

**Urban rural differences in the social characteristics of employed elderly in Sri Lanka:  
a case study of employed elderly in Thangalle Divisional Secretariat, Sri Lanka**

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Population ageing or the relative increase of the proportion of those aged 60 years and over in a population has become a demographic phenomenon of current interest and concern in the developing countries. The main objective of this study is to identify social characteristics of the employed elders. The data for this study is drawn from a survey of 150 employed elders residing in urban and rural areas of Thangalle Divisional Secretariat area in Hambantota District. Data was collected using an interviewer administrated questionnaire and analyzed using Uni-Variate and Bi-Variate techniques. More than 50 per cent of rural elderly are in agriculture, while 33 per cent or the majority of urban employed elders are in fisheries. According to the study, the majority of the elders in both sectors are Sinhalese. In both sectors a relatively high number of the employed elders are married. Out of the total sample, only 17 elders are illiterate. Little less than a half of the rural employed elders have completed secondary education, while majority of the urban employed elders have completed secondary level education. A relatively high number of urban elders suffer from non-communicable diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetics. In contrast lesser number of the rural elders have these diseases. However the majority of the rural elders suffer from health issues such as wheeze and body pain. A significant proportion of both rural and urban employed elders live with their spouse and children. Nearly 44 percent of the rural employed elders have membership in elder's societies. In the urban sector, majority of the employed elders have participated in "Shramadana Campaigns". Majority of the rural employed elders spend their leisure time by engaging in religious activities. Unlike rural elders, most of the urban elders spend their leisure time watching television. Both rural and urban employed elders express satisfaction with their occupation, because they can be economically independent. Majority of the urban and rural employed elders receive 'Samurdhi'. In addition to that some also receive social security funding. Usually when discussing productive ageing, more emphasis is placed on economic activities. However, it is important to realize that social factors also contribute to the wellbeing of the elderly as well as their economic activities.

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