

Luiss

Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche

Africa's Demographic Transformation

Maria Rita Testa

Professore ordinario di Demografia

Università Luiss Guido Carli

Roma 23 settembre 2026

LUISS



Africa: a youthful population

Implications for the future demographic dynamics

Median Age of African Population:

19 years in 2025; 25 years in 2050; 36 years in 2100

LUISS

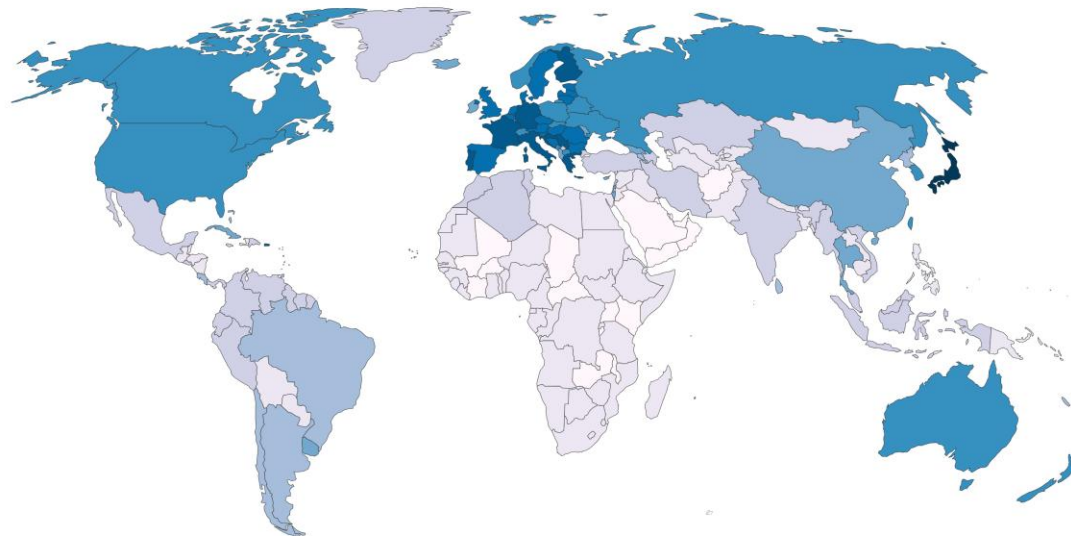


Youth and old-age dependency across world regions

Demographic imbalances between younger and ageing populations may increasingly shape international migrations.

Old-age dependency ratio, 2023

The number of elderly people (over 64 years old) relative to the number of working-age people (15-64 years). Figures are shown as the number of dependents per 100 working-age people. A value of 20% means that there are 20 people of old age for every 100 working-age people.

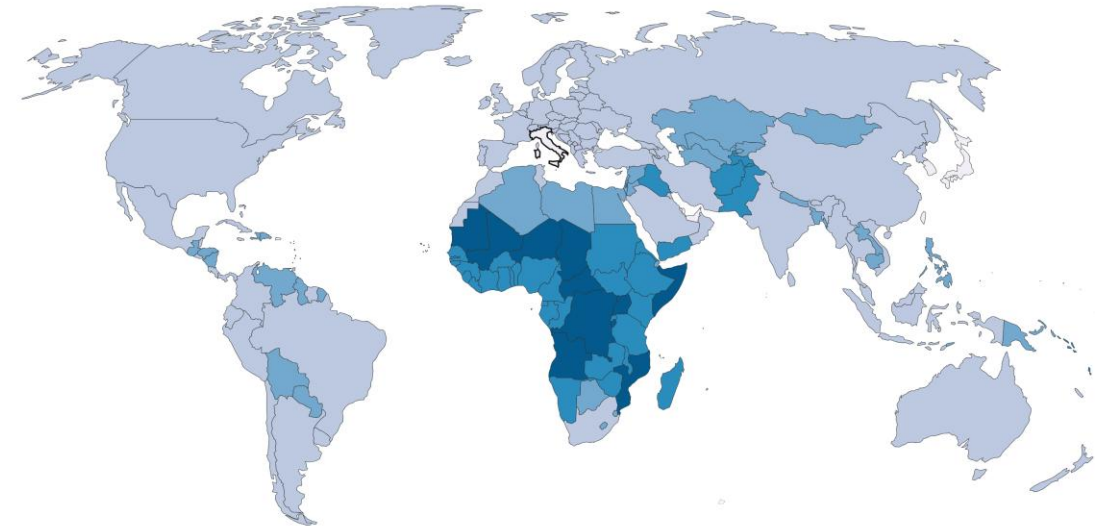


Data source: UN, World Population Prospects (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/age-str

Youth dependency ratio, 2023

The ratio of younger dependents – people younger than 15 – to the working-age population – those ages 15-64. Data are shown as the number of dependents per 100 working-age people.



Data source: UN, World Population Prospects (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/population-

Source: Our World in Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/age-dependency-ratio-of-working-age-population>

A young-age dependency ratio of 2:3 in the least developed countries

Approximately 2 young dependent people (0-14) for every 3 working-age people (15-64).

Youth and old dependency ratio by level of clusters of countries at different development stage in 2023.

Values in per cent.

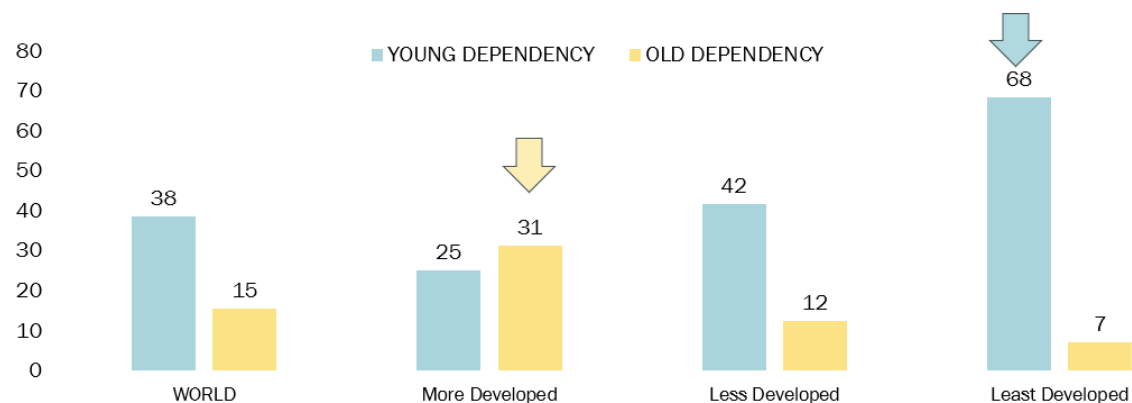
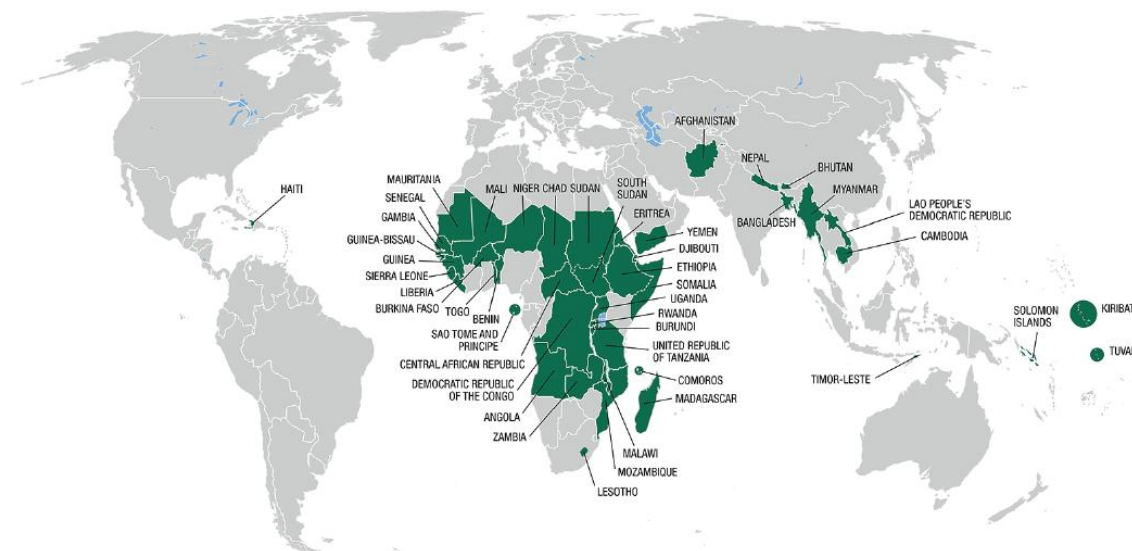


Figure 1.1
Least developed countries, 2023



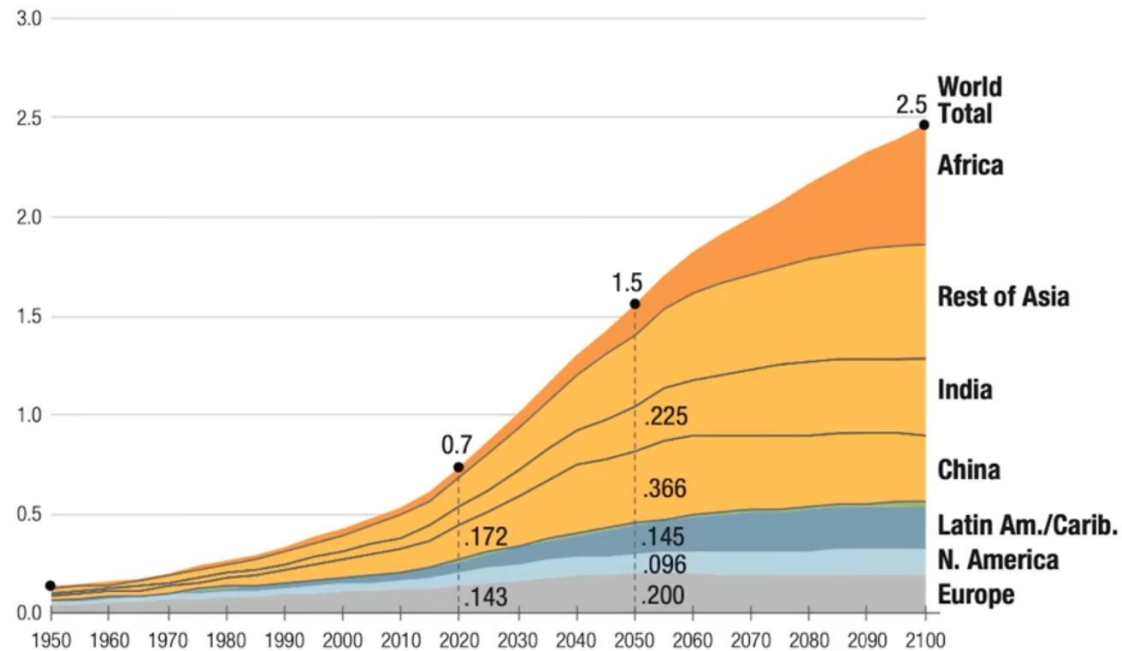
Source: Author's own elaboration based on PRB 2024 World Population Data Sheet

Source: UN 2023. World Population Ageing 2023

Diverging ageing trajectories: Asia by 2050, Africa in the second half of the century

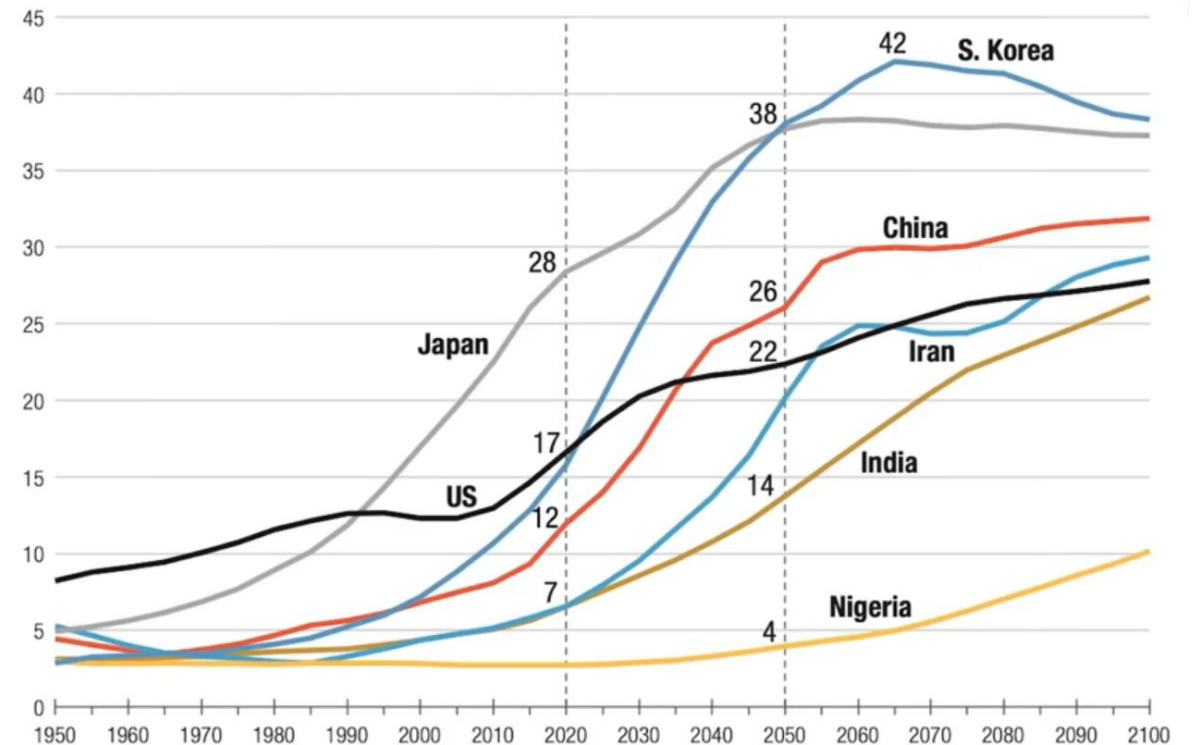
Africa ages more slowly: only 10% of Nigeria's population will be 65+ by 2100

Population Age 65+ by Region, in Billions



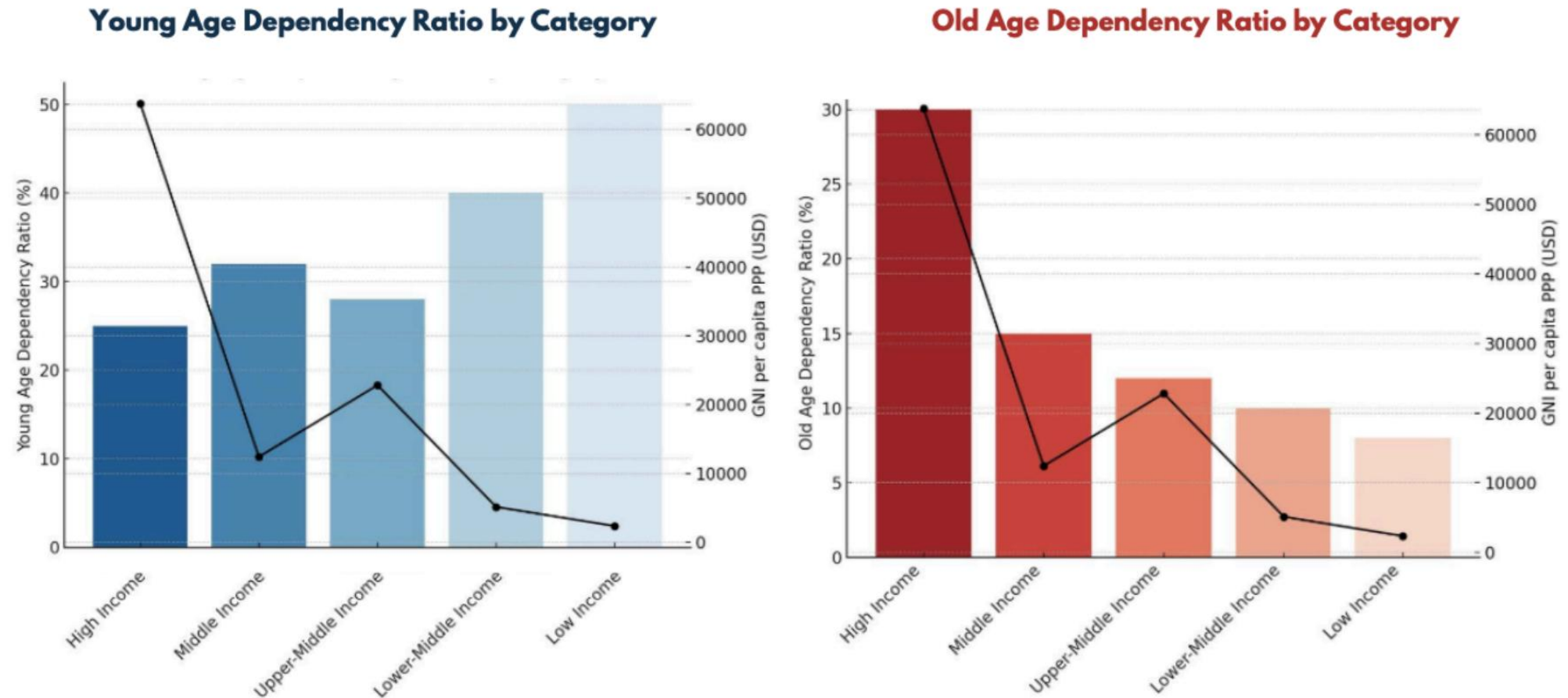
Source: Hayutin 2022 New landscapes of population change. Hoover Institute Press

Percentage of Population Age 65+, Selected Countries



Source: Hayutin 2022 New landscapes of population change. Hoover Institute Press

Africa's Development Challenge Ahead: Demographic Dependency and Economic Performance



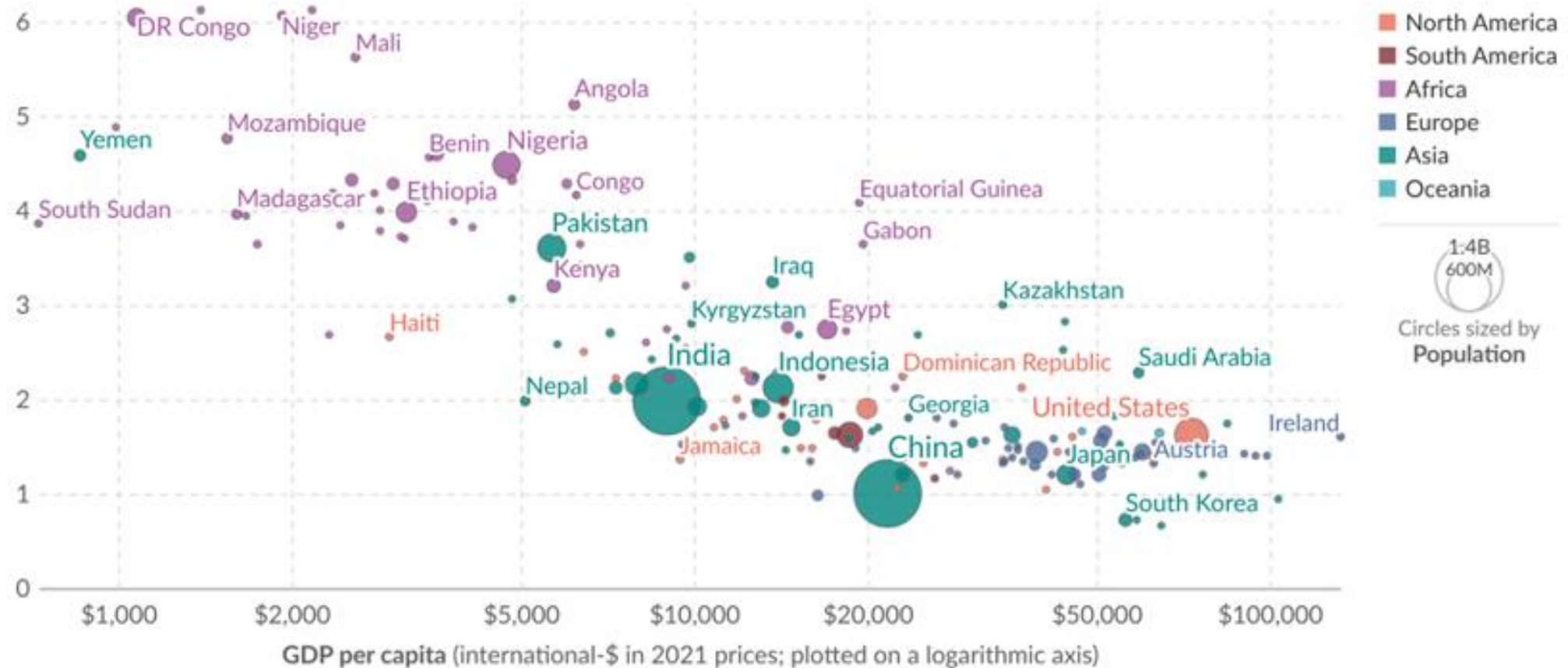
Source: Luiss elaboration based on PRB 2024 World Population Data Sheet

Fertility rate vs. GDP per capita, 2023

Our World
in Data

The total fertility rate¹ summarizes the total number of births a woman would have, if she experienced the birth rates seen in women of each age group in one particular year across her childbearing years. This is shown against gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, adjusted for inflation and differences in living costs between countries.

Births per woman (live births per woman)



Africa: sustained and rapid population growth

Implications for the future demographic dynamics

Annual growth rate of population:

~2.3% (2025); ~ 1.5% (2050) ~ 0.36% (2100)

Mean number of children per woman:

4 in 2025; 2.8 years in 2050; 2.0 in 2100



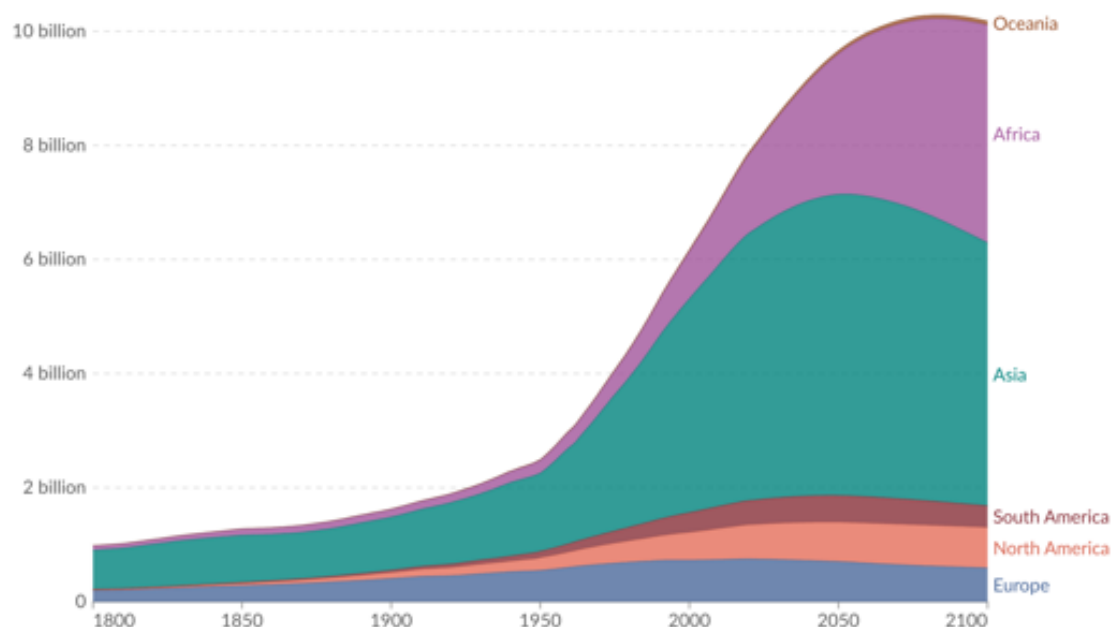
By 2100, one in three people worldwide is projected to live in Africa

From around 1.6 billion people today to approximately 3.8 billion by 2100.

Population by world region

Historic estimates with future projections based on the UN medium scenario¹.

Our World
In Data



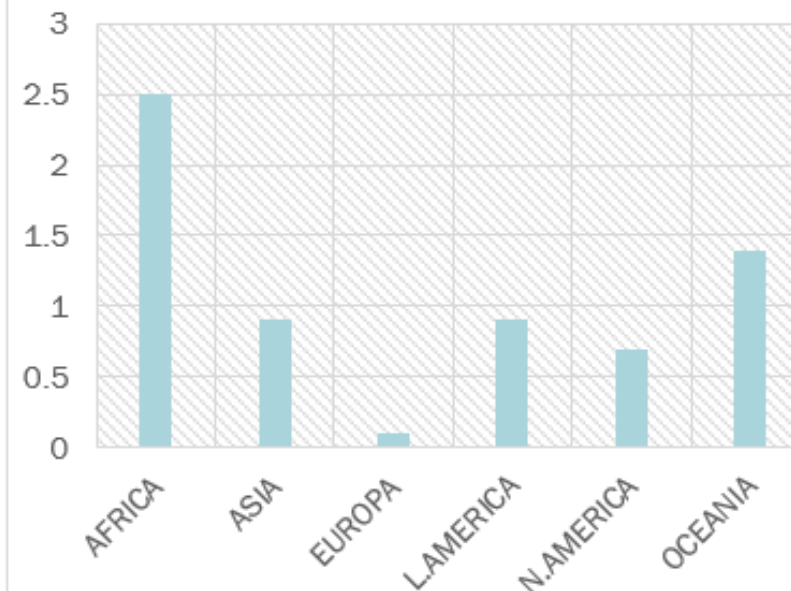
Data source: HYDE (2023); Gapminder (2022); UN WPP (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/population-growth | CC BY

Note: Historical country data is shown based on today's geographical borders.

1. UN projection scenarios: The UN's World Population Prospects provides a range of projected scenarios of population change. These rely on different assumptions in fertility, mortality and/or migration patterns to explore different demographic futures. [Read more: Definition of Projection Scenarios \(UN\)](#)

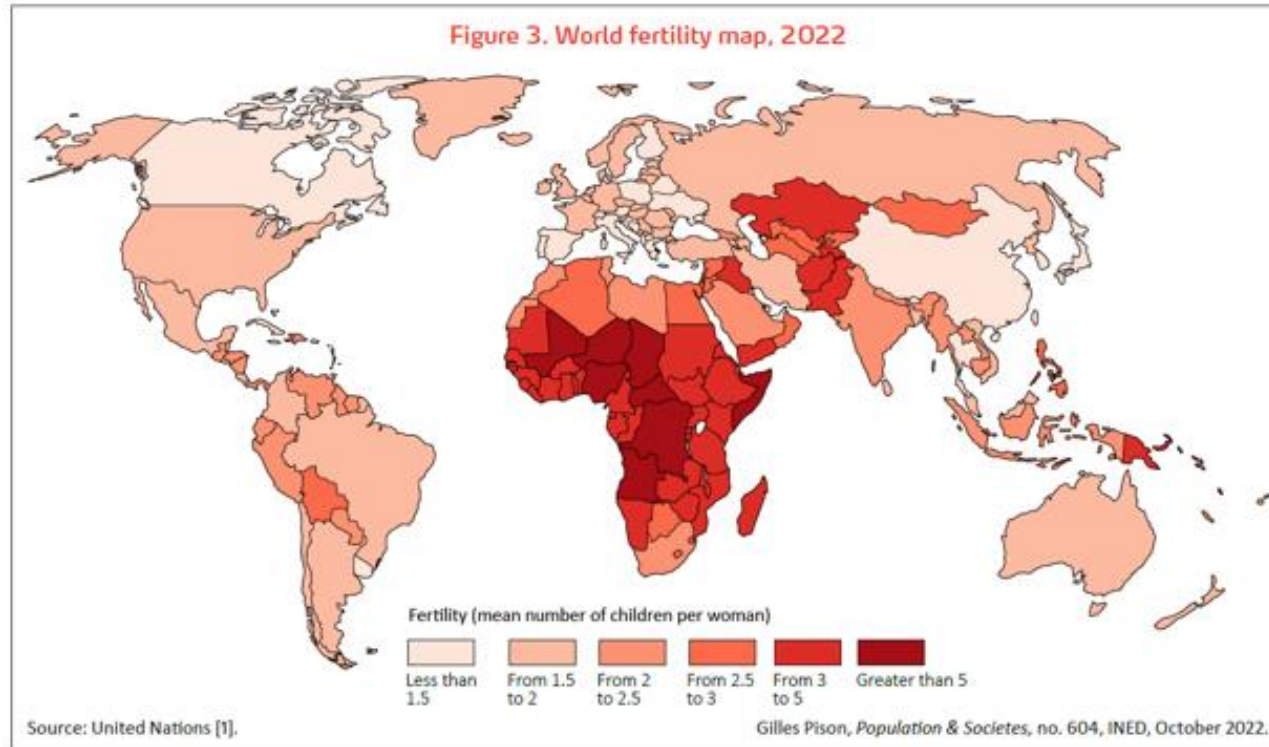
POPULATION GROWTH RATES BY CONTINENT. 2020 (%)



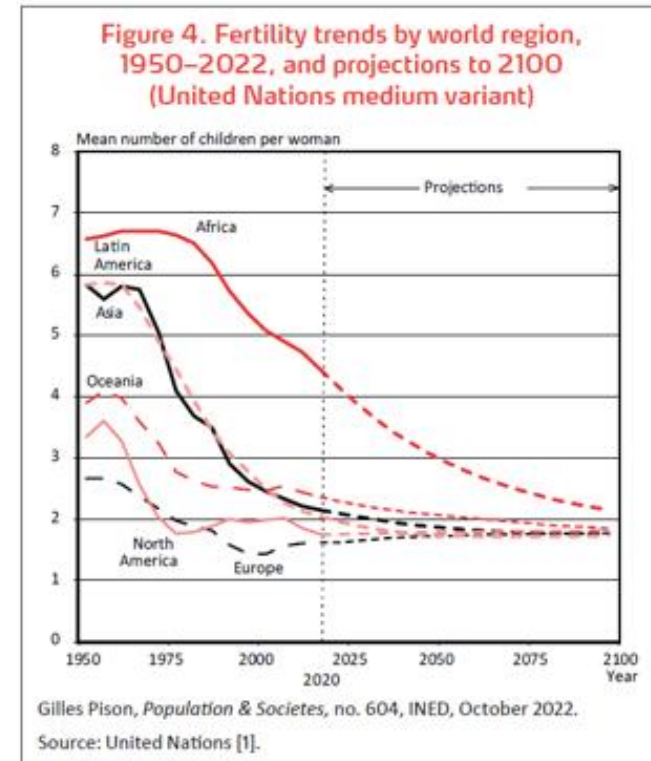
Source: Luiss elaboration based on UN data

Fertility drives Africa's rapid population growth

Africa has the world's highest fertility levels and is projected to converge towards the fertility levels of other regions only towards the end of the 21st century



Gilles Pison, *Population & Societes*, no. 604, INED, October 2022.
Source: United Nations [1].



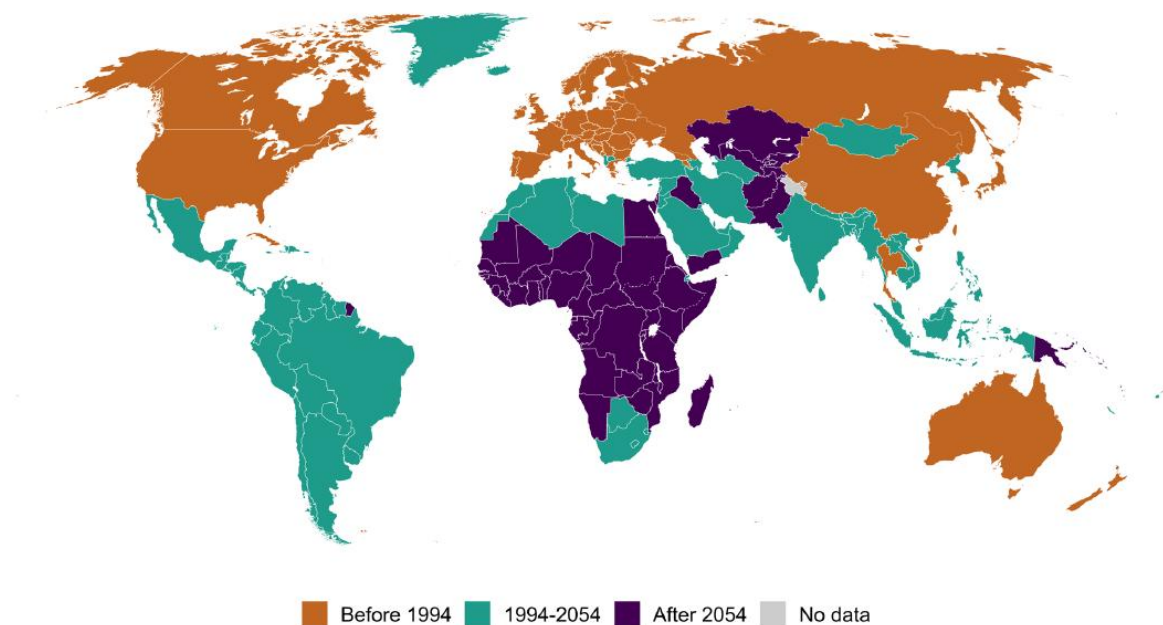
Gilles Pison, *Population & Societes*, no. 604, INED, October 2022.
Source: United Nations [1].

Africa's transition to replacement-level fertility will occur only in the long term

The number of countries below replacement fertility will rise over time, with Africa joining the group only towards the end of the century.

Map 1.1

Countries and areas by timing of the observed or projected total fertility reaching below 2.1 births per woman



Source: United Nations (2024a).

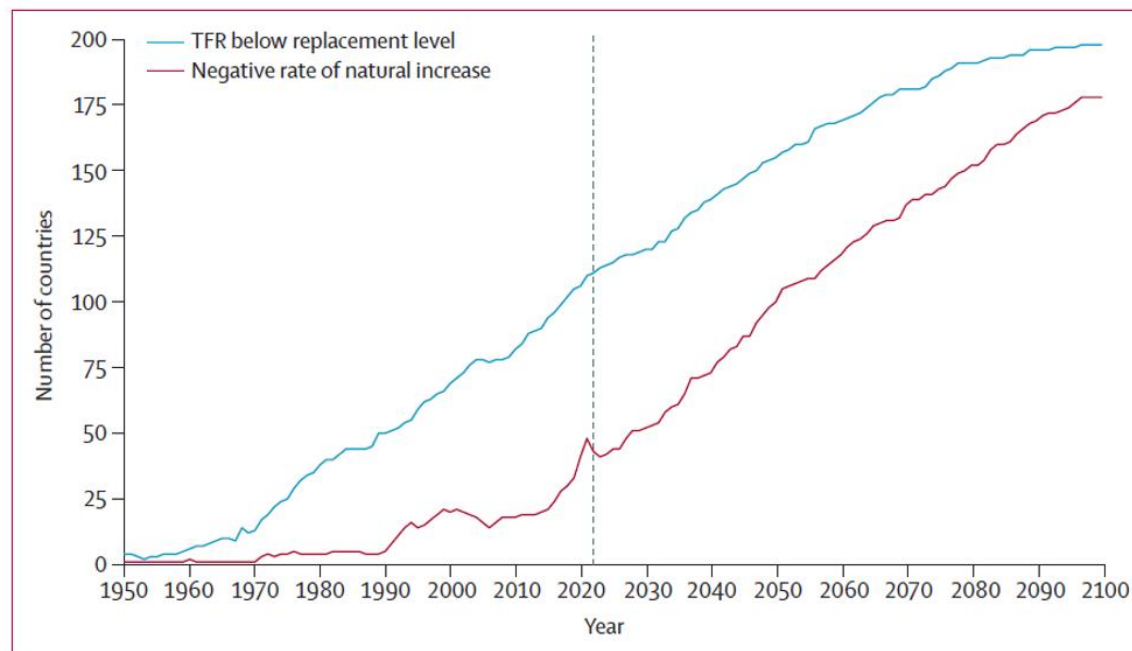


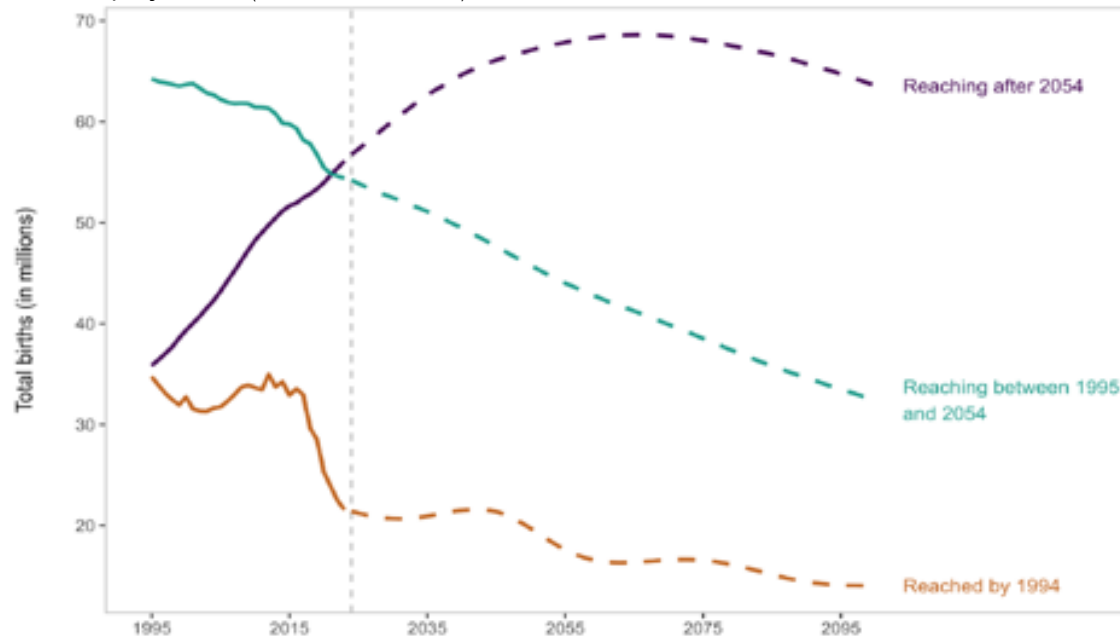
Figure 3: Number of countries and territories with TFR below replacement level (2.1) and with a negative rate of natural increase, 1950–2100

The number of countries and territories is out of a total of 204. The rate of natural increase is calculated as the birth rate minus the death rate; a negative rate indicates more deaths than births in a particular year and location. The vertical dashed line is at year 2022 (the first forecast year). TFR=total fertility rate.

Source: UN 2024. World Fertility Report

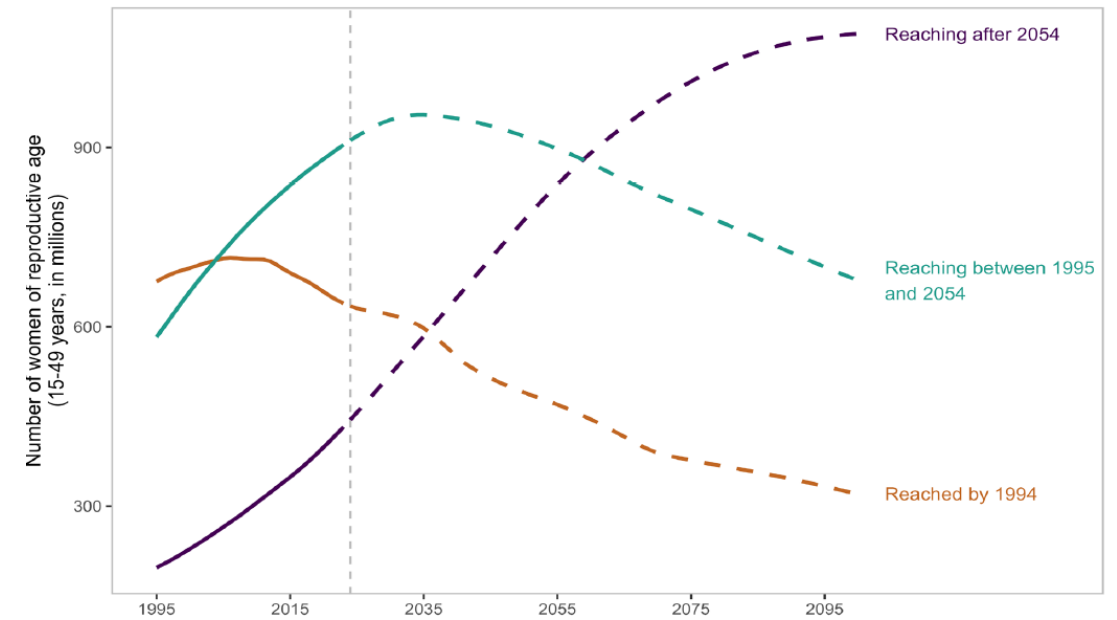
Africa: demographic momentum through the 21st century

Number of births for countries and areas in three groups by timing of reaching total fertility rate below 2.1 children per woman, estimates, 1995-2023, and projections (medium scenario) 2024-2100



Source: UN 2024. World Fertility Report

Number of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) for countries and areas in three groups by timing of reaching total fertility rate below 2.1 children per woman, estimates, 1995-2023, and projections (medium scenario) 2024-2100



Source: UN 2024. World Fertility Report

Demographic outlook (source Ined)

<https://www.ined.fr/en/publications/editions/population-and-societies/the-population-of-the-world-2024/>

Area	Population (in millions)	Births (per 1,000)	Deaths (per 1,000)	Age 0-14 (%)	Age 65+ (%)
World	8,162	16	8	25	10
Africa	1,515	31	8	34	4
Asia	4,807	14	7	23	10
Europe	745	8	11	15	21
North America	385	10	9	17	18
Latin America & Caribbean	663	14	7	23	10
Oceania	46	15	7	22	14

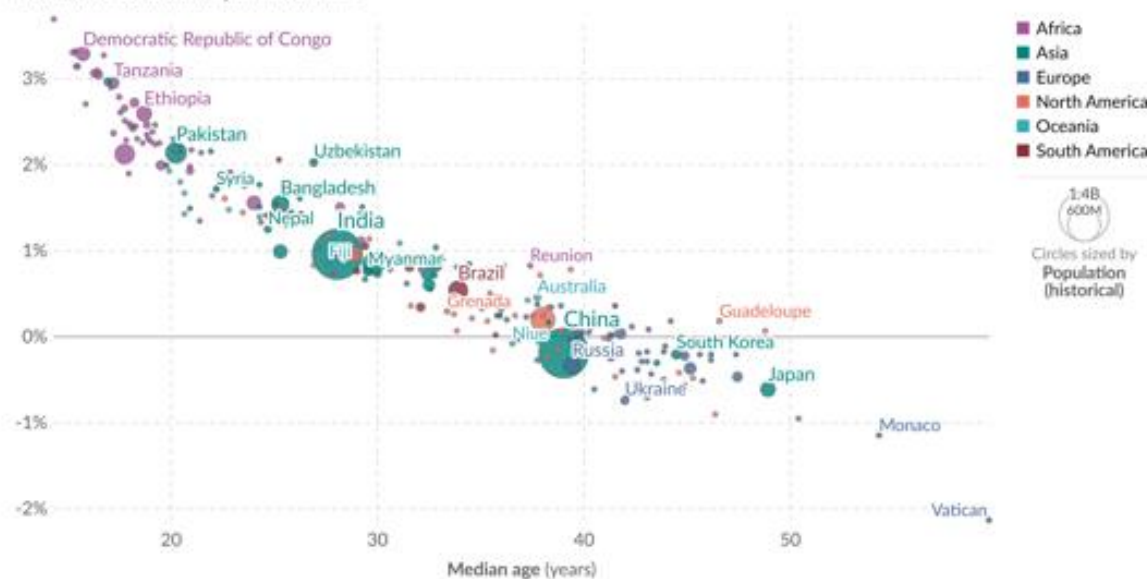
Africa's Demographic Future: Population Growth and Age Structure

The pace of population growth shapes age structure: faster growth is associated with younger populations, while slower growth leads to older populations

Natural population growth rate vs. median age, 2023

The median age is the age that divides the population into two parts of equal size, that is, there are as many people with ages above the median as there are with ages below the median. In this metric of population growth, changes due to migration are excluded and only births and deaths are considered.

Annual Rate of Natural Population Increase



Data source: UN, World Population Prospects (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/age-structure | CC BY

AFRICA



Luiss

Maria Rita Testa

Professor of Demography

Department of Political Science

Director of the Undergraduate Program in Political Science

mtesta@luiss.it

LUISS

