

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF OLDER PERSONS AROUND THE WORLD



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Population Division

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF OLDER PERSONS AROUND THE WORLD



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DESA

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PREFACE

Populations everywhere are growing older. Worldwide, the proportion of the population aged 60 years or over was 8 per cent in 1950, 10 per cent in 2000 and will be 21 per cent by 2050.^a The global number of persons aged 60 years or over has tripled over the last 50 years, and is projected to more than triple again over the next 50 years. Not only are more people surviving to reach old age, but those who attain old age are living longer. In practically all regions of the world, life expectancy at age 80 is increasing faster than life expectancy at age 60, which is in turn increasing faster than life expectancy at birth. As a consequence, families comprising three or even four generations have become a common situation, considerably expanding the alternatives for residential composition, and making the living arrangements of older persons an increasingly complex and dynamic issue.

Rapid growth in the older population is occurring at the same time as long-term shifts in economies and societies are transforming many aspects of day-to-day family life. Today as in the past, co-residence of older and younger kin is an important element in the system of intra-family support transfers, which affects the well-being of older and younger individuals. This is particularly true in the less developed regions, where the lack of adequate formal support from public or private systems makes most older adults dependent, either partially or exclusively, on the informal support provided by the family. Living arrangements of older persons can also have important macroeconomic and social implications. For instance, if more older persons maintain households separate from those of their adult children, this can increase the demand for housing, social services and energy, water and other resources.

Earlier studies in the more developed countries have shown that older persons are increasingly living on their own. There are signs that similar changes are under way in many developing countries as well. The nature, speed and consequences of these changes are, however, difficult to determine. Even the most basic statistical portrait of living arrangements of the older population has been lacking for much of the developing world.

The present publication aims to provide a broad survey and analysis of the current situation of older person's living arrangements around the world, which it is hoped will serve as a baseline for studying future trends. The study presents comparable data for all countries for which information was available regarding institutional living of the population aged 60 years or over, solitary living and co-residence of older persons with family members; and aims to identify the main factors associated with various living arrangements. Earlier United Nations publications related to the present study include *Population Bulletin of the United Nations: Living Arrangements of Older Persons* (United Nations, 2001) and *Ageing and the Family* (United Nations, 1994).

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This publication, as well as other population information, may be accessed on the Population Division World Wide Web site, at www.unpopulation.org. For further information about this publication, please contact the office of Ms. Hania Zlotnik, Director, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017; tel: (212) 963-3179; fax (212) 963-2147.

^a See *World Population Ageing: 1950-2050* (United Nations, 2002a).

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Explanatory notes

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures.

The tables presented in this publication make use of the following symbols:

Two dots (..) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

An em dash (—) indicates that the amount is nil or negligible.

A hyphen (–) indicates that the item is not applicable.

A minus sign (-) before a figure indicates a decrease.

A full stop (.) is used to indicate decimals.

Use of a hyphen (–) between years, for example, 1995-2000, signifies the full period involved, from 1 July of the first year to 1 July of the second year.

Numbers and percentages in tables do not necessarily add to totals because of rounding.