Policies to influence fertility and promote work-family balance

Continued levels of low fertility are expected to have a profound impact on the population size and age structure of many countries.

The proportion of countries with low fertility is expected to increase from 44% in 2015 to 58% in 2030.

The percentage of older persons (aged 65+) compared to those of working age (20-64) is expected to rise rapidly, with 29% in developed regions in 2015 and 41% in 2030, and 11% in developing regions in 2015 and 17% in 2030.

Fertility levels are influenced by multiple social, economic and institutional factors, including gender equity.

On average, women in low fertility countries spend more than twice as much time on unpaid domestic work as men. In 2015, women in low fertility countries spent 4.0 hours per day on unpaid domestic work, compared to 1.7 hours per day for men. In high fertility countries, women spent 85% of their time on unpaid domestic work, compared to 36% for men.

Gender parity, expressed as the difference in the amount of time spent by men and women on unpaid domestic work, is higher in low fertility countries. In 2015, the gender parity index for low fertility countries was 56%, compared to 38% in high fertility countries.

In low fertility countries, governments are adopting policies to influence fertility levels and to promote better work-family balance.

The majority of low fertility countries now have policy measures intended to raise fertility levels. In 1996, 35% of low fertility countries had child or family allowance policies, compared to 59% in 2015.

Countries with low fertility have adopted a larger number of policy measures to promote work-family balance. In low fertility countries, 44% of countries have maternity leave policies, compared to 33% in intermediate-high fertility countries and 2% in low fertility countries.

In low fertility countries, policies intended to improve work-family balance often aim at increasing birth rates.

Maternity leave policies are nearly universal, while paternity leave policies are lagging behind.

More than 99% of countries with low fertility have maternity leave policies, compared to 64% for paternity leave policies.

Public childcare is available in 88% of countries with low fertility, compared to 85% in high fertility countries.

63% of countries with low fertility have policies intended to improve work-family balance, compared to 38% of countries with very low fertility.

Notes:
- Levels of low fertility are defined as the percentage of women aged 18 to 49 in developing and developed regions who are expected to be in the childbearing age range in 2015 and 2030.
- The gender parity index is the difference between the time spent by men and women on unpaid domestic work, expressed as a percentage of the time spent by women.

Data sources:

*Low fertility countries* include: Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, North Africa, South Asia, and Eastern Asia.

*Intermediate-high fertility countries* include: Central Asia, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Sub-Saharan Western Europe, and Sub-Saharan Eastern Europe.

*High fertility countries* include: Sub-Saharan Africa, Sub-Saharan Western Europe, and Sub-Saharan Eastern Europe.

*Very low fertility countries* include: Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, North Africa, South Asia, and Eastern Asia.

*Unavailable data* includes: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Maldives, Myanmar, North Korea, and Yemen.