

Abstract:

China is entering an era of population ageing . In order to predict the future development of this phenomenon for the forthcoming century, it is important to grasp the evolutionary trends in the numbers of the elderly and the degree of seriousness of this issue.

I. Statistics and forecasts

1. Statistics. (1) This article draws on total population numbers and different age structures obtained from the 2000 population census and has made relevant adjustments. (2) Adjustments were made according to the statistical data of primary school children divided into different age-sex structures. The fifth population census (carried out in 2000) estimates that the number of 0 to 9 year-olds has increased by 29.84 million, of which 13.69 million are males and 16.15 million are females.

2. Suppositions and forecasts. (1) According to statistical data on education, the total fertility rate in 2000 was supposed to be 1.73, but has dropped to the lowest limit of 1.7. (2) According to family planning regulations, a couple composed of two only-child is allowed to have a family of two children. This policy is supposed to raise the total fertility rate to 1.8 by the year 2010 and the figure should be maintained at this level. (3) For the death rates, the average male life expectancy at birth is calculated to be 69 years while that of female was 74.44 in 2000. (4) Based on empirical data from various countries and the relevant UN predictions, this article predicts that by 2050 the average male life expectancy at birth will reach 74.4 years female's will be 79.9. By 2100 this will be 80.0 and 85.6 respectively.

II. An analysis of the development trend of population ageing in China

1. Variation trends in the total population

The articles projects that (1) The total population in China will peak at 1.45 billion by 2026, and will then gradually decline. (2) The total population in the country will drop to 1.38 billion in 2050. (3) It will further reduce to 1.05 billion by 2100.

2. The number of elderly people and the ageing population trend

(1) The population forecast for the first half of this century shows that the ageing population in China will grow constantly , but will gradually decline by the second half of the century. (2) By 2053 the elderly population aged 60 and over will peak at 430 million, after which the curve will gradually flatten. (3) However, the number will remain at over 350 million even by 2100. The 2041- 2064 period will be regarded as China's 'ageing peak' because the annual average elderly population in this period will exceed 400 million (4) By the year 2027 the elderly population above 65 will reach 200 million and will exceed 300 million by 2037. The peak will be reached in 2055 when the total number will exceed 340 million.

3. Variations in the dependency ratio trend

(1) In the next 100 years the dependency ratio of the entire Chinese population will first drop and then rise. More specifically, it can be divided into three stages: before the year 2008 it is in a stage of decline, between 2009 and 2053 it will be a period of rapid increase, and after

2054 there will be a phase of fluctuations and slow growth. After that the curve will climb. (2) By 2023 the elderly dependency ratio is forecasted to be higher than the young dependency ratio.

4. Population numbers of the very elderly

Along with the process of population ageing, it is also possible to observe the ageing tendency of the very elderly (80+ years old). This group is likely to face many problems and thus needs the most help. The article predicts that (1) The numbers of the very elderly will continue to grow in China to reach 30 million by 2023, and peaking at 100 million by around 2053. The proportion of the very elderly to the total elderly population will be 23% and 30% by the years 2053 and 2100 respectively. (2) Since this group is the most vulnerable, the departments concerned should take early, relevant measures to ensure medical and daily care for them.