

ABSTRACT

The project on “Study of Centenarians in Thailand” had two objectives: 1) To study trends of demographic changes in the Thai population (size, age-sex structure, increasing trend) and health of the population age 80 years and more (‘the oldest old elderly’); and 2) To study the demographic characteristics (size, age-sex structure, geographic structure and trends and health of the Thai centenarians (age 100 years or more).

For Objective #1, secondary data from the National Population and Housing Census and model life tables were used to analyze the changes in size of the population, age-sex distribution, mortality patterns, probability of surviving, and health of the oldest old elderly population. A special set of life tables for the Thai population were constructed for the year 2004 to 2014 to analyze trends in longevity and disability-free life expectancy of the Thai population at present. The oldest old cohort of the Thai population is growing at the extremely rapid rate of approximately 6% per year. These individuals will become an extreme vulnerable group in the near future.

Objective #2 focused on the completeness on Thai centenarian database of the Thai Civil Registration. Registration-system development was analyzed for evaluation of individuals’ age. Information of centenarians unrevealing names was used as the primary source of data on studying demographic characteristics of Thai centenarians. A phone-based sample survey was conducted to key informants to compare Civil Registration data with the de facto number of living centenarians since some individuals may not have been removed post-mortem. This study also disaggregated the data on centenarians by province. Correction ratios, the ratio of survived centenarians per those recorded in the Civil Registration database, were created and used for estimation of the de facto number of living centenarians by province. Four provinces (one from each geographic region) were selected for a field survey to confirm that individuals identified by the Civil Registration as centenarians, were still alive and age 100 years or more. From this comparison, correction ratios were employed to adjust the total for the province. This study estimates that, in 2015, Thailand had a total of 1,026 centenarians (209 males and 817 females).

The field survey also included a component to evaluate the health of Thai centenarians. Health status scores were created and computed as a summary measure of the health of Thai centenarians. This component examined five dimensions of health: Memory, mobility, vision, hearing, and ability to feed oneself. This study found that over half the sample of centenarians were in poor health.

Based on the findings from this study, channel for improvements in the quality of the Civil Registration data on centenarians were recommended. The necessity of gender-different measures to increase the number of years lived with disability-free and reduce the duration of disability among the oldest old was urged.