

POLICY BRIEF

Population in Ghana: An Analysis of Growth Trends and Implications for Development Planning

INTRODUCTION

Before any country can engage in any developmental agenda, it is imperative for it to take into consideration the dynamics of its population structure in order to fashion out policies and programmes that address the concerns of the population. The 1969 National Population Policy acknowledges the human population as “organic parts of social and economic planning and development activity” (Republic of Ghana, 1969, cited in Benneh et al., 1989:1). The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994) has recommended the integration of population variables into national development planning (United Nations, 1995). An understanding of Ghana’s population dynamics from the past, the present, and the future are critical in guiding the country in its decision making.

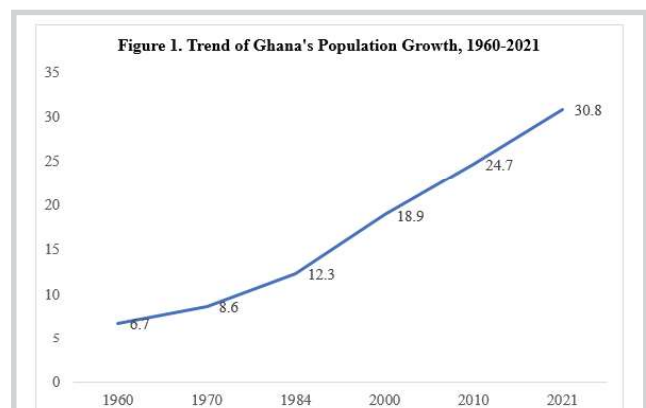
This policy brief looks at Ghana’s population dynamics in relation to its size, growth, structure and spatial distribution, and its ramifications for the country’s development. This is viewed within the context of population being the main beneficiary of any development that is realized in the country.



KEY ISSUES

Population Growth Trends

Ghana’s population almost doubled in 24 years between 1960 and 1984. Subsequently, it doubled in 26 years between 1984 and 2010 and grew by a quarter of its size in 2010 to reach 30.8 million in 2021. With a growth rate of 2.1 per annum, Ghana’s population is expected to double in the next 33 years, indicating that by 2051, the population could reach 61.6 million if the annual rate of growth remains the same.



Population Dynamics

Ghana's population remains dominated by females who constituted more than half (50.7%) of the population in 2021, with the males representing 49.3 percent. There are, however, variations by broad age groups, type of place of residence and administrative region. The population structure of Ghana is fast transitioning from a broad-based pyramid, representing a high percentage of children, to that which is gradually showing signs of ageing, represented by a pyramid with a bulging mid-section (see Figure 2).

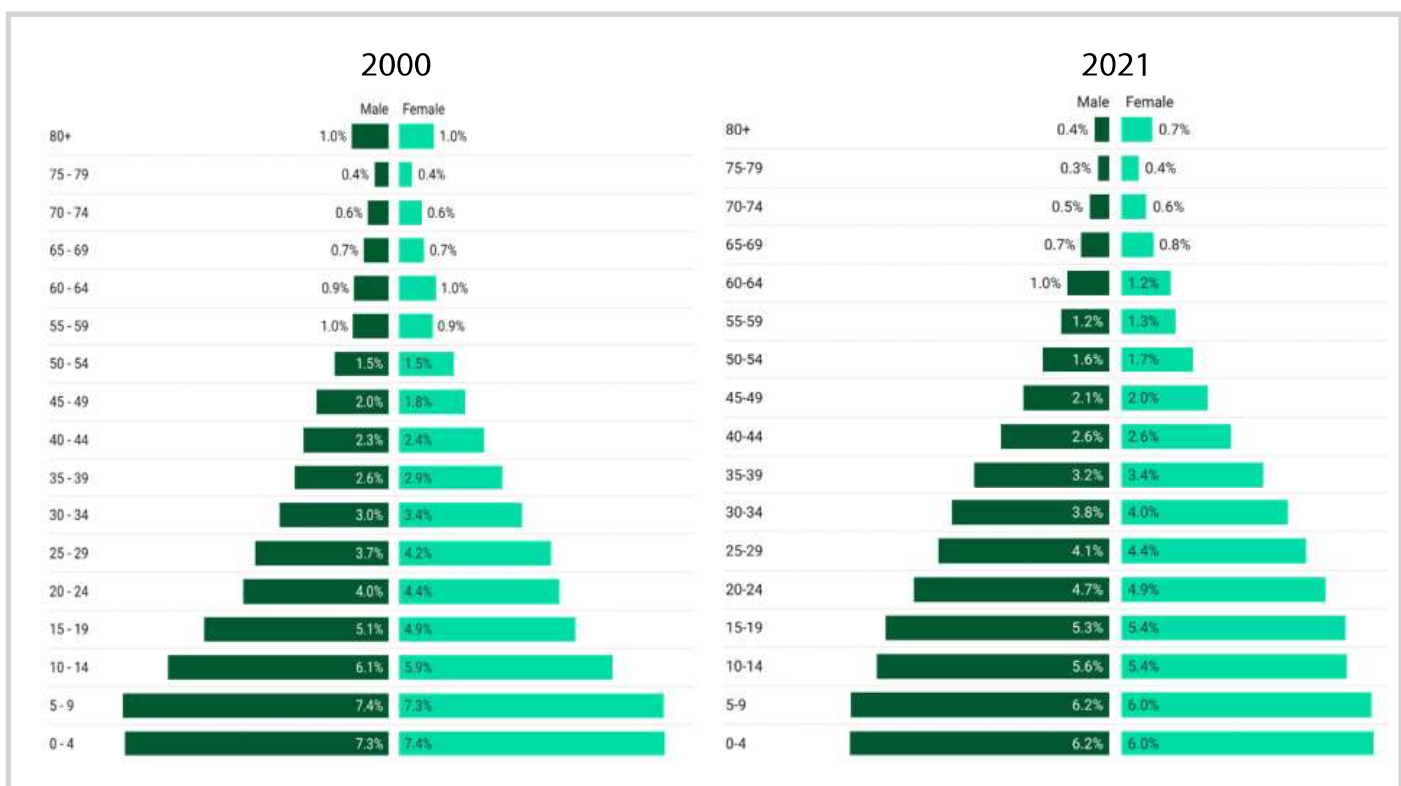
The proportion of the children's population (0-14 years) has steadily reduced from 41.3 percent in 2000 to 35.3 percent in 2021. The dependency ratio of 66 suggests that there are 66 persons classified as being dependent (i.e., in ages 0-14 and 65+ years) for every 100 persons in the working age group of 15-64 years. The proportion of the population of young people of age 15-35 years, in contrast to that of the children's population, increased from 34.6 percent in 2000 to 38.2 percent in 2021. This suggests a drive towards the attainment of a demographic dividend, which could be harnessed if the right policies and programmes

are put in place to build the skills and capacity of this young segment of the population to support the country's development agenda.

Spatial Dynamics

The spatial distribution of Ghana's population shows that Greater Accra Region in 2021 took over as the most populous region in the country from the Ashanti Region, which had for a long time remained the most populous region (17.7 percent of the total population), with Greater Accra Region as the second most populous (17.6 percent). It is projected that the population of Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) will reach about 10.5 million by 2040. Notwithstanding the considerable development the region has witnessed over the years, the region is still bedeviled by several social and environmental problems. The population growth created a huge housing gap leading to an increase in the number and size of informal settlements, especially slums. The rising population has also worsened the waste management systems in the region: only 15% of GAMA is covered by sewage system while 32.3% of solid waste generated is dumped into drainages or open spaces.

Figure 2. Population Pyramid for Ghana, 2000 and 2021

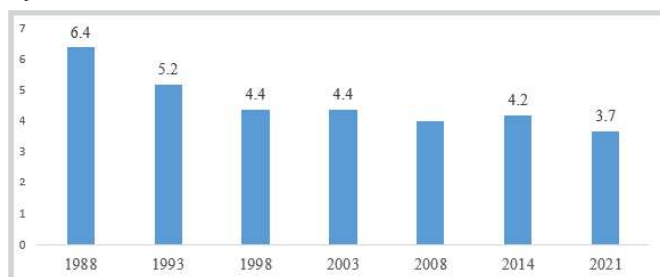


Source: Generated from the 2000 and 2021 Population and Housing censuses

Fertility and Mortality

The country's fertility trend indicates that the rate of reproduction has substantially declined over the past decades accompanied by regional and spatial variations. The total fertility rate (TFR) declined from 6.4 in 1988 to an estimated 3.7 per woman in 2021 (see Figure 3). The declining fertility rate has both positive and negative socioeconomic impacts on national development, especially in relation to the size of the labour force. Life expectancy at birth has also increased over the years, from 57 years in 2000 to 64 years in 2020 (World Bank, 2022). As generally observed, females tend to live longer than males. The leading causes of institutional deaths in Ghana were chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The Covid-19 pandemic also had its own toll on the death rates among the adult population in the country.

Figure 3. Trend in Total Fertility Rate in Ghana, 1988-2021



Source: GSS, 2021; GDHS Reports, 1988-2014

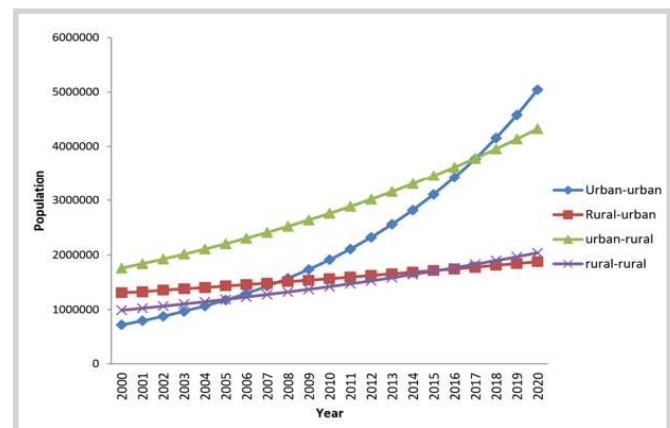
Urban Growth

Ghana has experienced rapid urbanization over the years. The share of the urban population increased from 23.1 percent in 1960 to 56.7 percent in 2021. Urbanization in Ghana can best be described as urban primacy where there are few cities and towns with huge population concentrations while several localities across the country have smaller numbers of people, leading to challenges in spatial planning for certain infrastructure facilities. Urbanisation in Ghana is driven by inter-regional migration flows where the more economically resource-endowed regions attract more migration inflows compared to others that are less endowed socio-economically. Migration, as the third component of population change, is related to urbanisation.

The most common migration flow in Ghana from the year 2000 up to 2017 was urban to rural migration. Afterwards, urban to urban

migration has been more visible and has overtaken urban-rural migration. This suggests that people are moving from relatively smaller urban localities to bigger ones, leading to the big cities and large towns increasingly attracting more migrants and thereby increasing their population concentrations and densities. The expectation, therefore, is that Ghana will continue to experience increased urbanisation of varying degrees across the regions, driven largely by migrant inflows from other smaller urban settlements.

Figure 4. Trend in migration flows in Ghana, 2000-2020



Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2014; 2021

Implications of Ghana's Population for Development Planning

Ghana's population dynamics have obvious implications for the country's sustainable development planning efforts. Since the outcome of development planning is for the benefit of the human population, all development planning efforts or strategies must necessarily pay critical attention to how the population is growing and being distributed spatially over time. There is, therefore, the need to monitor the changes taking place as the population grows over time to be accurately informed during policy decision-making at all levels.

The population growth rate has seen a declining trend since the year 2000, the result of which has included the altering of the population structure with ageing fast becoming an important phenomenon of Ghana's age profile. This is also linked to the increasing life expectancy being recorded in the population. This means that we can no longer be concerned only about the young population but the

elderly population as well. While the size of the youthful population needs to be factored into policy decision-making, the plight of the elderly cannot be easily glossed over. This is especially important considering the steady disintegration of the extended family support system for old people and the increasing unemployment among young people who migrate out of home and are unable to take care of the social and economic needs of their older parents and other older relations.

Despite Greater Accra having the least proportionate share (1.36%) of Ghana's total land area, it is receiving increasing proportions of the country's population and has overtaken Ashanti Region. This is largely due to inter-regional and international migration into the region, which otherwise has the lowest fertility in the country compared to the other regions. The heavy concentration of the population in the region especially in the cities of Accra, Tema and Ashaiman certainly has serious implications for housing, sanitation, road traffic management, food security and national security.

Furthermore, the shift in the population towards becoming more urban implies a more strategic focus of policy actions on the urban setting. This marks a shift from earlier discourse which was characterised by calls for more focused interventions in the rural environment when Ghana's population was largely rural. Issues of sanitation, traffic congestion resulting in stress and mental health conditions should begin to engage the attention of development planning practitioners in the country. Associated with the degree of urbanisation is a concern for urban primacy and the need to redirect population movements away from choked cities to areas with less population concentration but where people could be guaranteed their economic wellbeing through deliberate job creation strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further analysis of the data at the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly (MMDA) level will reveal district-specific pictures which should inform the district level planning

activities. Each MMDA should explore the opportunity of analysing the population dynamics as they pertain to their peculiar circumstances and ensure they reflect in development planning activities.

Apart from the place of birth and enumeration data which the census provides, and which could be highly inadequate in telling fully the country's migration story, real time migration data continues to be a challenge in Ghana. Unlike the demographic and health surveys (DHS) that contain large data on fertility and mortality, a similar regular national survey on migration is lacking. The very first and last national migration survey conducted in Ghana by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) was in 1991. GSS should roll out regular national migration surveys, just like the DHS, at least once every 10 years to provide real time migration data at the district, regional and national levels, including international migration statistics.

There is a need to strengthen the provision of the new pension scheme for individuals working in the private sector to attract more patronage. Educational campaigns need to be carried out extensively throughout the country to encourage those engaged in the informal sector to enroll onto these schemes to guarantee their future economic wellbeing through social security benefits after their eventual retirement.

Deliberate policies to move development away from the cities with high population concentration should be considered in the context of spatial economies of scale to help redirect migration away from the few choked cities. This calls for an effective operationalisation of the decentralisation system, which should be backed by efficient planning, resource mobilization, prudent financial management, and programme implementation.

The observed influx of young migrants from the West African sub-region into Ghana is fast becoming a source of concern for national security especially in Accra and its environs and yet there is no data on this development. The Ministry of Interior, National Security and the Ghana Immigration Service should team

up to undertake a study to document all these immigrants to determine their status based on the ECOWAS Protocol and take appropriate actions to defuse the possible threats their presence poses to national security in the country.

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