

# 2013

## POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS



THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA



### ELDERLY REPORT

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
LGA	Local Government Area
NS	Not Stated
UNSD	United Nations Statistical Division

## Concepts and Definitions

**Disability:** In the Population and Housing Census, a person with disability is defined as someone who is limited in the kind or amount of activities that he or she can do because of ongoing difficulties due to long-term physical condition, mental condition, sensory impairment or health problem. It must however be noted that short-term disability due to temporary conditions such as a broken leg and illnesses are excluded. Only disability lasting for more than six months are included. It may not be enough to rely on the household head for the identification of persons with disability in their households but if possible, observe the persons reported to be disabled.

**Economically Active Population (Labour Force):** It is the total employed and unemployed persons in the population. In other words, these are the persons available to the job market.

The census follows the internationally recommended definitions for Economically Active Population agreed by the International Labor Organization (ILO), defining it as a group of persons who during an established reference period, furnish the supply of labor for the production of goods and economic services or are available to do so and carry out actions to incorporate themselves into said production.

**Elderly:** The definition of an elderly adopted for this report is persons aged 65 years and over.

**Rural:** Settlements that do not meet the criteria of an urban settlement described below are considered rural.

**Urban:** According to the 2013 Population and Housing Census, a settlement is considered urban if it satisfies most of the following:

- Has commercial importance
- Has institutional importance
- Majority of the population should be non-agricultural in occupation
- Population should be 5,000 and above
- Density should be high
- Some degree of infrastructure should be available

## **Preface**

This is Volume 13 of the 2013 Population and Housing Census report. The population aged 65 years and over is an important and growing segment of the population of The Gambia. The ageing population as in most Sub-Saharan African countries is becoming a development problem and needs a comprehensive solution. This publication on the elderly population provides data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the elderly needed for policy and planning purposes. In light of the anticipated growth of this segment of our population, it is increasingly important for policy makers, families and the public to have data that provides an insight into the characteristics of the elderly population for effective planning towards their welfare.

We thank Mr Ali D. Ceesay for the preparation of this report. We also thank other GBoS staff for finalizing the report.

We wish to extend sincere thanks to The Gambia Government for providing funding for the conduct of the census, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for their support both technical and financial for the conduct of the 2013 Population and Housing Census.



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Statistician General

## **Executive Summary**

Presented in this report is the distribution of the elderly population (population aged 65 years and over) by socio-demographic characteristics. Also presented in this report is the share of the elderly population over the past three decades to measure the growth in the population of this age group.

Overall, the size of the elderly population has more than doubled over the period 1983-2013, increasing from 25,461 in 1983 to 58,055 in 2013. Except in Banjul, where the elderly population has been declining since 1993, across all other LGAs, the elderly population has been on the increase with Kanifing and Brikama LGAs registering the highest growth.

The percentage share of the elderly population has been fluctuating over the period. Overall, the elderly population represented 3.7 per cent of the population in 1983, 3.2 per cent in 1993, 3.4 per cent in 2003 and 3.1 per cent in 2013.

Fifty-one per cent (i.e. 51.1 per cent) of the elderly population were females. Over 67 per cent of the elderly were married and 26.6 per cent widowed. Male elderly were more likely to be in marital union than females with 90.7 per cent of males and 44.6 per cent of females in marital union at the time of the census. On the other hand, the elderly females were more likely to be widowed than males with 48.6 per cent of elderly females and 3.1 per cent of males widowed at the time of the census. This could be explained by the fact that females have longer life expectancy than males coupled with the fact that in general, in The Gambia males are much older than their spouses are, hence, there is the likelihood of men dying before their spouses.

Regarding educational attainment, 14.1 per cent of the elderly attained some education. While 20.9 per cent of the elderly males went to school, only 6.9 per cent of females went to school. Of the elderly who went to school, 38.3 per cent attained upper secondary level, 27.2 per cent primary, 15.5 per cent lower secondary and 8.0 per cent vocational level education. The proportion of elderly males who attained higher levels of education was higher than females.

In regards to labour force participation, 62.2 per cent of elderly males compared to 32.9 per cent of females were economically active. More than half of the elderly in the predominantly rural LGAs (Mansakonko, Kerewan, Kuntaur, Janjanbureh and Basse) were economically active compared to a little more than one-third of those in Banjul and Kanifing LGAs. For the economically active elderly population, 97.6 per cent of males were employed compared to 95.6 per cent of females. Most of the employed elderly population were employed as 'agricultural workers' and 'services, shop and market sales workers'.

More than 9 per cent of the elderly live with some form of disabilities. The most common forms of disabilities among the elderly were seeing difficulties (39.6 per cent) followed by physical disabilities (31.2 per cent) and then hearing difficulties (17.5 per cent). The census results show that the likelihood of disability increases with age. Not much variation was observed in disability rates between the sexes.



The evidence reviewed from the census points to the potential for the elderly population to grow rapidly for decades. However, for the elderly's percentage share of the population to drastically change, there has been a decline in fertility over a long period. With the current high fertility rates, it is unlikely that The Gambia would experience the problems related to an ageing population in the near future. It is however worth noting that the rapid increase in the elderly population points to potential social and economic problems associated with ageing, which require proper planning to mitigate the adverse consequences such as destitution in old age. Because a majority of the Gambian labour force are engaged in the informal sector where decent job conditions are not fulfilled, the elderly are unable to accumulate enough savings to live on. Thus, older children become the source of old age security. A universal old age pension programme set at the national poverty line would go a long way in improving the wellbeing of the elderly.

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

This report provides an insight into the size of the elderly population, their geographical locations and their socio-economic characteristics. For the purpose of this report, the elderly population is defined as persons aged 65 years and over. Old-age may have different meanings in different societies with people often considered to belong to the aged once they lose their ability to perform certain physical or economic activities. It is common knowledge that old-age is associated with susceptibility to non-communicable diseases and disabilities related to old age.

In The Gambia, although the Government and Non-Governmental supported institutional programmes catering for the elderly are limited, the rapid growth in the elderly population has been attracting concern over the years. This is mainly because of the increasing demand for health services for the elderly and its attendant pressure on health resources. The growth in this population group also increases the size of the dependent population, which has implications on household budgets and expenditure.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The compilation of this report has the following main objectives;

- To examine the distribution and background characteristics of the elderly population according to sex, residence, marital status, education, economic characteristics and disability status.
- To highlight key policy issues and make recommendations that will enable government and policymakers to design appropriate measures to further improve the welfare of the elderly population.

## **1.3 Methodology**

This report is based on data from the 2013 Population and Housing Census. The census collected data on population size and composition, population dynamics and household characteristics. This report focuses on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the elderly, classified mainly by sex and type of residence. Where possible an attempt has been made to reflect on changes in the size of the elderly population from 1983 to 2013. Differences in the scope of censuses have made it impossible to embark on further inter-censal analysis of the data from successive censuses.

## **1.4 Data Sources and Limitations**

Most information provided in this report is obtained from the 2013 Population and Housing Census. However, other comparative information in the report were obtained from the past three censuses, 1983, 1993 and 2003. Some information was also obtained from other reference materials.

Censuses are massive data collection exercises that require the mobilization of a large human resource for its conduct. Due to the large number of people to be recruited and trained on the completion of the questionnaires, it is impossible to get highly qualified individuals to partake in the exercise. The calibre of personnel recruited for the census data collection may compromise the quality of the census data. In addition, errors may be introduced into the census data at various stages of the census from the enumeration to the census data processing. Either these errors may be coverage errors, resulting from persons being missed or counted more than once, or content errors, that is, errors in the characteristics of the persons counted, resulting from incorrect reporting or recording or from failure to report on certain characteristics of the enumerated population. In a community like The Gambia where a large proportion of the adult population can neither read nor write, errors in the reported ages are not uncommon as has been observed in successive population and housing censuses.

Although an attempt has been made to present an analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the elderly population, the limited scope of the census restricted the extent to which this analysis could be done. These constraints also limited the extent to which comparative data analysis could be undertaken over inter-censal periods.

## CHAPTER 2: SIZE OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION AND THEIR DEMOGRAPHICS

### 2.1 Elderly Population and Percentage Change by LGA, 1983-2013

Presented in Table 2.1 is the distribution of the elderly population and percentage change by LGA from 1983 to 2013. Overall, the data shows that the elderly population has been increasing steadily over the past three decades with marked differences in the growth across LGAs. The largest growth in the elderly population was observed in Kanifing and Brikama Local Government Areas and the least growth in Banjul. The elderly population in Banjul has been declining over the period. The rapid increase in the size of the elderly population in Kanifing and Brikama LGAs can be explained by the fact that these two LGAs have over the past three decades been the destination of most in-migrants and immigrants.

**Table 2.1: Elderly Population and percentage change by LGA, 1983 - 2013**

LGA	Census Year				Percentage Change		
	1983	1993	2003	2013	1983-1993	1993-2003	2003-2013
Banjul	1,528	1,463	1,217	1,116	-4.3	-16.8	-8.3
Kanifing	2,501	4,741	7,239	9,606	89.6	52.7	32.7
Brikama	5,797	8,336	12,812	19,082	43.8	53.7	48.9
Mansakonko	2,473	2,766	3,496	3,597	11.8	26.4	2.9
Kerewan	4,531	5,567	6,961	8,246	22.9	25.0	18.5
Kuntaur	2,170	2,308	3,109	3,382	6.4	34.7	8.8
Janjangbureh	2,706	3,303	4,276	4,616	22.1	29.5	8.0
Basse	3,755	5,010	7,009	8,410	33.4	39.9	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,461</b>	<b>33,494</b>	<b>46,119</b>	<b>58,055</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>25.9</b>

With declining mortality and increasing female life expectancy, one would have thought that the population of the elderly would have rapidly increased, hence increasing its share of the population over time. However, the findings of the successive censuses as presented in (Table 2.2) shows that whereas the population of the elderly has increased in absolute terms, their share of the population has not consistently increased from 1983 to 2013. In 1983, the elderly constituted 3.7 per cent of the total population compared to 3.2 per cent in 1993, 3.4 per cent in 2003 and 3.1 per cent in 2013. A similar trend is observed across LGAs with the percentage share of the elderly population fluctuating over the inter-censal periods. The elderly as a percentage of the total population was lowest in Kanifing ranging from 2.1 per cent in 1993 to 2.5 per cent in 2013. Mansakonko LGA recorded the highest elderly population's share of the total population over the past three decades ranging from 4.2 per cent in 1993 to 4.4 per cent in 2013. This could be the combined effect of declining mortality and the outward movement of young people from the LGAs. Improvements in the accuracy of reporting of ages could have also influenced the shifts in the elderly population's share of the population over the inter-censal periods reviewed in this report (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2 Percentage Share of the Elderly Population by LGA, 1983 - 2013**

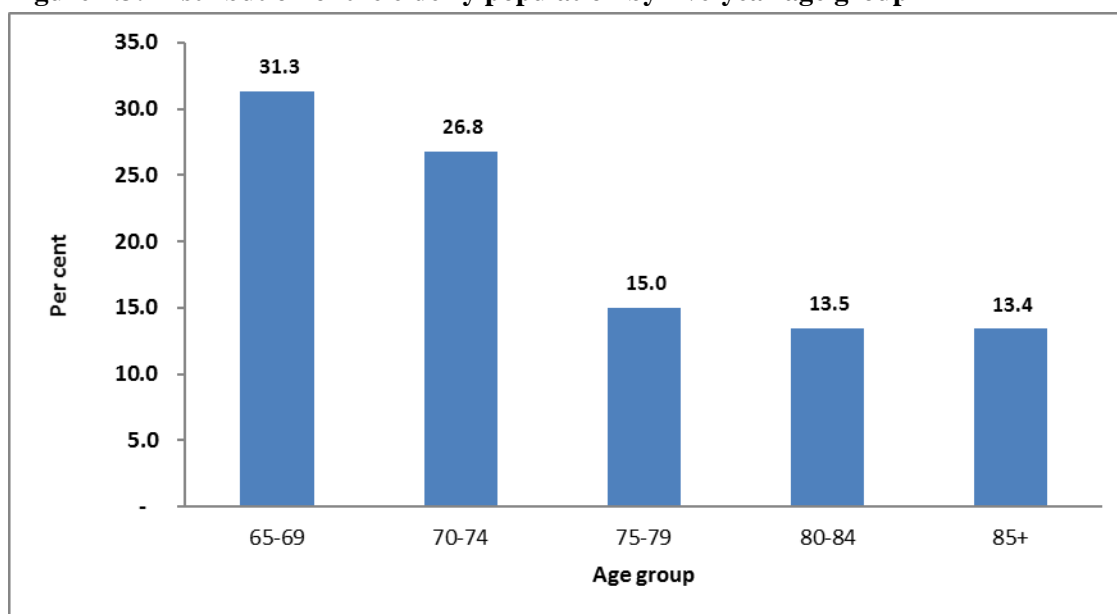
<b>LGA</b>	<b>Census Years</b>			
	<b>1983</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2013</b>
Banjul	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6
Kanifing	2.5	2.1	2.2	2.5
Brikama	4.2	3.5	3.3	2.8
Mansakonko	4.5	4.2	4.8	4.4
Kerewan	4.0	3.6	4.0	3.7
Kuntaur	3.8	3.4	4.0	3.5
Janjangbureh	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.7
Basse	3.4	3.2	3.8	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>

Although the elderly population's share of the population remains relatively small, data from successive censuses points to a rapid increase in the size of the elderly population. This calls for Government to develop appropriate policies and programmes to cater for the welfare of this population of senior citizens. This will require a study of time series data on the population of the elderly and their potential burden on national resources both economic and social. This is of particular concern in view of the increase in non-communicable diseases, largely related to ageing, and their burden on health services.

### **2.3 Percentage distribution of the elderly population by five-year age-group**

Figure 2.3 shows the percentage distribution of the elderly population by 5-year age-groups; 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84 and 85 years and over. Over the period, the share of the age groups 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84 and 85 years and above was 31.3, 26.8, 15.0, 13.5 and 13.4 per cent respectively. With further improvements in the welfare of the population and health services in particular, the country is expected to experience further growth in the size of this population.

**Figure 2.3: Distribution of the elderly population by five-year age group**



## 2.4 Distribution of the Elderly Population by Sex

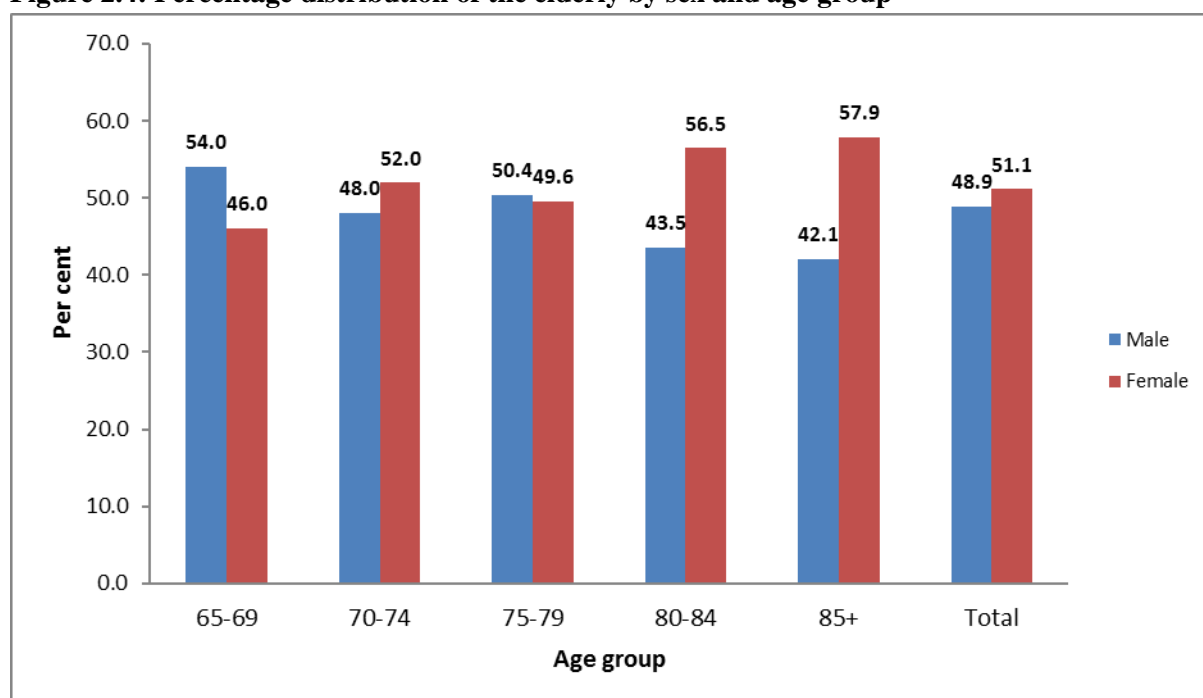
In The Gambia like in most countries, women have higher life expectancy compared to men. This is shown with the 2013 Census figures as the elderly women outnumbered men. It can be seen in Table 2.4 that the elderly women constituted 51.1 per cent (29,693 persons) of the elderly population while men constituted 48.9 per cent (28,362 persons).

**Table 2.4: Percentage distribution of the elderly by sex**

Sex	Count	Per cent
Male	28,362	48.9
Female	29,693	51.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,055</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Further review of the 2013 Census data shows that except in the age groups 65-69 and 75-79 where more males than females were enumerated, more females were enumerated in the other age categories of the elderly population. As observed in Figure 2.4, female dominance in the elderly population increases with age as would be expected.

**Figure 2.4: Percentage distribution of the elderly by sex and age group**



## 2.5 Distribution of the elderly population by sex and LGA

Presented in Table 2.5 is the percentage distribution of the elderly population by sex and LGA. Of the total elderly population of The Gambia, Brikama has the largest share with 32.9 per cent, followed by Kanifing with 16.5 per cent, Basse with 14.5 per cent and Kerewan with 14.2 per cent. Banjul has the lowest proportion of the elderly population with 1.9 per cent followed by Kuntaur with 5.8 per cent, Mansakonko with 6.2 per cent and Janjanbureh with 8.0 per cent. The observed distribution of the elderly population across LGAs is a reflection of the distribution of the total population across LGAs.

**Table 2.5: Percentage distribution of the elderly population by Sex and LGA**

LGA	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Banjul	1.8	2.0	1.9
Kanifing	16.5	16.6	16.5
Brikama	32.7	33.0	32.9
Mansakonko	6.1	6.3	6.2
Kerewan	14.0	14.4	14.2
Kuntaur	6.3	5.4	5.8
Janjanbureh	8.4	7.5	8.0
Basse	14.1	14.8	14.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,362</b>	<b>29,693</b>	<b>58,055</b>

## 2.6 Marital status of the Elderly

In The Gambia, in case of divorce or widowhood, re-marriage is common even amongst the elderly. With Muslims constituting 96.0 per cent of the population of the country, re-marriages are largely premised on religious reasoning. Table 2.6 shows that about 97 per cent of the elderly have been in marital union at one time or the other in their lifetime. Slightly more than two-thirds (67.1 per cent) of the elderly were in marital union at the time of the census and slightly more than 29.0 per cent were either separated, divorced or widowed. Only 3.1 per cent of the elderly population were never married.

**Table 2.6: Percentage distribution of the elderly by marital status**

Marital Status	Count	Per cent
Never	1,803	3.1
Married	38,965	67.1
Divorced	997	1.7
Separated	655	1.1
Widowed	15,303	26.4
Not stated	332	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,055</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 2.6.1 Marital Status of the Elderly by age group

Among the elderly population, the largest proportion of those married was within the 65-69 age group with 74.9 per cent. It can be seen that the proportion of those married at the time of the census declined with increasing age. In addition, those who were divorced were proportionally higher among those aged 65-69 years whilst the never married were proportionally higher amongst those aged 75-79 years. The separated and widowed constituted the largest proportion amongst those aged 85 years and over, with the proportions increasing with age (Table 2.6.1).

**Table 2.6.1: Percentage distribution of the elderly by marital status and age group**

Age Group	Never	Married	Divorced	Separated	Widowed	Not Stated	Total
65-69	3.2	74.9	2.1	1.0	18.0	0.8	18,197
70-74	3.0	68.5	1.6	1.1	25.2	0.6	15,558
75-79	3.4	66.0	1.7	1.2	27.3	0.5	8,700
80-84	2.7	59.9	1.5	1.2	34.3	0.4	7,821
85+	3.1	54.8	1.2	1.3	39.2	0.3	7,779
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>58,055</b>



## 2.6.2 Marital Status of the Elderly Population by Sex

Table 2.6.2 shows that slightly more than nine out of every ten elderly males were married (90.7 per cent) at the time of the census, 3.6 per cent were never married, 3.1 per cent widowed, 1.4 per cent divorced and 0.5 per cent were separated. Of the married elderly male, the largest proportion were found in the 65-69 age-group constituting 91.8 per cent and this reduces with an increase in age. The proportion of separated and widowed males increased with an increase in age while the proportion of never married men was higher amongst those aged 75-79 years. On the other hand, 44.6 per cent of the elderly women were in marriage at the time of the census, 48.6 per cent widowed, 2.7 per cent never married, 2.0 per cent were divorced and 1.7 per cent were separated. The larger proportion of widowed elderly women can partly be explained by the longer life expectancy experienced by women and the fact that in The Gambia married males are in most cases much older than their spouses, hence, are likely to die before their spouses. The proportion of the elderly that were widowed increase with age for both sexes with a similar trend observed for the proportion that were married at the time of the census.

**Table 2.6.2: Percentage distribution of the elderly by marital status, age group and sex**

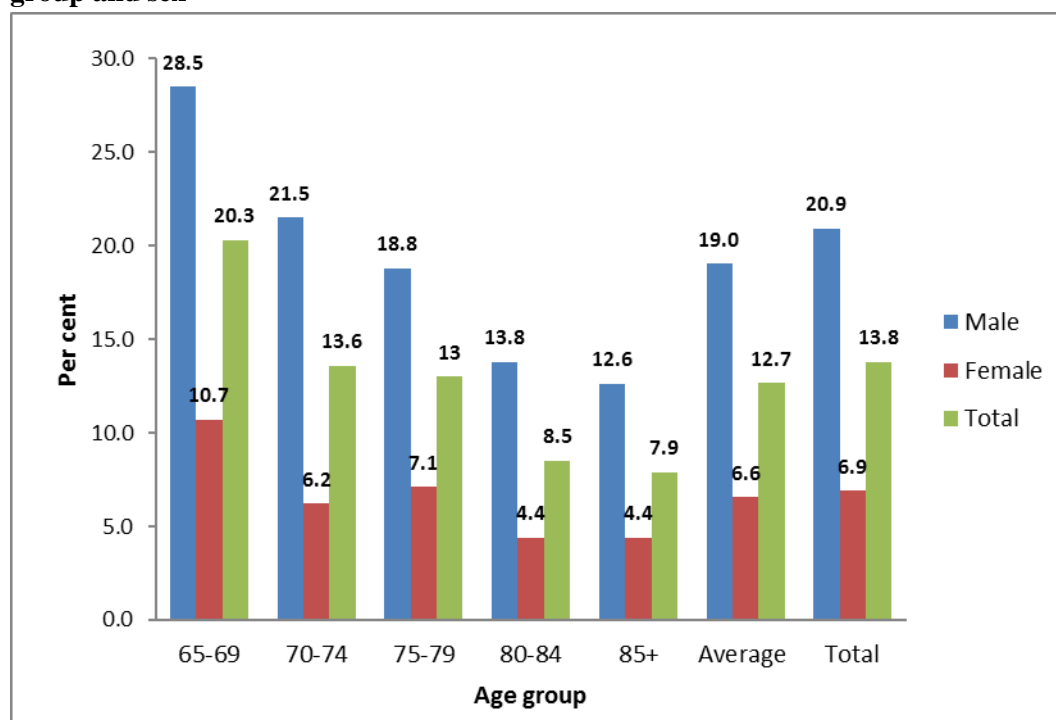
Age Group	Never		Married		Divorced		Separated		Widowed	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
65-69	3.7	2.6	91.8	55.0	1.6	2.7	0.5	1.7	1.6	37.3
70-74	3.4	2.6	91.4	47.4	1.4	1.9	0.5	1.6	2.7	46.0
75-79	3.9	2.8	90.4	41.1	1.5	1.8	0.6	1.9	3.0	52.0
80-84	3.1	2.5	90.2	36.5	1.1	1.9	0.6	1.5	4.5	57.3
85+	3.5	2.9	87.3	31.2	1.2	1.2	0.6	1.8	7.0	62.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>90.7</b>	<b>44.6</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>48.6</b>

## 2.7 Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Elderly Population

### 2.7.1: Educational attainment by the elderly

Overall, only 14.1 per cent of the elderly population attained some formal education. As shown in the graph below, a larger proportion of elderly males than females attained some formal education. About 21 per cent of the elderly male attained some education while only about 7 per cent of the elderly female population attained some education. As expected, the proportion of the elderly with some formal education drops with an increase in age. Of the elderly population aged 65-69 years, 20.3 per cent attained some education compared to 7.9 per cent of those aged 85 years and over. The evidence from the census shows that across all the ages, the elderly males were more likely to have attained some formal education than females (Figure 2.7.1).

**Figure 2.7.1: Percentage of the elderly population who attained some formal education by age group and sex**



## 2.7.2 Elderly Population by Educational Attainment and Age-Group

Presented in Table 2.7.2 is the percentage distribution of the elderly by age-group and educational attainment. The table shows that most of the elderly who went to school obtained upper secondary education (5.9 per cent) followed by those who obtained primary (3.5 per cent) and lower secondary education (2.2 per cent). Only 1.1 per cent of the elderly population had tertiary education. The census results further show that the elderly population in the 65-69 age-group were more likely to attain higher levels of education than their counterparts in the other age groups.

**Table 2.7.2: Percentage distribution of the elderly by age group and educational attainment**

Age group	None	Early Childhood	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Vocational	Tertiary	Total
65-69	79.6	0.4	4.7	3.2	8.4	1.8	2.0	18,197
70-74	86.4	0.3	3.4	2.1	5.8	1.1	0.9	15,558
75-79	87.0	0.3	3.3	1.8	5.7	0.9	0.9	8,700
80-84	91.5	0.2	2.5	1.4	3.4	0.6	0.4	7,821
85+	92.1	0.3	2.5	1.5	2.8	0.5	0.4	7,779
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>58,055</b>

### 2.7.3 Educational Attainment of the Elderly by Sex

About 10 per cent of the elderly male population who ever went to school attained upper secondary level education and 4.7 per cent attained primary level education. Those who attained tertiary level education accounted for 1.7 per cent of the elderly population. Compared to the male elderly population, a small proportion (each with 2.4 per cent) of the elderly female population attained primary and upper secondary levels of education. The results indicate that elderly males are more likely to attain higher levels of education than their female counterparts. This can be explained by the existence of a culture of preference for male education over females in The Gambia, particularly in the past (Table 2.7.3).

**Table 2.7.3: Percentage distribution of the elderly population by sex, age group and educational attainment**

Age group	None	Early childhood	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Vocational	Tertiary	Count
<b>Both sexes</b>								
65-69	79.6	0.4	4.7	3.2	8.5	1.8	2	18,197
70-74	86.4	0.3	3.4	2.1	5.8	1.1	0.9	15,558
75-79	87	0.3	3.3	1.8	5.7	0.9	0.9	8,700
80-84	91.5	0.2	2.5	1.4	3.4	0.6	0.4	7,821
85+	92.1	0.3	2.5	1.5	2.8	0.5	0.4	7,779
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>58,055</b>
<b>Male</b>								
65-69	71.4	0.4	5.7	4.6	12.4	2.6	2.8	9,824
70-74	78.5	0.4	4.8	3.2	9.8	1.8	1.5	7,472
75-79	81.2	0.3	4.2	2.7	8.9	1.3	1.4	4,387
80-84	86.1	0.3	3.6	2.4	5.9	1.1	0.6	3,404
85+	87.4	0.2	3.5	2.4	4.9	1	0.7	3,275
<b>Total</b>	<b>78.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>28,362</b>
<b>Female</b>								
65-69	89.2	0.4	3.4	1.5	3.8	0.8	1	8,373
70-74	93.7	0.2	2.1	1	2.1	0.5	0.4	8,086
75-79	92.9	0.4	2.5	0.9	2.5	0.5	0.5	4,313
80-84	95.6	0.1	1.7	0.6	1.5	0.2	0.3	4,417
85+	95.6	0.3	1.7	0.8	1.2	0.1	0.2	4,504
<b>Total</b>	<b>92.9</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>29,693</b>

### 2.8 Economic activity of the elderly

Overall, 47.2 per cent of the elderly were economically active (27,403 out of 58,055) whilst 52.8 per cent were inactive (30,652 out of 58,055) (Table not shown). It is worth noting that the majority of the employed population in The Gambia are employed in the informal sector with most of those in the rural areas being subsistence farmers. Since retirement in the informal sector is largely determined by one's ability to continue work, many employed in

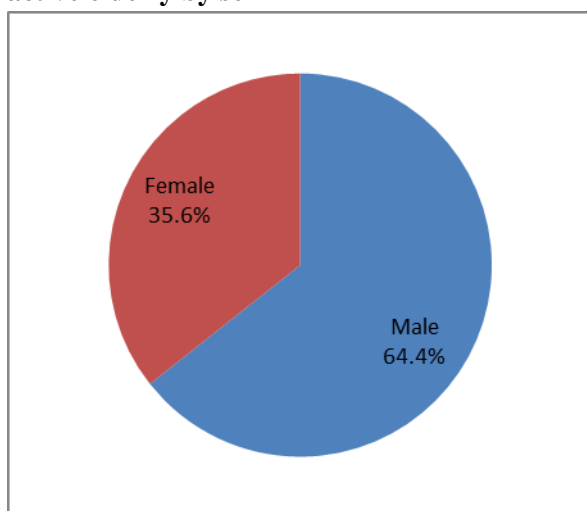
this sector continue work into their advance ages. This explains why a large proportion of the elderly are economically active in the country.

## 2.8.1 Economically Active Elderly Population

Presented in Figure 2.8.1a is the composition of the economically active elderly population by sex while in figure 2.8.1b is the proportionate distribution of the elderly by economic activity status and sex. It is evident in figure 2.8.1a that the majority of the economically active elderly were males constituting 64.4 per cent of the entire economically active elderly population.

Figure 2.8.1b shows that 62.2 per cent of the elderly males were economically active compared to 32.9 per cent of their female counterparts who were economically active. While females have longer life expectancy, their quality of life is often curtailed by disability. This partly explains why a larger proportion of the elderly females were economically inactive.

**Figure 2.8.1a: Composition of the economically active elderly by sex**



**Figure 2.8.1b: Proportion of the elderly by economic activity status and sex**

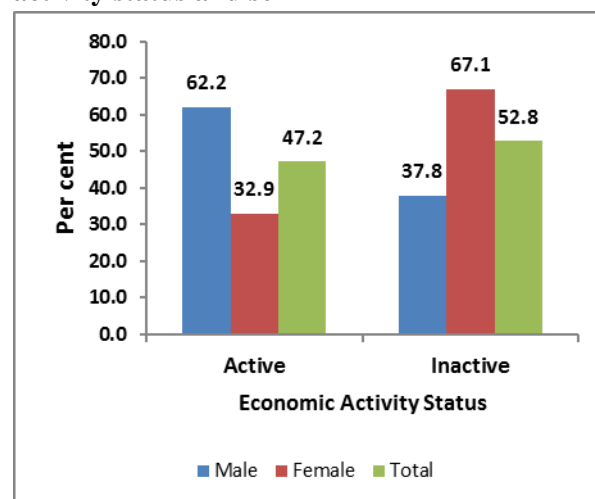
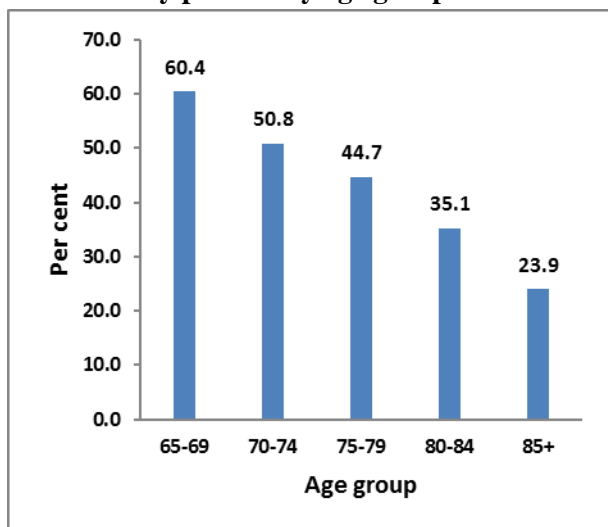
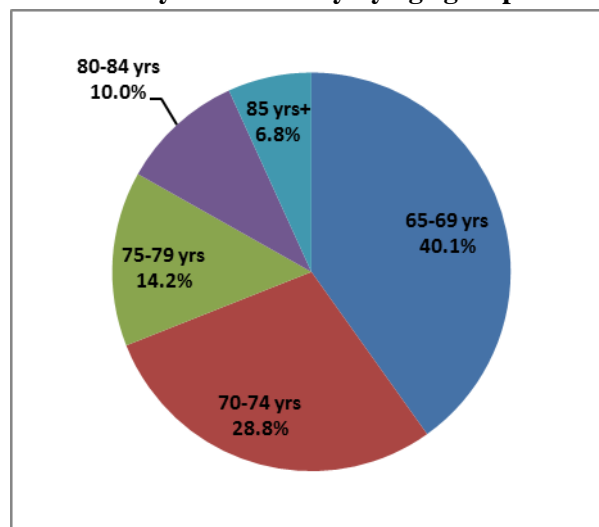


Figure 2.8.2a presents the economically active elderly population by 5-year age groups. It is observed that the economically active were proportionately higher amongst the elderly aged 65–69 (60.4 per cent). The proportion of the economically active elderly persons declined with an increase in age. This trend is expected, as people tend to be less economically active as they grow older. Figure 2.8.2b also shows the percentage distribution of the economically active elderly by age group. The figure shows that a larger proportion of the economically active are aged 65-69 years.

**Figure 2.8.2a: Percentage of economically active elderly persons by age group**



**Figure 2.8.2b: Percentage distribution of the economically active elderly by age group**



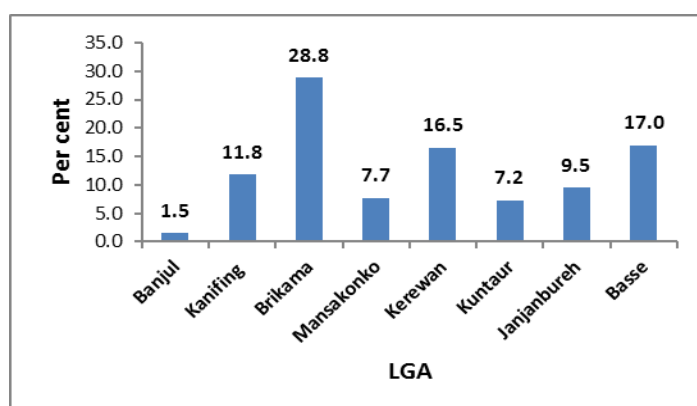
### 2.8.3 Distribution of the Economically Active Elderly by LGA

Table 2.8.3 shows the percentage distribution of the elderly economic activity status by LGA. It shows that Mansakonko had the highest proportion of the elderly population who were economically active (58.7 per cent). This was followed by Kuntaur, Janjanbureh and Basse with 58.6, 56.2 and 55.3 per cent of their elderly populations, respectively, being economically active. Kanifing had the least proportion of their elderly population being economically active with 33.7 per cent followed by Banjul and Brikama with 37.5 per cent and 41.4 per cent respectively. The results indicate that the proportions of the elderly population that were economically active were higher in the predominantly rural LGAs. This can mainly be explained by differences in economic activities across LGAs. In terms of the distribution of the economically active elderly, the majority were found in Brikama with 28.8 per cent followed by Basse (17.0 per cent) and Kerewan (16.5 per cent).

**Table 2.8.3: Proportion of the elderly by economic activity status by LGA**

LGA	Active	Inactive	Total
Banjul	37.5	62.5	100.0
Kanifing	33.7	66.3	100.0
Brikama	41.4	58.6	100.0
Mansakonko	58.7	41.3	100.0
Kerewan	54.7	45.3	100.0
Kuntaur	58.6	41.4	100.0
Janjanbureh	56.2	43.8	100.0
Basse	55.3	44.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>52.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>

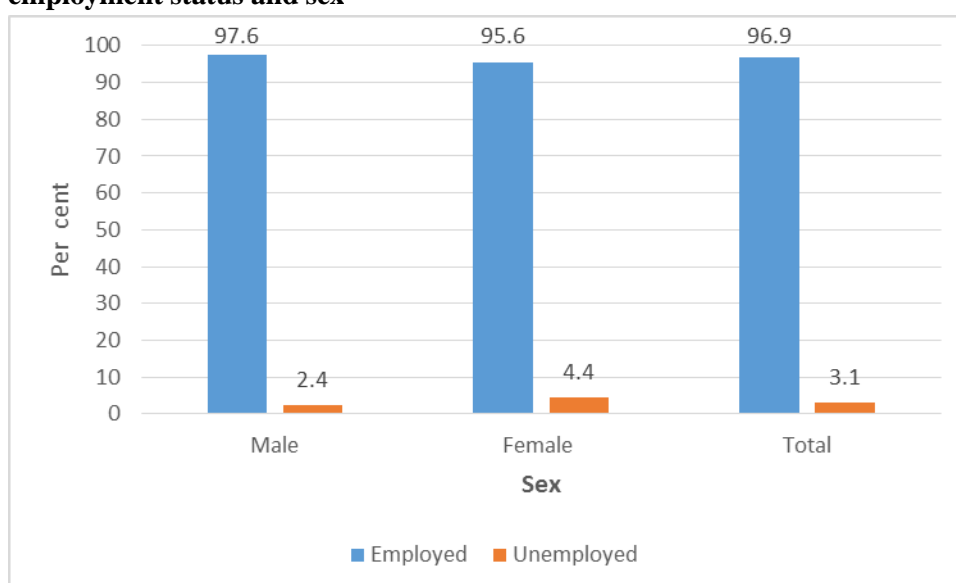
**Figure 2.8.3: Percentage distribution of the economically active elderly by LGA**



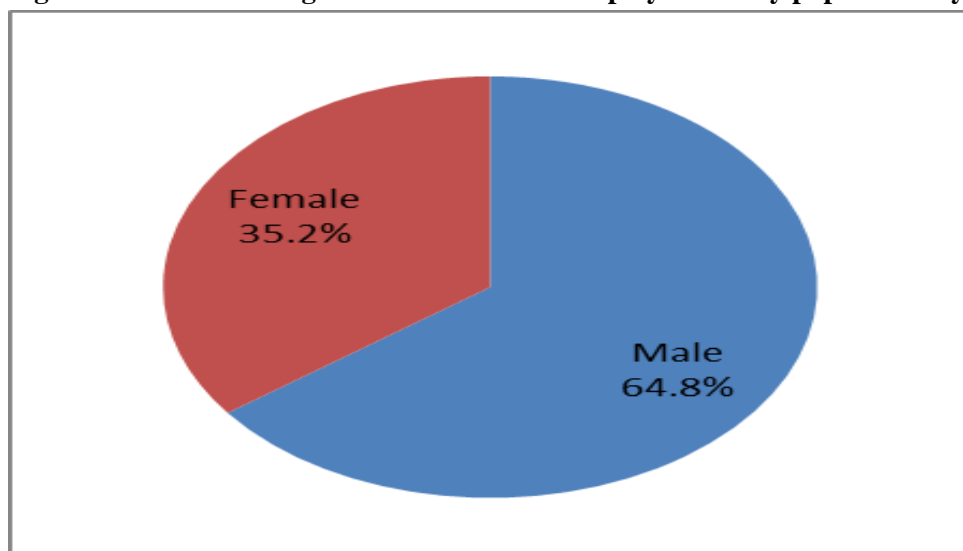
## 2.8.4 Employment status of the elderly

Figure 2.8.4a shows that amongst the economically active elderly population, 96.9 per cent were employed and 3.1 per cent unemployed. Proportionally, more males (97.6 per cent) than females (95.6 per cent) were employed. Differentials in employment opportunities between elderly males and females is further exemplified in figure 2.8.4b which shows that of the total employed elderly population, 64.8 per cent were males and 35.2 per cent were females.

**Figure 2.8.4a: Percentage distribution of the economically active elderly population by employment status and sex**



**Figure 2.8.4b: Percentage distribution of the employed elderly population by sex**



### 2.8.5 Occupation of the Elderly Population

Table 2.8.5 shows that a majority of the elderly were not engaged in occupations that were highly technical; require specialized skills or high levels of educational attainment. Almost half of the employed elderly were engaged in agricultural work (48.6 per cent). This was followed by those working as ‘services, shop and market sales’ workers and ‘craft and related trade workers’ with 18.3 and 6.8 per cent respectively. Only a small proportion were engaged as 'legislators, senior officials and managers' and 'clerical support workers' each with 0.3 per cent.

**Table 2.8.5: Percentage distribution of the elderly population by occupation**

Occupation	Count	Per cent
Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers	113	0.3
Professionals	634	1.9
Technicians and Associate Professionals	434	1.3
Clerical Support Workers	116	0.3
Service, shop and Market Sales Workers	6,190	18.3
Agricultural Workers	16,430	48.6
Craft and Related Trade workers	2,294	6.8
Plant/Machine Operators and Assemblers	753	2.2
Elementary Occupations	1,341	4.0
Other	5,467	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,772</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 2.8.6 Industry of Employment of the Economically Active Elderly Population

Table 2.8.6 below shows the percentage distribution of the economically active elderly population by age group and industry. The findings indicate that more than half of the economically active elderly population (56.6 per cent) were engaged in ‘Agriculture, hunting, fishing and forestry’ industry. The second largest industry employing the elderly was the ‘Wholesale, retail, restaurant and hotel’ industry (15.8 per cent) and then those in community, social, and personal services (13.0 per cent).

The table further shows that only negligible proportions of the economically active elderly were engaged in the mining and quarrying industry (0.2 per cent) and ‘electricity and gas’ industry ‘Finance, Insurance, Estate and business services’ each with (0.3 per cent). This evidence further buttresses the assertion that most economically active elderly population were engaged in the informal sector which does not require any specialized skills, high levels of formal education and is not bound by any regulations on age at retirement.

**Table 2.8.6: Percentage distribution of the economically active elderly population by Industry and age group**

Age group	Industry										Total
	Agriculture, Hunting, fishing and forestry	Mining and Quarrying	Manufacturing, Processing and services	Electricity, Gas, Water	General Construction	Wholesale, Retail, Restaurant and Hotel	Transport, Communication and storage	Finance, Insurance, Estate and business services	Community, Social and personal services	Not stated	
65-69	50.5	0.2	4.7	0.4	4.0	18.3	3.3	0.4	14.5	3.8	100.0
70-74	59.3	0.2	3.7	0.3	2.8	15.3	2.2	0.2	11.9	4.1	100.0
75-79	59.8	0.1	4.0	0.0	3.3	13.9	2.1	0.2	12.4	4.2	100.0
80-84	62.8	0.2	3.1	0.2	2.7	12.6	1.5	0.1	11.7	5.1	100.0
85+	65.0	0.1	2.3	0.1	1.5	11.8	1.3	0.1	11.8	6.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>



## **CHAPTER 3: THE ELDERLY AND DISABILITY**

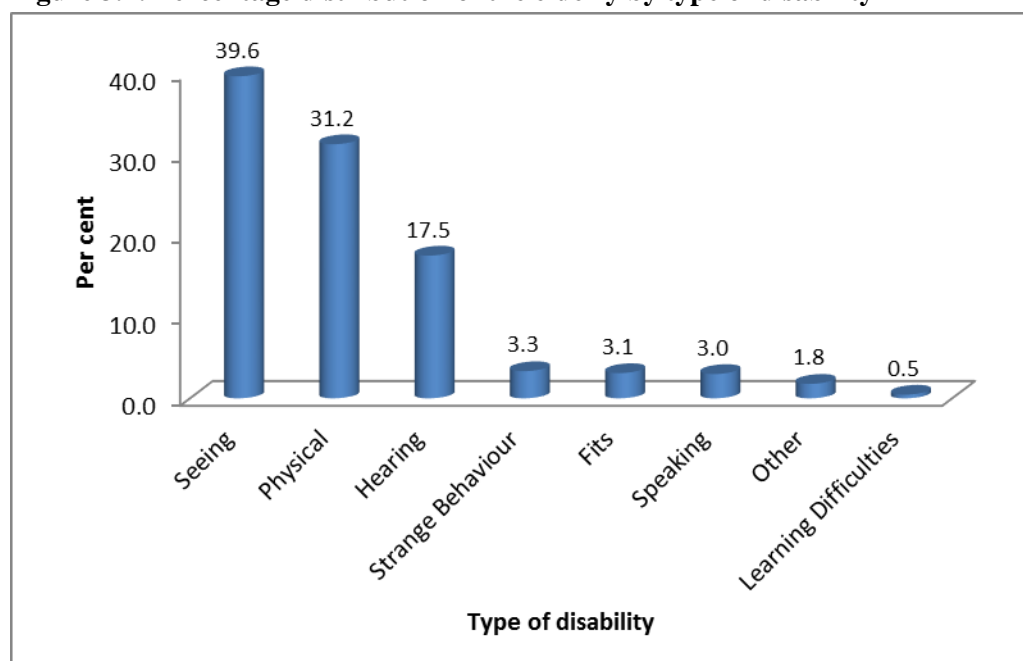
During the 2013 Population and Housing Census, questions on disability were administered to all persons aged 2 years and over. This related to whether individuals had any form of disability. Respondents to the census questions were expected to report any member(s) of their households with disability. The census did not investigate the extent of the disability and relied on testimonies of respondents on determining the prevalence of disability.

The health status of the elderly population is of particular interest in light of their disproportionate exposure to disability related to old age and their high demand for medical care, which could over burden the national health care system. Disabilities related to poor vision, hearing difficulties and physical disabilities are often more common amongst the elderly population. An increase in size of the elderly population can therefore pose a challenge to national health services of any country and increase the burden on families for home-based care.

### **3.1 Type of Disability among the Elderly**

As expected, Figure 3.1 shows that seeing difficulties, physical disabilities and hearing difficulties were the most common types of disabilities among the elderly. The most common form of disability was seeing difficulty (39.6 per cent) followed by physical disability (31.2 per cent) and hearing difficulty (17.5 per cent). Those with learning difficulties accounted for the lowest proportion with less than one per cent of the elderly population affected by this type of disability. The proportions presented in the figure below are in descending order.

**Figure 3.1: Percentage distribution of the elderly by type of disability**



### **3.2 Prevalence of disability among the Elderly by type**

Presented in Table 3.2 is the percentage distribution of the elderly population by age-group, type of disability and sex. Overall, the prevalence of seeing difficulties is the highest reported condition among those aged 70-74 (41.1 per cent) and 85 years and over (41.0 per cent) whilst the lowest prevalence rate was reported among those aged 65-69 (35.7 per cent). It is observed that hearing difficulties increases with age, the prevalence of hearing difficulties was 21.0 per cent among the elderly aged 85 years and older. Interestingly, the prevalence of physical disability and ‘strange behaviour’ were highest amongst those aged 65-69.

A similar pattern is observed when the data is analysed from a gender perspective. For the elderly men, the prevalence of seeing difficulties was highest amongst those aged 85 years and over followed by those aged 70-74. For hearing difficulties, the prevalence was highest among the elderly male aged 85 and above whilst physical disability and ‘strange behaviours’ were more prevalent amongst the youngest elderly male aged 65-69.

Seeing difficulties were more common among elderly women aged 75-84 and lowest among those aged 65-69. The prevalence of hearing difficulties was highest amongst women aged 85 years and over while physical disabilities were more common amongst those aged 65-69. In comparison, the prevalence of hearing difficulties was higher amongst females compared to their male counterparts while seeing and physical difficulties were more common among males.

**Table 3.2: Percentage distribution of the elderly by age-group and type of disability and Sex**

Age group	Seeing	Hearing	Speaking	Physical	Strange Behaviour	Fits	Learning Difficulty	other	Total
<b>Male</b>									
65-69	36.4	14.4	2.9	35.9	4.5	2.5	0.6	2.8	646
70-74	44.2	12.1	5.0	32.2	2.3	2.6	0.0	1.6	618
75-79	40.9	15.1	3.2	33.8	2.4	2.4	0.6	1.7	465
80-84	39.8	18.1	4.4	30.0	3.3	3.3	0.0	1.2	430
85+	44.4	18.5	2.3	27.8	2.1	3.0	1.1	0.8	525
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2,684</b>
<b>Female</b>									
65-69	34.9	15.8	2.8	35.3	4.3	5.1	0.4	1.4	507
70-74	38.4	18.9	2.9	29.7	4.7	3.5	0.1	1.7	687
75-79	39.8	20.6	1.1	28.7	3.9	3.3	0.6	1.9	359
80-84	39.8	19.5	1.8	30.0	3.0	2.2	0.6	3.0	497
85+	38.2	23.1	2.8	28.2	2.6	3.3	0.5	1.4	646
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2,696</b>
<b>Both Sexes</b>									
65-69	35.7	15.0	2.9	35.6	4.4	3.6	0.5	2.2	1,153
70-74	41.1	15.7	3.9	30.9	3.5	3.1	0.1	1.7	1,305
75-79	40.4	17.5	2.3	31.6	3.0	2.8	0.6	1.8	824
80-84	39.8	18.9	3.0	30.0	3.1	2.7	0.3	2.2	927
85+	41.0	21.0	2.6	28.0	2.4	3.2	0.8	1.1	1,171
<b>Total</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>5,380</b>

## **CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

It is evident from the census results that the increase in the elderly population would be maintained for decades to come as the health conditions of the people improve and mortality declines. Although the negative consequences of an ageing population on the labour force may not be felt that much in the immediate future, consequences related to the demand on health services related to ageing are a reality in the immediate future. This is particularly of concern in light of the recent increase in non-communicable diseases which disproportionately affect the elderly. In the absence of an adequate number of institutions for the care of the elderly, this may pose a challenge to families who would have to care for their elderly people. In addition, an already over stretched health sector may have to increasingly invest in the care of the elderly over stretching meagre health resources.

On the economic front, while a bulging elderly population size would add to the already large dependent population, in the midst of youth unemployment, household budgets would be put under increasing pressure. The situation may translate to an increase in the size of the population engaged in the informal sector with the elderly being exposed to competition with a younger unemployed population, hence a potential reduction in earnings.

### **Recommendations**

The implications of an ageing Gambian population are huge and are likely to have far-reaching consequences. An ageing population is likely to affect every aspect of our lives, individually and socially. However, although increases in the elderly population are huge, changes in the size of this population are by their nature not dramatic. This notwithstanding, the time to act is now in order to prepare for their specific needs. In this regard, there is need to put in place policies and programmes to reflect the needs of a population group whose needs may be significantly different from the younger population. To have a better appreciation of magnitude of problems associated with the growth in the elderly population of the Gambia, there is need to project the population of this group and investigate the immediate needs of the elderly to engender effective planning towards these needs.

The following recommendations are being advanced to address the welfare of the elderly population in The Gambia;

- Using robust population projection methods, project the size of the elderly population across LGAs by sex for a period of 30 years;

- Research into the nature of disabilities that affect the elderly and the support they would require to improve their welfare;
- Whilst institutionalizing the elderly may not be an acceptable option to many families in the near future, the provision of day care facilities for the elderly should be explored to relieve families of the burden of having to care for the elderly, which may impede their participation in economic activities. This would also provide an opportunity for the elderly to interact with their peers;
- The Gambia should gradually move towards a universal social security pensions scheme for the elderly to prevent old age destitution and relief families of some of the burden of catering for the elderly; and
- Concessions should be introduced in the provision of health services for the elderly especially cost of medications to make them affordable.