

PRESS RELEASE

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Growing at a slower pace, world population is expected to reach 9.7 billion in 2050

Growth of the working-age population is creating opportunities for economic growth

In most of sub-Saharan Africa, and in parts of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, recent reductions in fertility have caused the population at working ages (25-64 years) to grow faster than at other ages, creating an opportunity for accelerated economic growth thanks to a favourable population age distribution. To benefit from this “demographic dividend”, governments should invest in education and health, especially for young people, and create conditions conducive to sustained economic growth.

People in the poorest countries still live 7 years less than the global average

Life expectancy at birth for the world, which increased from 64.2 years in 1990 to 72.6 years in 2019, is expected to increase further to 77.1 years in 2050. While considerable progress has been made in closing the longevity differential between countries, large gaps remain. In 2019, life expectancy at birth in the least developed countries lags 7.4 years behind the global average, due largely to persistently high levels of child and maternal mortality, as well as violence, conflict and the continuing impact of the HIV epidemic.

The world’s population is growing older, with the age group of 65 and over growing the fastest

By 2050, one in six people in the world will be over age 65 (16%), up from one in 11 in 2019 (9%). Regions where the share of the population aged 65 years or over is projected to double between 2019 and 2050 include Northern Africa and Western Asia, Central and Southern Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. By 2050, one in four persons living in Europe and Northern America could be aged 65 or over. In 2018, for the first time in history, persons aged 65 or above outnumbered children under five years of age globally. The number of persons aged 80 years or over is projected to triple, from 143 million in 2019 to 426 million in 2050.

Falling proportion of working-age population is putting pressure on social protection systems

The potential support ratio, which compares numbers of persons at working ages to those over age 65, is falling around the world. In Japan this ratio is 1.8, the lowest in the world. An additional 29 countries, mostly in Europe and the Caribbean, already have potential support ratios below three. By 2050, 48 countries, mostly in Europe, Northern America, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, are expected to have potential support ratios below two. These low values underscore the potential impact of population ageing on the labour market and economic performance, as well as the fiscal pressures that many countries will face in the coming de

a net inflow of migrants over the decade, helping to offset population losses caused by an excess of deaths over births.

“These data constitute a critical piece of the evidence base needed for monitoring global progress