

## Ageing Populations

### Revision Points:

- Some countries like the UK have an ageing population. In other words, the proportion of people over the age for retirement is growing by comparison with the rest of the population. This is a characteristic of MEDCs.
- Certain areas of the UK have become popular for retirement.
- Elderly people require specialized services as they get older which are costly to provide. As a result there may be less money for other services like schools and youth clubs.
- Life expectancy increases with advances in medical care, while the birth rate in the UK is low. As a result the dependency ratio is increasing.
- The dependency ratio is worked out by dividing the percentage of people in a society who are dependents (under 16 and over 65) by the percentage of the economically active population and multiplying by 100.
- As the dependency ratio rises there are severe implications for social welfare, for example, pensions and health care.

*Newspaper interview with an occupational therapist from Sidmouth, Devon.*

Journalist: Hi. I'm writing an article about people who work in Sidmouth in Devon. Would you answer a few questions?

Occupational therapist (OT): Sure. I haven't lived here for very long though. I moved to Sidmouth from Bristol because of my new job.

Journalist: What do you do?

OT: I'm an occupational therapist. I help people recover from injuries and work with them to live independently. I mainly work with older people. I'm so busy here!

Journalist: I've heard that Sidmouth is a popular place to live for people who are retired.

OT: Yes that's right, about 60% of all the residents here are over retirement age. That's why there are so many tea rooms and golf courses around here.

Journalist: So what's it like living in Sidmouth?

OT: I love living here because it's so close to the sea. I jog along the seafront every morning and love to listen to the sound of the waves.

The town is well-looked after and you never see rubbish lying around like you often find in bigger towns or cities.

Journalist: What about shops and entertainment?

OT: There are lots of small independent shops in Sidmouth, in fact the whole area feels very old-fashioned. I suppose that the big chain stores want younger customers so they don't bother with Sidmouth. I usually travel to Exeter to go shopping as it's only 20 miles away.

Entertainment wise there is a brilliant folk music festival in the summer but I feel a bit sorry for some of the kids though as there isn't much to do if you're a teenager. It would be different if they liked playing bowls or golf! Some of the kids have been trying to get a skate park built but they don't think the council is listening.

Journalist: Tell me a bit more about your job. What are your patients like?

OT: I spend a lot of time working in care homes. Many of the residents are quite old but they still lead very active lives. A few of my patients have Alzheimer's disease. They take quite a lot of looking after. I give advice and try to make their lives easier. I work with retirement homes to make sure they know how to look after the elderly people in their care.

Actually a lot of my friends have similar jobs. My best friend is a warden in a sheltered housing scheme and her mum runs Meals on Wheels. I really like my job; I feel like I'm making a big difference to a lot of people.

Journalist: Is your job well paid?

OT: I'm quite happy with my salary. I put quite a lot of money aside each month for my pension though. I know how important it is to make sure that you save for retirement. Until recently I thought that I would be OK on the state pension when I'm retired, but a financial advisor told me I needed to take out a private pension as well. She explained that in the future the government might not have enough money to fund pensions for everyone because there'll loads of old people being supported by fewer people of working age. Many of the people I work with retired at 60. I don't expect to retire until I'm 65 or 70.

Journalist: Yes, that's very true, in the UK we have an ageing population and because doctors keep finding ways to improve medical care, life expectancy is increasing. At the same time, families are getting smaller. That means that in the future there will be more elderly people dependent on fewer people of working age. It's called the dependency ratio. It makes me wonder who'll be looking after me in the future.