

## **Health and long-term care needs of the ageing population in Sri Lanka: The role of research in making evidence-based social policies**

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Demographic transitions followed by a significant change in the age-sex structure of the population and increase in life expectancy that have been observed in Sri Lanka over the last two decades are directly related to the country's current and future ageing population. These demographic dynamics have transformed the country into a rapidly ageing society. Presently, 13 percent of the country's total population comprises older adults (age 60 years and over) and projections show that one in every five persons (20%) will be in the aged category by 2050. With the increase in the number of older adults, those who need health and social care also increase, and it will become a burden not only for the national economy but also for the family and the society. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are (a) to examine the health and disability status of the ageing population in Sri Lanka and to identify long-term care needed; (b) to discuss the measures that have already been implemented to address such issues; and (c) to identify research gaps and the role of research in making evidence-based social policies. This study was based on secondary data obtained from the Population and Housing Census, 2012, and the National Survey on Self-reported Health, 2014, conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka. The health status and factors affecting long-term care needs of the elderly were examined by using bivariate and multivariate analyses. Logistic regression was used, with the dependent variable as 'health status', any health problem or functional disability coded as '1', and the absence of health issues coded as '0'. Findings revealed that most health issues among elders were related to functional disability while more than half of the elderly had experienced non-communicable diseases. The prevalence of diseases and disability was significantly associated with socio-demographic and economic factors. Findings suggest that an integration of research evidence is vital in formulating health and social policies on ageing populations.

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