

Global Ageing Long-Standing and Emerging Realities

Shereen Hussein

Professor of Health & Social Care Policy
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
United Kingdom

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



Background

The notion of ageing

- From a demographic perspective
- At the individual level (briefly)

Migration, mobility & global connectedness

- Ageing in and out of place

Life-journeys

- Diversity of experience & inequalities

- Old and new-comers
- Similarities & differences
- Two-directional learning
- Honing down on the MENA region
- Healthy-ageing agenda and opportunities



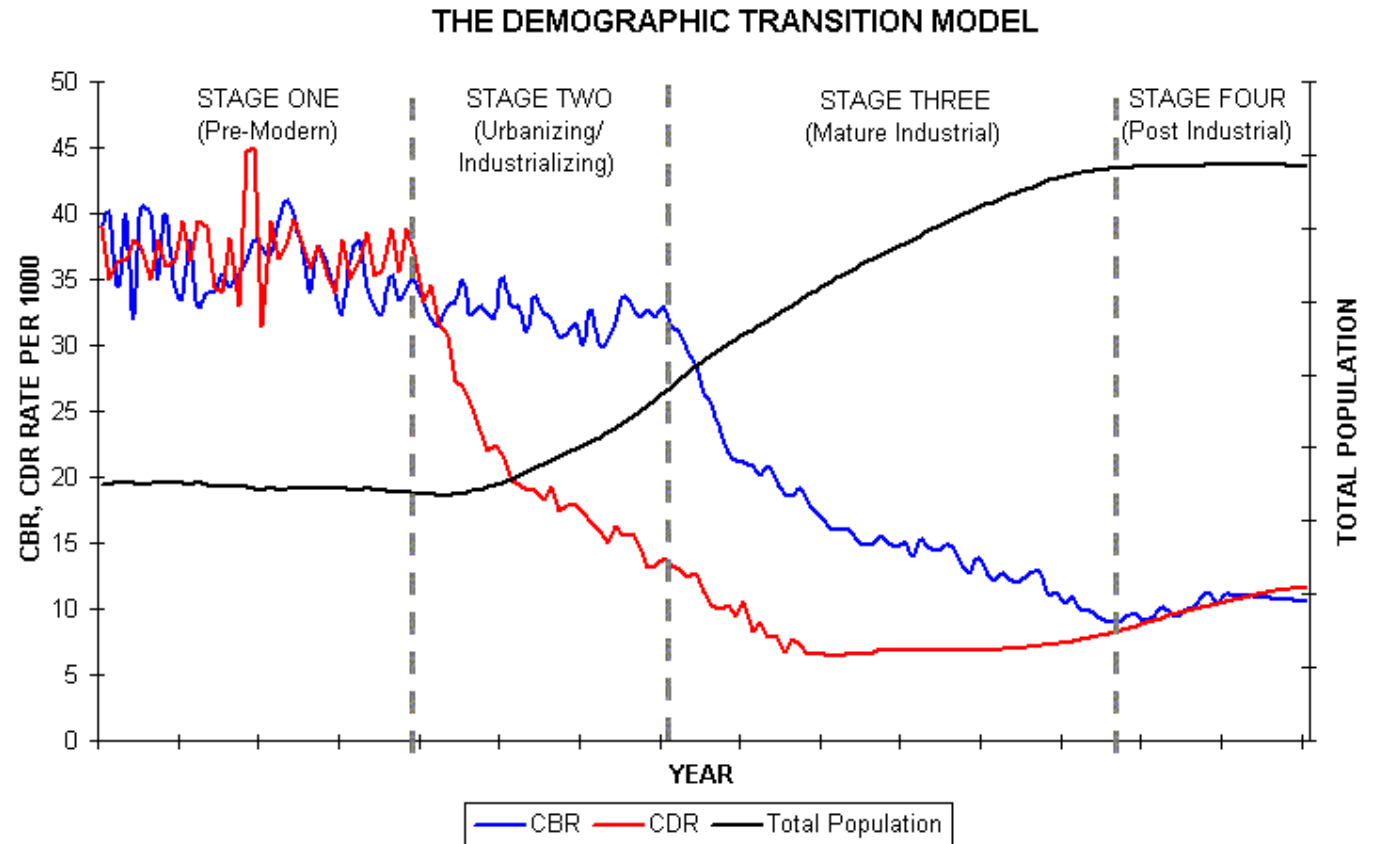
Demographic Transitions

Determined jointly by three demographic processes:

fertility, mortality and migration.

The tempo, or speed, has been different across the world

Historical and recent changes



What is Population Ageing?

Demographically speaking

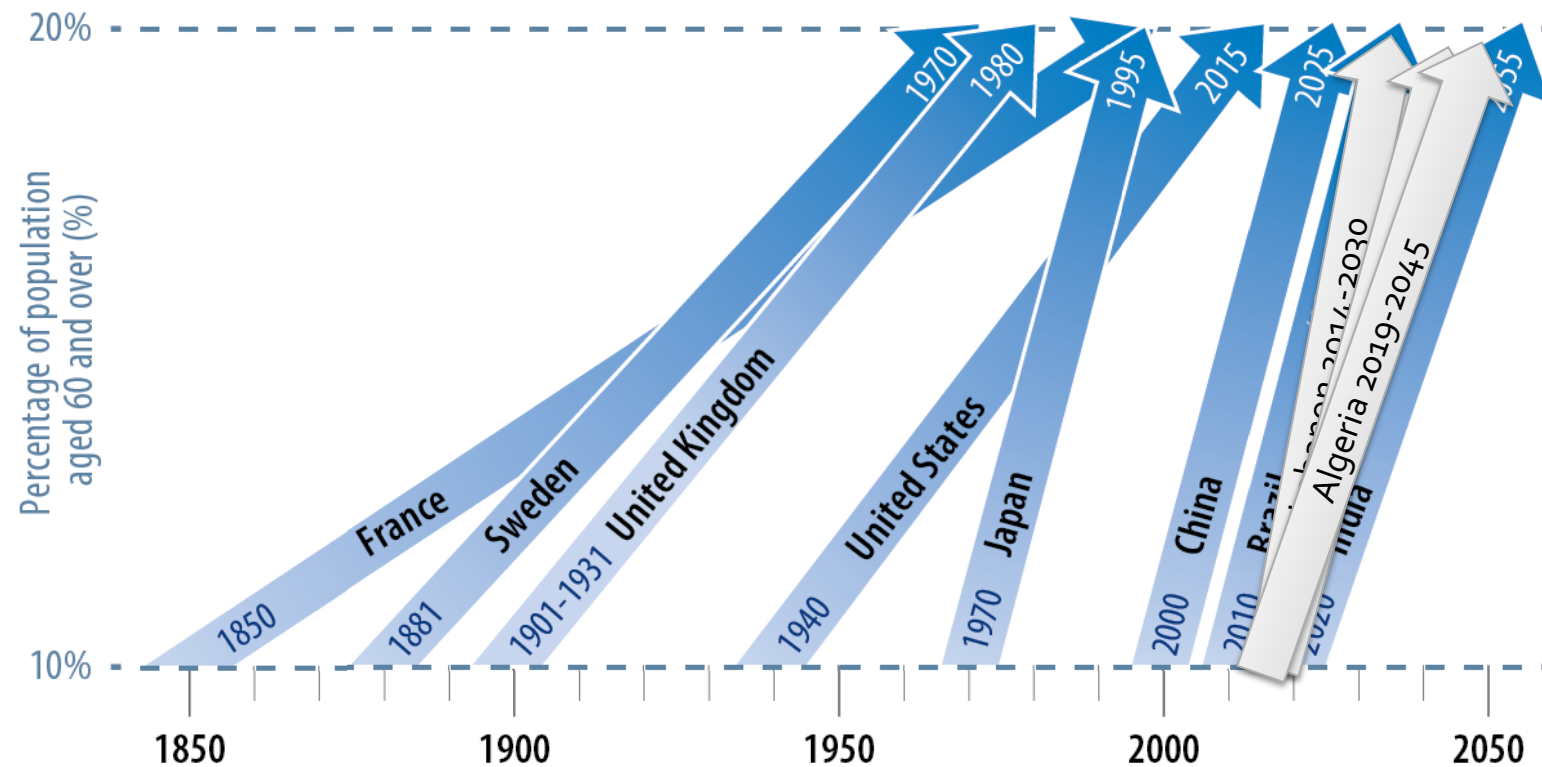
- Age Index
- age dependency ratio,
- percentage over 65+
- prospective ageing

Changes to the whole structure of a population

- Societal/population level
- Individual's perception
- Perceptions of ageing
 - What one can and can not do!
- Expectations from and opportunities at old age
- Differentials by societal & individual factors
- Variations in health and wellbeing at older age is not random

Population Ageing in LMICs

By 2050, 80% of the world
older people will be living in
LMICs



It is Much More than Numbers

The meaning of ageing

- No typical definition
- Varies within and across individuals, societies and groups
- Desired & unwanted outcomes

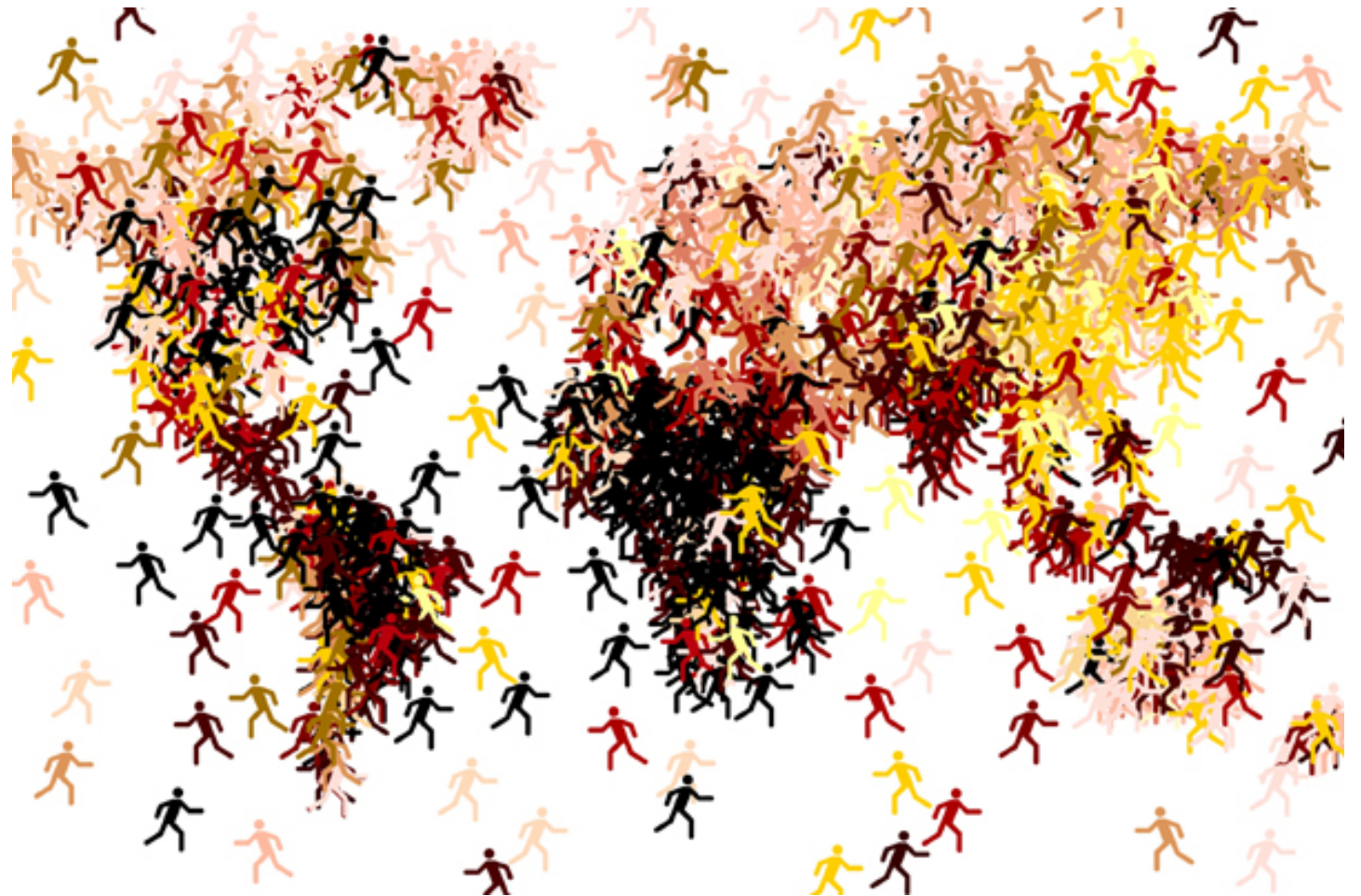


Image credit: *unsplash*

- The notion of 'Growing older'
 - Connotations of experience and frailty
 - Maturity and dependency
- Age-conscious societies
- A Growing attention to
 - Life-long learning
 - An increased importance of enhancing wellbeing and quality of life
- Not all years gained are spent in good health
- Huge observed levels of inequalities at old age

Global Connectedness

- Mobility of people & ideas
- Diversity within age groups
- Global care chains
- Virtual & actual connectedness
- (Un)planned retirement 'place'



Ageing in and out of 'Place'

Life trajectories and journeys
shape identity and
expectations at old age

Alignment and divergence
between envisaged and actual
ageing process

Earlier migrants growing older
in 'host' societies

- *'Neither here nor there, but rather somewhere in between'*
- Strong but limited social-bonds
- (dis)connection to home and host countries
- Collective and solidarity living
- Older people identity
- Caring across-borders; at a distance
- Otherness (us and them)

Inequalities at Old Age

RECOGNITION

- Self-recognition
- Cultural visibility & class
- Assumptions - otherness

negative

(MIS)REPRESENTATION

- Inclusion (exclusion) – the environment
- Participation
- Media representation

positive

OLD AGE INEQUALITIES

LIFE COURSE & SOCIAL CAPITAL

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



Global Ageing: Opportunities for Cross-Learning

Paradigm shift from a notion of 'crisis' to realising opportunities

The flow of knowledge and ideas is two-directional

Increasing role of social capital and community

Perception of self and others

Unequal experience but common goals

- Sustainability
- Equality
- Rethinking the life-course
 - Particularly around learning, training and work
- 50 is the new 30?
 - Demographically speaking could be accurate
- Inclusivity of the built and socially-constructed environment

The Middle East and North Africa Region

Geographically wide

Spans a mix of cultures, socio
and political dimensions

Historically characterized by
younger populations
and related policies

Dynamic socio-political

- Some Similarities:
 - Common languages, religious code, heritage
 - Norms around family, ageing and women (filial obligations etc.)
 - More coherence between sub-regions
- Huge variabilities:
 - Poverty and per capita income
 - Population size
 - Literacy and unemployment rates
 - Migration, geographical mobility, co-residency arrangements and other socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics

Population Ageing in the MENA Region

'Rapid' process of ageing (fast and steep)

High level of unpreparedness

Health and care services

Infrastructure

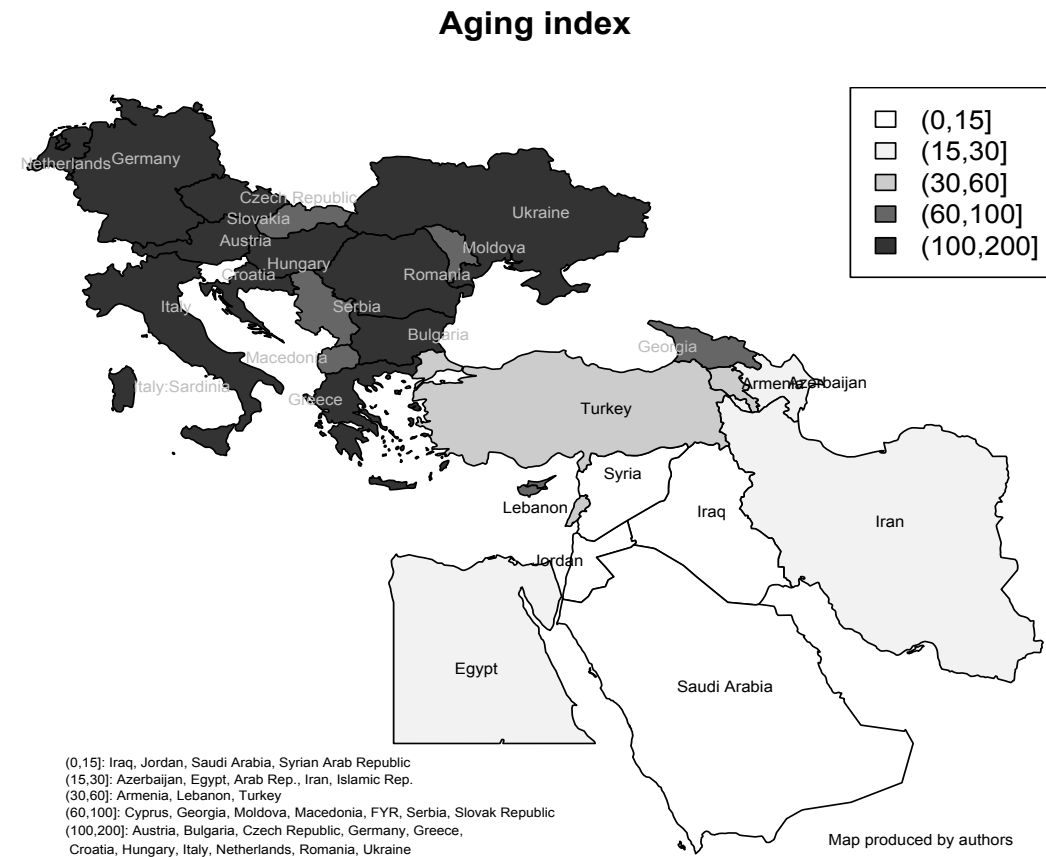
Social & economic opportunities

Social-determinants of health and wellbeing at old age

Nested within other demographic dynamics (pop. growth & dividends)

Socio-political structures

Perceived age-related roles & duties



'Treasuring' older people

Re-constructing 'real' vs.
rhetoric values

Healthy and meaningful
ageing process

Care is a family 'business'

Care ability and burden

- Younger populations dominate the policy agenda
- Obesity and co-morbidity
- Physical (in)activity
- Isolation and loneliness
- Care options
- Support mechanisms
- Regional and socio-economic differences
 - Within and between countries

Gender, Family and Communities

Gender roles, expectations and aspirations

Both as older people and informal carers

Unequal, and qualitatively different, gender share of caring burden

Family and marriage norms

Intergenerational two-ways flows of exchange

Ageing as 'women's' issues – at both ends of the spectrum

Wellbeing & quality of life

Opportunities – learning, training & the workforce

Informal support networks, communities and 'care-share'



Opportunities & Challenges

Fiscal constraints

Competing policy priorities

Challenges to traditional
social structures

- Extended families, closed-net communities

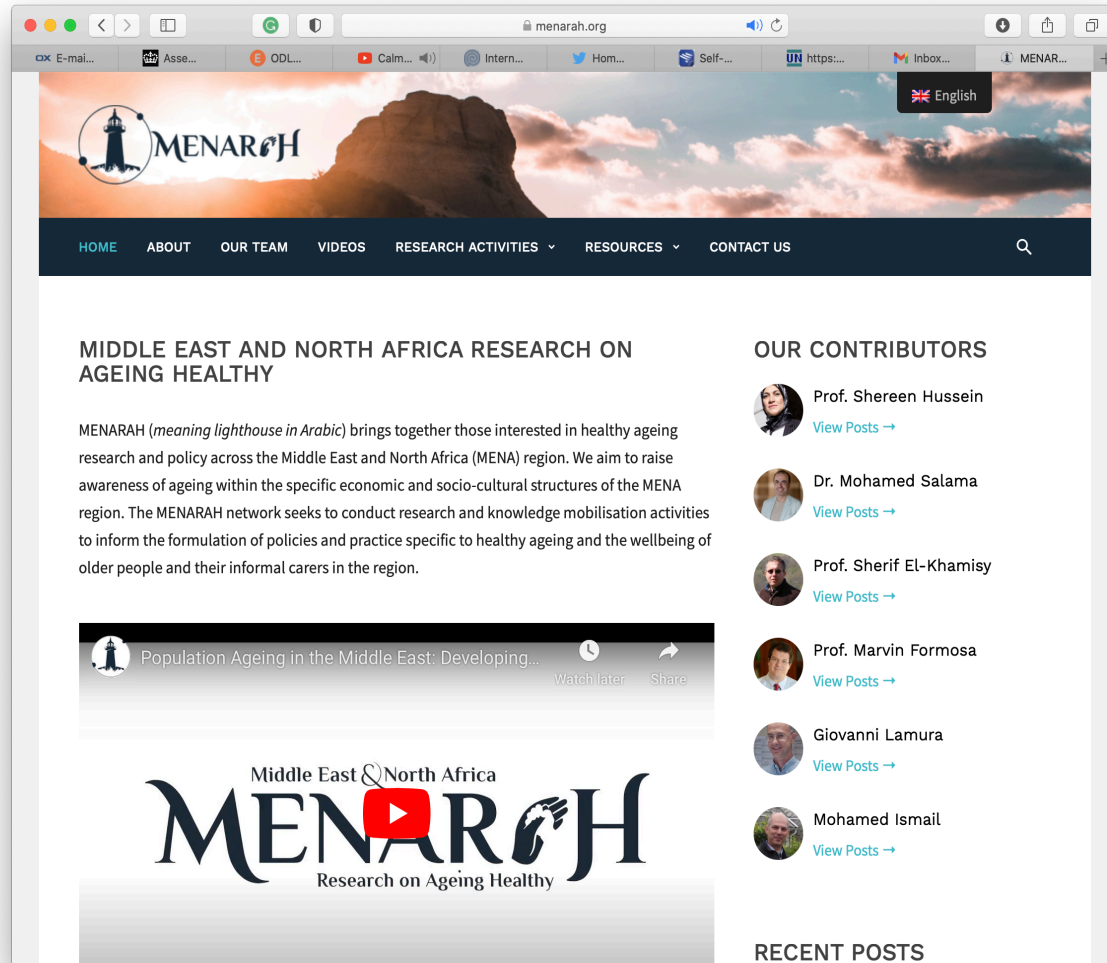
Environment & infrastructure

Awareness & stigma

- E.g., Dementia

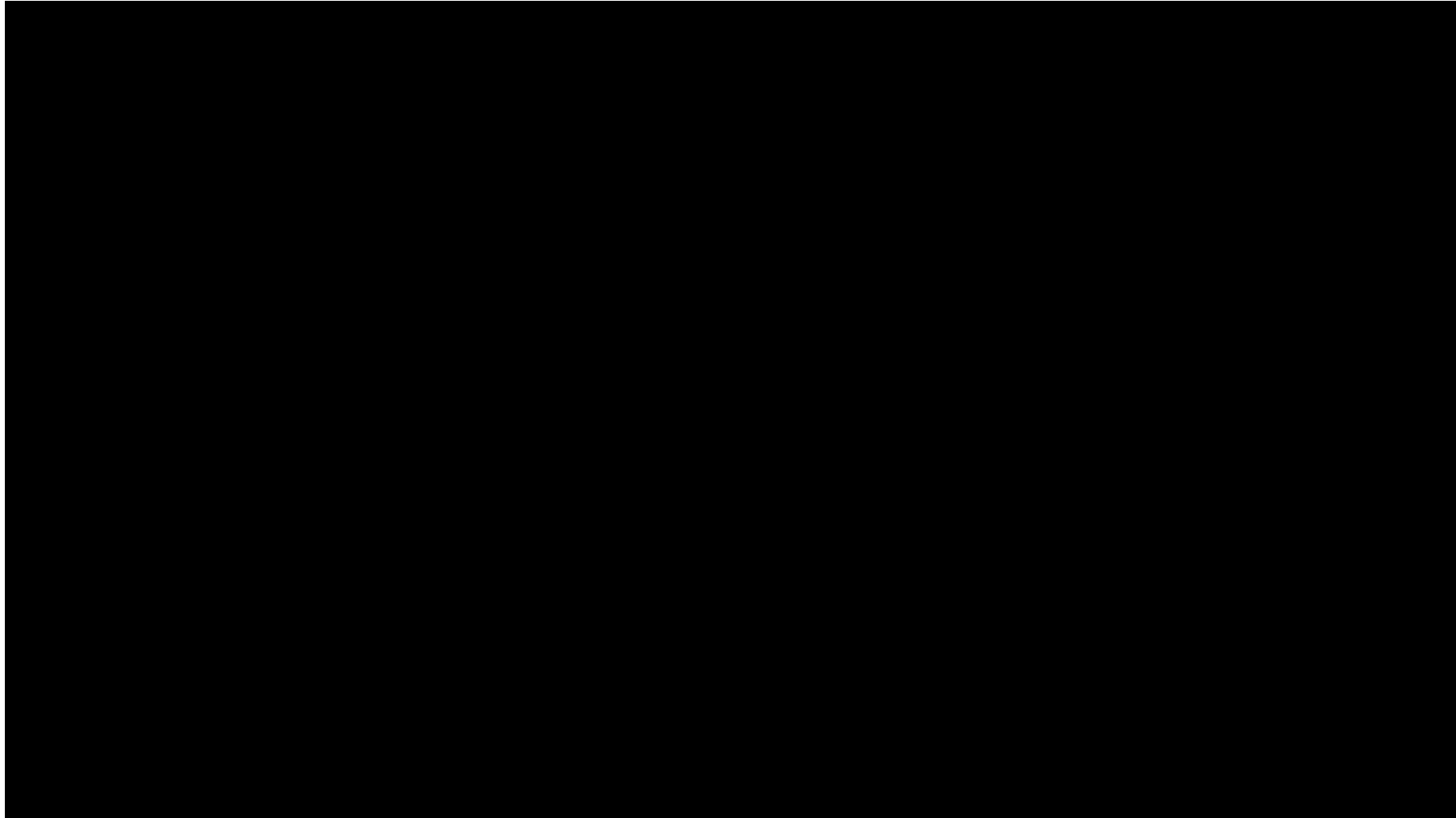
- A growing interest in global ageing, particularly healthy ageing
- The UN decade of health ageing (2021-2030) – building on the 2030 SDGs
- An interest in LMIC and the MENA region in developing ageing policies and supporting the community as a whole
- Realization of the need for data, evidence and dialogue
- A new initiative to bring stakeholders together (MENARAH)

The Middle East and North Africa Research on Ageing Healthy (MENARAH) Network



- Focuses on healthy ageing in its broadest meaning
- Aims to
 - Conduct research and knowledge mobilisation activities
 - Raise awareness and connect different actors
 - Inform policy and practice
- A network of researchers, NGOs, policymakers and many more
- Launched Sep. 2020; funded by the GCRF, UK

The MENARAH Network: www.menarah.org



Conclusion

- Ageing is everyone's business
- It is a normal part of our life-journeys
 - Yet perceived differently by various individuals, groups and societies
- Diversity of experiences across and between countries, groups and communities
- Many countries have experienced ageing for decades, yet are still working on capitalising on and benefiting from longevity
- Rethinking opportunities across the life-course
- The pace of population-ageing is incredibly faster in LMIC including the MENA region than has been previously observed in the global north
- Opportunities for global cross-learning, knowledge transfer and capacity building

Thank you for Listening

Shereen.Hussein@LSHTM.ac.uk

@DrShereeHussein

@MENARAH3

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE

