General Assembly 3

Responding to the global rise in aging populations



MODEL UNITED NATIONS
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

Emilia Alexandersdottir &
Sebastian Mariner

Forum	GA3
Issue:	Responding to the global rise in aging populations
Student Officer:	Emilia Alexandersdottir & Sebastian Mariner
Position:	Deputy Chairs

Introduction

All around the world, populations are aging at an unprecedented rate. Advances in healthcare, improved living conditions and declining fertility rates have all contributed to the increase in life expectancy, not only in developed economies, but emerging ones too. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), global life expectancy at birth reached 73.3 years in 2024, making it an increase of 8.4 years since 1995. At the same time, the number of people aged 60 and older is projected to grow from 1.1 billion in 2023 to 1.4 billion by 2030, with the most rapid increases occurring in developing regions. While these changes do mean there has been remarkable progress in public health and human development, it also presents a pressing set of social economic and humanitarian challenges, from pressures on healthcare systems and pension schemes, to the rise of age related discrimination and elder neglect. Nations must now rethink how they structure their societies and policies to accommodate these growing older populations.

Definition of Key Terms

Ageing population

A demographic trend characterized by a rising proportion of of older people, (typically ages 60 or 65 and above) in the overall population, often resulting from increased life expectancy and declining birth rates

Dependency Ratio

A measure used to compare the number of dependents (children and elderly) to the working-age population. A higher old-age dependent ratio may show greater economic pressure on the working population to support retirees

Geriatric Care

Healthcare services that focus on the needs of elderly individuals, including the treatment of age related illness, palliative care and support for any chronic conditions and physical limitations.

Pension System

A programme, often state run, designed to provide financial support to people during retirement, funded through taxation or money made during working life

Active Ageing

A concept promoted by the world health organisation (WHO), which encourages the participation of older individuals in economic, social, cultural and civic affairs to increase their quality of life.

Ageism

Stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination against people or groups based on their age, often directed toward older adults in social and/or professional contexts.

Working age

The age range of the population that is seen as fit to work and economically active, typically categorized in the ages 15-64. This group stimulates the economy by providing a high percentage of taxes and contributions, commonly via labour.

General Overview

The insurmountable rise in aging populations across the globe is presenting an inevitable demographic shift that will negatively and greatly leave an impact on healthcare systems, societal structures, and the economy of countless nations worldwide. One of the causes of this global rise is the increase of life expectancy, leading to over 12% percentage of people aged 60 and above (with that number being expected to almost double to 22% by 2050 according to recent predictions by the

WHO). Simultaneously, declining birth rates also contribute majorly as a key factor in this issue, Amongst many others.

Declining birth rates

With global fertility rates declining, fewer children are born, which leads to a large disparity in working and elderly aged people that we can see today. This fall in birth rates can be attributed by a multitude of possible causes, such as (but not limited to): the widespread availability of contraceptives, the rise of the cost of living leading to more and more women not being equipped with the financial capability to have a child, or the shift in societal expectancies which nowadays focus more on careers and financial gain, rather than having a family. Out of all of these factors, economic insecurity is a driving force when it comes to the decline in birth rates. Similarly, China's former one child policy has had long lasting and substantial impacts on the population's age difference. As healthcare improves and the mortality rate of infants rapidly diminishes, many families in first world countries don't feel the need to have children in order to "survive" or have someone provide for them, compared to nations like Niger or Chad, with each woman expecting to have 6 children each.

Rising dependency ratios and Economic burdens

The rise in aging populations is directly causing an imbalance in the old age dependency ratio (the ratio between elderly people and the working age population). As the number of workers being able to support a climbing demographic of retired people, it places pressure on social welfare programs and pension schemes. For example, pension systems are facing financial difficulties since there are a diminished number of contributors, but at the same time they are having to help fund a rising number of beneficiaries, leading to the government having to raise taxes in order to fund these pensions. In the EU alone, pension spending is expected to increase by 4-7% by 2070, majorly due to this increasing demographic imbalance.

Labour shortages

To add on, labour shortages worldwide add on to this growing issue. For instance in nations such as Japan, a country projected to only have 1.3 workers per retiree by 2050 according to OECD, is already experiencing a decline in the workforce, leading to reduced productivity and impeded economic growth. As aging populations

increase and birth rates decline, shortages of qualified and able workers become a worldwide issue and creates an imbalance in a nation's economy.

Underfunded elder care systems

Elderly populations require more on the nose medical care, especially when faced with chronic illnesses such as: Alzheimer's, dementia, cancer, arthritis, and many chronic respiratory diseases (such as COPD). A common solution to this dilemma is relocating he elderly person that requires such attention to various nursing homes, or personal carers being provided to them if they prefer to still live at their one home. However, these systems are being pushed to their limits as demand for hospice care, specialised nurses, and home nursing increase, which leads to long waiting lists and lower quality of care. Furthermore, many care homes and nursing services are underfunded, especially in middle/lower-income countries. With these elder care services being underdeveloped, the outcome of this is more and more young/working age citizens having to take care of their elderly parents/grandparents, as this is often seen as tradition in some cultures.

Social effects of aging and elder abuse

In many first world countries' societies, younger generations are becoming increasingly independent and individualistic, symbolising the shift in traditional family structures and societal norms regarding older populations in these high-income nations. Alongside this, young people are moving away in droves to pursue higher education, employment, or for the sake of independence, something they may not be able to achieve if they stayed near their aging parents. In urban areas, multigenerational families living under one roof has become rare, compared to previous eras, and elder care is typically outsourced to institutions or private nurses. Whilst this form of independence is oftentime celebrated in these modern societies, it creates a leading effect of isolationism in older adults, especially in suburban regions. The social disconnection of these elderly people with their families increases the risk of mental health issues, decline of cognitive abilities, and in some cases, neglect or abuse by their family. Regarding abuse, many aging populations with limited mobility of cognitive function face a heightened risk of financial exploitation, often the perpetrator being from their very own family. In certain cases, unregulated private carers can use the elderly person's disadvantages to their advantage. In situations like these, the victim is, for the most part, afflicted by

memory-affected diseases like dementia or Alzheimer's, making it easier for the abuser to take advantage of them.

Ageism

Ageism is a large contributing factor to elder abuse and other social effects of ageing societies, especially in first-world countries whose young societies prioritize digital engagement in work and overall higher standards of productivity in the workplace. Older adults often face discrimination in the hiring process, with older applications holding less value to a hiring manager solely based on the applicee's age, not qualifications. This discrepancy directly causes an imbalance in unemployment in elderly population, causing more of the government's funds having to be spent on unemployment benefits. Alongside this, as digital societies become the norm in social interactions, aging adults may be left behind in this wave due to digital literacy or lack of access, which prevents them to access streamline services such as digital banking or quality of life services. This digital exclusion not only affects banks worldwide, but it also reinforces negative stereotypes that elderly people are incapable and irrelevant to modern society, with them being a "burden" on this rapidly changing world.

Ageing on a global scale

Whilst the imbalance of the ratio between elderly populations and young populations was before seen as an issue for Western nations/regions, it is now a crisis that is affecting developed and developing countries worldwide. In nations such as China, Brazil, and Thailand, their populations are aging rapidly, with them not having the infrastructure and the social care to cope. For example, the amount of people aged 60 and over in China is expected to surpass 400 million by 2035, yet a large margin of Chinese provinces face pension deficits and lack the elder support services other nations may have, especially in rural provinces such as Guangxi and Yunnan.

Major Parties Involved

Japan

Japan is currently one of the most aged societies in the world, with over 29% of the population aged 65 and above. The country has created various strategies to adapt including integrating robotics in elder care, raising the retirement age and promoting community-based care models

Germany

Germany is currently one of the five “super-aged” societies and its population of individuals aged 65 and above will continue to grow, reaching almost a third of the total population by 2030. They have implemented pension and labour market reforms and support EU- wide strategies for active aging while also investing heavily in long term elder care and social insurance

People's Republic of China

China is experiencing one of the fastest demographic shifts in the world, with nearly 297 million people aged 60 and above in 2023, which is over 21% of the population. Decades of the one child policy, as well as rising life expectancy due to medical advancements have contributed to this rapid aging. In response to this, the Chinese government has expanded healthcare services, modernised their pension systems, which now covers a billion people, and invested heavily in improving elderly care infrastructure.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has had a leading role in global efforts through its Decade of Healthy Ageing initiative (2021-2030), which promotes age inclusive public health policies and cross sector collaboration

International labour Organisations (ILO)

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) advises on labour and social protection systems, especially regarding retirement, elder employment, and equitable pensions across different economies.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
September 25th 1979	China adopts the One-Child policy
November 1st 1994	Japan reports that over 20% of its population is above the age of 65, becoming the first "super-aged" society
April 12th 2002	In the first World Assembly of ageing, UN nations adopt the "Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing"
June 30th 2015	Global fertility rates halve from 5.0 in 1950, to 2.5 births per woman
October 1st 2020	UN DESA estimates there are over 727 million people aged 65+ worldwide.
May 30th 2025	The European Commission releases a report warning of the potential increase of pension spending by governments

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, 3 April 1982 (A/CONF.113/31)
- Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 12 April 2002 (A/CONF.197/9)
- Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 20 December 2002 (A/RES/57/167)
- Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 18 December 2012 (A/RES/67/139)
- Measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons, 21 December 2020 (A/RES/75/131)
- Proclamation of the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2020 (WHA73.10)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The World Health Organisation launched the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) to coordinate and monitor any action among governments, civil society, international agencies, and the private sector. The initiative focuses on age-friendly environments, integrated care, long term care and the combatting of ageism. While progress has been made in some areas, such as increasing awareness and gathering data, implementation has been uneven, particularly in low-income countries lacking healthcare infrastructure.

Various countries have also undertaken national ageing strategies, such as the European Union's Active Ageing Index, and Japan's community integrated care systems. These have shown success in improving elder quality of life and reducing healthcare burdens. However in many areas, economic constraints, political instability and insufficient long term planning have stopped any solid policy implementation.

Some international resolutions under the United Nations general assembly and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have addressed aging within the broader context of development and human rights, but these efforts often lack binding commitments and funding ways, which limits their impact.

Possible Solutions

Governments could consider developing or updating national ageing strategies that align with international frameworks, making sure they address healthcare access, age friendly urban planning and inclusive pension systems. These strategies should be data-driven, culturally appropriate and also designed with input from older civilians.

Labour market policies could be changed to encourage the active participation of older adults. This could be offering flexible or part time work arrangements, promoting lifelong learning and eliminating age related workplace discrimination.

Technology could also be used to improve the independence and wellbeing of the elderly. For example, investment in telemedicine, digital literacy training, and age inclusive innovation can reduce isolation and healthcare strain.

Bibliography

Works Cited

AARP International. “Germany.” *Www.aarpinternational.org*, 2025, www.aarpinternational.org/initiatives/aging-readiness-competitiveness-arc/germany. Accessed 27 July 2025.

Bloom, D. E., and D. L. Luca. “Ageing Population - an Overview | ScienceDirect Topics.” *Sciencedirect.com*, 2017, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/ageing-population. Accessed 27 July 2025.

BRIEF BACKGROUND NOTES on AGEING ISSUES LEADING up to the ESTABLISHMENT of the OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP on AGEING, and ITS WORK during ITS FOURTEEN SESSIONS. www.ngocoa-ny.org/resolutions-and-background.pdf. Accessed 28 July 2025.

D’Ambrogio, Enrico. *Japan’s Ageing Society*. European Parliamentary Research Service, Dec. 2020, www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/659419/EPRS_BRI(2020)659419_EN.pdf. Accessed 27 July 2025.

European Commission. “The 2024 Ageing Report • the Silver Times.” *The Silver Times*, 13 Jan. 2025, thesilvertimes.com/insight/the-2024-ageing-report/. Accessed 28 July 2025.

Hervé Boulhol, and Christian Geppert. “This Is How Ageing Populations Are Affecting Pensions.” *World Economic Forum*, 6 June 2018, www.weforum.org/stories/2018/06/the-effect-of-population-ageing-on-pensions/.

IMF. “Aging Populations and Public Pension Schemes --IMF Occasional Paper No. 147.” *Www.imf.org*, www.imf.org/external/pubs/nft/op/147/.

International Labour Organisation . “Challenges and Opportunities of an Ageing Workforce: A Worker’s Perspective.” *International Labour Organization*, 30 Sept. 2024, www.ilo.org/resource/news/challenges-and-opportunities-of-an-ageing-workforce.

Nations, United. “Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 2002.” *United Nations*, 12 Apr. 2002, www.un.org/en/conferences/ageing/madrid2002.

NGO committee on ageing. *BRIEF BACKGROUND NOTES on AGEING ISSUES LEADING up to the ESTABLISHMENT of the OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP on AGEING, and ITS WORK during ITS FOURTEEN SESSIONS*. www.ngocoa-ny.org/resolutions-and-background.pdf. Accessed 28 July 2025.

O’Neill, Aaron. “Countries with the Highest Birth Rates 2017 | Statista.” *Statista*, Statista, 2017, www.statista.com/statistics/262884/countries-with-the-highest-fertility-rates/.

OECD. “Demographic Trends.” *OECD*, 2025, www.oecd.org/en/publications/2023/11/health-at-a-glance-2023_e04f8239/full-report/demographic-trends_e7faed7b.html.

---. “Working Better with Age: Japan.” *OECD*, 20 Dec. 2018, www.oecd.org/en/publications/working-better-with-age-japan_9789264201996-en.html.

Paúl, Constança, et al. “Active Ageing: An Empirical Approach to the WHO Model.” *Current Gerontology and Geriatrics Research*, vol. 2012, 2012, pp. 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1155/2012/382972.

Reuters Staff. “China Plans ‘Bigger, Stronger’ Social Security Fund to Aid Ageing Society.” *Reuters*, 20 Aug. 2024, www.reuters.com/world/china/china-plans-bigger-stronger-social-security-fund-aid-ageing-society-2024-08-20/.

Science Direct. “Geriatric Care - an Overview | ScienceDirect Topics.” *Www.sciencedirect.com*, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/nursing-and-health-professions/geriatric-care. Accessed 27 July 2025.

Song, Peipei, and Wei Tang. “The Community-Based Integrated Care System in Japan: Health Care and Nursing Care Challenges Posed by Super-Aged Society.” *BioScience Trends*, vol. 13, no. 3, June 2019, pp. 279–81, https://doi.org/10.5582/bst.2019.01173.

UN DESA. “World Population Ageing 2020 Highlights .” *United Nations*, United Nations, 1 Oct. 2020, www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Sep/un_pop_2020_pf_ageing_10_key_messages.pdf.

UNECE. “Active Ageing Index | UNECE.” *Unece.org*, unece.org/population/active-ageing-index.

United Nations. “Global Issues: Ageing.” *United Nations*, 2024, www.un.org/en/global-issues/ageing. Accessed 27 July 2025.

---. *World World Population Prospects United Nations Data Booklet*. 2015, www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2015_world_population_prospects-2015_revision_databooklet.pdf.

WHO. “Ageing and Health.” *World Health Organization*, 1 Oct. 2024, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health.

---. “Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030).” *Www.who.int*, 2022, www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing. Accessed 27 July 2025.

Wikipedia Contributors. “Ageism.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 18 Sept. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ageism. Accessed 27 July 2025.

World Bank Group. “Glossary | DataBank.” *Databank.worldbank.org*, databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/gender-statistics/series/SP.POP.DPND. Accessed 27 July 2025.

World Health Organization. “Ageing: Global Population.” *World Health Organization*, 21 Feb. 2025, www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/population-ageing. Accessed 27 July 2025.

Zaken, Ministerie van Buitenlandse. “What Is a Pension? | NetherlandsWorldwide.” *Www.netherlands worldwide.nl,* 22 Dec. 2022, www.netherlandsworldwide.nl/retiring/what-is-a-pension. Accessed 27 July 2025.