



**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**

### ***Revised Background Note***

#### **Introduction**

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 major demographic changes and their impact on families. The event is to share current knowledge about demographic trends, including ageing, and intergenerational solidarity; facilitate the analysis of their impacts on family life; and recommend family-oriented policies that respond to the needs of families around the world.

#### **Demographic Trends and Families**

In late 2022, the world's population reached eight billion people. Characterised by the United Nations Secretary-General as a 'milestone in human development' this landmark event reflects major reductions in premature deaths, especially among children, and the gradual extension of the human lifespan. Population growth is expected to continue albeit at a decreasing rate. It is projected

to reach 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 in 2100 raising 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 socio-economic development. Research indicates that decreasing fertility is also associated with women's increasing labour force participation. On the other hand, more and more countries have begun to experience population decline. Currently, two-thirds of the global population lives in a country or area where fertility is below 2.1 births per woman. According to recent surveys in several low-fertility countries, many women are having fewer children than they would like. Women face many obstacles to achieving their desired family size, such as the demands of higher education, high costs of childcare, challenges to work-family balance, unequal division of household responsibilities and care responsibilities for ageing parents. Addressing these constrains is important so that all individuals have the opportunity to achieve family sizes they desire.

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 deaths from COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, 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. Divorce may also create challenges for families in terms of change in residential arrangements, economic disadvantage, loneliness associated with social network changes and challenges in care arrangements for children. The research on global divorce and scholarship indicates a range of negative outcomes for children and adolescents, such as greater vulnerability to poverty, educational failure, early and risky sexual activity, non-marital childbirth, early or child 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 (across the regions) 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 increase in divorce and separation as well as 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 2050 an average longevity globally is to reach around 77.2 years of age. The population of older persons is increasing both in numbers and as a share of the total. The share of the global population aged 65 years and over is projected to rise from 10 per cent in 2022 to 16 per cent in 2050. Demand for long-term care is rising in many countries. Traditionally, co-residing family members, usually unpaid women and girls met the care needs of older persons. As intergenerational co-residence is declining globally, care models that rely primarily on families are increasingly inadequate. Countries with ageing populations need to adapt public programmes to the growing proportion of older persons by improving the sustainability of social security and pension systems and by establishing universal health care and long-term care systems.

Achieving 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 a household's capacity to care for older persons.

Questions of **intergenerational equity** in an ageing world should be a critical part of the preparation for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Summit for the Future. Strengthening of **intergenerational solidarity** is key if we are to meet the needs of all generations 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 irreversibly towards older populations, collective actions and policymaking can help societies to adapt to the demographic changes and to ensure that no families and no individuals are left behind.

The 2023 International Day of Families observance will raise awareness of the impact of demographic trends on families.

## References

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