analysis of population ageing becomes pressing. Preparing for an ageing population is integral to the achievement of the integrated 2030 Agenda, with a particular emphasis on SDGs related to poverty eradication, good health, gender equality, decent work, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and peaceful and inclusive societies. To achieve effective implementation of the SDGs and the pledge to Leave No One Behind, data are required across all ages and across the full range of sustainable development targets. Population ageing is a major global trend that affects all regions, and reflects one of the major achievements of human development, resulting in part from better living conditions, improved health, greater longevity and lower mortality (UNDESA 2007; UN 2017).

It is widely recognised that the contribution and participation of all people is essential for sustainable development. This is as true for older persons as it is for other age groups. Many older women and men are already making significant contributions in all aspects of life, including in formal and informal employment, and at the family and community level through unpaid work and through their participation in decision making processes. Others are unable to contribute or face significant barriers to enjoying their right to participate, including ageist attitudes which restrict older people's autonomy and their ability to participate in different areas of individual, family and community life. Improvements in statistical systems will provide a more nuanced understanding of diverse forms of participation and the current and potential contribution older people are making to families, communities and societies.

3. Working together to improve data on ageing

While the international community has recognised these global demographic shifts, little has been done to recognise that older women and men are as diverse an age-group as any other. They should not, therefore, be lumped together as the 60+ age-group, assuming uniformity across age and gender and other socio-economic and demographic characteristics. To better understand the challenges and opportunities faced by older persons and to assess their economic, social, health and cultural conditions, systematic data analysis, data disaggregation and data collection approaches and methodologies need to be developed to fill these data and evidence gaps, building on work already completed, including for example, the UNECE Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics, 2016.

Co-ordinated action is needed by National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to address these evidence gaps, and to ensure that age-disaggregated data is available across a range of domains. It is important that this is done in the context of a conceptual framework that aligns the policy and analytical context that ensures data and analysis are directed towards addressing the policy challenges associated with an ageing population. Without this action there is a risk the diversity of experience of older persons is overlooked, that particular sub-groups of older persons are invisible in the data, and that there is a disconnect between availability of data, and the ability to conduct meaningful analysis to support evidence based policy formulation and decision making.

To address these challenges in a more formal and systematic way, a broad set of interested stakeholders have come together to mobilise, partner and coordinate efforts towards standardizing approaches to improving the availability of ageing-related statistics and age disaggregation of data.

4. The Titchfield City Group on Ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated Data

At the forty-eighth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in March 2017, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) of the United Kingdom proposed that the establishment of the Titchfield City Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data. This group was formally endorsed by the UNSC in March 2018 and held its first technical meeting in the UK in June 2018.

Ultimately, through greater availability and knowledge of ageing-related data and statistics the Titchfield Group will seek to contribute to the following development outcomes:

- Improved and harmonised statistical measurement and dissemination of information about the life course, enabling evidence based policy making in relation to ageing.
- Greater awareness among policy makers and development practitioners about the importance of the Ageing agenda, and the 2030 Agenda pledge to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first.

- Greater availability of tools and guidelines to increase capacity and facilitate understanding and action on ageing issues.

The June 2018 technical group was well attended by representatives from around 40 countries including NSOs, UN agencies, charities and academia. The meeting discussed improvements to data on ageing and age disaggregation under several themes, which will form the basis of the workplan.

Assessment of Evidence – to include a stocktake of data sources, comparing global and country level estimates, identify starting points for countries and how global estimates compare to country estimates.

Horizon scanning and future needs – to include an assessment of the suitability of current evidence to inform future needs, such as increased diversity among older people, different economic activities and suitable data in the event of humanitarian disaster.

Conceptual and Analytical framework -to include a description of ageing and ageing processes, case studies, examples of conceptual frameworks and ‘think pieces’ on key concepts (e.g chronological age vs healthy age). The work will also demonstrate how a life course approach should be considered in policy decisions about interventions earlier in life to improve people’s lives when they are older and will consider which definitions are most useful for projections.

Links with SDGs and other groups – to include the production of a list of priority indicators for age disaggregation and other dimensions. The work will also identify existing international groups and how the Titchfield City Group will learn from and collaborate with these groups where relevant.

Standardisation and harmonisation – to include an assessment of current data sources on levels of current harmonisation and to produce guidance to countries on standard approaches to enable global comparisons, inequality analysis and projection approaches. This work will also include a library of tools for countries to use in data collection and analysis.

Sharing information on good practice – great work should not be hidden! This work will involve the development of a suitable platform for sharing information, knowledge transference and a repository of information. It will also assess legal and ethical barriers for sharing data.

5. Conclusion

By 2023, the work delivered by the group will ensure that countries are in a good position to measure their progress towards the 2030 agenda and will be able to understand better the lives of their ageing populations and the implications of this on their economies, services, society and the individual.