

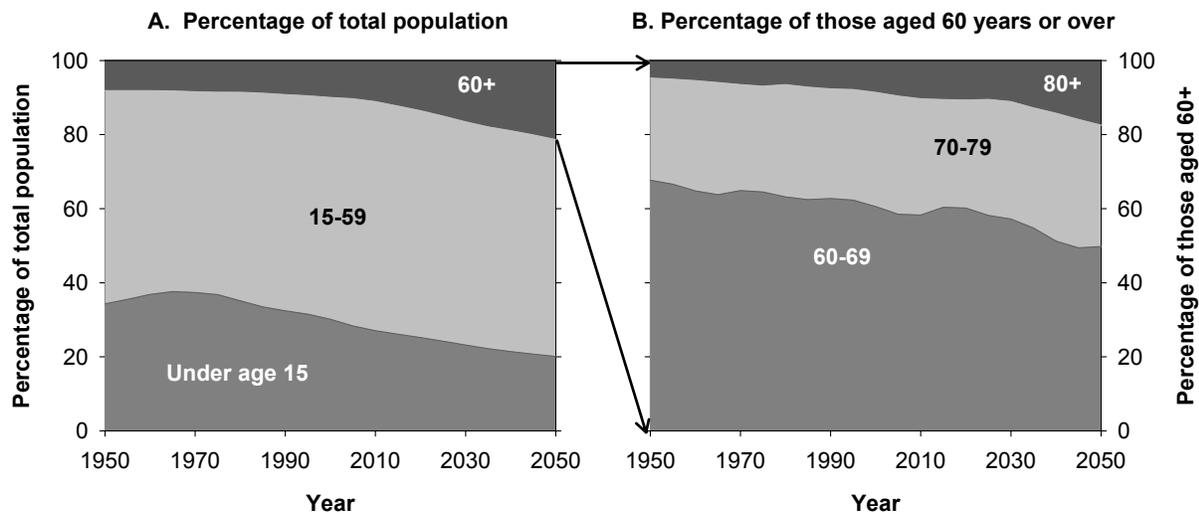
INTRODUCTION

All over the world, populations are ageing. The proportion of the world's population aged 60 years or over is projected to increase from about 10 per cent in 2000 to 13 per cent by 2020, or to more than one person in eight. By 2050, it is likely to be over 20 per cent (United Nations, 2002a). Although the speed of the process varies, most countries in the world, with the exception of those in Africa, will experience relatively old age structures before 2020.

Figure 0.1 shows, for the world as a whole, the changing proportions of younger and older persons since 1950, and the changes that are projected to occur by 2050. The ageing process is not only a matter of changing proportions of children and older adults: the older population itself is ageing, as the figure also shows. The

numbers of the oldest-old, those aged 80 years or over, are projected to increase from approximately 70 million in 2000 to 380 million in 2050. Nearly two thirds of the oldest old are women. Further, although the proportions aged 60 years or over are substantially higher in the more developed than in the less developed regions, the numbers and proportions of older persons are currently increasing more rapidly in the less developed regions. By 2050, the number of persons aged 60 years or over in the less developed regions is projected to be 4 times as large as it was in 2000; in the more developed regions, it will be 1.7 times as large as in 2000. The over-80 population of the more developed regions is projected to be 3 times as large by then as it was in 2000, but in the less developed regions, it will be 8 times as large (table 0.1).

Figure 0.1. Proportion of world population in different age groups, 1950-2050



Source: United Nations (2003b).
NOTE: Estimates and medium-variant projections.

TABLE 0.1. ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE NUMBERS OF POPULATION AGED 60 YEARS AND OVER AND POPULATION AGED 80 YEARS AND OVER FOR THE WORLD, MAJOR AREAS AND REGIONS, 1950, 2000 AND 2050

Major area	Population aged 60 years or over						Population aged 80 years or over					
	Population (millions)			Proportion over total population (per cent)			Population (millions)			Proportion of these aged 60 or over (per cent)		
	1950	2000	2050	1950	2000	2050	1950	2000	2050	1950	2000	2050
World.....	205	606	1 907	8	10	21	14	69	377	7	11	20
More developed regions.....	95	232	394	12	19	32	9	37	113	9	16	29
Less developed regions.....	110	375	1 514	6	8	20	5	32	265	5	9	17
Africa.....	12	40	183	5	5	10	1	3	20	5	7	11
Asia.....	95	322	1 191	7	9	23	4	29	224	5	9	19
Europe.....	66	147	222	12	20	35	6	21	60	9	14	27
Latin America and the Caribbean	10	42	184	6	8	24	1	5	38	7	12	21
Northern America	21	51	117	12	16	26	2	10	33	9	20	28
Oceania	1	4	11	11	13	25	0	1	3	9	17	25

Source: United Nations (2003c).

This demographic transformation is not occurring in isolation. It is embedded in social and economic contexts that are also changing—and changing in ways that tend to erode or at least unsettle traditional relationships between the generations. Among such traditions are those regarding lifelong co-residence as a basic means of providing mutual support of younger and older adults. Yet, the understanding of the actual living conditions of the older population remains poor, especially in the developing world. Even a basic statistical description of the current living arrangements of older people, and of how those arrangements affect well-being, has not been carried out for many countries. Indeed, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (United Nations, 2002e, Chap. I, resolution 1, annex II), pointed to the topic of living arrangements of older persons as one of the areas requiring more research attention (para. 44).

The present report assembles data for as many countries as was possible regarding living arrangements of older persons, trends in living arrangements, and how these arrangements vary by gender and age. The report also employs information on factors such as: (a) marital status, which helps in understanding gender differences in living arrangements among older persons;

(b) the relationship of household members to the householder; (c) socio-economic characteristics such as education and place of residence; and (d) an indicator of relative material well-being, based on household amenities. In addition, the report uses information on kin availability and intrafamily support transfers for a small group of countries, obtained from a special survey for the study of older persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, to examine in greater depth the role of co-residence in family support.

By providing a summary of living arrangements of people aged 60 years or over for countries around the world during the 1980s through the beginning of the twenty-first century, the report is intended to serve both as a baseline for future study and as a complement to more traditional demographic views of ageing that deal with trends in fertility, mortality and age structure (see, for example, Myers, 1990). Some of the data were originally obtained through secondary sources including published articles and books, reports of the United Nations and other organizations, and special databases. Most of the analysis, however, is based on “microlevel” data, obtained at the individual level from primary sources such as population censuses and surveys, including the Demographic and Health Surveys

(DHS), the United States Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Health, Well-being and Ageing survey (SABE).¹

The report is structured as follows. The first chapter is concerned with some of the conceptual issues and evidence regarding living arrangements of older persons that helped motivate this study. The second chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the data. Based on the most recent available information for individual countries, it describes patterns and trends of older people's residential arrangements for over 130 countries around the world, presenting levels of institutional living, solitary living, and household composition, focusing particularly on whether older persons are living with their children. This chapter also examines ways in which living arrangements vary according to age, gender and marital status, within the older population.

Chapter III discusses living arrangements in the context of development. It examines how living arrangements within countries are related to socio-economic characteristics, particularly education, urban/rural residence and material well-being. Both descriptive and multivariate analytic approaches are employed to examine these issues. Multivariate analyses assess the significance of the effect of each socio-economic and demographic factor net of the others. Besides exploring the effects of individual-level variables on the living arrangements of older persons, this chapter also examines the effects of country-level indicators such as per capita gross domestic product (GDP), percentage of the population residing in urban areas, expectation of life at birth,

and a rough indicator of availability of younger kin.

Chapter IV takes advantage of newly available data from a special survey in a group of Latin American and Caribbean countries to examine several issues in greater depth than is possible on the basis of information that is normally obtained in censuses and multi-purpose surveys. The SABE survey was conducted simultaneously in seven Latin American and Caribbean urban centres. The analysis deals with a number of aspects strongly linked with the living arrangements of older persons, such as the number and characteristics of kin and the flow of informal support transfers between generations, that cannot be fully addressed by the data sources considered in the previous sections.

The concluding chapter summarizes the main results of the study and points to some research directions that could contribute both to improving the quality of the data on living arrangements of older persons and to filling the knowledge gap regarding the theoretical aspects involving this important issue. In addition, the report contains a number of annexes providing discussions of several technical issues and a set of data tables that can serve as a baseline for examining future trends in living arrangements.

NOTE

¹ The acronym is derived from the survey's name in Spanish: Salud, Bienestar y Envejecimiento.