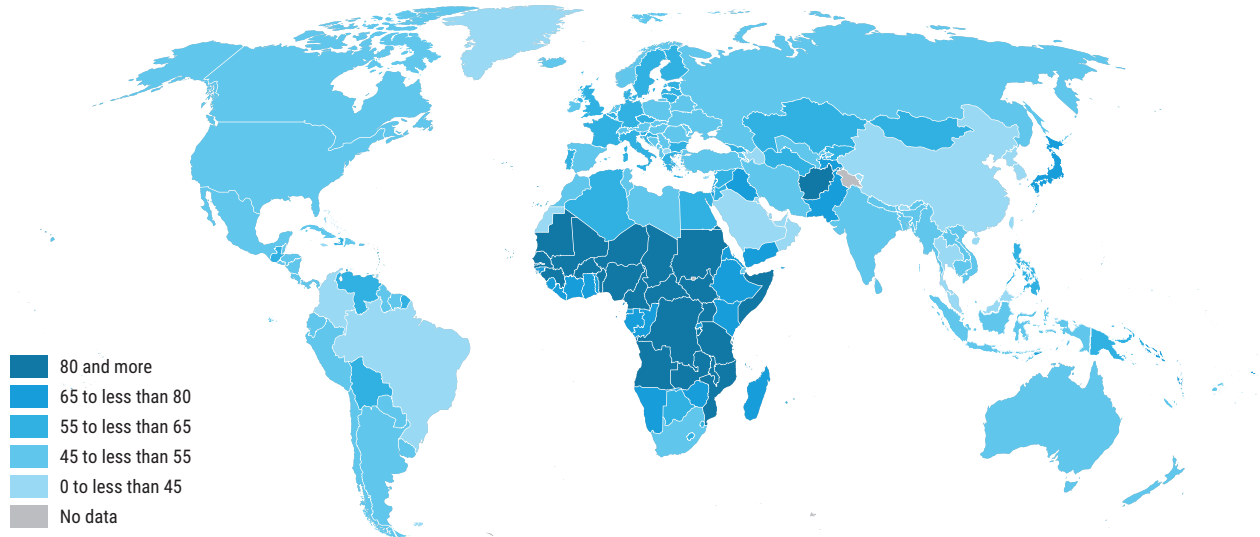




Fact sheet #12: Age structure

Map 1 Dependency ratio, 2021
(Percentage)



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.

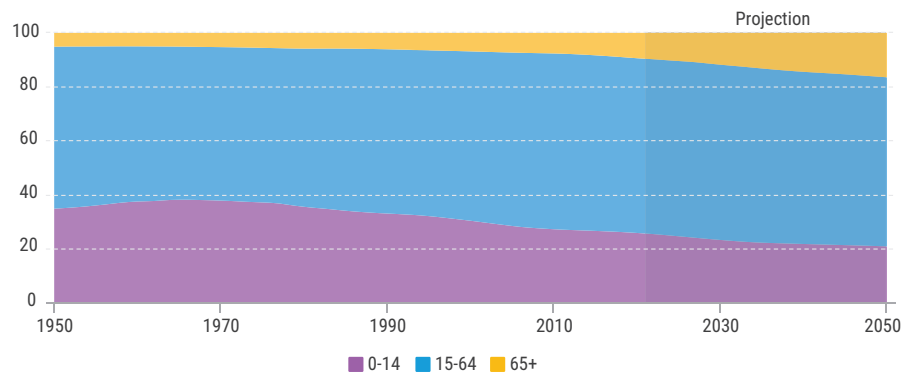
The child dependency ratio is defined as the number of children per hundred persons of working age. The old-age dependency ratio is defined as the number of older persons per hundred persons of working age.

Regional distribution of dependency ratios and trends over time

In 2021, for every 100 persons of working age there were 54 children or older people. The dependency ratio was highest in some African countries and in Afghanistan. In all these cases, the high ratios were a result of a very high child dependency. In Africa as a whole, the child dependency ratio alone was 72 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 2021. Fifty years ago, this number was 57 per cent. The marked change is that the proportion of children has decreased from 38 per cent in 1971 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 16 per cent of the global population by 2050.

Figure 1 World population by age group
(Percentage)



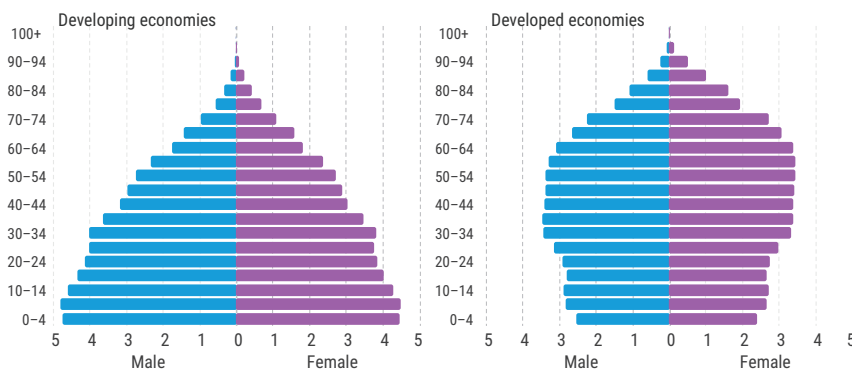


Young age cohorts are smaller in developed economies

The age structure in developing economies is pyramid shaped with older age classes successively smaller than younger classes. In developed economies, however, the biggest age groups are 30 to 59 years old. A temporarily accelerated decrease in births worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic is reflected by the size of groups of children under 5.

Globally, in 2021, 59 per cent of people over 75 years were women, while only 48 per cent of children were girls. This imbalance in the sex distribution can be seen in both developed and developing economies.

Figure 2 Population pyramids, 2021
(Percentage)



The proportion of older persons worldwide projected to increase to 16% by 2050 from 10% in 2021

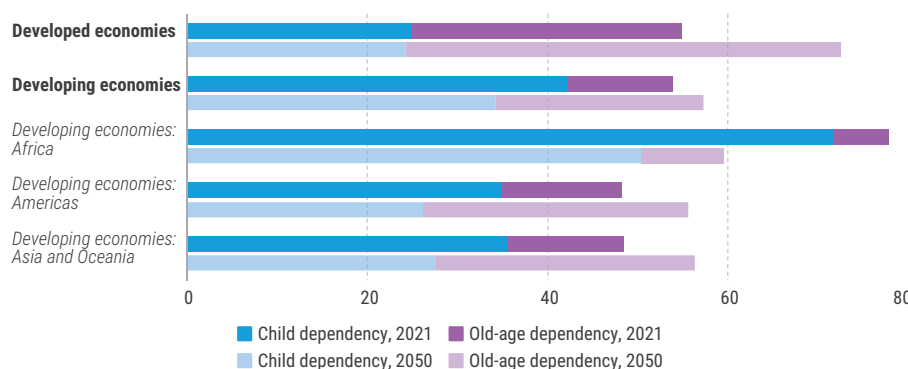
Working age people support fewer children but more older persons

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 of over 64.

In most regions of the world, the bulk of the dependency ratio decrease has already taken place, and 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. By 2050, the dependency ratio in Africa is projected to fall to 60 per cent from 78 per cent in 2021. 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.

Developed economies projected to overtake Africa in dependency ratio by 2050




Table 1 | Age structure and dependency ratio by group of economies

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
	2021	2 015	5 133	761	39.3	14.8	54.1
	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
	2021	216	867	261	24.9	30.1	55.0
	2050	187	771	374	24.3	48.4	72.7
Developing economies	1950	627	952	64	65.9	6.7	72.6
	2021	1 799	4 266	500	42.2	11.7	53.9
	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
	2021	562	782	48	71.8	6.2	78.0
	2050	786	1 555	142	50.5	9.1	59.7
Developing economies: Americas	1950	68	92	5	73.8	5.8	79.6
	2021	154	440	58	35.0	13.2	48.2
	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
	2021	1 083	3 044	394	35.6	13.0	48.5
	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
	2021	1 547	3 279	313	47.2	9.5	56.7
	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
	2021	1 371	3 635	461	37.7	12.7	50.4
	2050	1 228	4 110	1 111	29.9	27.0	56.9
LDCs	1950	81	109	7	74.8	6.0	80.8
	2021	429	631	40	67.9	6.3	74.2
	2050	595	1 215	119	48.9	9.8	58.7
LLDCs	1950	32	42	2	76.8	5.6	82.4
	2021	217	314	20	68.9	6.3	75.2
	2050	290	607	56	47.8	9.2	57.0
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	1950	8	12	1	70.2	6.4	76.6
	2021	18	46	6	39.1	12.1	51.3
	2050	17	54	13	31.7	24.1	55.7
HIPCs (IMF)	1950	53	69	4	76.7	6.1	82.7
	2021	345	443	23	78.0	5.3	83.2
	2050	517	970	72	53.3	7.4	60.7
BRICS	1950	406	692	51	58.6	7.4	66.0
	2021	700	2 222	330	31.5	14.8	46.4
	2050	523	2 161	736	24.2	34.1	58.3
G20	1950	641	1 187	106	54.0	8.9	63.0
	2021	1 014	3 307	593	30.7	17.9	48.6
	2050	794	3 220	1 167	24.7	36.2	60.9


Table 2 | Age structure by group of economies, 2021

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage of total						
		All age classes	0–14	15–24	25–39	40–64	65–74	75+
World	7 909	100.0	25.5	15.5	22.2	27.2	6.0	3.6
Developed economies	1 343	100.0	16.1	11.2	19.7	33.6	10.7	8.7
Developing economies	6 566	100.0	27.4	16.4	22.8	25.9	5.1	2.5
Developing economies: Africa	1 392	100.0	40.4	19.2	20.5	16.5	2.4	1.0
Developing economies: Americas	652	100.0	23.6	16.4	23.5	27.7	5.6	3.3
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	4 521	100.0	24.0	15.5	23.3	28.5	5.8	2.9
Selected groups								
Developing economies excluding China	5 140	100.0	30.1	17.8	22.8	23.2	4.1	2.0
LDCs	1 100	100.0	39.0	19.9	20.8	16.7	2.5	1.1
LLDCs	551	100.0	39.3	19.6	20.9	16.6	2.5	1.0
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	70	100.0	25.9	16.4	22.9	26.8	5.2	2.9
Selected economies								
China	1 426	100.0	17.7	11.3	22.6	35.3	8.7	4.4
India	1 408	100.0	25.7	18.1	24.1	25.3	4.6	2.2
Brazil	214	100.0	20.5	15.4	24.2	30.3	6.2	3.3
Nigeria	213	100.0	43.3	19.6	18.9	15.2	2.1	0.8
Russian Federation	145	100.0	17.7	9.8	22.7	34.1	9.9	5.7
Japan	125	100.0	11.8	9.3	15.7	33.4	13.9	15.8

Table 3 | Female population by age class, 2021

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage female						
		All age classes	0–14	15–24	25–39	40–64	65–74	75+
World	3 933	49.7	48.5	48.4	48.9	50.2	53.5	59.4
Developed economies	689	51.2	48.7	48.7	49.3	50.9	54.4	60.8
Developing economies	3 244	49.4	48.4	48.4	48.8	50.0	53.2	58.3
Developing economies: Africa	697	50.1	49.4	49.6	50.0	51.1	54.6	58.9
Developing economies: Americas	331	50.7	49.0	49.3	50.1	51.7	54.5	59.4
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	2 216	49.0	47.8	47.8	48.3	49.6	52.8	58.1
Selected groups								
Developing economies excluding China	2 546	49.5	48.7	48.8	49.1	50.1	53.3	58.5
LDCs	553	50.3	49.3	49.6	50.6	51.7	54.4	57.3
LLDCs	277	50.3	49.2	49.6	50.6	52.0	56.2	61.1
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	34	49.4	48.9	48.8	48.6	49.6	52.3	57.5
Selected economies								
China	698	48.9	46.4	46.2	47.7	49.7	53.0	58.1
India	681	48.4	47.8	47.5	48.0	48.9	51.0	55.6
Brazil	109	50.9	49.0	49.2	49.9	51.8	55.5	60.3
Nigeria	106	49.5	49.3	49.1	49.4	50.0	51.8	53.0
Russian Federation	78	53.6	48.7	49.0	49.7	53.9	62.9	73.7
Japan	64	51.4	48.9	48.9	49.0	49.7	52.0	60.2