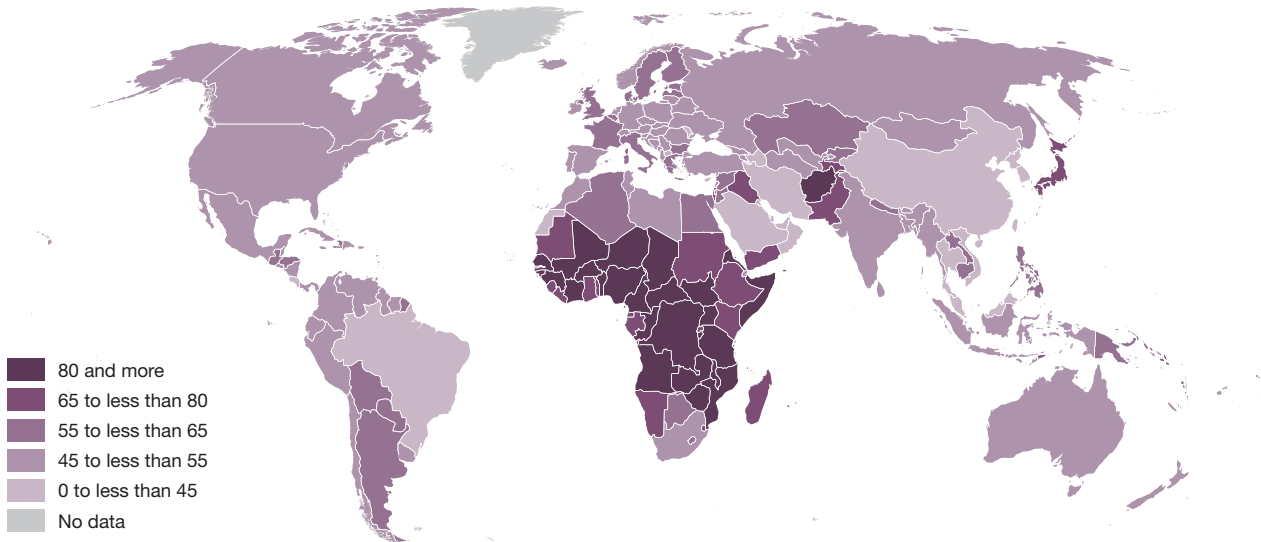




Fact sheet #12: Age structure

Map 1 | **Dependency ratio, 2018**
(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 aged 65 years or more.

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.

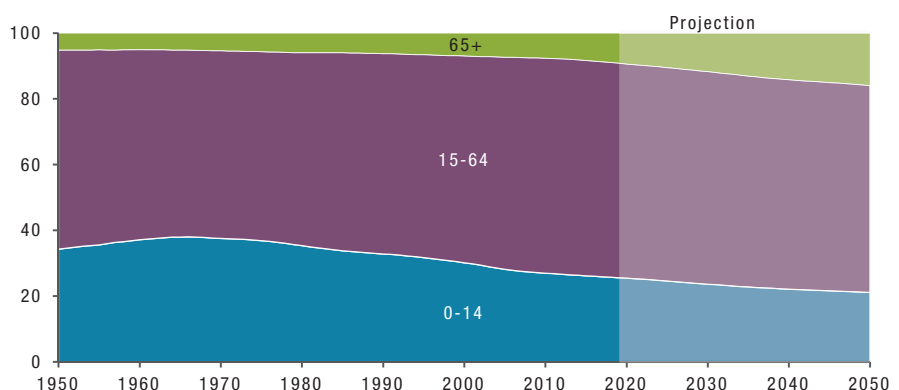
The old-age dependency ratio is defined as the number of older persons per hundred persons of working age.

Regional distribution of dependency ratios and trends over time

Globally, in 2018, for every 100 persons of working age there were 53 persons who were younger or older. This figure, the dependency ratio, varies considerably across regions. In most economies of Western, Middle and Eastern Africa it is higher than 65 per cent, whereas in Western, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, it is often lower than 45 per cent. Notable exceptions include Japan (67 per cent) and Israel (66 per cent), as well as Yemen (74 per cent), Timor-Leste (73 per cent), Iraq (72 per cent) and economies around the Hindu Kush.

Of the global ratio of 53 per cent, 14 persons per 100 were younger than the working age and 39 were older. The proportion of people under 15 in the population has steadily declined since 1966, from 38 per cent to 26 per cent in 2018, while the proportion of the older than 64 has risen from 5 to 9 per cent. The net effect has been a decline of the dependency ratio from 76 to 53 per cent. The aging of the world population is projected to continue in the next 30 years.

Figure 1 | **World population by age group**
(Percentage)



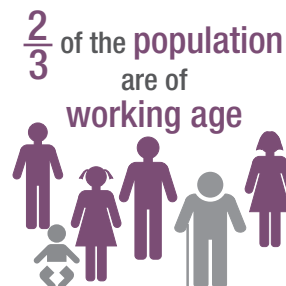
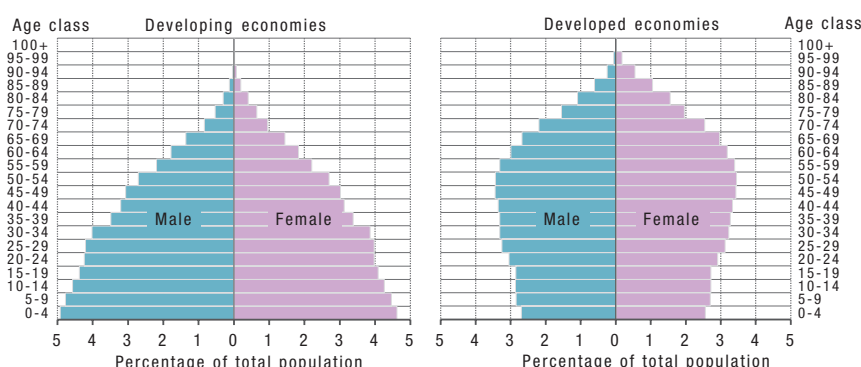


Non-pyramid shape of developed economies' population pyramid

Looking at population pyramids, we find that in developing economies, older age classes are successively smaller than younger. In developed economies, this pattern is reversed, from age 50 years or less, so that the proportions of older age groups are larger and those of younger age groups smaller than in developing economies.

In both the developing and developed world, women are the majority for older age groups, whereas the majority of children are boys. In 2018, 49.6 per cent of the world population were female.

Figure 2 | Population pyramids, 2018



Proportion of young people fell from 38 to 26% over the last 50 years

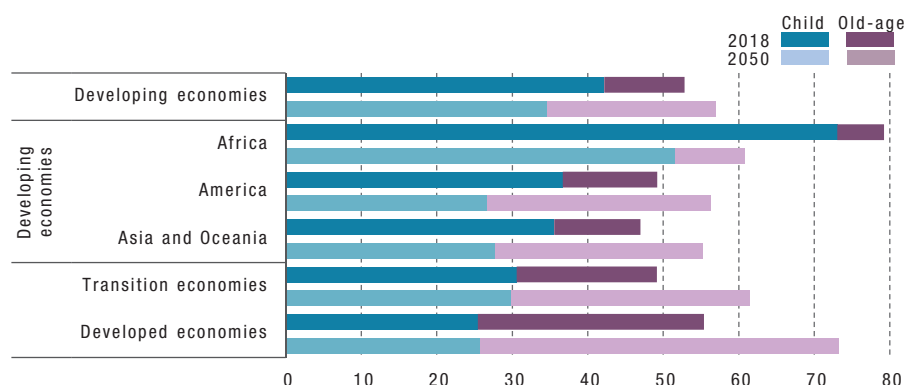


Less child dependency, more old-age dependency

Over the next 30 years, the total dependency ratio is projected to rise in most regions. Child dependency ratios will decrease, but it is forecast that this effect will be compensated by rising old-age dependency. Africa is the exception, featuring both decreasing child and overall dependency ratios (child: from 73 per cent in 2018 to 52 per cent in 2050, overall: from 79 to 61 per cent). In general, child dependency ratios are projected to fall fastest where they are currently highest.

Contrary to child dependency, old-age dependency is forecast to increase most for the groups of economies where it is already comparatively high, especially in developed economies, where an increase from 30 to 47 per cent is expected by 2050.

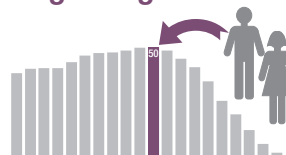
Figure 3 | Dependency ratio by age structure (Percentage)



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

For references, see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2019, annex 6.4.

In developed economies, people in their 50s form the largest age cohort



Old-age dependency in developed economies is high and forecast to keep rising




Table 1 | Age structure 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	870	1 538	129	56.5	8.4	64.9
	2018	1 965	4 988	678	39.4	13.6	53.0
	2050	2 056	6 131	1 549	33.5	25.3	58.8
Developing economies	1950	636	991	64	64.2	6.5	70.7
	2018	1 728	4 097	435	42.2	10.6	52.8
	2050	1 833	5 299	1 185	34.6	22.4	57.0
Developing economies: Africa	1950	94	126	7	74.6	5.9	80.5
	2018	520	711	44	73.1	6.2	79.2
	2050	797	1 548	143	51.5	9.2	60.7
Developing economies: America	1950	67	93	6	72.2	6.2	78.4
	2018	157	428	53	36.7	12.5	49.2
	2050	130	485	144	26.7	29.6	56.3
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	1950	475	772	51	61.5	6.6	68.1
	2018	1 051	2 958	338	35.5	11.4	47.0
	2050	906	3 266	899	27.8	27.5	55.3
Transition economies	1950	59	128	12	45.7	9.5	55.2
	2018	64	208	39	30.6	18.6	49.2
	2050	58	195	62	29.9	31.6	61.5
Developed economies	1950	175	419	53	41.7	12.5	54.2
	2018	174	683	204	25.5	29.9	55.4
	2050	164	636	302	25.8	47.5	73.3
Selected groups							
Developing economies excluding China	1950	448	650	39	68.9	6.1	74.9
	2018	1 473	3 080	279	47.8	9.1	56.9
	2050	1 635	4 461	819	36.7	18.4	55.0
Developing economies excluding LDCs	1950	556	883	58	62.9	6.5	69.5
	2018	1 330	3 520	399	37.8	11.3	49.1
	2050	1 262	4 113	1 065	30.7	25.9	56.6
LDCs	1950	80	108	6	74.4	5.9	80.3
	2018	398	576	36	69.1	6.2	75.4
	2050	571	1 186	120	48.1	10.1	58.2
LLDCs	1950	32	42	2	76.2	5.4	81.5
	2018	201	289	19	69.4	6.5	75.9
	2050	274	593	60	46.2	10.1	56.3
SIDS (UNCTAD)	1950	2	2	0	69.8	6.9	76.7
	2018	3	8	1	42.1	11.2	53.2
	2050	3	10	2	34.3	22.0	56.3
HIPCs (IMF)	1950	52	67	4	77.3	5.9	83.2
	2018	309	389	22	79.4	5.5	84.9
	2050	484	925	73	52.3	7.9	60.2
BRICS	1950	357	602	39	59.3	6.4	65.7
	2018	709	2 202	283	32.2	12.8	45.0
	2050	574	2 226	682	25.8	30.6	56.4
G20	1950	592	1 104	96	53.6	8.7	62.3
	2018	1 028	3 276	528	31.4	16.1	47.5
	2050	862	3 305	1 110	26.1	33.6	59.7

**Table 2** | Age structure by group of economies, 2018

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage of total						
		All age classes	0-14	15-24	25-39	40-64	65-74	75+
World	7 631	100.0	25.8	15.8	22.5	27.1	5.5	3.4
Developing economies	6 260	100.0	27.6	16.7	22.9	25.9	4.6	2.3
Developing economies: Africa	1 275	100.0	40.8	19.3	20.5	16.1	2.4	1.0
Developing economies: America	638	100.0	24.6	16.9	23.4	26.7	5.1	3.3
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	4 347	100.0	24.2	15.9	23.6	28.6	5.2	2.6
Transition economies	310	100.0	20.5	11.5	24.0	31.6	7.2	5.3
Developed economies	1 061	100.0	16.4	11.5	19.5	33.3	10.4	8.9
Selected groups								
Developing economies excluding China	4 832	100.0	30.5	18.0	22.9	22.8	3.8	2.0
LDCs	1 010	100.0	39.4	20.0	20.6	16.4	2.4	1.1
LLDCs	509	100.0	39.4	19.8	20.6	16.4	2.5	1.2
SIDS (UNCTAD)	13	100.0	27.4	17.3	23.0	25.0	4.6	2.7
Selected economies								
China	1 428	100.0	17.9	12.1	23.0	36.0	7.4	3.5
India	1 353	100.0	27.1	18.2	24.0	24.5	4.2	2.0
Brazil	209	100.0	21.3	16.2	24.5	29.0	5.6	3.4
Nigeria	196	100.0	43.9	19.1	19.3	15.0	2.1	0.7
Russian Federation	146	100.0	17.9	9.5	23.9	34.0	8.4	6.3
Japan	127	100.0	12.7	9.3	16.8	33.6	14.0	13.6

Table 3 | Female population by age class, 2018

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage female						
		All age classes	0-14	15-24	25-39	40-64	65-74	75+
World	3 784	49.6	48.4	48.4	49.0	50.1	52.9	58.9
Developing economies	3 081	49.2	48.3	48.3	48.9	49.8	52.2	56.9
Developing economies: Africa	638	50.0	49.3	49.6	50.2	51.2	54.1	58.2
Developing economies: America	324	50.8	49.0	49.4	50.4	52.1	54.2	59.0
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	2 119	48.7	47.7	47.7	48.4	49.3	51.6	56.4
Transition economies	163	52.6	48.5	48.8	49.8	53.7	61.1	70.8
Developed economies	540	50.9	48.7	48.8	49.4	50.4	53.0	59.9
Selected groups								
Developing economies excluding China	2 385	49.4	48.6	48.6	49.1	50.1	52.8	57.0
LDCs	508	50.3	49.4	49.7	50.8	51.4	53.9	56.5
LLDCs	257	50.4	49.3	49.7	51.0	52.0	55.5	59.4
SIDS (UNCTAD)	6	49.5	49.0	48.5	48.5	50.5	52.7	56.8
Selected economies								
China	695	48.7	46.5	46.8	48.4	49.3	51.2	56.7
India	650	48.0	47.5	47.1	47.6	48.8	50.9	54.0
Brazil	106	50.8	48.9	49.3	50.1	51.9	54.9	60.3
Nigeria	97	49.3	48.9	49.2	49.3	50.3	52.4	53.3
Russian Federation	78	53.7	48.7	48.9	50.0	54.4	62.6	73.3
Japan	65	51.2	48.7	48.7	48.9	49.6	52.2	60.9