

Demographic and Socio-Economic Study of the Elderly Population in Kolkata, India

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Abstract : Kolkata, the City of Joy, is a greying metropolis not only in respect of its concrete jungle but also because of the largest population of 60-plus residents that it shelters among all other cities in India. Declining birth and death rates and a negative growth of population indicate that the city has reached the last stage of demographic transition. Thus, the obvious consequence has been the ageing of its population. With this background, the present paper attempts to study the demographic and socio-economic status of the elderly population in Kolkata. Analysis and findings have been based on secondary data obtained from Census of India of various years, Sample Registration System Reports and reports by HelpAge India. Findings show that the elderly population is increasing continuously. With respect to gender, the male elderly outnumber the female elderly population. The percentage of households having one elderly member is more in the city due to the emergence of the nuclear families and erosion of joint family system. With respect to socio-economic status, those elderly who are the heads of the family are lower in percentages than those in the other age groups. Also, male elderly as head of the family are greater in percentage than female elderly. Elderly in the category of currently married records the highest percentage followed by widowed, never married and lastly, separated or divorced. Male elderly outnumber the female elderly as currently married, while female elderly outnumber the male elderly in the category of widowed. In terms of living status, the percentage of elderly who are living alone is highest in Kolkata and the reason for staying alone as no support from children also happens to be highest in this city. The literacy rate and higher level of education is higher among the male than female elderly. Higher percentages of female elderly have been found to be with disability. Disability in movement and multiple disabilities have been found to be more common among the elderly population in Kolkata. Percentages of male literate pensioners are highest than other categories. Also, in terms of levels of education male elderly who are graduate and above other than technical degree are the highest receivers of pension. Also, in terms of working status, elderly as non-workers are higher in percentages with the population of elderly females outnumbering the males. The old age dependency ratio in the city is increasing continuously and the ratio is higher among females than male. Thus, it can be stated that Kolkata is witnessing continuous and rapid ageing of its population. Increasing dependency ratio is likely to create pressure on the working population, available civic, social and health amenities. This requires intervention in the form of planning, formulation and implementation of laws, policies, programs and measures to safeguard and improve the conditions of the elderly in Kolkata.

Keywords : demographic, elderly, population, socio-economic

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