

## II. POPULATION SIZE, GROWTH AND AGE STRUCTURE

In late 2011, the world's population surpassed the 7 billion mark and is currently growing by an additional 82 million persons every year (United Nations, 2013a). By 2050, the world's population is likely to reach an unprecedented size between 8.3 billion and 10.9 billion people. Most of the future population growth will occur in developing countries, particularly in least developed countries. Presently, many developing countries still have population growth rates that, if sustained, would undermine their development and put pressure on future generations. Consequently, stabilizing population growth is a goal in many of these countries that must be achieved in order to preserve the options for the future and ensure sustainable development. In contrast, developed countries and some middle income countries are experiencing below-replacement fertility levels (less than 2.1 children per woman), declining population growth rates, and in some cases, declining population size. These countries are facing shrinking working-age populations, rapid population ageing and associated implications for renewability of the labour force and sustainability of social security and health care systems.

Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, many Governments in developing countries have realized the importance of reducing high rates of population growth in order to ease pressures on resources, combat climate change, prevent food shortages, and provide decent employment and basic social services to all their inhabitants. Many of these Governments have also realized that effective implementation of population policies requires the creation of an institutional framework that ensures the integration of population variables into development planning with adequate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. While Governments in developing countries have adopted measures to reduce population growth rates, a growing number of Governments in developed countries have expressed concerns about low rates of population growth.

The demographic transition associated with declining fertility and mortality levels is causing unprecedented changes in population age structures around the world. Different countries have been affected differently according to their stage of demographic transition and level of development. On the one hand, most developed countries and some developing countries have already attained older age structures and are experiencing declining proportions of youth and working-age adults, with negative consequences for labour supply and old-age support ratios. On the other hand, many developing countries are experiencing increasing numbers and proportions of youth and working-age populations, which, under the right circumstances, can lead to a short-run demographic bonus but at the same time create obvious challenges in terms of providing education and creating employment opportunities.

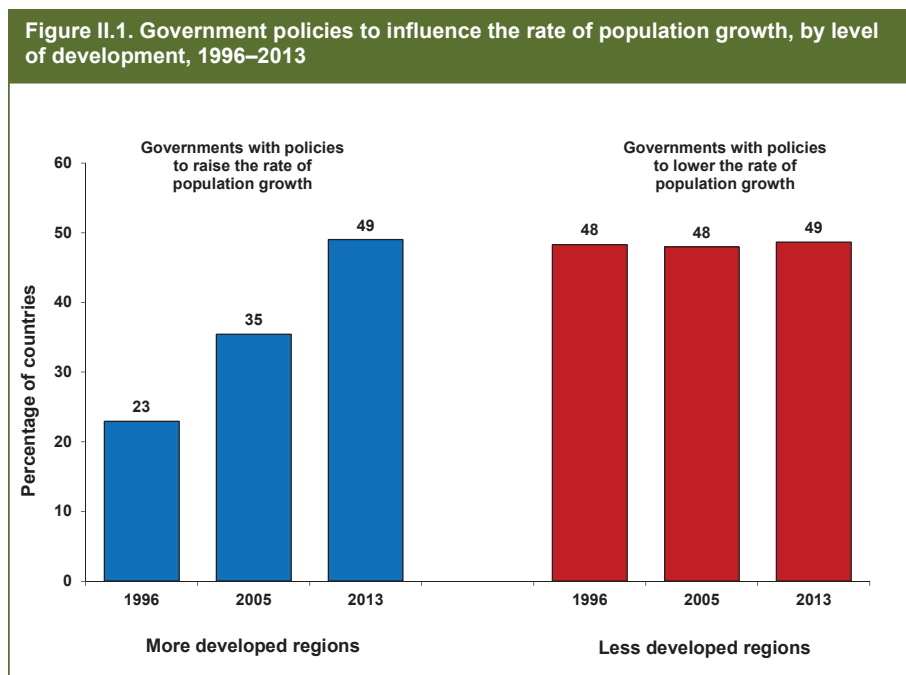
One of the inevitable consequences of the demographic transition resulting from fertility decline and increased longevity is population ageing—the process by which older individuals become a proportionally larger share of the total population. Population ageing has a profound impact on a broad range of economic, political and social conditions through such factors as economic growth, savings and investment, labour supply and employment, pension schemes,

health and long-term care, intergenerational transfers, family composition and living arrangements. For example, concerns are growing about the long-term viability of intergenerational social support systems, which are crucial for the well-being of both the older and younger generations (Cliquet and Nizamuddin, 1999; International Council on Social Welfare, 2010). This is especially true where provision of care within the family becomes more and more difficult as family size decreases and women, who are traditionally the main caregivers, increasingly engage in employment outside the home.

## POLICIES TO INFLUENCE THE RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH

To a large extent, concerns about the consequences of high and low population growth rates have been translated into policy interventions. In 2013, 37 per cent of Governments worldwide had policies to lower the rate of population growth, whereas 20 per cent had policies to raise it. The remaining 43 per cent of Governments had policies to maintain the current rate of population growth or did not intervene to influence it (table II.1). While the percentage of Governments with policies to lower population growth rate has remained largely unchanged since 1996, the percentage with policies to raise it has increased steadily, from 13 per cent in 1996 to 20 per cent 2013.

Not surprisingly, and consistent with concerns about low rates of population growth in developed countries and concerns about high rates of population growth in developing countries, there was a marked distinction in the policies to influence population growth rates by level of development. In 2013, 49 per cent of Governments in more developed regions had policies to raise their rate of population growth and only 2 per cent had policies to lower it. In contrast, an equal proportion (49 per cent) of Governments in less developed regions had policies to lower the rate of population growth and 10 per cent had policies to raise it (figure II.1).



Over time, as population growth rates have declined, the percentage of Governments with policies to raise the rate of population growth has increased steadily in more developed regions, from 23 per cent in 1996 to 49 per cent in 2013 (figure II.1). In less developed regions, where some countries have seen considerable declines in population growth rates while others continue to have high rates, the percentage of Governments attempting to lower the rate of population growth has remained mostly unchanged since 1996. However, in least developed countries where population growth rates have remained high in most cases, 84 per cent of Governments had policies to lower the rate of population growth in 2013, up from 55 per cent in 1996, 29 per cent in 1986 and 14 per cent in 1976 (table II.1).

As in the case of least developed countries, the percentage of Governments having policies to lower the rate of population growth has increased steadily in Africa since the mid-1970s, from 25 per cent in 1976 to 60 per cent in 1996 and 72 per cent in 2013 (table II.1). Conversely, the percentage of Governments in Africa that did not intervene to influence the rate of population growth has continued to decline, from 60 per cent in 1976 to 13 per cent in 2013.

In contrast to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean had a declining percentage of Governments with policies to lower the rate of population growth, from 39 per cent in 1996 to 21 per cent in 2013. This decline in Latin America and the Caribbean was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the percentage of Governments attempting to maintain the rate of population growth.

On the other extreme, in Europe, the percentage of Governments with policies aimed at raising the rate of population growth has doubled since the mid-1990s, from 26 per cent in 1996 to 52 per cent in 2013. This increase has been accompanied by a corresponding decline in the percentage of Governments that did not intervene in the rate of population growth. Asia has also seen a slow, but steady increase in the percentage of Governments attempting to raise the rate of population growth, from 17 per cent in 1996 to 23 per cent in 2013, while the percentage attempting to lower it has remained mostly unchanged (table II.1).

The changes in Government policies described above have been generally matched by a slowdown in population growth in many countries. Whereas in 1970–1975, 36 countries had population growth rates of 3 per cent or more and 70 countries had growth rates ranging between 2 per cent and 3 per cent, the corresponding figures for 2010–2015 were 15 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively (United Nations, 2013a). Twenty-six of the 83 countries with population growth rate of less than 1 per cent in 2010–2015 had no policies to intervene on the growth rate. Of the 18 countries with negative population growth rate in 2010–2015, all but Bosnia and Herzegovina had policies to raise it. Five countries (Marshall Islands, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom and Viet Nam) with population growth rate of less than 1 per cent had policies to lower it.

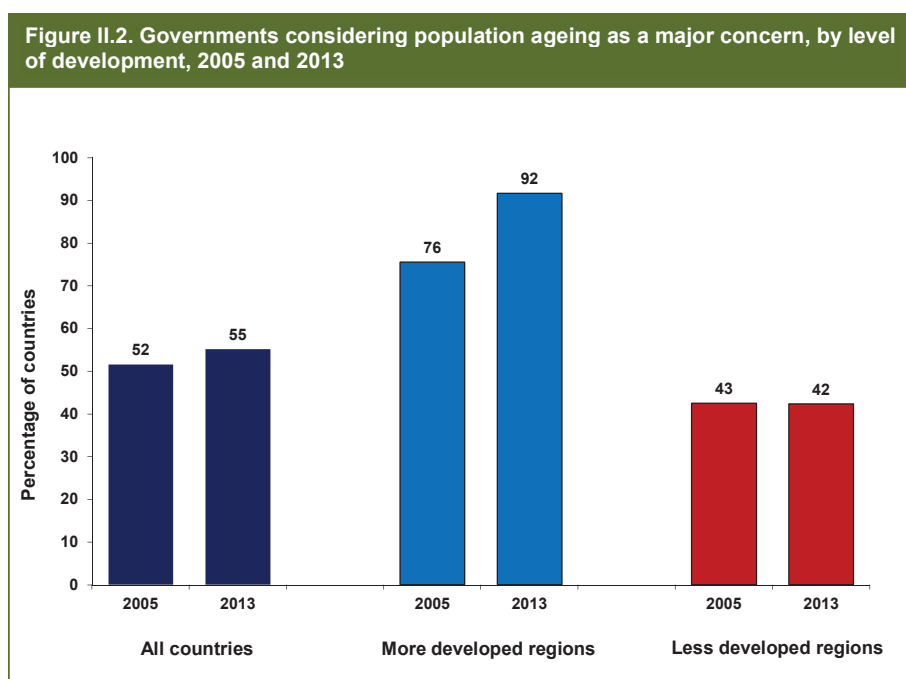
## **CONCERNS ABOUT POPULATION AGEING**

Many societies, particularly those in developed countries, have attained older population age structures than have ever existed in the past. Initially experienced by more developed

countries, the process has recently become apparent in much of the developing world as well. For the foreseeable future, virtually all countries in the world will experience population ageing, although at varying levels of intensity and in different time frames.

Indeed, at the global level, older persons are the fastest growing population group, amid rapidly changing family structures and declining family support systems. During 2010–2015, the annual growth rate for the population aged 60 years or over (3.2 per cent) is about three times that recorded for the total population (1.1 per cent) (United Nations, 2013a). Globally, the number of older persons aged 60 years or over is projected to increase from 841 million in 2013 to more than 2 billion in 2050. During this same period, the number of “oldest old” (persons aged 80 years or over) is projected to increase from 120 million to 392 million. Most developed countries and some developing countries with low fertility already face significant population ageing. However, in absolute numbers, the majority of older persons live in developing countries. In 2013, 66 per cent of the world’s population aged 60 years or over lived in countries in less developed regions, and by 2050 this proportion is projected to increase to 79 per cent (United Nations, 2013a).

While once limited to developed countries, concerns for the consequences of ageing have been growing in developing countries. In 2013, more than one half of Governments worldwide considered population ageing in their countries as a major concern (table II.2). Governments in more developed regions were more than twice as likely (92 per cent) as those in less developed regions (42 per cent) to consider population ageing as a major concern (figure II.2). In recent years, the percentage of Governments that considered population ageing as a major concern has increased in more developed regions, from 76 per cent in 2005 to 92 per cent in 2013, but it has barely changed in less developed regions (43 per cent in 2005 and 42 per cent in 2013).

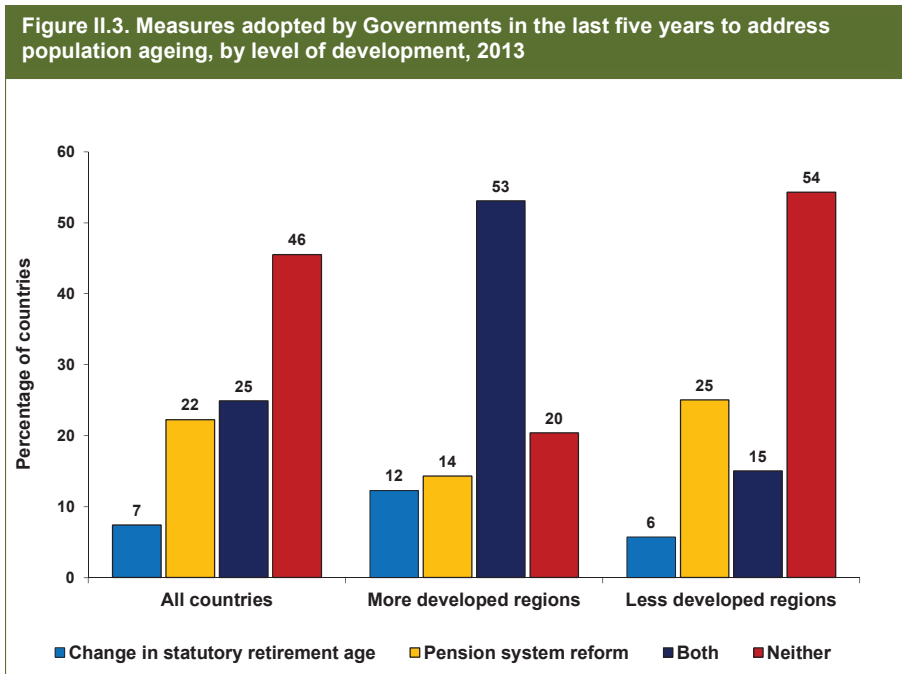


Governments of more than 9 out of 10 countries in Europe and Northern America considered population ageing as a major concern in 2013. Among less developed regions, the percentage of Governments that considered population ageing as a major concern in 2013 was highest in Latin America and the Caribbean at 73 per cent, compared with only 33 per cent of Governments in Africa and 38 per cent in Asia.

### **MEASURES TO ADDRESS POPULATION AGEING**

Concerned by population ageing and the financial unsustainability of pension programmes, many Governments are modifying the parameters of those programmes, and in some cases, introducing mandatory fully funded schemes, while in others, increasing the statutory retirement age, eliminating incentives for early retirement, reducing benefits and encouraging more women to enter the labour force. In 2013, information about changes in statutory retirement age and major reforms in the pension system in the past five years was available for 189 countries. Among these countries, Governments of 61 countries (32 per cent) changed their statutory retirement age and Governments in 89 countries (47 per cent) reformed their pension system in the past five years (table II.3). Forty seven of the 189 Governments (25 per cent) changed both the retirement age and reformed their pension system during this time. A little less than half (46 per cent) of the Governments with data neither changed the statutory retirement age nor reformed the pension system during the past five years.

Governments of 80 per cent of countries in more developed regions either changed the statutory retirement age or reformed their pension system or took both measures in the past five years, compared with only 46 per cent of Governments in less developed regions that adopted at least one of the two measures to address population ageing (figure II.3). The difference by development regions was particularly stark in the percentage of Governments that adopted both measures, 53 per cent in more developed regions compared with only 15 per cent in less developed regions.



The percentage of Governments that either changed the statutory retirement age or reformed their pension system in the past five years ranged from a high of 74 per cent in Europe to a low of 33 per cent in Africa and Oceania, with the exception of Northern America where the two Governments (Canada and the United States of America) did not make any changes in the two measures in the past five years (table II.3).

## **Chapter II**

### **Tables**

**Table II.1. Government policies on the rate of population growth, 1976–2013**

Year	By level of development									
	Number of countries					Percentage				
	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total
<i>World</i>										
1976	28	0	39	83	150	19	0	26	55	100
1986	26	12	53	73	164	16	7	32	45	100
1996	25	16	71	81	193	13	8	37	42	100
2005	29	32	70	63	194	15	16	36	32	100
2013	39	41	73	44	197	20	21	37	22	100
<i>More developed regions</i>										
1976	8	0	0	26	34	24	0	0	76	100
1986	8	8	0	18	34	24	24	0	53	100
1996	11	6	1	30	48	23	13	2	63	100
2005	17	8	0	23	48	35	17	0	48	100
2013	24	7	1	17	49	49	14	2	35	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>										
1976	20	0	39	57	116	17	0	34	49	100
1986	18	4	53	55	130	14	3	41	42	100
1996	14	10	70	51	145	10	7	48	35	100
2005	12	24	70	40	146	8	16	48	27	100
2013	15	34	72	27	148	10	23	49	18	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>										
1976	5	0	6	31	42	12	0	14	74	100
1986	4	3	14	27	48	8	6	29	56	100
1996	1	1	27	20	49	2	2	55	41	100
2005	0	4	35	11	50	0	8	70	22	100
2013	0	3	41	5	49	0	6	84	10	100



Table II.1. (Continued)

Year	By major area									
	Number of countries					Percentage				
	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total
<i>Africa</i>										
1976	7	0	12	29	48	15	0	25	60	100
1986	4	3	20	24	51	8	6	39	47	100
1996	2	2	32	17	53	4	4	60	32	100
2005	1	6	35	11	53	2	11	66	21	100
2013	1	7	39	7	54	2	13	72	13	100
<i>Asia</i>										
1976	9	0	14	14	37	24	0	38	38	100
1986	13	1	12	12	38	34	3	32	32	100
1996	8	5	18	15	46	17	11	39	33	100
2005	10	12	19	6	47	21	26	40	13	100
2013	11	14	20	3	48	23	29	42	6	100
<i>Europe</i>										
1976	8	0	0	21	29	28	0	0	72	100
1986	8	6	0	15	29	28	21	0	52	100
1996	11	6	1	25	43	26	14	2	58	100
2005	16	8	0	19	43	37	19	0	44	100
2013	23	7	1	13	44	52	16	2	30	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>										
1976	3	0	9	15	27	11	0	33	56	100
1986	0	0	15	18	33	0	0	45	55	100
1996	1	2	13	17	33	3	6	39	52	100
2005	0	5	8	20	33	0	15	24	61	100
2013	2	10	7	14	33	6	30	21	42	100
<i>Northern America</i>										
1976	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
1986	0	1	0	1	2	0	50	0	50	100
1996	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
2005	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
2013	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
<i>Oceania</i>										
1976	1	0	4	2	7	14	0	57	29	100
1986	1	1	6	3	11	9	9	55	27	100
1996	3	1	7	5	16	19	6	44	31	100
2005	2	1	8	5	16	13	6	50	31	100
2013	2	3	6	5	16	13	19	38	31	100

**Table II.2. Government level of concern about the ageing of the population, 2005 and 2013**

Year	Number of countries				Percentage			
	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern	Total	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern	Total
<b>By level of development</b>								
<i>World</i>								
2005	85	79	1	165	52	48	1	100
2013	102	76	7	185	55	41	4	100
<i>More developed regions</i>								
2005	34	11	0	45	76	24	0	100
2013	44	4	0	48	92	8	0	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>								
2005	51	68	1	120	43	57	1	100
2013	58	72	7	137	42	53	5	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>								
2005	9	25	1	35	26	71	3	100
2013	7	29	4	40	18	73	10	100
<b>By major area</b>								
<i>Africa</i>								
2005	15	27	1	43	35	63	2	100
2013	15	28	3	46	33	61	7	100
<i>Asia</i>								
2005	16	25	0	41	39	61	0	100
2013	18	28	2	48	38	58	4	100
<i>Europe</i>								
2005	30	10	0	40	75	25	0	100
2013	39	4	0	43	91	9	0	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>								
2005	21	12	0	33	64	36	0	100
2013	24	9	0	33	73	27	0	100
<i>Northern America</i>								
2005	2	0	0	2	100	0	0	100
2013	2	0	0	2	100	0	0	100
<i>Oceania</i>								
2005	1	5	0	6	17	83	0	100
2013	4	7	2	13	31	54	15	100

**Table II.3. Government measures adopted in the last five years to address population ageing, 2013**

Year	Number of countries					Percentage				
	Change in statutory retirement age	Pension system reform	Both	Neither	Total	Change in statutory retirement age	Pension system reform	Both	Neither	Total
<b>By level of development</b>										
<i>World</i>										
2013	14	42	47	86	189	7	22	25	46	100
<i>More developed regions</i>										
2013	6	7	26	10	49	12	14	53	20	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>										
2013	8	35	21	76	140	6	25	15	54	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>										
2013	0	11	3	30	44	0	25	7	68	100
<b>By major area</b>										
<i>Africa</i>										
2013	2	10	4	32	48	4	21	8	67	100
<i>Asia</i>										
2013	3	15	9	20	47	6	32	19	43	100
<i>Europe</i>										
2013	6	6	25	7	44	14	14	57	16	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>										
2013	2	9	7	15	33	6	27	21	45	100
<i>Northern America</i>										
2013	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
<i>Oceania</i>										
2013	1	2	2	10	15	7	13	13	67	100