



Older people count: Making data fit for purpose

Key messages

- Current data systems are not fit for purpose in today's ageing world. Data on older women and men is often not collected. When it does exist, it is not fully analysed, reported or utilised, leading to the absence of issues affecting older people in policies and development interventions.
- The current review of the Millennium Development Goals and the process to agree a new set of Sustainable Development Goals post-2015 provides an opportunity to better understand and highlight a range of challenges in relation to data on older women and men, and to offer solutions.
- Global coordinated action is needed at all levels of the data system from collection to utilisation, and from all stakeholders, to improve the quality and range of data on older women and men.
- The call for a “data revolution” to underpin an inclusive new Sustainable Development Framework is the ideal opportunity to ensure that issues affecting older women and men are included in line with efforts to “leave no one behind”.

Why older people count

The world is ageing. In 2012 there were 810 million women and men aged 60 and over worldwide. This figure is projected to reach 1 billion in less than ten years and 1.375 billion by 2030, meaning that people aged 60 and over will constitute 16 per cent of the global population (see Figure 1).¹ By 2030 there will be more people aged 60 and over than children under 10.² Worldwide the proportion of older women and men is growing at a faster rate than the general population. Population ageing is happening in all regions of the world. It is progressing fastest in developing countries. Of 15 countries that currently have more than 10 million older people, seven are developing countries.³

Yet, despite this trend, older women and men are still not included in data collection mechanisms and datasets. Many population-based surveys focus on younger people, usually aged 15-49, leading to a lack of data on people aged 50 and over. This has a number of implications. First, this lack of data means that the situation of older women and men is often invisible, making it difficult to document and address entrenched patterns of discrimination.⁴ Secondly where data is collected on older people, it is often not disaggregated by age (or sex). Both of these situations lead to a lack of understanding and a subsequent failure to include older women and men in many policies and development interventions.

Global AgeWatch Policy Briefs provide authoritative and evidence-based guidance to international and national policy makers to deliver the rights of older people and respond to their needs.

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