



**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

# An overview: Population and Sustainable Development, in particular, Sustained and Inclusive Economic Growth

Population Division

21 July 2021

# A quick overview...

1. Sustainable development and inclusion: a generational perspective.
2. Interlinkages of population and other megatrends.
3. Integrating population into development planning.

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Two important principles present from the beginning of the global discussion on “sustainable development”:

- A long-run, generational perspective.
- Inter- and intra-generational equity linked to sustainability.

# Sustainable development is based on a long run, generational perspective -- familiar to demographers

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Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of **future generations** to meet their own needs.

-- UN General Assembly, 1987, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the "Brundtland Report".

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# Sustainability requires inclusive development : inter- and intra-generational equity

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But physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits. Even the narrow notion of **physical sustainability** implies a concern for **social equity between generations**, a concern that must logically be extended to equity within each generation.

-- UN General Assembly, 1987, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the "Brundtland Report".

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1. Sustainable development and inclusion: a generational perspective.
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# 5 global megatrends

Demographic shifts,  
particularly pop ageing

Urbanization

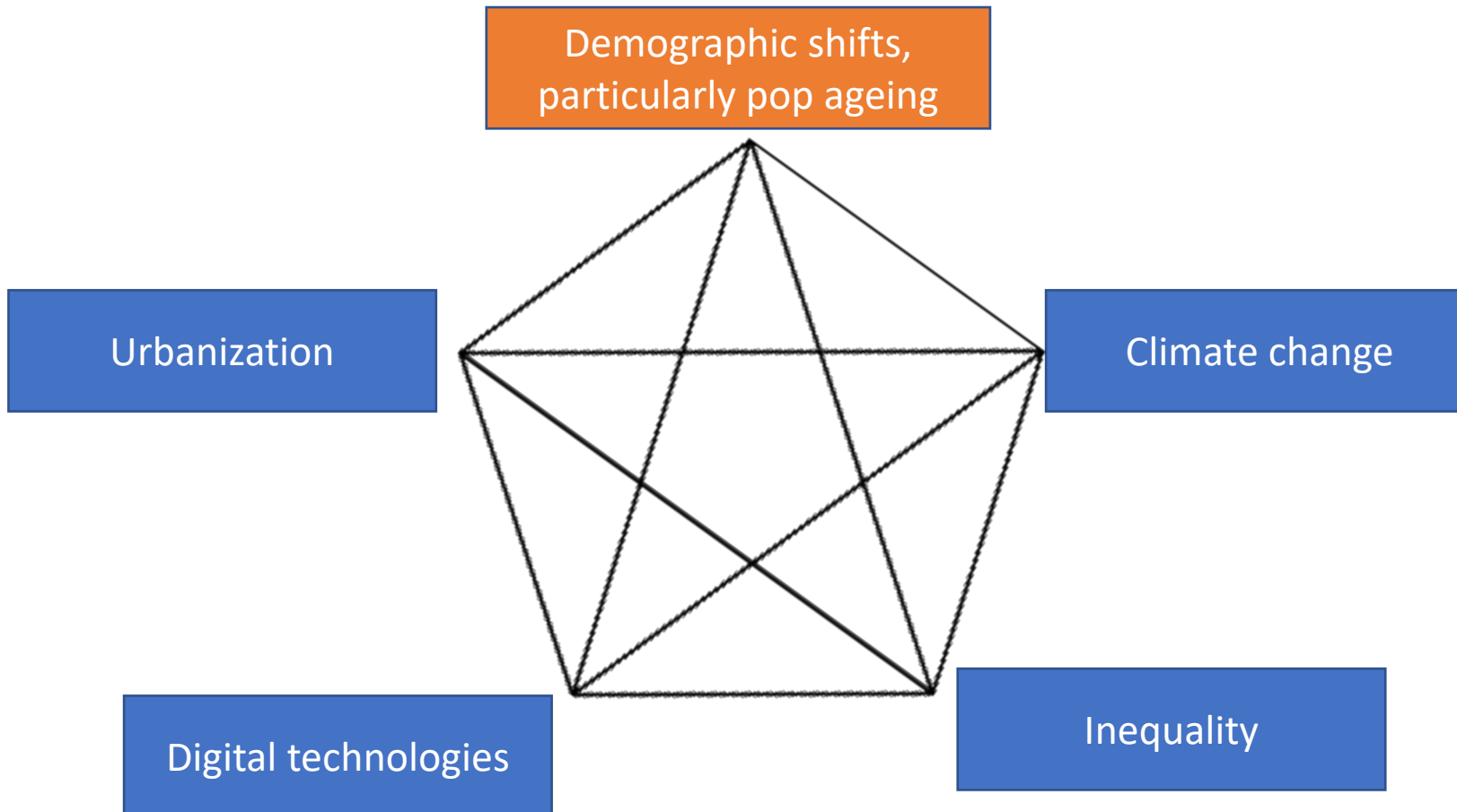
Climate change

Digital technologies

Inequality



# Interlinkages of population and other megatrends





# Examples:

## Population ageing, poverty and inequality

- High fertility and population growth continue to be associated with high prevalence of poverty. Better realization of women's fertility intentions helps to break that link and to improve gender equality.
- The modern demographic transition is made possible by inclusion: extending access to health care, education, and other services to ever broader segments of the population.
- Advanced population ageing may worsen economic inequality within countries because capital intensity can increase in labour scarce economies, the "Piketty effect."
- Giving due recognition and fair compensation to care work is a key step on the pathway to reduce gender inequality.

# Examples:

## Demographic shifts and climate change

- Both sudden-onset, climate related events (floods & hurricanes) and longer-term processes (rising sea-level & shifts in precipitation patterns) can spur migration within and between countries.
- Population size, age structure, and other characteristics are important determinants of consumption patterns (including demand for food and raw materials), energy-use, and carbon emissions.
- Slowing global population growth is easing pressure on climate, but rising incomes and continued unsustainable consumption & production patterns could easily offset that beneficial effect.

Examples:

## Demographic shifts and digital technologies

- Population ageing is inducing technological innovations that enhance physical and cognitive capacities, allowing older people to work longer and enjoy better quality of life.
- For countries experiencing a “youth-bulge”, digital technologies can support youth in acquiring necessary education and training for participating in the labour market (massive open online courses).
- Increasingly, digital communication technologies allow for the geographic separation of worker and employer -- “virtual migration.”

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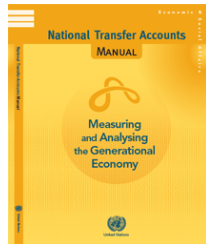
Disaggregating national economic activity by population groups (age, gender, and socio-economic background) allows us to measure and plan for inclusive and sustainable societies.

# Leaving no one behind: Measuring economic activity of populations groups at the national scale

- Population Division:

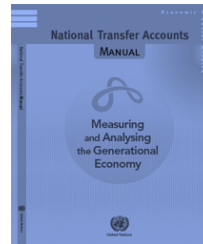
(1) BY AGE:

National Transfer Accounts (2013)



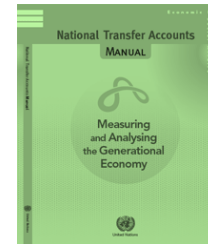
(2) BY GENDER:

National Time Transfer Accounts (2021)



(3) BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS:

National Inclusion Accounts (202x)



- Other relevant DESA publications and projects

- System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting
- System of Population and Social Conditions Statistics
- The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE)



“Slow as demographic changes have been, changes in institutions have not kept pace with them.”

World Population Conference,  
Rome, 1954