United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES
15 MAY 2023

Families and Demographic Change

Observance of the

2023 International Day of Families

Background Note

As part of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2024 (IYF+30), the 2023 in-person observance of the International Day of Families focuses on the megatrend of demographic change and its impact on families. The event is to share current knowledge on demographic trends, including ageing and intergenerational solidarity; facilitate the analysis of their impacts on family life and recommend responsive family-oriented policies to respond to the needs of families around the world. The event is to raise awareness of the impact of demographic trends on families with a goal to advocate for family-oriented policies aiming to improve family well-being.

Demographic Trends and Families

In late 2022, the world's population has reached eight billion people. Characterised by the United Nations Secretary-General as a 'milestone in human development' this landmark event illustrates major advancements in health extending human lifespans. Population growth is to continue albeit at a decreasing rate. It is projected to reach 9.8 billion in 2050 and 11.2 in 2100 rising concerns about the prospects of sustainable urbanization and management of climate change.

Demographic change is one of the most important megatrends impacting our world and the life and well-being of families worldwide. Demographic trends are mostly shaped by fertility and mortality patterns. Declining **fertility** rates result in benefits for families as they are more able to invest in their children's health and education which in turns helps with poverty reduction and better socio-economic development. Research indicates that decreasing fertility also increases women's labour participation. On the other hand, fertility declines results in smaller families which are less likely to cope with care and other household obligations. As such in time of unemployment or illness, families have fewer members to rely on. Moreover, low fertility rates may undermine labour forces and social structures triggering drastic responses with hard to predict consequences for issues raging from social security to gender equality.

In terms of **mortality**, the global life expectancy at birth reached 72.8 years in 2019, an improvement of around 9 years since 1990. Although HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to be a world concern, there was a 23 per cent decline in infections since 2010. Despite the estimated 14.9 million direct and indirect death from COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, the World Health Organisation projects that global mortality rates will keep declining in the coming years as communicable diseases, the major cause of mortality in developing countries, will continue to be addressed through better access to clean water and sanitation, improved health services and increased incomes from social protection systems.

Families are especially impacted by trends in **nuptiality** patterns. While **marriage** remains the prevailing norm in most of Africa and Asia, the overall proportion of people getting married is decreasing in many parts of the world. In many countries of the global North as well as Latin America and the Caribbean, the decrease in marriage has been partially offset by an increase in cohabitation.

Divorce, separation and **widowhood** are on the rise as well. Divorce is often necessary to prevent various forms of domestic abuse and allow for greater independence of women who can support themselves financially through paid work independently of marriage. On the other hand, divorce and separation also imply greater vulnerability for families. Major changes following the divorce for families include change in residential arrangements, economic disadvantage, loneliness associated with social network changes and challenges in care arrangements for children. This can in turn lead to adverse effects for parents' and children's physical, emotional and financial well-being. The research on global divorce and scholarship indicates a range of negative outcomes for children and adolescents, such as vulnerability to poverty, educational failure, early and risky sexual activity, non-marital childbirth, earlier marriage and divorce.

Family structure

Despite rapid modernization, industrialization and urbanization as well as falling fertility and the rise in nuclear family structure, 26.6 per cent of all households are extended and prevail in developing countries. In the Western world, the highest proportion of couples without children, 23.6 per cent, can be found, while one-person households constitute 27.1 per cent of all households. It can be concluded that this reflects the ability of older persons to manage the financial cost of living alone well and the increase in social norms favouring solitary living as well as overall progress in healthy ageing and independent living.

Ageing

Declining mortality and fertility rates have resulted in rapid ageing with World Population Prospects indicating that by 2030 nearly 12 per cent of the world population will be 65 years of age or older. By 2050 an average longevity globally is to reach around 77.2 years of age. As population grows older, dependency rations increase adding pressures on social security and public health systems. With longer life spans come higher risks of non-communicable diseases and diminished physical capacity leading to higher care needs. The demand for long-term care is rapidly increasing in many countries with care models relying on families increasingly insufficient.

Meeting of the SDG target 1.3 on old age pensions is not only crucial for older persons but for family well-being overall, especially in the context of extreme

poverty and household vulnerability with old age pensions helping to strengthen household's capacity to care for older persons.

Questions of **intergenerational equity** in an ageing world need more attention in preparation for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Summit for the Future. Strengthening of **intergenerational solidarity** is key if we are to tackle the challenge of ageing effectively.

With rapid demographic changes responsive policies are needed to safeguard the well-being of families and all its members. While the world is shifting towards older populations, an irreversible trend, collective actions and policymaking can shape its path and consequences to ensure that no family and no individual are left behind.

The 2023 International Day of Families observance is to raise awareness of the impact of demographic trends on families. The event will include:

- Launch of the Background Paper on ***"The Impact of Demographic Trends on Families"***
- Presentation of the World Social Report 2023 ***"Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World"***
- Presentation on ***intergenerational equity and solidarity***
- An **overview of recommendations of policies** in response to demographic trends
- Presentation of **civil society initiatives for IYF+30**.
- **Interactive discussion** with audience participation

References

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World Social Report 2023, "Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World" UNDESA, 2023

UNDESA website https://www.un.org/en/desa/world-population-projected-reach-98-billion-2050-and-112-billion-2100