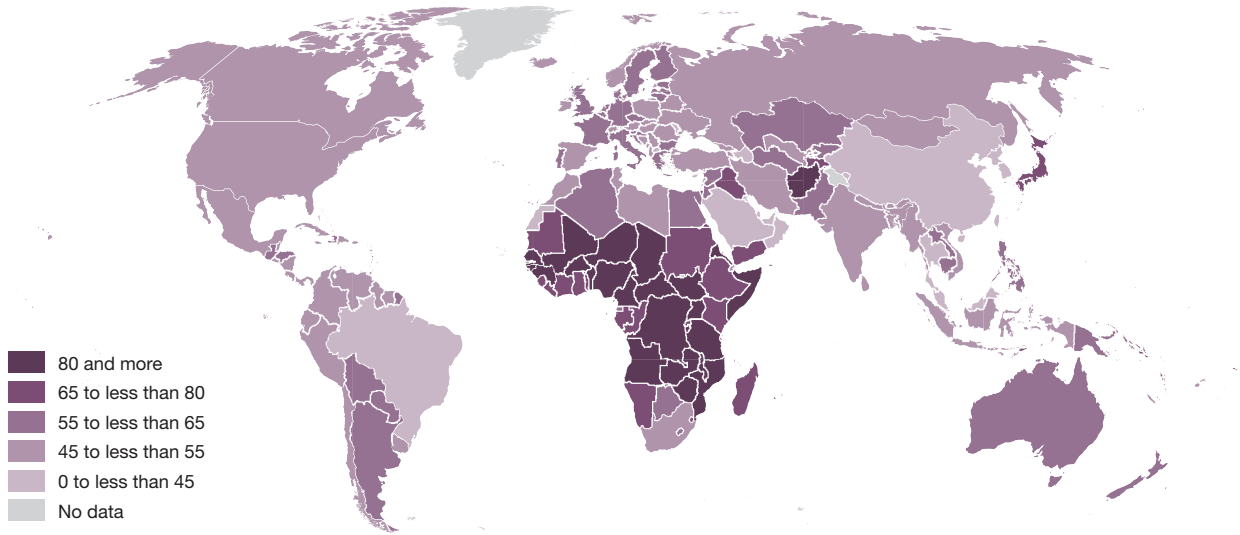




# Fact sheet #12: Age structure

**Map 1** | **Dependency ratio, 2020**  
(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.

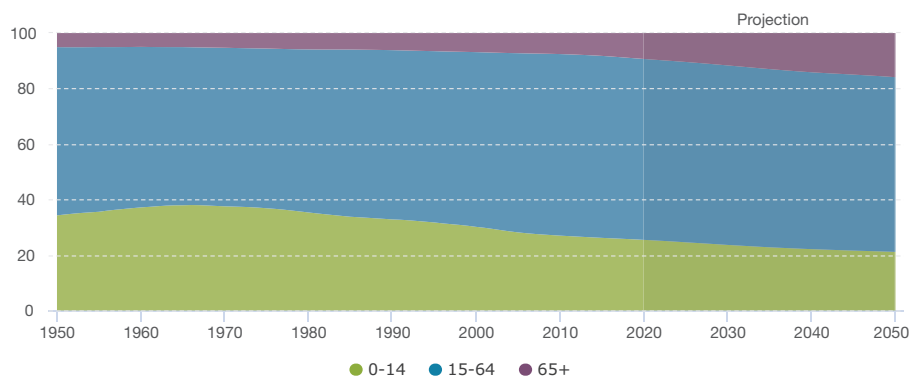
Except for the world total, data in this chapter exclude data by sex and age for economies with a population of less than 90 000 in 2019.

## Regional distribution of dependency ratios and trends over time

Globally, in 2020, 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 (69 per cent) and Israel (67 per cent), as well as Yemen (72 per cent), Timor-Leste (70 per cent) and Iraq (70 per cent).

Globally, for every 100 persons of working age there were 39 children and 14 older people. The proportion of children in the population has steadily declined from the peak of 38 per cent in 1966, to 25 per cent in 2020, while the proportion of the older than 64 rose from 5 to 9 per cent over the same period. 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 coming decades.

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



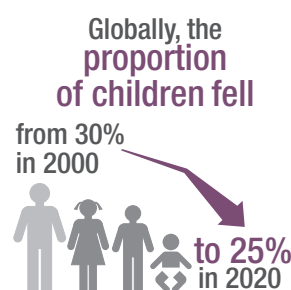
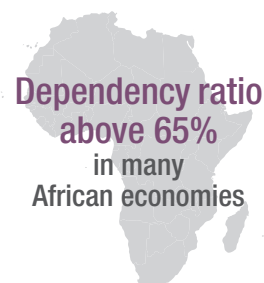
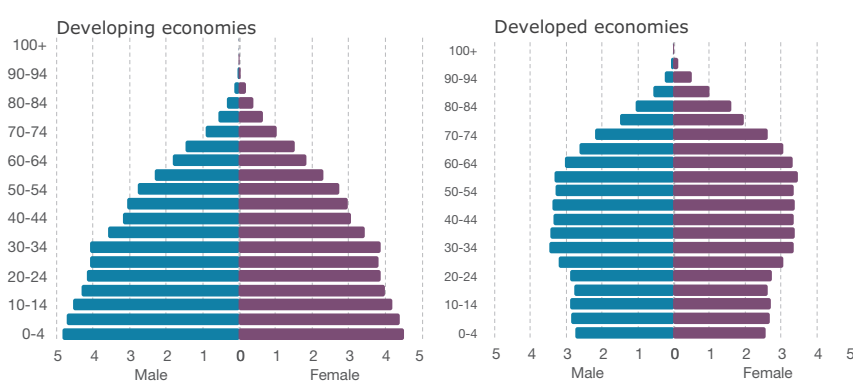


### Non-pyramid shape of developed economies' population pyramid

Comparing population pyramids, we find that in developing economies, older age classes are successively smaller than younger classes. In developed economies, this pattern is reversed, so that the proportions of older age groups are larger and younger age groups are 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 2020, 49.6 per cent of the world population was female.

**Figure 2** | Population pyramids, 2020

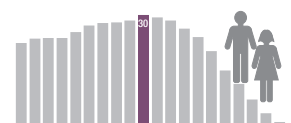


### Less child dependency, more old-age dependency

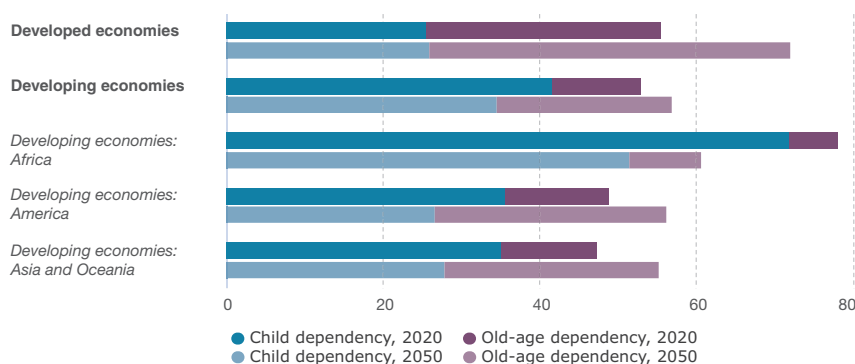
Over the next 30 years, the total dependency ratio is projected to rise in most regions. Child dependency ratios will decrease, but it is forecast that this will be compensated for by rising old-age dependency ratios. Africa is the exception, featuring both decreasing child and overall dependency ratios (child: from 72 per cent in 2020 to 52 per cent in 2050, overall: from 78 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 in the groups of economies where it is already comparatively high. This is the case in developed economies, where an increase from 30 per cent in 2020 to 46 per cent is expected by 2050.

The proportion of people under 30 is smaller in developed than in developing economies



**Figure 3** | Dependency ratio by age structure (Percentage)



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

Old-age dependency in developed economies is forecast to increase



For references, see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2021, annex 6.4.

**Table 1** | Age structure and dependency ratio

Group of economies	Year	Population			Dependency ratio		
		(Millions)			(Percentage)		
		0-14	15-64	65+	Child (0-14)	Old-age (65+)	Total
<b>World</b>	1950	870	1 538	129	56.5	8.4	64.9
	2020	1 984	5 084	728	39.0	14.3	53.3
	2050	2 056	6 131	1 549	33.5	25.3	58.8
Developed economies	1950	233	547	65	42.6	11.8	54.5
	2020	212	828	248	25.6	29.9	55.5
	2050	196	755	349	25.9	46.2	72.1
Developing economies	1950	636	991	64	64.2	6.5	70.7
	2020	1 771	4 255	480	41.6	11.3	52.9
	2050	1 860	5 375	1 200	34.6	22.3	56.9
Developing economies: Africa	1950	94	126	7	74.6	5.9	80.5
	2020	541	752	47	71.9	6.2	78.1
	2050	797	1 548	143	51.5	9.2	60.7
Developing economies: America	1950	67	93	6	72.2	6.2	78.4
	2020	155	436	58	35.6	13.3	48.9
	2050	130	485	143	26.7	29.6	56.3
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	1950	475	772	51	61.5	6.6	68.1
	2020	1 075	3 066	375	35.1	12.2	47.3
	2050	933	3 342	914	27.9	27.3	55.2
<b>Selected groups</b>							
Developing economies excluding China	1950	448	650	39	68.9	6.1	74.9
	2020	1 517	3 242	307	46.8	9.5	56.3
	2050	1 661	4 537	834	36.6	18.4	55.0
Developing economies excluding LDCs	1950	556	883	58	62.9	6.5	69.5
	2020	1 361	3 646	442	37.3	12.1	49.5
	2050	1 289	4 189	1 080	30.8	25.8	56.6
LDCs	1950	80	108	6	74.4	5.9	80.3
	2020	410	609	38	67.4	6.2	73.6
	2050	571	1 186	120	48.1	10.1	58.2
LLDCs	1950	32	42	2	76.2	5.4	81.5
	2020	208	305	20	67.9	6.6	74.6
	2050	274	593	60	46.2	10.1	56.3
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	1950	8	12	1	68.9	6.7	75.7
	2020	18	44	6	39.8	12.7	52.4
	2050	17	53	13	32.5	24.2	56.7
HIPCs (IMF)	1950	52	67	4	77.3	5.9	83.2
	2020	322	416	23	77.4	5.5	82.9
	2050	484	925	73	52.3	7.9	60.2
BRICS	1950	411	719	49	57.1	6.9	64.0
	2020	704	2 224	309	31.6	13.9	45.6
	2050	574	2 226	682	25.8	30.6	56.4
G20	1950	645	1 221	107	52.8	8.7	61.6
	2020	1 022	3 306	566	30.9	17.1	48.0
	2050	862	3 305	1 110	26.1	33.6	59.7


**Table 2** | Population by age class, 2020

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage of total						
		All age classes	0-14	15-24	25-39	40-64	65-74	75+
<b>World</b>	<b>7 795</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>3.5</b>
Developed economies	1 288	100.0	16.5	11.0	19.9	33.3	10.5	8.7
Developing economies	6 506	100.0	27.2	16.4	22.9	26.1	5.0	2.4
Developing economies: Africa	1 339	100.0	40.4	19.3	20.5	16.4	2.5	1.0
Developing economies: America	650	100.0	23.9	16.5	23.4	27.3	5.5	3.4
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	4 517	100.0	23.8	15.5	23.5	28.8	5.6	2.7
<b>Selected groups</b>								
Developing economies excluding China	5 067	100.0	29.9	17.7	22.9	23.4	4.0	2.1
LDCs	1 057	100.0	38.8	20.0	20.8	16.8	2.4	1.1
LLDCs	533	100.0	38.9	19.7	20.9	16.7	2.6	1.2
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	68	100.0	26.1	16.4	22.8	26.4	5.2	3.1
<b>Selected economies</b>								
China	1 439	100.0	17.7	11.8	22.7	35.8	8.3	3.7
India	1 380	100.0	26.2	18.0	24.1	25.1	4.5	2.1
Brazil	213	100.0	20.7	15.7	24.2	29.8	6.0	3.6
Nigeria	206	100.0	43.5	19.4	19.2	15.2	2.1	0.6
Russian Federation	146	100.0	18.4	9.4	22.9	33.8	9.5	6.0
Japan	126	100.0	12.4	9.3	16.3	33.6	13.8	14.6

**Table 3** | Female population by age class, 2020

Group of economies	Population (Millions)	Percentage female						
		All age classes	0-14	15-24	25-39	40-64	65-74	75+
<b>World</b>	<b>3 865</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>52.8</b>	<b>58.9</b>
Developed economies	660	51.3	48.7	48.8	49.3	51.0	54.4	61.1
Developing economies	3 204	49.2	48.3	48.3	48.8	49.9	52.2	57.3
Developing economies: Africa	670	50.0	49.3	49.6	50.1	51.2	54.0	58.3
Developing economies: America	330	50.8	49.0	49.4	50.3	52.0	54.3	59.0
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	2 204	48.8	47.8	47.6	48.3	49.4	51.7	56.9
<b>Selected groups</b>								
Developing economies excluding China	2 503	49.4	48.6	48.6	49.0	50.1	52.7	57.4
LDCs	531	50.3	49.4	49.7	50.7	51.5	53.9	56.8
LLDCs	269	50.4	49.2	49.6	50.9	52.0	55.5	59.8
SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)	33	49.4	48.9	48.8	48.2	50.0	52.4	56.6
<b>Selected economies</b>								
China	701	48.7	46.6	46.7	48.2	49.3	51.3	57.1
India	663	48.0	47.5	47.1	47.5	48.8	50.6	54.1
Brazil	108	50.9	48.9	49.2	50.0	51.8	54.9	60.4
Nigeria	102	49.3	48.9	49.2	49.3	50.2	52.6	53.3
Russian Federation	78	53.7	48.7	48.9	49.8	54.2	62.5	73.8
Japan	65	51.2	48.7	48.7	48.8	49.5	52.0	60.6