

4.2 Age structure

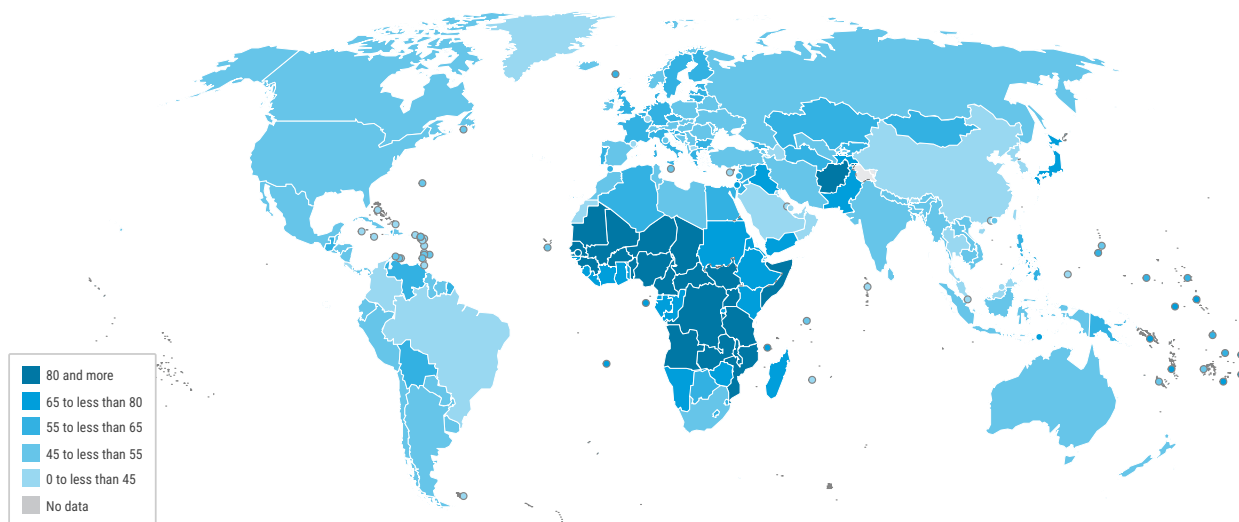
71 children per 100 persons of **working age** in Africa

The **proportion of older persons** worldwide projected to **increase** to **17%** in 2050 from **10%** in 2022

48% of the world's children are girls

Developed economies projected to **overtake Africa** in dependency ratio by 2050

Map 1. Dependency ratio, 2022
(Percentage)

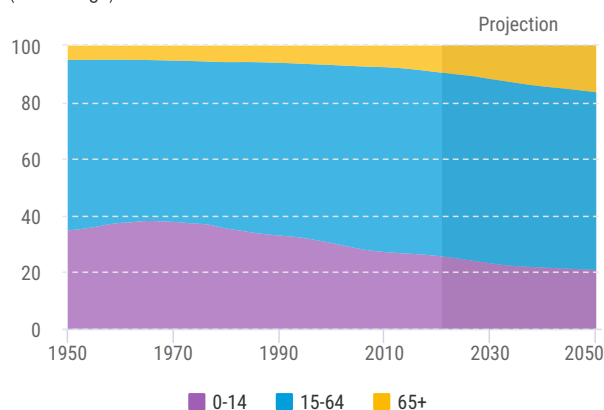


Regional distribution of dependency ratios and trends over time

In 2022, for every 100 persons of working age in the world there were 54 children or older people. Among the thirty economies with the highest dependency ratio, all except Afghanistan were in Africa. In these cases, the high ratios were a result of an extraordinarily high child dependency. In Africa as a whole, the child dependency ratio alone was 71 per cent. By contrast, the lowest dependency ratios were found on the Arabian Peninsula and in the Caribbean. Several developed economies, most notably Japan, show rising dependency ratios due to increasing old-age dependency.

Globally, 65 per cent of people were of working age in 2022. Fifty years ago, this number was 57 per cent. The marked change is that the proportion of children has decreased from 37 per cent in 1972 to 25 per cent while the proportion of older persons has increased from 5 to 10 per cent. People above the age of 64 are projected to make up 17 per cent of the global population by 2050.

Figure 1. World population by age group
(Percentage)



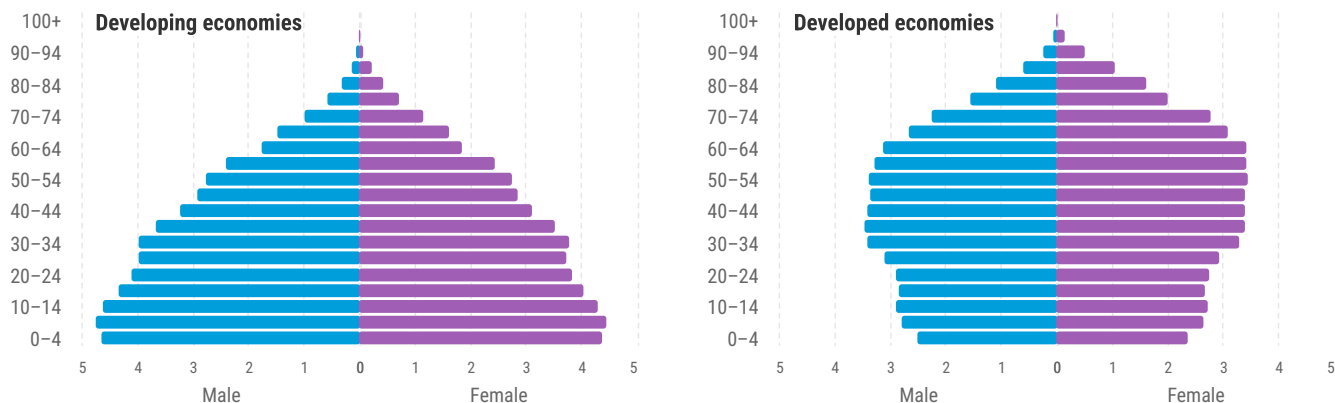
Note: The figures from 2022 to 2050 are based on the medium fertility variant projection (UN DESA, 2022b).

Young age cohorts are smaller in developed economies

The age structure in developing economies is pyramid-shaped with older age classes successively smaller than younger classes. By contrast, in developed economies, the biggest age groups are 35 to 54 years old. A temporarily accelerated decrease in births worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic is reflected by less children under 5 than in the next higher age group. Globally, in 2022, 59 per cent of people over 75 years were women, while only 48 per cent of children were girls. This imbalance can be seen in both developed and developing economies.

Figure 2. Population pyramids, 2022

(Percentage)



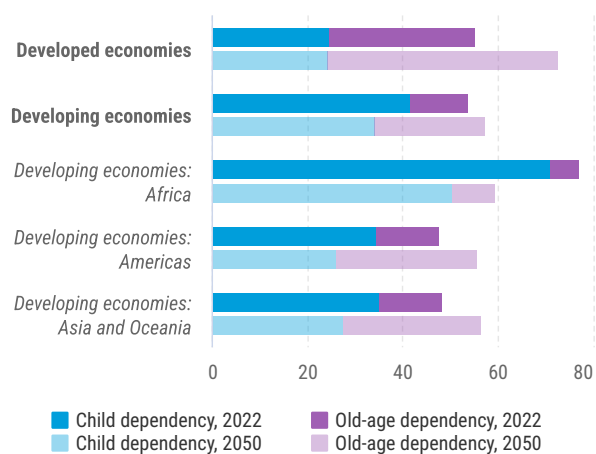
Working age people support fewer children but a larger number of older people

In most economies, the age structure has seen a trajectory over time, where dependency ratios first decrease, due to shrinking proportions of children, and later increase, as more people reach an age over 64.

In most regions of the world, the bulk of the dependency ratio decrease has already taken place. Further decreases in the child dependency ratio are projected to be more than offset by increases in the old-age dependency ratio. In Africa, however, the decline of the dependency ratio is expected to continue beyond 2050, and by 2050, the indicator is projected to fall to 60 per cent from 77 per cent in 2022. In developed economies, dependency ratios are already increasing and are projected to reach 73 per cent by 2050.

Figure 3. Dependency ratio by age structure

(Percentage)



Note: The total dependency ratio is the sum of the child and old-age dependency ratios.

Concepts and definitions

In this section, the term “persons of working age” refers to persons aged from 15 to 64 years. The term “children” refers to persons under the age of 15. The term “older persons” refers to persons over the age of 64.

The dependency ratio is defined as the number of children and older persons per hundred persons of working age. It can be expressed as the sum of the child dependency ratio and the old-age dependency ratio.

The child dependency ratio is defined as the number of children per hundred persons of working age. The old-age dependency ratio is defined as the number of older persons per hundred persons of working age.

For references, see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2023, annex 6.4

**Table 1. Age structure and dependency ratio by group of economies (as of 1 July)**

Group of economies	Year	Population			Dependency ratio		
		(Millions)			(Percentage)		
		0-14	15-64	65+	Child (0-14)	Old-age (65+)	Total
World	1950	868	1 503	128	57.7	8.5	66.2
	2022	2 014	5 178	783	38.9	15.1	54.0
	2050	2 010	6 096	1 603	33.0	26.3	59.3
Developed economies	1950	241	552	64	43.6	11.7	55.2
	2022	214	865	265	24.7	30.7	55.4
	2050	187	771	374	24.3	48.4	72.7
Developing economies	1950	627	952	64	65.9	6.7	72.6
	2022	1 800	4 313	518	41.7	12.0	53.7
	2050	1 823	5 325	1 229	34.2	23.1	57.3
Developing economies: Africa	1950	94	125	8	75.3	6.0	81.3
	2022	572	804	50	71.2	6.2	77.4
	2050	786	1 555	142	50.5	9.1	59.7
Developing economies: Americas	1950	68	92	5	73.8	5.8	79.6
	2022	153	443	60	34.5	13.5	47.9
	2050	126	479	141	26.3	29.4	55.7
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	1950	465	734	51	63.3	7.0	70.3
	2022	1 075	3 066	409	35.1	13.3	48.4
	2050	911	3 291	947	27.7	28.8	56.5
Selected groups							
Developing economies excluding China	1950	438	624	36	70.1	5.8	76.0
	2022	1 554	3 329	322	46.7	9.7	56.4
	2050	1 673	4 557	834	36.7	18.3	55.0
Developing economies excluding LDCs	1950	546	843	57	64.7	6.8	71.6
	2022	1 364	3 665	477	37.2	13.0	50.2
	2050	1 228	4 110	1 111	29.9	27.0	56.9
LDCs	1950	81	109	7	74.8	6.0	80.8
	2022	436	648	41	67.2	6.4	73.6
	2050	595	1 215	119	48.9	9.8	58.7
LLDCs	1950	32	42	2	76.8	5.6	82.4
	2022	220	323	20	68.2	6.3	74.5
	2050	290	607	56	47.8	9.2	57.0
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	1950	8	12	1	70.2	6.4	76.6
	2022	18	46	6	38.8	12.4	51.2
	2050	17	54	13	31.7	24.1	55.7
BRICS	1950	406	692	51	58.6	7.4	66.0
	2022	691	2 231	341	31.0	15.3	46.3
	2050	523	2 161	736	24.2	34.1	58.3
G20	1950	641	1 187	106	54.0	8.9	63.0
	2022	1 002	3 321	609	30.2	18.3	48.5
	2050	794	3 220	1 167	24.7	36.2	60.9

 **Table 2. Age structure by group of economies, 1 July 2022**

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage of total						
		All age classes	0–14	15–24	25–39	40–64	65–74	75+
World	7 975	100.0	25.3	15.5	22.1	27.3	6.2	3.6
Developed economies	1 343	100.0	15.9	11.2	19.6	33.6	10.8	8.9
Developing economies	6 631	100.0	27.1	16.3	22.7	26.1	5.2	2.6
Developing economies: Africa	1 425	100.0	40.1	19.2	20.5	16.7	2.4	1.0
Developing economies: Americas	655	100.0	23.3	16.2	23.4	28.0	5.8	3.4
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	4 550	100.0	23.6	15.4	23.2	28.7	6.0	2.9
Selected groups								
Developing economies excluding China	5 205	100.0	29.9	17.7	22.8	23.5	4.2	2.0
LDCs	1 125	100.0	38.7	19.9	20.9	16.9	2.6	1.1
LLDCs	563	100.0	39.1	19.6	21.0	16.7	2.5	1.0
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	70	100.0	25.7	16.2	23.0	27.0	5.3	2.9
Selected economies								
China	1 426	100.0	17.2	11.3	22.3	35.5	9.1	4.6
India	1 417	100.0	25.3	18.0	24.2	25.6	4.7	2.2
Nigeria	219	100.0	43.0	19.7	18.9	15.3	2.1	0.8
Brazil	215	100.0	20.3	15.1	24.0	30.7	6.4	3.4
Russian Federation	145	100.0	17.7	10.1	22.3	34.1	10.2	5.6
Japan	124	100.0	11.6	9.3	15.6	33.5	13.6	16.3

 **Table 3. Female population by age class, 1 July 2022**

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage of female						
		All age classes	0–14	15–24	25–39	40–64	65–74	75+
World	3 967	49.7	48.5	48.4	48.9	50.2	53.6	59.3
Developed economies	688	51.2	48.7	48.7	49.3	50.9	54.4	60.6
Developing economies	3 278	49.4	48.4	48.4	48.8	50.0	53.2	58.4
Developing economies: Africa	714	50.1	49.4	49.6	50.0	51.1	54.7	59.0
Developing economies: Americas	333	50.7	49.0	49.3	50.1	51.7	54.6	59.5
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	2 232	49.0	47.9	47.7	48.3	49.6	52.8	58.2
Selected groups								
Developing economies excluding China	2 580	49.6	48.8	48.8	49.1	50.1	53.3	58.6
LDCs	566	50.3	49.3	49.6	50.5	51.7	54.5	57.5
LLDCs	284	50.3	49.2	49.6	50.6	52.0	56.3	61.3
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	35	49.4	48.9	48.8	48.6	49.7	52.4	57.7
Selected economies								
China	698	49.0	46.5	46.1	47.6	49.7	53.1	58.1
India	686	48.4	47.8	47.5	47.9	49.0	51.0	55.7
Brazil	110	50.9	49.0	49.2	49.8	51.8	55.5	60.5
Nigeria	108	49.5	49.3	49.1	49.4	50.0	51.8	52.9
Russian Federation	78	53.6	48.7	49.0	49.7	53.8	63.0	73.5
Japan	64	51.4	48.9	48.9	49.0	49.7	52.0	60.0