

Chapter 1

Population and families

Key findings

- There are about 62 million more men than women worldwide. In younger age groups, men outnumber women; in older age groups, women outnumber men.
- About half of all international migrants are women, but men migrants are dominant in developing countries, mostly those in Northern Africa, Oceania, and Southern and Western Asia.
- The age at marriage has increased for both women and men.
- Child marriage has declined; still, almost half of women aged 20 to 24 in Southern Asia and two fifths in sub-Saharan Africa marry before age 18.
- The average number of children per woman declined in countries with high and medium fertility levels but increased slightly in some countries with low fertility.
- Adolescent birth rates declined almost everywhere but are still high in many African and Latin American and Caribbean countries.
- Lone mothers with children constitute about three quarters of one-parent households.
- The proportion of women aged 45 to 49 who are divorced or separated is at least 25 per cent higher than that of men in the same age group.
- Widowhood is about three times higher among women aged 60 to 64 than among men in the same age group.
- The majority of older persons living in one-person households are women.

Introduction

Population dynamics affect the lives of women and men everywhere. Declining fertility rates and increasing longevity have resulted in decreasing proportions of children and increasing proportions of older persons in the world's population. Women tend to outlive men, with the result that women outnumber men in older age groups. Subtle differences in the distribution of the population by sex have also emerged, starting at birth and extending throughout the life cycle. The global sex ratio (that is, the number of boys and men relative to the number of girls and women) increased across almost all age groups, resulting in an increasing share of boys and men in the global population.

Changes in marriage patterns and fertility suggest that, overall, women are becoming more independent, empowered and in control of their own fertility and lives. The age at marriage has increased, while fertility has declined in countries with high and medium fertility levels. Yet in many countries, child marriage and adolescent

fertility persist and a large share of the demand for family planning goes unmet.

At the same time, families are becoming more diverse. One-person households and one-parent households are more common as patterns of marriage, unions and divorce shift. One-person households are more common because of population ageing and changing norms related to intergenerational relationships and family support. Some of the changes in living arrangements are not spurred by personal choices but by larger phenomena. For example, in countries greatly affected by the HIV epidemic and by conflict, women are at higher risk of becoming young widows and children of becoming orphans. Since women and men do not often have the same opportunities in education, employment and access to their own income (see other chapters of this report), changes in living arrangements can have a bearing on the overall differences in well-being between women and men.

Demographic changes are also the background against which many dimensions of life—including health, education, labour and wealth—are being shaped. In fact, the mere distribution of the population across regions and countries largely determines the distribution of human capital, poverty and the burden of disease around the world. Therefore, any assessment of progress in

the status of women vis-à-vis men needs to draw first on major demographic changes. This chapter presents trends and current levels in population composition by age and sex and migration in the first part; and marriage and unions, their dissolutions, fertility and living arrangements in the second part. Mortality is covered in the following chapter (see Chapter 2 on Health).

Box 1.1

Gaps in gender statistics related to population and families

Population statistics are routinely collected through population and housing censuses, civil registration systems and/or nationally representative sample surveys. Population and housing censuses are the primary source of information on the size and composition of the population by age and sex, as well as on other demographic topics, including migration, fertility and mortality. Most countries conduct at least one population census every 10 years.^a For the 2010 census round (covering the decade 2005–2014), 21 countries or areas, covering 7 per cent of the world's population, did not conduct a population census, a slight improvement over the previous census decade (1995–2004), when that number was 26.

The availability of data based on household surveys has increased dramatically in the past two decades. For instance, the number of countries able to conduct Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS) increased from 99 (conducting 189 surveys) in 1995–2004 to 113 (conducting 241 surveys) in 2005–2014. These surveys play a crucial role in providing statistics on fertility and mortality in countries where the civil registration system is underdeveloped.^b

The quality of data on age and sex can be affected by the way the data are reported. Errors in the declaration of age are common. In some cultural settings, skewed sex ratios at different ages can also occur as a result of underreporting or misreporting of the female population.^c

Inconsistencies among various data sources can occur as a result of differences in data collection operations, including sampling frames and questionnaires. For example, in a number of countries, the large variations in the marital status of women over time can be explained only by differences in the data sources used. Recent research has shown that, compared to population

and housing censuses, some household sample surveys suffer from systematic “family bias”. Married women with children are more likely to be included in survey samples, while single women are almost systematically underrepresented.^d Basic demographic indicators, such as the average age at marriage or the number of children per woman, vary when different data sources are used.

Data on some demographic topics, such as on informal unions or births occurring outside of marriage, are less often collected. Only a limited number of countries collect and make data available on extramarital births. According to the *World Fertility Report 2012*,^e only 91 countries reported data on extramarital fertility for the period 2000–2011, and only 64 have such data for the three periods, 1965–1989, 1990–1999 and 2000–2011.

Migration is one of the topics where the lack of detail impedes analysis. Data on the reasons why people migrate are often not collected and, when they are, they may be limited to only one primary reason. Women may appear considerably underrepresented in labour migration statistics since, although many of them work before and after migrating, they often cite the category of “marriage or family” as the reason for their migration.

The availability of demographic data on refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers varies by categories of displaced populations. Data are more often available for refugees, particularly in countries where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is directly involved in data collection, using its dedicated refugee registration system. In 2013, data disaggregated by sex were available for 71 per cent of the global refugee population.^f

^a See: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/census-dates.htm> (accessed December 2014).

^b See chapter on Health for availability and quality of vital statistics from civil registration systems.

^c Goodkind, 2011; Spoorenberg, 2013; Yi and others, 1993.

^d Hull and Hartanto, 2009; Kantorova, 2014; Spoorenberg, 2014.

^e United Nations, 2013i.

^f UNHCR, 2014.

A. Population

1. Population composition by age and sex

The world's population in 2015 is estimated at 7.3 billion people—1.6 billion more than two decades ago. Currently, 83 per cent of the global population (6 billion people) live in developing regions and that share is increasing. This has implications for the global distribution of human capital and poverty, as well as the burden of disease. The developed regions are home to the remaining 17 per cent (1.3 billion). The share of the world's population living in developing regions is as follows: an estimated 45 per cent are concentrated in Eastern and Southern Asia; 14 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa; and almost 9 per cent each in South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Taken together, the remaining developing regions (the Caucasus and Central Asia, Northern Africa, Oceania and Western Asia) represent less than 7 per cent of the global population.¹

The proportion of children is declining in most countries around the world

One of the most notable demographic changes in the past few decades has been the transition of the population to an older structure. Population ageing—an increase in the share of people in older age groups and a reduction in the proportion of children—is the result of a decrease in fertility and increased longevity. The global share of children aged 0 to 14 declined from 32 per cent in 1995 to 26 per cent in 2015. The decline is more pronounced in developed regions, but occurs in most countries around the world. Currently, the proportion of children in developed regions is low, at 17 per cent, compared to 28 per cent in developing regions. One region with a low proportion of children is Eastern Asia (18 per cent), dominated by population dynamics in China and its long-standing one-child policy. At the other extreme, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of children in the population, at 43 per cent.²

Populations in many countries are ageing rapidly

The share of older people (aged 60 and over) in the global population has increased over time. In 2015, the proportion is 12 per cent, compared to 10 per cent in 1995, and is projected to increase to 21 per cent by 2050. The older population itself is also ageing, with the proportion of those aged 80 or older projected to grow from 14 per cent in 2015, to 19 per cent by 2050.³

Population ageing is taking place in all regions and countries, although each of them is at a different stage in the transition. In developed regions, where the transition occurred earlier, the proportion of older persons is currently at 24 per cent. By comparison, in developing regions, the proportion is 10 per cent. Nevertheless, population ageing is also occurring in developing regions and at a faster pace than in developed ones. The same demographic shift experienced by developed regions is expected to take a shorter period of time in developing regions.⁴ This means that countries in developing regions have much less time to put in place the infrastructure to address the needs of a rapidly expanding older population. A life-course approach to healthy and active ageing is becoming crucial. Continuous participation in and contribution to society, including at older ages, can be supported by promoting healthy behaviours at all ages, preventing and detecting chronic diseases early, encouraging lifelong learning, and gradual retirement at older ages (see Chapters on Health, Education and Work).

Programmes and services targeted to older persons need to take into account the fact that women tend to live longer than men (figure 1.1). Once they reach age 60, women are expected to live for another 24 years in the developed regions and for another 20 years in developing regions. By comparison, men reaching age 60 are expected to live for another 21 years in developed regions and 18 years in developing regions.

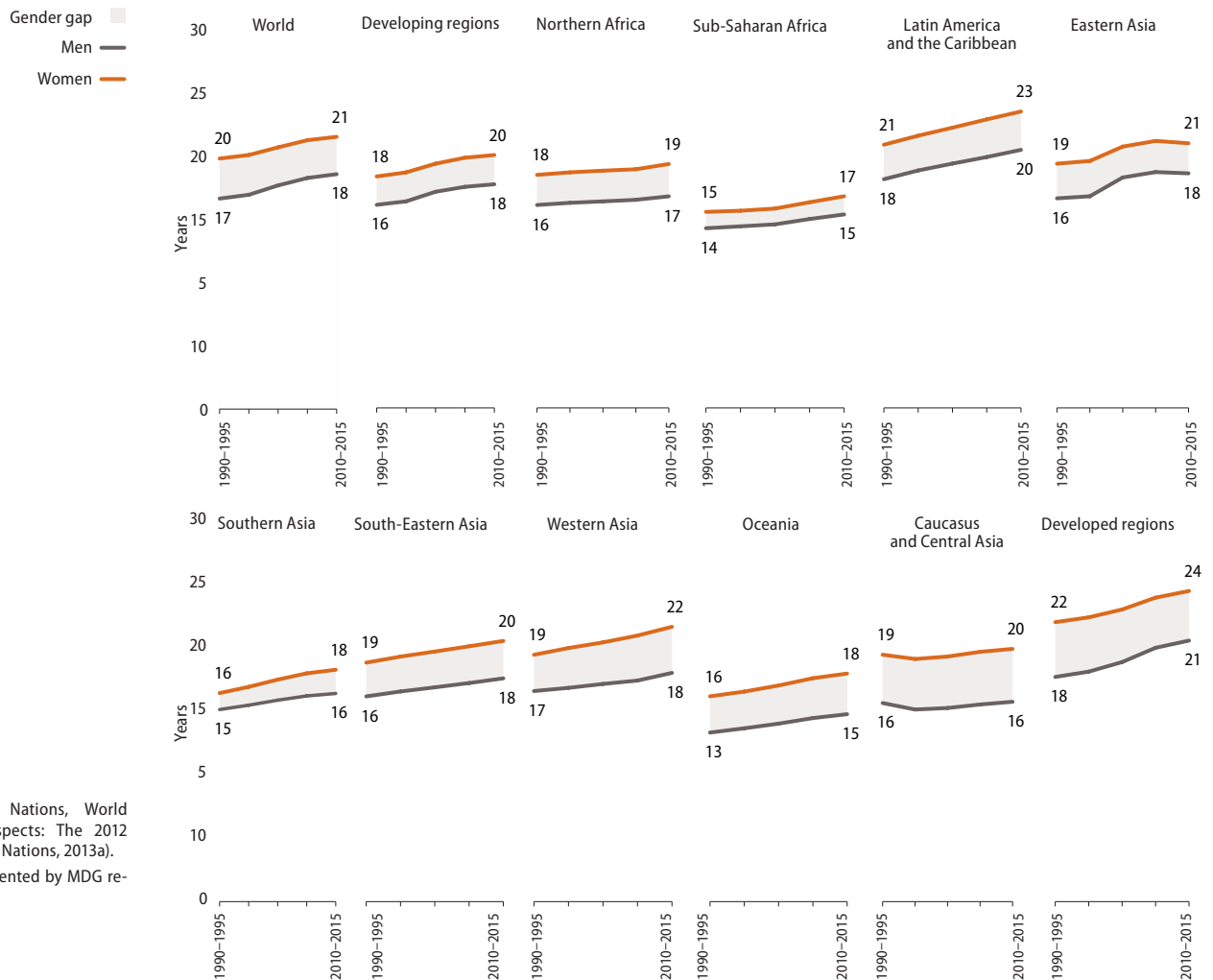
¹ United Nations, 2013a.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ United Nations, 2013l.

Figure 1.1
Life expectancy at age 60 by sex, 1990–1995 to 2010–2015



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision (United Nations, 2013a).

Note: Data presented by MDG regions.

Changes in age structure have created a demographic window of opportunity for economic growth in many developing countries

The reduction in the share of children, at a time when the proportion of older persons is still relatively low, opens a demographic window of opportunity for economic growth and social development in developing countries.⁵ This is a favorable period during which the share of the dependent population (children and older persons) is going down, while the share of the working population (adults) is increasing. The dependency ratio (the ratio of children and older population to the ratio of adults at working age) reached its minimum level in

2015, but is projected to stay there for only 15 years.⁶ Most developed countries already have large older populations, but many developing countries can benefit from this “demographic dividend”, with the appropriate economic and social policies and increased investments in human capital (education and health), particularly among children, adolescents and youth. In this short window of opportunity, women’s economic participation could make a big difference. Gender equality and women’s access to the full range of economic opportunities can contribute to increased productivity and improved development outcomes for their children.

⁵ Pool, Wong and Vilquin (eds.), 2006; Vallin, 2005.

⁶ United Nations, 2013l.

Sex ratio

There are fewer women than men in the world and in some developing regions

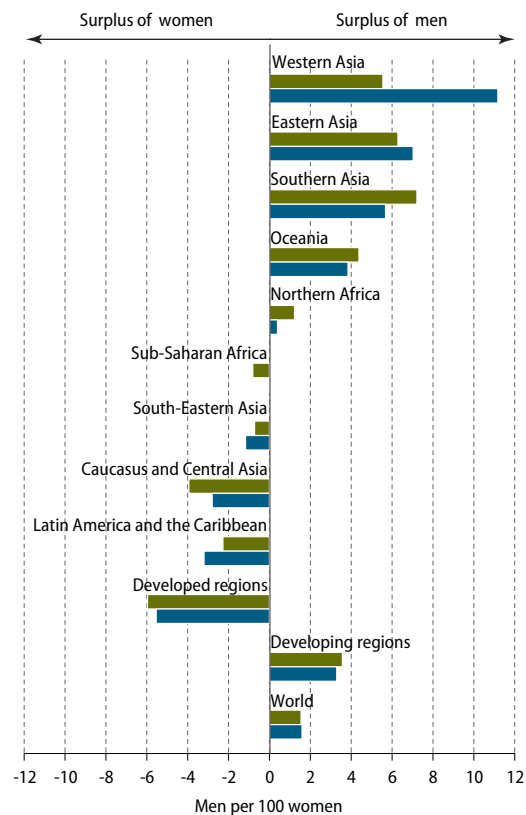
In 2015, population projections estimate that there are 3.6 billion women and 3.7 billion men worldwide. In other words, women constitute slightly less than half of the global population (49.6 per cent). The ratio of males to females (sex ratio) indicates that there are 102 men for every 100 women.⁷ Men outnumbered women by approximately 44 million in 1995 and by 62 million in 2015. This increase is the result of population growth and greater improvements in the survival rates of men compared to women. Within the same time period, the sex ratio increased by a very small margin (less than 0.5 per 100).⁸

Large variations in the ratio of men to women are found across the world, with some regions experiencing a shortage of men and others a shortage of women (figure 1.2). Women outnumber men in developed regions and in three out of nine developing regions: the Caucasus and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South-Eastern Asia. The surplus of women in absolute numbers is highest in developed regions and in Latin America and the Caribbean, at 36 million and 10 million, respectively. Over the past two decades, the relative shortage of men became smaller in developed regions and in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and increased in Latin America and the Caribbean (figure 1.2). Currently, the countries and areas with the relative largest shortages of men are Curaçao (82 men per 100 women), Latvia (84 per 100), Lithuania, Martinique and Ukraine (all 85 per 100) and the Russian Federation (86 per 100).⁹

Men outnumber women in Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, Oceania, and Western Asia (figure 1.2). The largest relative surplus of men is recorded in Western Asia, where estimates count 111 men for every 100 women. Eastern and Southern Asia also experience a surplus of men, with a sex ratio of 107 and 106, respectively. Three regions have the highest surplus of men in absolute numbers: 5.5 million in Eastern Asia (mainly due

to China), 49.5 million in Southern Asia (mainly due to India), and 12.1 million in Western Asia (mainly due to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). Over the past two decades, the relative surplus of men declined in Southern Asia and Oceania and increased in Eastern and Western Asia. The increase was particularly noteworthy in Western Asia, where the relative surplus of men doubled (figure 1.2). Countries with the highest observed ratio of men to women in the world are located in this region, including Qatar (324 men per 100 women), the United Arab Emirates (228 per 100), Oman (188 per 100), Kuwait (148 per 100) and Saudi Arabia (139 per 100). In absolute terms, countries with the largest surplus of men are China (52 million), in Eastern Asia, and India (43 million), in Southern Asia. The ratio of men to women and the surplus of men in these two most populous countries largely determine the surplus of men observed at the global level. In sub-Saharan and Northern Africa, the number of women and men is almost equal.¹⁰

Figure 1.2
Surplus or shortage of men per 100 women by region, 1995 and 2015



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision (United Nations, 2013a).

Note: Data presented by MDG regions.

⁷ In a growing number of countries, a third gender has been officially acknowledged and included in official categories. Few countries have granted legal rights to persons of a third gender who choose not to be identified as either a woman or man.

⁸ United Nations, 2013a.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

a. Sex ratio at birth

The sex ratio of a population is determined by the sex ratio at birth—the number of baby boys born for every 100 baby girls—and, after birth, by differences in female and male mortality and migration across age groups.

Currently, more baby boys are born than girls, a by-product of enduring natural selection processes and one of the very rare constants in demography. The biological level of the sex ratio at birth tends to be close to 105 boys per 100 girls, with a standard sex ratio at birth taken as between 103 and 107 boys per 100 girls, allowing for natural regional variations. In some populations, the sex ratio at birth exceeds the standard values. Sex-selective abortion, which is reflective of long-standing cultural preferences for sons, is a major explanatory factor.¹¹

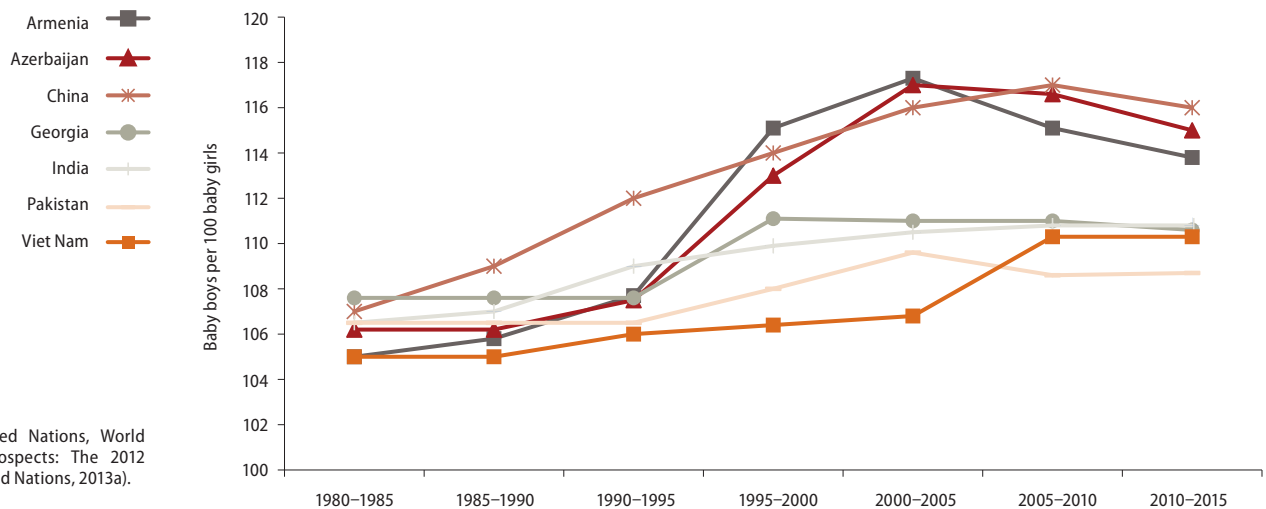
Globally, the sex ratio at birth for 2010–2015 is 107 boys per 100 girls. Regional differences, however, are evident.¹² In developed regions, a sex ratio at birth of 106 is observed, compared to 108 for developing regions. The largest imbalances are recorded in Eastern Asia, with 115 male births per 100 female births, followed by Southern Asia, with a sex ratio at birth of 109, Oceania¹³ at 108, the Caucasus and Central

Asia at 107, due to recent imbalances recorded in selected countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), South-Eastern Asia at 106, and both Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia at 105. With 104 boys born per 100 girls, sub-Saharan Africa is the region of the world with the lowest sex ratio at birth.

Increasing imbalances in sex ratios at birth are found in a number of countries

Over the past few decades, a number of countries and areas have displayed growing imbalances in sex ratios at birth (figure 1.3), indicating that more parents are selecting the sex of their offspring in order to have at least one son. Currently, the highest sex ratio at birth is observed in China, where 116 boys are born for every 100 girls. While higher than expected sex ratios at birth were initially found mostly in Asia, they have also been observed in Southern Europe in recent years, as well as among the South Asian diaspora living in developed countries.¹⁴ The sex ratio at birth varies by the birth order of the child and the sex of the preceding child(ren). In general, the sex ratio at birth tends to increase with birth order and is more imbalanced in families without at least one son.¹⁵

Figure 1.3
Imbalanced sex ratios at birth in selected countries



Source : United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision (United Nations, 2013a).

¹¹ Attané and Guilmoto, eds., 2007; Bongaarts, 2013; Frost and others, 2013; Guilmoto, 2009; Jha and others, 2011.

¹² United Nations, 2013a.

¹³ Australia and New Zealand are not included in this region, but in developed regions.

¹⁴ Almond, Edlund and Milligan, 2013; Dubuc and Coleman, 2007; UNFPA, 2012.

¹⁵ Arnold, Kishor and Roy, 2002, p. 780; Guilmoto and Du-thé, 2013; Meslé, Vallin and Badurashvili, 2007; UNFPA, 2010, p. 17; World Vision and UNFPA, 2012, p. 82.

In some countries, son preference is declining. The experience of the Republic of Korea, for example, suggests that the sex ratio at birth can potentially return to a biologically normal value. After reaching its peak around 1990–1995, the sex ratio at birth in that country progressively declined to expected levels by 2010. Changes in social norms and societal development driven by increases in education, together with legislation against sex-selective abortions, are among the main forces driving the reversal of the trend in the sex ratio at birth.¹⁶ In contrast, in India, while sex-selective abortions have been technically illegal since 1996, the law has had little effect so far on the sex ratio at birth.¹⁷

b. Sex ratio across age groups

Among younger age groups, there are more boys and men than girls and women; the opposite is true among groups of older persons

After birth, biology favours women. The slight male advantage in numbers at birth progressively disappears during childhood and young adulthood, owing to a generally higher male (compared to female) mortality at all ages (see chapter 2 on Health). An equal balance in the numbers of women and men is reached during adulthood. At the global level, there are more men than women up to age 50 (figure 1.4). After that age, when higher mortality rates for men compared to women continue to be observed, the share of women increases rapidly. Globally, the sex ratio is 95 men per 100 women in the 60 to 64 age group, but declines to 70 per 100 in the 80 to 84 age group, and to 45 per 100 in the 90 to 94 age group.

Some populations depart from this global pattern due to specific sex differences in mortality and migration. In developed regions, the balance in the numbers of women and men is reached around age 40, whereas in the developing regions it is around age 55 (figure 1.4). The difference between the two regions is mainly explained by the higher than expected sex ratio at birth and the lower than expected mortality for boys compared to girls in developing regions, particularly among children under age 5. Eastern and Southern Asia are extreme examples of this pattern. Unlike other regions, Eastern and Southern Asia have higher

sex ratios not only among children and youth, but also among older adults. In these two regions, the number of women equal that of men only around age 65.

The lower proportion of women across all age groups in Eastern and Southern Asia relative to other regions may be a measure of the inequalities faced by women at all stages of the life cycle. The term “missing women,” coined by Amartya Sen¹⁸ and used extensively in the literature since then, refers to the high sex ratios observed in some Asian countries, such as China and India, compared to those found in developed countries (and in many countries in developing regions). In other words, the number of “missing women” is the number of additional women that would be found if these countries had the same sex ratios as areas of the world in which women and men received the same treatment and care. The higher mortality of women compared to other countries with similar overall levels of mortality and similar epidemiological conditions is an indicator of the neglect of girls and gender inequality. The sex ratio at birth (as shown above) and the relatively higher female mortality in childhood (see Chapter 2 on Health) play a key role in explaining the lower than expected numbers of women in some countries. More recent research points out that the “missing women” phenomenon can also be explained by premature deaths among women in later age groups.¹⁹

Among the other developing regions, Western Asia has the most distinct demographic profile, characterized by a much higher number of men than women at adult working ages, peaking in the 35 to 39 age group (figure 1.4). Western Asia also has the largest percentage of international migrants among its population and the only region where international migration has a significant impact on the sex ratio at adult ages. Large scale male-dominant labour migration to many Western Asian countries has brought the sex ratio of the adult population to unusually high levels. International migrants constitute nearly a third of the male population between the ages of 25 and 44 in that region. For women, the share of international migrants in the total female population in Western Asia is one in seven (figure 1.7).

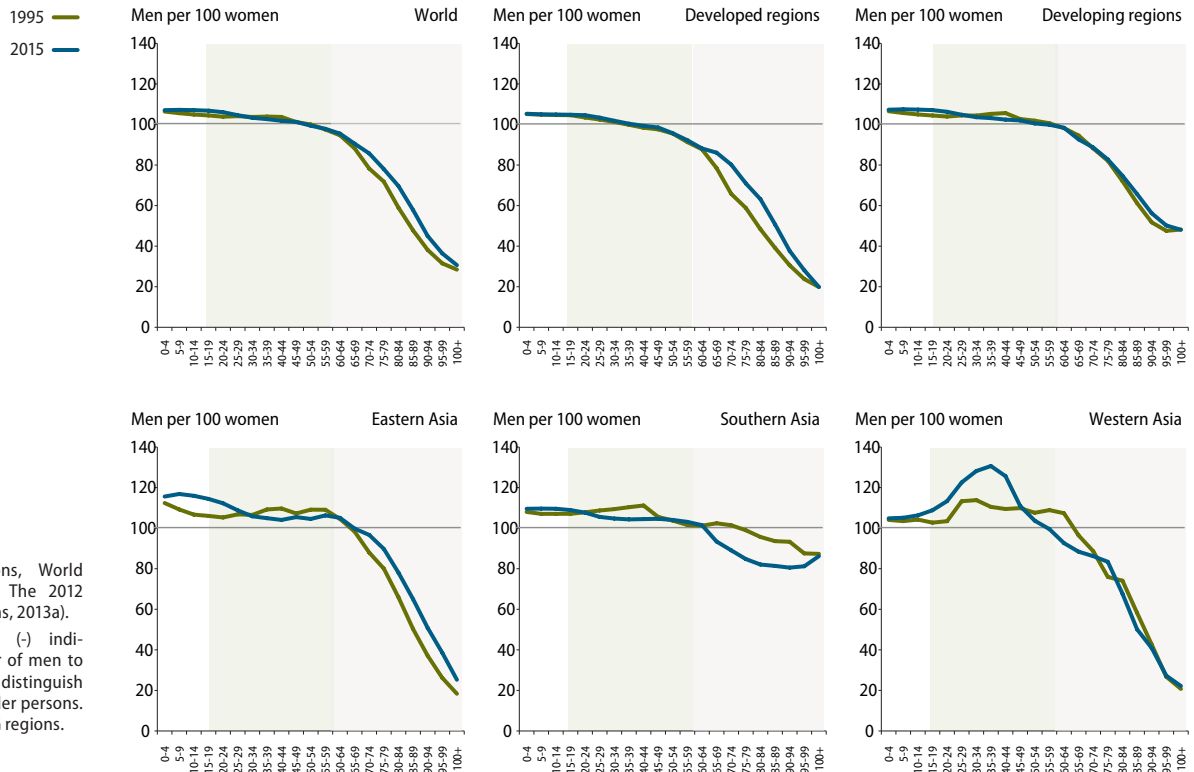
¹⁶ Chung and Das Gupta, 2007.

¹⁷ Jha and others, 2011.

¹⁸ Sen, 1992.

¹⁹ See, for example, Anderson and Ray, 2010; World Bank, 2011; Milazzo, 2014.

Figure 1.4
Age-specific sex ratio in population, world and selected regions, 1995 and 2015



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision (United Nations, 2013a).

Note: Horizontal line (-) indicates an equal number of men to women. Shaded areas distinguish children, adults and older persons. Data presented by MDG regions.

Compared to 20 years ago, the ratios of men to women across all age groups have changed slightly at the global and regional levels (figure 1.4). The slightly higher number of boys relative to girls recorded in 2015, compared to 1995, is indicative of the influence of Eastern and Southern Asia on world population dynamics. The increase is mainly explained by an increased sex ratio at birth over the past 20 years in a few countries (figure 1.3) in these two regions, as well as slightly faster improvements in boys' survival rates compared to girls' in these and other regions.

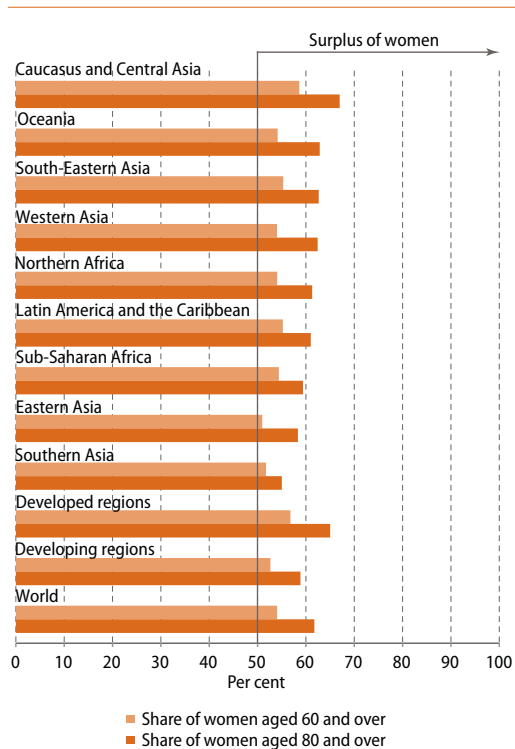
The ratio of men to women among older persons also increased (figure 1.4), due to a greater increase in the chance of survival to older ages among men than among women. Over the past 20 years, the number of men living beyond age 60 increased faster than the number of women, with a proportionate decline of women in older age groups. The increase in the ratio of men to women at older ages occurred mainly in developed regions, but also in some developing regions, including the Caucasus and Central Asia, Eastern Asia and Northern Africa (see Statistical

Annex).²⁰ The opposite trend has been observed in Southern Asia. The unusually high ratio of men to women at older ages observed in 1995, declined considerably over the past 20 years. Nevertheless, the ratio remains the highest among all regions in 2015.

Despite gains in survival among men, including at older ages, women continue to constitute the majority of older persons in all regions, representing 54 per cent of those aged 60 and over, and 62 per cent of those aged 80 and over in 2015 (figure 1.5). They outnumber men at older ages in both developing and developed regions, but the developing regions count proportionally less women at older ages. The lowest proportion of women among older persons and in the oldest age group is found in Southern Asia (52 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively) and Eastern Asia (51 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively). This is the result of sex imbalances that begin at birth and continue throughout life.

²⁰ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

Figure 1.5
Share of women among older persons
(aged 60 and above) and among those aged 80
and over by region, 2015



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision (United Nations, 2013a).

Note: The vertical line (-) indicates the same number of women and men. Data presented by MDG regions.

2. Migration, refugees and internally displaced persons

Migration can offer an empowering opportunity for women and men seeking better education, job opportunities and improved living conditions. Gender roles and attitudes acquired in the country of origin are often challenged and changed among migrants as they integrate into new communities. Such roles and attitudes may also shift in the families and communities left behind.²¹ Women migrants in particular may become more empowered as they learn a new language and skills, take paid employment that secures their access to financial resources, and become familiar with new norms regarding women's rights and opportunities. Women left at home as their husbands migrate may also experience changes in their roles and assume greater decision-making power and autonomy.²²

²¹ United Nations, 2006.

²² *Ibid.*

Migration has complex social and economic impacts in communities of origin and destination. In communities of origin, the emigration of highly educated and skilled individuals, often referred to as the "brain-drain", can negatively impact social development and economic growth.²³ In some contexts, this type of emigration is more pronounced among women than men. For instance, emigration rates among highly educated women from developing regions to OECD countries (member States of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) are higher than those of highly educated men in about half the countries with available data.²⁴

Migration often results in remittances, which are an important source of income for many families in developing countries. In 2013, officially recorded remittance flows to developing countries reached \$404 billion, far exceeding official development assistance.^{25, 26} Remittances have an important role in keeping households out of poverty, including female-headed households. In some sub-Saharan African countries, for instance, the lower poverty rate among female-headed households, compared to male-headed households, is partially attributed to remittances received (see Chapter 8 on Poverty). Remittances have other gender dimensions as well. Some studies have shown that women migrants tend to remit more of their income to their families than male migrants.²⁷

The effect of international migration on women and men in their new destination often depends on whether the rights of migrants are protected and if migrants and their families are integrated into society. A number of global, regional and national instruments dealing specifically with migrant rights have been adopted. However, instruments protecting the rights of migrant workers and their families²⁸ have been ratified by less

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Widmaier and Dumont, 2011.

²⁵ World Bank, 2014.

²⁶ Official development assistance stood at \$135 billion in 2013. United Nations, 2014c.

²⁷ United Nations, 2006.

²⁸ The 149 ILO Convention concerning Migration for Employment (No. 97) was ratified by 49 States as at 1 December 2013; the 1975 ILO Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) (No. 143) was ratified by 23 States; the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families was ratified by 47 States; and the 2011 ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for

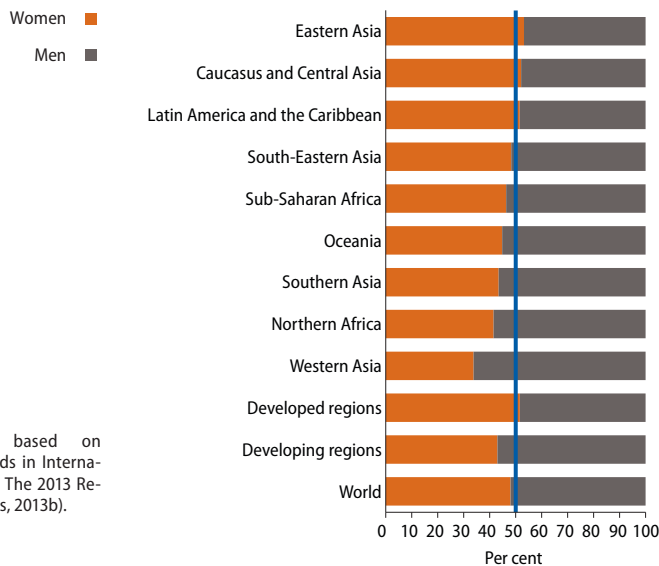
than one quarter of all UN Member States. For instance, the 2011 International Labour Organization Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, a category of workers dominated by women, was ratified by only 10 member States as at the end of 2013. By comparison, instruments to combat human trafficking have been ratified by more than three quarters of States.²⁹

International migration

Adult men are more likely than adult women to migrate internationally

Globally, the number of international migrants reached an estimated 232 million in 2013, up from 175 million in 2000, and 154 million in 1990.³⁰ The proportion of international migrants in the global population has changed little, from 2.9 per cent in 1990 to 3.2 per cent in 2013.³¹ The sex composition of the migrant stock has remained relatively stable over time. With 111 million women migrants compared to 120 million men migrants, women constituted 48 per cent of total international migrants in 2013, compared to 48.8 per cent in 1990.³²

Figure 1.6
Share of women and men in international migrant stock by region, 2013



Source: Computed based on United Nations, Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision (United Nations, 2013b).

Domestic Workers (No. 189) was ratified by 10 States.
Source: United Nations, 2013k.

²⁹ United Nations, 2013k.

³⁰ United Nations, 2013b.

³¹ United Nations, 2013k.

³² United Nations, 2013b.

In developed regions, women migrants represent slightly more than half (52 per cent) of the international migrant stock (figure 1.6), a proportion that has been relatively stable over the past 20 years (51 per cent in 1990).³³ In developing regions, women's share in the international migrant stock is lower, declining from 46 per cent in 1990 to 43 per cent in 2013. Nevertheless, in some developing regions, women are more than half of international migrants, including in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caucasus and Central Asia and Eastern Asia. In regions with an established history of immigration, such as the developed regions and Latin America and the Caribbean, the larger share of women in the migrant stock is partially the result of the longer life expectancy of women than men migrants who arrived decades earlier.³⁴ In the remaining developing regions, including, Northern Africa, Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia, men's share among international migrants is higher than women's (figure 1.6). In Western Asia, women constitute the smallest share (34 per cent) of the international migrant stock.

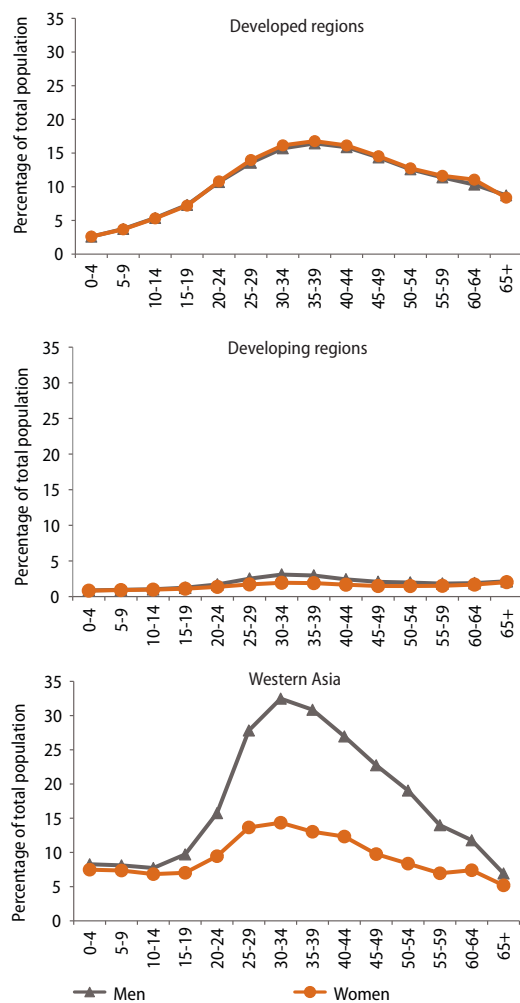
Migration plays a role in the age and sex composition of the population in some regions and countries. In developed regions, the international migrant stock represents an estimated 11 per cent of the population. As shown in figure 1.7, the proportion of migrants in the population is higher in the working age groups, particularly ages 30 to 44. While the effect on the age structure of the host population is considerable, there is no effect on the sex ratio in the population, since the proportion of women and men migrants in the total population of the developed regions is similar (figure 1.7).

In developing regions, where less than 1.6 per cent of the population is composed of international migrants, the potential effect of international migration on the age structure of the population is less prominent than in developed regions (figure 1.7). However, the effect on the sex ratio at adult ages is more pronounced than in the developed regions, since men dominate the international migrant stock in developing regions. The difference is particularly significant between ages 25 and 44, as the share of migrant men in the population is 1.5 times higher than the share of migrant women.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ United Nations, 2013k.

Figure 1.7
International migrant stock by age and sex
as a percentage of the male and female total
population in 2013



Source: Computed based on United Nations, Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision (United Nations, 2013b).

Note: Data presented by MDG regions.

Among developing regions, Western Asia has the largest proportion of international migrants due to strong demand for migrant workers in its oil-producing countries.³⁵ It is also the region with the highest impact of international migrants on the age and sex composition of the population. There, international migrants are almost a third of the male population between the ages of 25 and 44. However, although, the share of international migrants in the total female population does not reach such levels, almost one in seven women between the ages of 25 and 44 is an international migrant.

In Europe, men are more likely to migrate for work, while women migrate mostly for family reasons

The two major reasons for migration, namely, family formation and/or reunification and labour migration, play different roles in the migration of women and men. For instance, as shown in figure 1.8, for first residence permits granted in European countries, migration for work in developed countries is still dominated by men. For women and children, migration for family reasons is predominant. However, it should be noted that women also migrate in high numbers for work, and men for family reasons. Migration for educational reasons is prevalent more often among young women than young men. Nevertheless, these statistics on officially recorded reasons for migration refer only to the first residence permit. Migration is a dynamic and complex process, and many women and men entering the host country for family or educational reasons may later shift from one category to another. Even if many women are categorized administratively as family migrants, like men, they nevertheless seek better living conditions and improved prospects for their children, including through individual access to paid employment.

Gender-specific labour demands in receiving countries stimulate the extent of labour migration of women and men. This is the case, for example, in the demand for domestic workers and nurses in developed regions, or demand for workers in the oil and construction industries in Western Asia. Gender norms and stereotypes in both countries of origin and destination, reinforced by formal education and training programmes, define jobs such as domestic workers and nurses as more suitable for women, and jobs in the oil industry or construction as more suitable for men.³⁶

Labour market integration can be particularly challenging for women migrants. Many women are often ineligible for social benefits and mainstream support as they enter the host country under the family reasons category, and if their partners also work. Integration is usually particularly difficult for women migrants in countries where the employment of women is generally low.³⁷ Nevertheless, migrant women still have more work opportunities than in their countries of origin, and tend to be more inte-

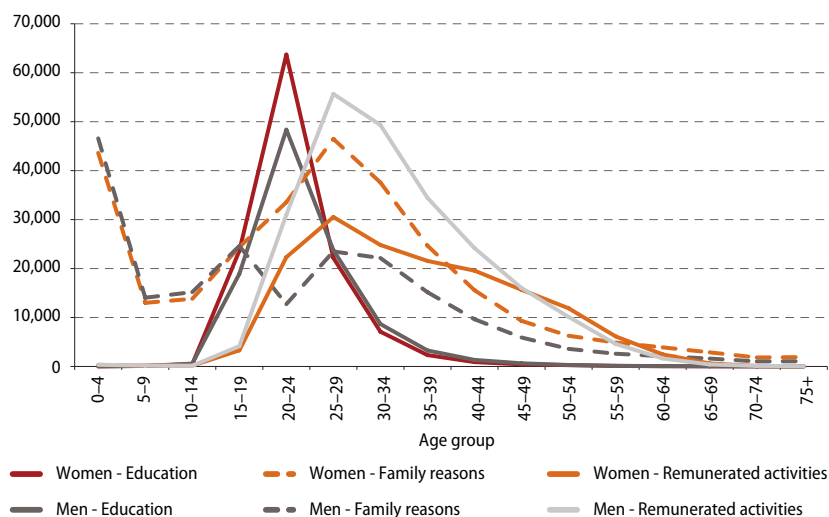
³⁵ Birks, Seccombe and Sinclair, 1988; Fargues, 2011; Fargues and Brouwer, 2012; Kapiszewski, 2006; United Nations, 2013m.

³⁶ OECD, 2014; United Nations, 2006; Widmaier and Dumont, 2011.

³⁷ OECD, 2014.

grated into the labour market of developed countries of destination than women from the same country who did not migrate.³⁸

Figure 1.8
Numbers of people granted first residence permits by age, sex and reason, European countries, 2013



Source: Eurostat, First Permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship (accessed July 2014).

Note: Computed based on data on residence permit issued to a person for the first time. A residence permit is also considered a first permit if the time gap between the expiration of the old permit and the validation of the new permit issued for the same reason is at least 6 months, irrespective of the year the permit is issued. Four types of residence permits are covered in the data: family reasons, education, remunerated activities and other.

Internal migration

Migration within countries is more common than international migration. In 2005, an estimated 763 million people living within their country of birth were residing outside the region of their birth, and 229 million people were living in a different region than they were five years earlier.³⁹ Overall, the proportion of persons migrating internally is higher in developed than in developing regions.⁴⁰

Among young age groups, internal migration in some developing regions is dominated by women

Similar age and sex patterns of recent internal migration⁴¹ are observed in both developed and developing regions (figure 1.9). Internal migration is mainly concentrated among young adults,

³⁸ Widmaier and Dumont, 2011.

³⁹ United Nations, 2013j.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Recent internal migration is measured based on census information on residence five years ago.

and slightly more so for women than for men. In developing regions, internal migration peaks at younger ages than in developed regions, due to earlier age at first marriage, less years of schooling and earlier entry into the labour market. However, the reasons associated with internal migration among younger people may differ between the sexes. In developing regions, for example, adolescent boys tend to have higher rates of migration for work and education than girls.⁴² While marriage is the reason for migration for a high proportion of adolescent girls, the situation varies in some contexts.⁴³ After peaking at the young adult years, internal migration in both developed and developing regions declines across all ages.

Refugees and internally displaced persons

By the end of 2013, 51.2 million individuals—including 16.7 million refugees, 33.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.2 million asylum-seekers (having pending refugee status)—were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations. In 2013, the three countries contributing most to the total number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate were Afghanistan (2.56 million), the Syrian Arab Republic (2.47 million) and Somalia (1.12 million).⁴⁴ Developing countries hosted 86 per cent of the world's refugees. The largest numbers of refugees were hosted by Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon.

Women and girls account for 49 per cent of the global refugee population. Women represent more than half of the refugees in all sub-regions of sub-Saharan Africa, except Southern Africa. Wide variations are found in the share of women among refugees. Among countries with over 1,000 refugees and complete coverage of data disaggregated by sex, the proportion of women range from 15 per cent in Israel, to 56 per cent in Rwanda. Women are underrepresented among asylum seekers (38 per cent in 2012).⁴⁵ On the other hand, stateless persons and returnees to their countries of origin⁴⁶ are more often women.

⁴² Temin and others, 2013.

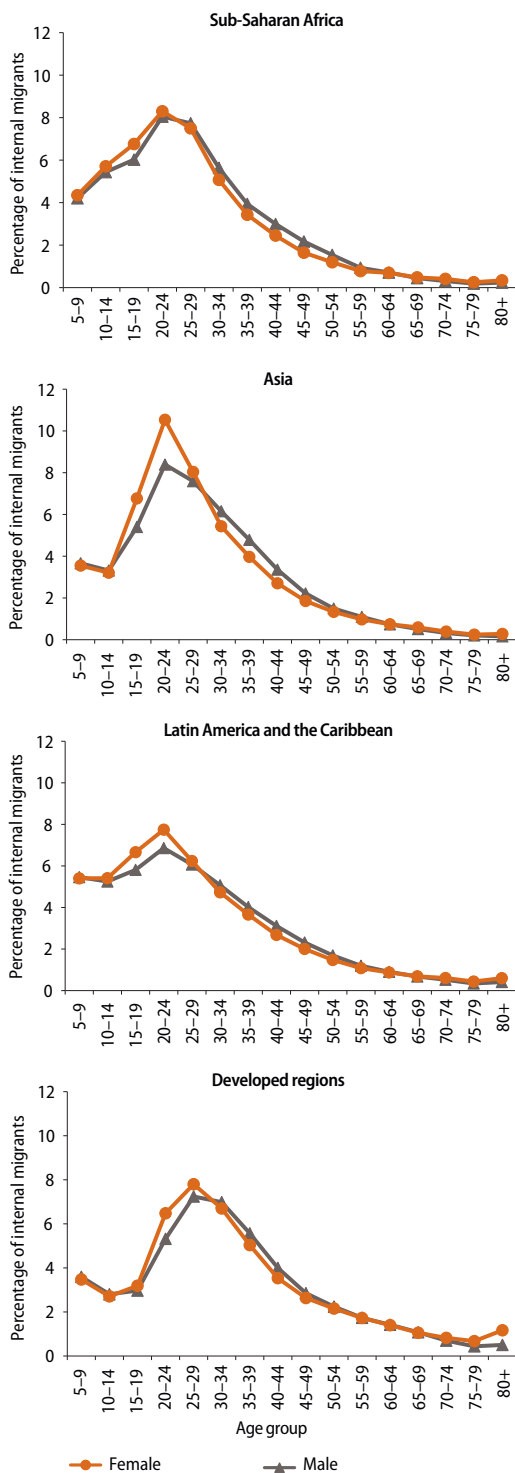
⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ UNHCR, 2014.

⁴⁵ UNHCR, 2013.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Figure 1.9
Percentage distribution of internal migrants by age and sex (according to the place of residence five years ago), 2000–2010 (latest available)



Source: Computed based on IPUMS data. IPUMS-International, 2014.
Note: Unweighted averages. Regional average based on: four countries in sub-Saharan Africa; 12 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean; five countries in Asia; and six countries in developed regions. Internal migration is measured based on census information on residence in a different administrative unit five years ago.

Refugee and internally displaced women and girls are at special risk of violence and exploitation, partly because they often lack decision-making power. Violence against women—including rape, forced impregnation, forced abortion, trafficking, sexual slavery and the intentional spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV—is one of the defining characteristics of contemporary armed conflict (see Chapter 6 on Violence against women). Women’s vulnerability to rape and sexual assault continues during the flight from their homes, crossing of the border and at the place of destination, as well as in refugee camps or collective centres. At their final destination, women and girls may face other difficulties. For example, they may lack individual identity documents, be sidelined in decisions concerning the administration of the camps and in the formulation and administration of assistance programmes. Returning refugees and internally displaced women, particularly widows, may face more difficulties than men in reclaiming property in post-conflict situations, and may be excluded from reconstruction and rehabilitation activities.⁴⁷

B. Families

1. Marriage and other unions

For many people, marriage is the first step in beginning a new life. However, in many countries—representing a variety of social, cultural, legal and political systems—less formal unions form the basis of family life. Included in the category of “other unions” used in this chapter are informal consensual unions and civil unions based on cohabitation and polygyny (when a man takes more than one wife).

Age at marriage

Women and men are marrying at later ages

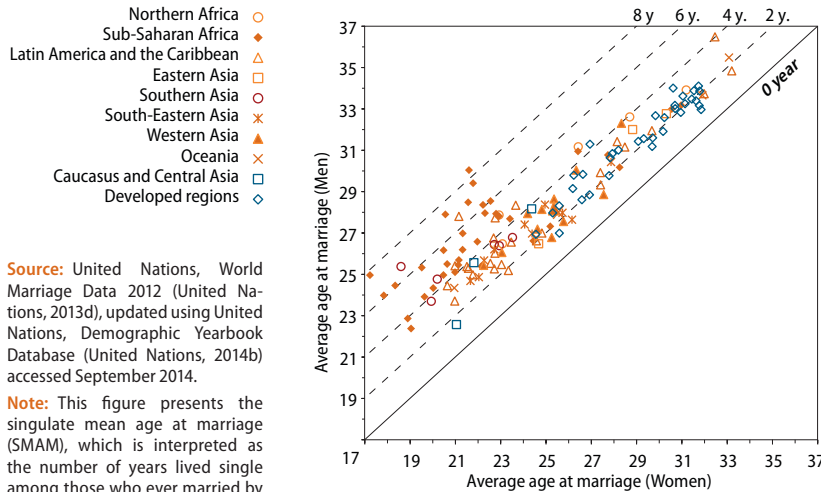
Women and men around the world are marrying at later ages, reflecting increases in education levels, later entry into the labour force, changing norms about formal marriage and informal unions based on cohabitation, and increased economic independence and empowerment for women. Women continue to marry a few years earlier than men (figure 1.10). Currently at the global level, women marry at age 25 on average,

⁴⁷ United Nations, 2006; UNFPA, 2006; UNHCR, 2011; UNHCR, 2012.

while men marry at age 29, about 1 year later for both compared to two decades ago.⁴⁸

Figure 1.10

Average age at first marriage by sex and region, 2005–2012 (latest available)



Source: United Nations, World Marriage Data 2012 (United Nations, 2013d), updated using United Nations, Demographic Yearbook Database (United Nations, 2014b) accessed September 2014.

Note: This figure presents the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM), which is interpreted as the number of years lived single among those who ever married by age 50. The diagonals correspond to the indicated age difference between spouses. Data presented by MDG regions.

Age at first marriage has increased in most regions, except in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Caucasus and Central Asia. It has been the highest and has increased the most in developed regions, where women marry at age 29 on average and men at age 31. The age gap between spouses also declined the most, reaching 2.4 years, the lowest among all regions. These trends in developed regions show increased similarity between women and men in patterns of age at first marriage in a context of wider educational and employment opportunities for both of them. Increasingly, both women and men also tend to spend a period of time in an informal union before formalizing a relationship into marriage.⁴⁹

Women continue to marry at the youngest ages in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, for women in these regions, age at marriage averages 21 and 22 years, respectively, some 7 to 8 years earlier than in developed regions, while men on average marry at age 26 and 27, respectively—4 to 5 years earlier than in developed regions. In contrast, women and men in Northern Africa marry the latest among developing regions, at age 27 and 31, respectively. There, men marry at similar ages with men in developed re-

⁴⁸ Global and regional averages are unweighted (that is, the averages do not take into account the size of national populations) and are based only on available data for a region.

⁴⁹ OECD, 2011.

gions, while women marry two years earlier than women in those regions.

The age gap between spouses narrowed slightly in some regions and increased in others

For women, marrying at a young age tends to be associated with a wider age gap between spouses, often resulting in greater inequality. Women who marry older men at a young age may be disadvantaged in family decision-making, including on issues related to sexual and reproductive health. They are also at greater risk of domestic violence and early widowhood.⁵⁰ The age gap between spouses remains the widest in sub-Saharan Africa (on average, men are 4.8 years older than their wives) and Southern Asia (men are an average of 4.3 years older). In the past two decades, the age gap between spouses narrowed slightly, by a few months, in four regions of the world: Northern Africa, Southern Asia, Western Asia and the developed regions. Meanwhile, in Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, the difference between the male and female average age at marriage increased, also by a few months.⁵¹

Child marriage

The prevalence of child marriage is high in many countries, particularly in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa

Child marriage, defined as a formal marriage or informal union before age 18, is a fundamental violation of human rights. Yet, marriage before age 18 is not allowed by law, with or without parental consent, in only 10 out of 45 developed countries with available information, and 35 out of 129 developing countries with available information.⁵² Girls are more likely to marry at a young age than boys. Moreover, girls are often married to older men, sometimes making it difficult for them to exercise their decision-making power within the household and partnership, including on issues related to reproductive health. Child marriage among girls can result in early pregnancy—placing the health and very survival of mothers and their babies at risk. Child brides are also more likely to experience domestic violence and social isolation, and typically have

⁵⁰ UNICEF, 2014a.

⁵¹ Unweighted averages calculated by UNSD based on United Nations, 2013d and United Nations, 2014b.

⁵² Minimum Set of Gender Indicators, 2015.

limited opportunities for education, a career and vocational development.⁵³

Globally in 2010, an estimated 26 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 were married before age 18; this is only 5 percentage points lower than in 1995.⁵⁴ Women who married before age 15 accounted for most of the decline. Between 1995 and 2010, the proportion of women aged 20 to 24 who married before age 15 declined from 12 per cent to 8 per cent.⁵⁵ The prevalence of child marriage remains highest in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (figure 1.11). In Southern Asia, 44 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 were married before age 18 and 16 per cent before age 15. The corresponding figures for sub-Saharan Africa were 40 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively.

Among the 113 countries with available data, 42 have a prevalence rate of child marriage of more than 30 per cent, including 8 countries with prevalence rates exceeding 50 per cent (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and South Sudan).⁵⁶

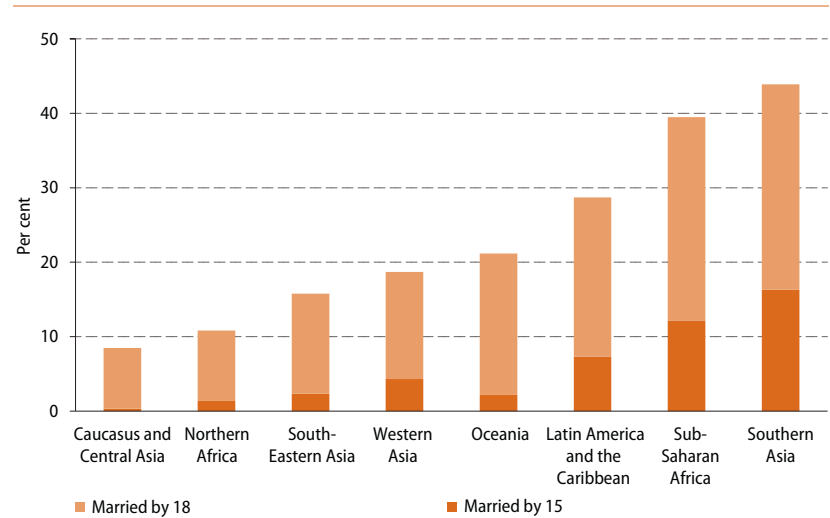
Informal and civil unions

Informal unions everywhere are on the rise

While marriage remains the traditional path to establishing a family, other forms of union also exist, including consensual unions or unions based on cohabitation. While these relationships are usually recognized by society, they are not necessarily formalized through civil unions and/or a legal contract, and are often not registered as unions in statistical sources. Many women and men in informal unions categorize themselves as “single” in censuses or surveys and are not listed as “married” or “in union” in datasets that look at marital status. Furthermore, in many countries, informal unions are not included as an option in census or survey forms. It is important to note that women in informal consensual unions may be disadvantaged relative to women in legal marriages, especially with respect to financial commitments in cases of separation.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the proportion of women living in consensual unions has increased continuously, reaching high levels in

Figure 1.11
Proportion of women aged 20 to 24 who married before ages 15 and 18, 2005–2012
(latest available)



Source: UNICEF, State of the World's Children 2014 in Numbers: Every Child Counts. Personal communication (UNICEF, 2014b).

Note: Data presented by MDG regions.

most countries of the region (figure 1.12). For example, in Uruguay, the 2011 census revealed that 42 per cent of women aged 25 to 29 years were living in consensual unions, versus 16 per cent recorded in the 1996 census. Consensual unions are dominant among young persons in many other countries of the region. The proportion of women aged 25 to 29 living in consensual unions is more than 40 per cent in 8 out of 18 countries with available trend data.

In sub-Saharan Africa, consensual unions are generally less common, but are increasing in the majority of countries in the region. Some countries such as Burundi, Cabo Verde and Uganda have witnessed a sharp increase in the prevalence of consensual unions (figure 1.12). Currently, more than 30 per cent of women aged 25 to 29 are living in consensual unions in 4 out of 16 countries with available trend data (Botswana, Cabo Verde, Gabon and Uganda). In contrast to Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, informal unions are far less common across Asia, reaching, at most, 10 per cent of women aged 25 to 29.

In Europe, cohabitation is common, whether as a prelude to marriage or as a stable alternative to it

In some European countries, cohabiting partners can enter a civil union in order to legalize their relationship without marrying. Cohabiting unions are more often found among younger

⁵³ UNICEF, 2014a.

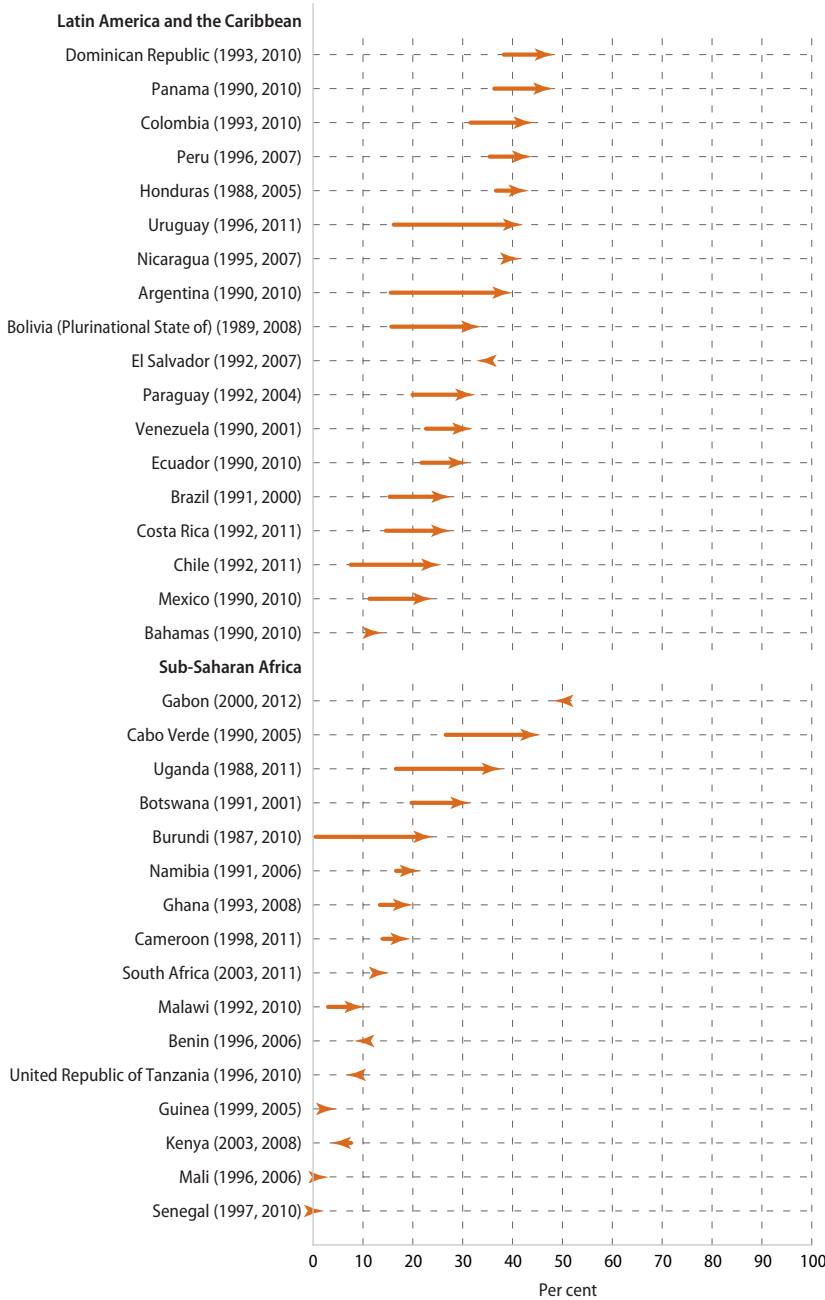
⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Data based on UNICEF, 2014b.

people, particularly couples without children. For instance, in 2007, the proportion of women with no children in a cohabiting union was, on average, 63 per cent at around age 20, 38 per cent at around age 30, and 23 per cent at around age 40. Among women with children, the cor-

Figure 1.12
Proportion of women aged 25 to 29 years in consensual union, Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa



Source: United Nations, World Marriage Data 2012 (United Nations 2013d), updated using United Nations, Demographic Yearbook Database (United Nations, 2014b) accessed September 2014.

responding proportions were 28 per cent, 14 per cent and 7 per cent.⁵⁷

Large regional variations in cohabitation are found across Europe. Generally, the proportion of women aged 20 to 34 in a cohabiting union is higher in Northern and Western European countries than in Eastern and Southern European countries (figure 1.13). Denmark and Finland account for the largest proportion of women aged 20 to 34 in a cohabiting relationship. In contrast, the lowest proportions of women aged 20 to 34 in such relationships are found in Malta, Poland and Slovakia.

Figure 1.13
Proportion of women aged 20 to 34 cohabiting, European countries



Source: OECD Family Database, Table SF3.3. Cohabitation rate and prevalence of other forms of partnership (OECD, 2013b).

Note: Data refer to those who have formalized their relationship through a civil union and/or legal contract and those who have not registered their relationship (but report their cohabiting status in censuses and other relevant surveys). In most countries, cohabitation refers to relationships between men and women, but same sex partnerships can be included in a few countries.

⁵⁷ Eurostat, 2010.

Polygyny

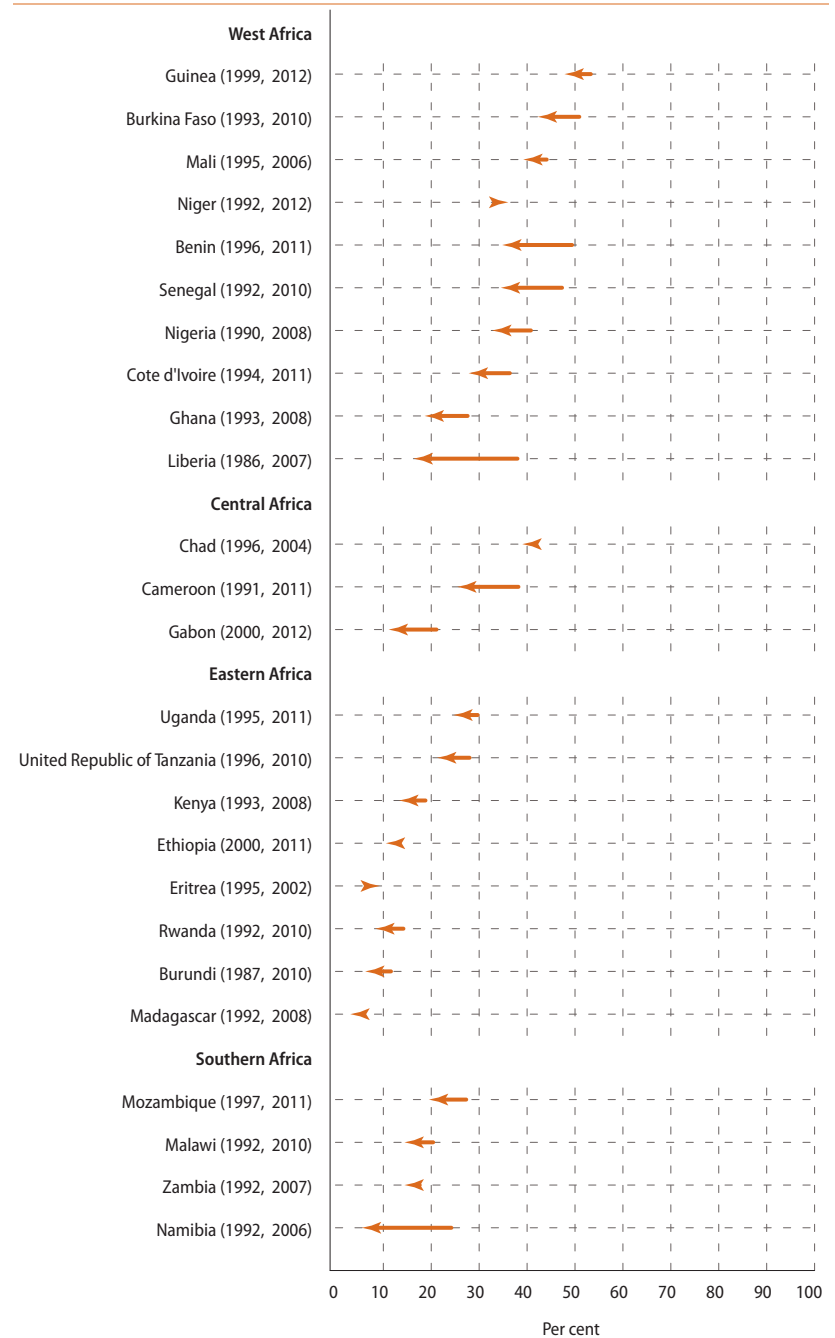
Being in a polygynous union—meaning that a man has more than one wife—affects many aspects of a woman’s life. Polygynous unions tend to be associated with wider age gaps between wives and husbands,⁵⁸ lower contraceptive use and high fertility.⁵⁹ There is also evidence that child survival is lower for children of polygynous unions.⁶⁰ In general, polygyny is more prevalent in rural areas, among poorer households and less educated women. For example, an analysis of data for 34 countries in sub-Saharan Africa shows that the prevalence of polygyny among women with no education is twice as high as among women with secondary or higher education.⁶¹

Polygyny is still prevalent in some sub-Saharan African countries

Polygyny is common in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly West Africa (figure 1.14). Around 2010, more than a third of women aged 15 to 49 in that region were married to men who had more than one wife. In Guinea, for instance, almost half of the women aged 15 to 49 were in polygynous unions. Nevertheless, the proportions of women in polygynous relationships have been declining faster in West Africa than in any other sub-region of sub-Saharan Africa. Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, polygyny is found in a few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa, and in Southern, South-Eastern and Western Asia. Yet, in these regions, the prevalence of polygyny reaches about 5 to 7 per cent, with the exception of Haiti, where 16 per cent of women were in polygynous unions in 2012, versus 20 per cent in 2000.⁶²

Figure 1.14

Proportion of women aged 15 to 49 years in polygynous unions, selected African countries with available data



Source: Data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program STATcompiler (DHS, 2014).

⁵⁸ Barbieri and Hertrich, 2005; Antoine, 2006.

⁵⁹ Barbieri and Hertrich, 2005.

⁶⁰ Amey, 2002; Omariba and Boyle, 2007; Smith-Greenaway and Trinitapoli, 2014.

⁶¹ DHS, 2014.

⁶² *Ibid.*

2. The dissolution of unions

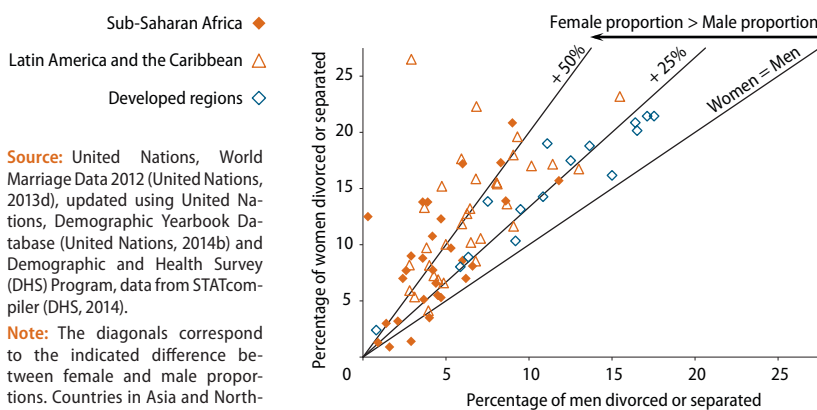
Divorce

Women are more likely than men to be divorced or separated

Divorce or separation can have multiple disruptive and lasting consequences not only for both partners, but also for children and other dependent family members.⁶³ Women are less likely than men to re-marry after a divorce, and often-times find themselves in more vulnerable social and economic situations.

In most countries with available data, the proportion of women aged 45 to 49 who are divorced or separated is at least 25 per cent higher than the proportion of men who are divorced or separated (figure 1.15). Overall, the disparities between women and men in this regard are higher in developing than in developed regions. However, large variations are found across countries within each region, both in terms of the prevalence of divorce or separation and the gender disparities associated with them.

Figure 1.15
Proportion of divorced or separated women and men aged 45 to 49 years, 2000–2011 (latest available)



An increasing number of women are divorced or separated

Divorce is on the rise globally. The percentage of divorced or separated women in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the developed regions has increased. In the developed regions, over 17 per cent of women aged 45 to 49 on average are divorced or separated, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, the prevalence is about 16 per cent. However, these regional figures hide

⁶³ See, for example, Härkönen, 2014; Bernardi and Radl, 2014.

large variations among countries. For example, among developed countries, the prevalence of divorced or separated women aged 45 to 49 in the Czech Republic (24 per cent) and Lithuania (22 per cent) is more than twice that of women in Japan (8 per cent) and Slovenia (10 per cent).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence of divorce or separation is generally lower, but is increasing, with large variations among countries. In some countries of the region, the proportions of divorced or separated women have reached levels comparable to those observed in developed regions, as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, in Gabon and Uganda, more than 20 per cent and 17 per cent of women aged 45 to 49, respectively, are currently divorced or separated.

The prevalence of divorce remains low in Asia and Northern Africa compared to other regions of the world. In the latter region, the proportions of divorced or separated women aged 45 to 49 have been increasing very slowly during the past 20 years and currently stand at about 5 per cent. Large variations are found across Asia, with three broad regional patterns emerging: an East Asian pattern characterized by increasing divorce rates (for example, the proportion of women aged 45 to 49 in the Republic of Korea who are divorced or separated has almost tripled between 1995 and 2015); a Southeast Asian pattern characterized by declining divorce rates until recently; and a South Asian pattern with relatively stable and low divorce rates.⁶⁴

Widowhood

Widowhood is about three times higher among women aged 60 to 64 than among men of the same age

Among persons aged 60 to 64, widowhood is about three times more common among women than men (figure 1.16). This is a direct result of the higher survival rates among women than men and the lower probability of women than men remarrying after the death of their spouse. Widowhood among women of this age group is most prevalent in developing countries, particularly in some parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where mortality levels are higher, women often marry older men, and remarriage after the death of a male spouse is less common than in other regions.

⁶⁴ Dommaraju and Jones, 2011.

The highest levels of widowhood (above 40 per cent among women aged 60 to 64) are found in some sub-Saharan African countries, especially in those countries that experienced political events such as conflicts (for example, in Burundi, Rwanda and Sierra Leone), as well as those with high HIV prevalence (such as Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe). In addition, given the level of polygyny in the region (as shown earlier), when a man passes away it is usual that two or more women would become widows.

Early widowhood has increased for women in countries afflicted by conflict and HIV

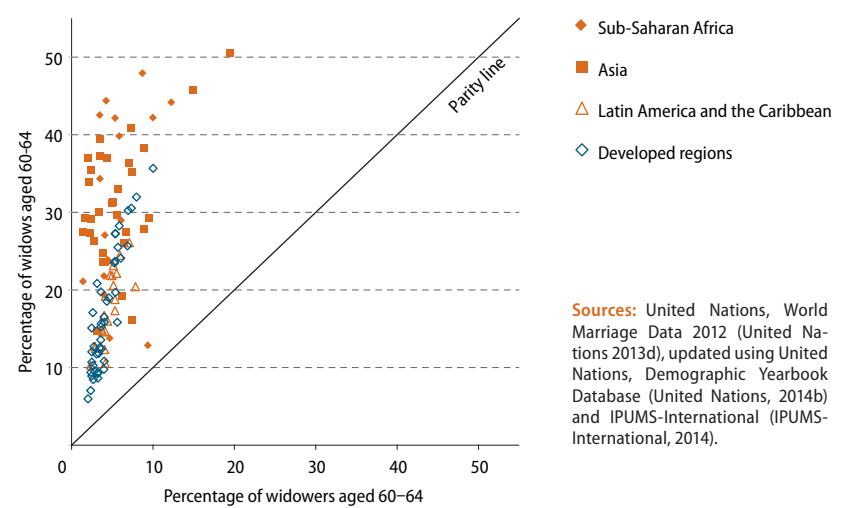
One of the results of the conflicts and HIV epidemics that have plagued many sub-Saharan African countries is early female widowhood. For example, in Lesotho and Zimbabwe—two countries with a high prevalence of HIV, women became widows at significantly younger ages in the early 2000s than in the 1990s (figure 1.17). In countries with high HIV prevalence, an increase in widowhood in the early 2000s is consistent with the 10-year time lag in mortality that followed the peak of the HIV epidemics in the mid-1990s. In Zimbabwe, the proportion of widows in the 30 to 34 age group tripled between 1992 and 2002. As for the impact of conflict on widowhood, data for Rwanda show that as a result of the civil war and genocide in the early 1990s, the proportion of widowed women aged 30 to 34 increased nearly sixfold between 1991 and 2002.

The prevalence of widowhood in Asia has also been relatively high compared to other regions. The most recent available data for countries in the region show widowhood prevalence levels of over 40 per cent among women aged 60 to 64 in Indonesia, Mongolia and Pakistan. In the latter two countries, widowhood levels among men aged 60 to 64 were also considerably higher than in other countries in the region.

The prevalence of widowhood at age 60 to 64 is lowest in countries of the developed regions, where in general it has been steadily declining, mainly due to improvements in survival rates almost everywhere.⁶⁵ However, a few exceptions are found, especially in some countries of Eastern Europe such as Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine,

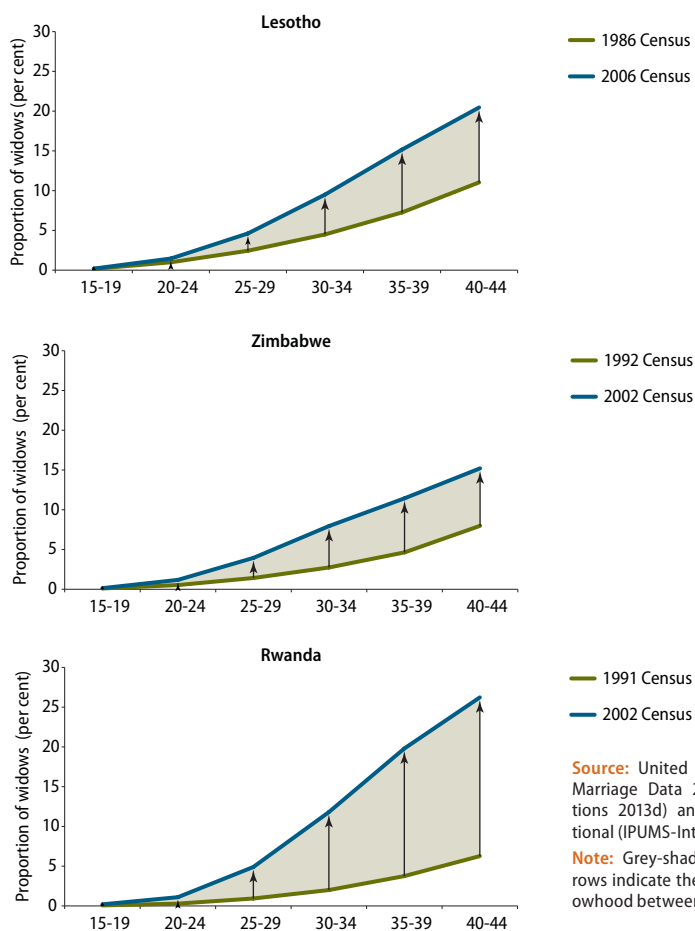
⁶⁵ Trends in prevalence of widowhood among women aged 60 to 64 are presented in the Statistical Annex at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

Figure 1.16
Proportion of widowed among persons aged 60 to 64, by sex, 2000–2013 (latest available)



Sources: United Nations, World Marriage Data 2012 (United Nations 2013d), updated using United Nations, Demographic Yearbook Database (United Nations, 2014b) and IPUMS-International (IPUMS-International, 2014).

Figure 1.17
Early female widowhood in countries with high HIV prevalence or conflicts



Source: United Nations, World Marriage Data 2012 (United Nations 2013d) and IPUMS-International (IPUMS-International, 2014).

Note: Grey-shaded areas and arrows indicate the increase in widowhood between censuses.

where, among women, it did not decline and even increased slightly due to negative trends in male mortality,⁶⁶ and in the Caucasus and Central Asia, where it has not changed among women over the past two decades, mainly due to persistently high male mortality rates.⁶⁷ In Latin America and the Caribbean, the prevalence of widowhood among women aged 60 to 64 is relatively low, similar to developed regions, and a general declining trend is observed.

3. Fertility

Almost all aspects of women's and men's lives are touched by decisions about how many children to have and when to have them. A number of factors influence how parenthood unfolds, including age at marriage, educational and employment opportunities available to women and men, their access to family planning, gender roles and expectations, and the overall social and economic context in which they live. All of these factors have undergone changes over the past two decades, as shown in the following Chapters of this report (see in particular the chapters on Education and Work). Parenthood models also shift as women's and men's roles in the family and society change. Although such changes are often slow, women are increasingly involved in decision-making in the public sphere (see Chapter 5 on Power and decision-making), while men are participating more in the raising of children. At the same time, men's rights to parental benefits are being addressed in a growing number of countries (see Chapter 4 on Work).

Globally, in 2010–2015, the total fertility rate reached 2.5 children per woman, compared to 3 children in 1990–1995 (figure 1.18). In developed regions, the total fertility rate reached its lowest point in 1995–2000, but in 2010–2015, it returned to the level observed 20 years earlier of 1.7 children per woman. In Europe, women have the fewest children, less than 1.6 children per woman on average in 2010–2015. The average number of children per woman has been increasing slightly in that region, however, after reaching its lowest level in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Eastern and Southern Europe are the sub-regions of the world with the lowest fertility level (less than 1.5 children per woman in 2010–2015). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, women in Eastern Europe had less than 1.3 children on average. In the developed regions, many women and men desire a small number of children and choose to have them at later ages. The rising enrolment of women in higher education has resulted in an upward shift in the mean age at childbearing,⁶⁸ from 27 years in 1980–1985 to above 29 years in 2010–2015.⁶⁹ In that regard, the recent upturn in fertility observed across countries in developed regions can be explained by a decline in the pace of fertility postponement in recent years.⁷⁰

In the developing regions, the average number of children per woman declined by 0.7 children, to reach 2.7 in 2010–2015. Despite a decline of more than one child on average over the past 20 years, sub-Saharan Africa is still by far the region where women have the largest number of children—4.6 in 2010–2015. Within that region, the total fertility rate varies from less than 2.5 in Southern Africa to more than 5.6 in Central and West Africa.⁷¹

Not all childbearing is intended, and millions of women around the world who would like to delay or stop it do not use any method of contraception. In many countries, a gap—called the unmet need for family planning—exists between contraceptive use and the desire of women to have children. Worldwide, 145 million women of reproductive age who are married or in union had an unmet need for family planning in 2014, increasing to 219 million if women using traditional contraceptive methods are included.⁷² This unmet need is especially high (more than one in four women who are married or in union) in sub-Saharan Africa and in countries where fertility is high⁷³ (see Chapter 2 on Health).

The satisfaction of women's unmet family planning needs is important, especially since it enables women and men to decide freely on the number, timing and spacing of their children. Unmet need for family planning also has a considerable impact on population numbers. It is estimated that if the current unmet need for fam-

⁶⁶ Grigoriev, 2012; Meslé, 2004; Shkolnikov and others, 2004.

⁶⁷ Becker and Urzhumova, 2005; Duthé and others, 2014; Guillot, Gavrilova and Pudrovska, 2011; Guillot and others, 2013; Sharygin and Guillot, 2013.

⁶⁸ Ní Bhrolcháin and Beaujouan, 2012.

⁶⁹ United Nations, 2013h.

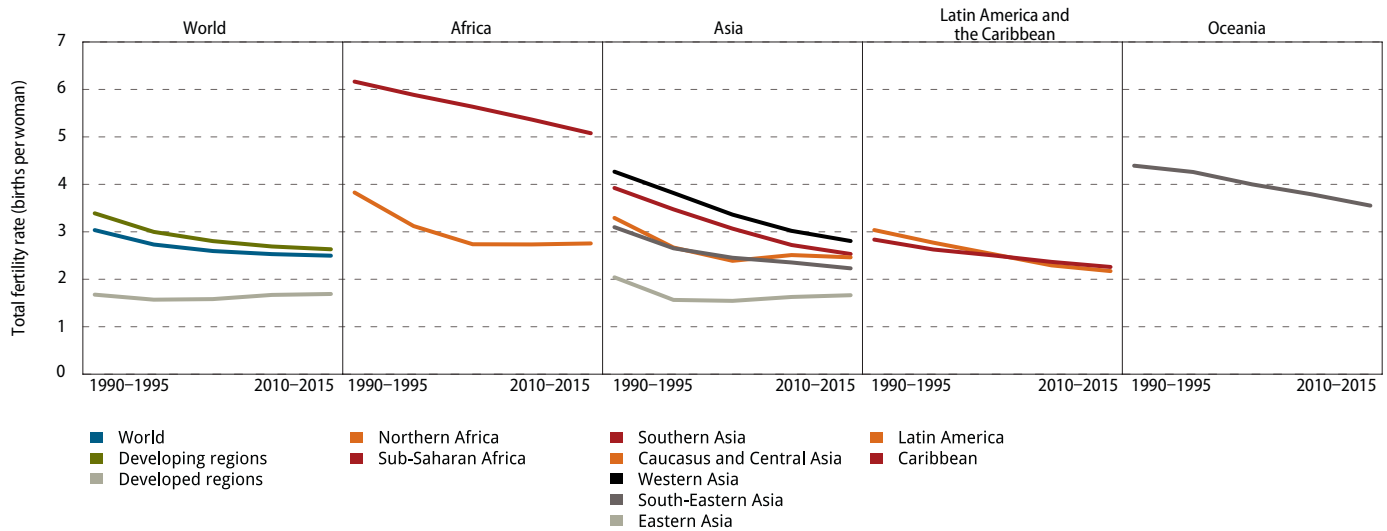
⁷⁰ Bongaarts and Sobotka, 2012.

⁷¹ United Nations, 2013h.

⁷² United Nations, 2013f.

⁷³ United Nations, 2013d.

Figure 1.18
Average number of children per woman, by region, 1990–1995 to 2010–2015



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision (United Nations, 2013a).

Note: Data presented by MDG regions.

ily planning was satisfied over the next 25 years at an accelerated pace (compared to historical trends) in 97 developing countries (excluding China), the total population would be about 562 million less people in 2050 than what current trends suggest.⁷⁴

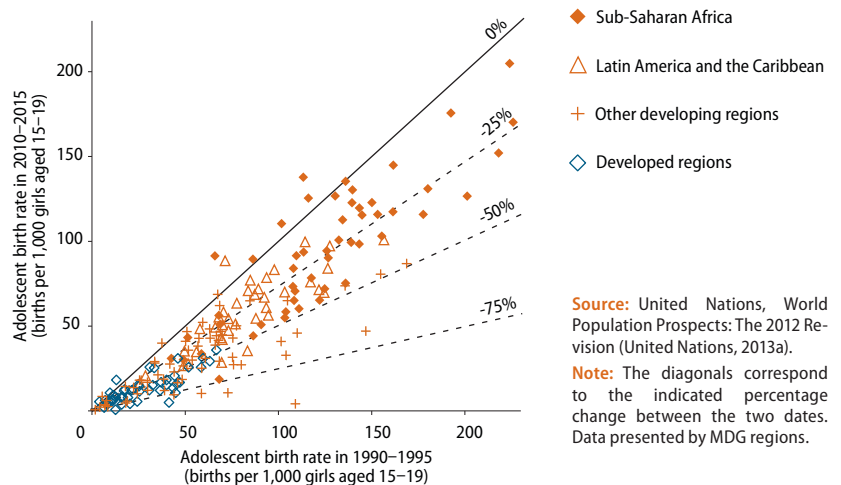
Adolescent birth rate

Despite a general decline, the adolescent birth rate is still high in a number of countries

Reducing the adolescent birth rate (births among women aged 15 to 19) is essential for improving the sexual and reproductive health of women and, ultimately, the social and economic well-being of adolescents. Over the past 20 years, the decline in the adolescent birth rate was almost universal (figure 1.19), but progress has slowed in recent years and adolescents in many countries still experience high birth rates. This is especially the case in a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Angola, Mali and Niger had adolescent birth rates of above 170 births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years in 2010–2015. Adolescent fertility also remained high (at around 100 births per 1,000 girls in 2010–2015) in some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Nicaragua). High adolescent

birth rates are generally related to early marriage, unintended pregnancy, unsatisfied demand for family planning and school dropout.⁷⁵

Figure 1.19
Adolescent birth rate by country and region, 1990–1995 and 2010–2015



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision (United Nations, 2013a).

Note: The diagonals correspond to the indicated percentage change between the two dates. Data presented by MDG regions.

Births outside marriage

Marriage and fertility are becoming increasingly delinked. More people currently get married after having children or have children without getting married. In countries where informal unions are socially acceptable, extra-marital fertility is common, while in other countries such

⁷⁴ Moreland and Smith, 2012.

⁷⁵ United Nations, 2013g.

unions are slowly becoming more socially acceptable than in the past. Trend data, based on 64 countries, show that the share of extra-marital births has been increasing since the 1970s, and there is currently a larger variation in the prevalence of extra-marital fertility across countries.⁷⁶

The countries and areas with the highest prevalence of extra-marital fertility in 2000–2011 are in Latin America and the Caribbean: French Guiana (87 per cent), Jamaica (85 per cent), Panama (83 per cent), Venezuela (83 per cent) and Colombia (80 per cent).⁷⁷ In comparison, the few countries with available data in Asia show very low levels of births outside of marriage. Extra-marital fertility is also becoming more common in OECD countries. The share of children born outside marriage tripled, from 11 per cent in 1980 to almost 33 per cent in 2007. The rate is particularly high among Nordic countries, with Iceland, Norway and Sweden having more births outside of marriage than within. By contrast, extra-marital fertility is rare in countries where the cohabitation rate is also low, as in Greece, Japan and the Republic of Korea.⁷⁸

Childlessness

Childlessness is increasing in almost all regions

Whether by choice or not, many women remain childless throughout their reproductive lives. Over the past few decades, the prevalence of childlessness (measured as the proportion of women aged 45 to 49 who have never had a child) has been generally on the increase worldwide. Childlessness reaches about 3 per cent in settings with low prevalence of contraceptive use, where large families are generally considered desirable, and where marriage or union tends to be early and universal.⁷⁹ In the past, higher levels of childlessness have been associated with some sexually transmitted infections. For example, in the 1970s and earlier, the prevalence of childlessness in sub-Saharan Africa declined due to success in reducing sexually transmitted infections. However, more recently, it is increasingly linked to later age at marriage, the proportion of women who never marry, postponement of childbearing

⁷⁶ United Nations, 2013i.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ OECD, 2011.

⁷⁹ Bongaarts and Potter, 1983.

to older and less-fecund ages, and the deliberate choice not to have children.

In recent years, the highest levels of childlessness were found in developed regions (figure 1.20). In some countries in these regions (Finland, Ireland and Spain), nearly one in five women are childless at the end of their reproductive lives. In contrast, childless women aged 45 to 49 are generally less common in developing regions. Among developing regions, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have some of the highest proportions of childless women; however, childlessness does not exceed 15 per cent in any country. In countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the proportions of childless women are lower, at less than 10 per cent, and are increasing only slightly. Low proportions of childlessness are also generally recorded throughout Asia, where less than 10 per cent of women aged 45 to 49 are childless. Still, childlessness is quickly gaining ground in some Asian countries (such as Singapore, Thailand and the Republic of Korea), where the proportions of childless women have more than doubled between 1990 and 2010. The Caucasus and Central Asia is the only region of the world where childlessness has stagnated or has even declined in recent years. Indeed, this trend was observed mainly in Central Asia and should be interpreted in the context of recent fertility increases in the region.

4. Living arrangements

Living arrangements are also changing. Declining fertility rates, increasing age at first marriage and the increasing prevalence of divorce and never marrying are leading to smaller families, one-parent families and one-person households made up of young people. Living arrangements for young women and men are influenced by differences in education and employment opportunities, as well as gender differences in the norms and expectations related to starting a family. As a result, women tend to make the transition from childhood to adulthood at an earlier age than men. For instance, in European countries on average, half of women move away from home by age 24, live with a partner by age 26, and have a child by age 30. In comparison, half of men move away from home by age 26, live with a partner by age 29 and have a child by age 34.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Eurostat, 2010.

As young adults, men are more likely than women to live alone

In 40 countries with available data,⁸¹ women represent less than half of young people (aged 15 to 29) living in one-person households. However, large variations are found among regions as well as countries within the same region. Among developing regions, the share of women aged 15 to 29 in one-person households is lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. It is slightly higher in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in Asia, where some countries, including Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and Viet Nam, are getting very close to parity. In developed regions, the share of women among young people living alone is high in all countries with available data, ranging from 40 per cent in Ireland to 49 per cent in France, Hungary and Portugal.

The proportion of women and men living in one-person households is expected to increase in older age groups as well, since the proportion of the population who never marry is rising slightly. At the global level, 6 per cent of women aged 45 to 49 had never married or entered into union in the 1990s; this proportion increased to 9 per cent between 2000 and 2011.⁸² The increase was larger in developed regions (from 7 per cent to 12 per cent), compared to developing regions (from 6 per cent to 8 per cent). Among developing regions, the share of women who never married or lived in union varies widely—from 6 per cent or less in Asia, Northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa to 16 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Lone mothers make up more than three quarters of one-parent households

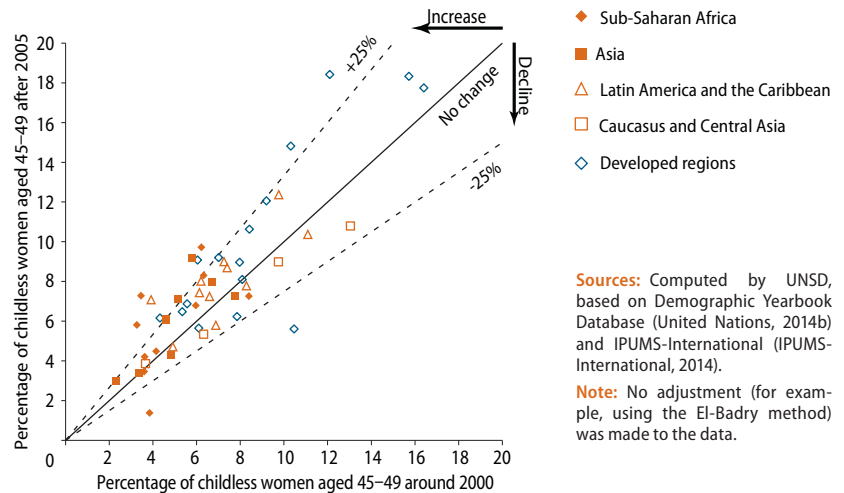
With the increase in divorce and separation and in the share of children born outside marriage, one-parent households (households in which children are raised by only one parent) are more common in many countries in both developing and developed regions.⁸³ Around 2010, the proportion of one-parent households in countries with available data ranged from 4 per cent in Albania to 20 per cent in Latvia.

⁸¹ Based on data from IPUMS-International, 2014.

⁸² Averages computed by UNSD on the basis of United Nations 2013i. Data series for 105 countries.

⁸³ United Nations, 2014b.

Figure 1.20
Percentage of childless women aged 45 to 49 years, around 2000 and after 2005



Sources: Computed by UNSD, based on Demographic Yearbook Database (United Nations, 2014b) and IPUMS-International (IPUMS-International, 2014).

Note: No adjustment (for example, using the El-Badry method) was made to the data.

In about three quarters of cases, the lone parent is the mother. This is usually related to the fact that mothers are awarded custody of children. The share of lone mothers is relatively stable, with a possible slight decline between 2000 and 2010, indicating that an increasing proportion of children live with their fathers or in joint custody. The mother and child(ren) of lone-mother households are likely to face challenging social and economic circumstances. Lone mothers, for example, are more likely to be poorer than mothers living with a partner and poorer than lone fathers (see Chapter 8 on Poverty).

Children's living arrangements are also changing as a result of changes in marriage and fertility patterns. The majority of children—both girls and boys—continue to live in households with both parents, however, an increasing proportion of children live in less traditional forms of households. For instance, the proportion of children in one-parent households has increased in most countries with available data, particularly in developed regions and Latin America and the Caribbean.⁸⁴ Currently, in OECD countries, 73 per cent of children under age 18 live with two married parents, and an additional 11 per cent live with two cohabiting parents, 15 per cent live with one parent, and 1 per cent with neither parent.⁸⁵ In developing regions, living arrangements for children are slightly different. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, a region with a high propor-

⁸⁴ United Nations, 2014d.

⁸⁵ OECD, 2011.

tion of orphans (often due to HIV and conflict) and fostered⁸⁶ children, only 59 per cent of children live with both parents, while 25 per cent live with one parent. The remaining 16 per cent, most of whom are fostered children, do not live with either of their parents.⁸⁷

At older ages, women and men live more independently than before, often alone or as a couple without younger generations present in the household. This trend is largely the result of demographic ageing, increasing financial security and shifting family norms.⁸⁸ Living arrangements at older ages are different for women and men, particularly in developed regions, and marital status is a major determinant of such arrangements. As shown earlier, in most countries there are more widows than widowers. Older women are more likely than older men to survive their spouses since women have lower mortality rates and tend to marry men that are a few years older. Older women are also less likely than men to remarry after their spouse dies. Men, on the other hand, are more likely than women to be in a marital union. The proportion of people in a marital union in 2005–2008 was 80 per cent among men aged 60 years and over and 48 per cent among women of the same age.⁸⁹ Other factors contribute to the living arrangements of older persons. In some societies, social norms on intergenerational relationships and family support prescribe that younger generations provide for their parents in old age. Such norms have changed in many countries, particularly when large proportions of older persons have access to their own pensions and income, and there are fewer children and grandchildren to provide support.

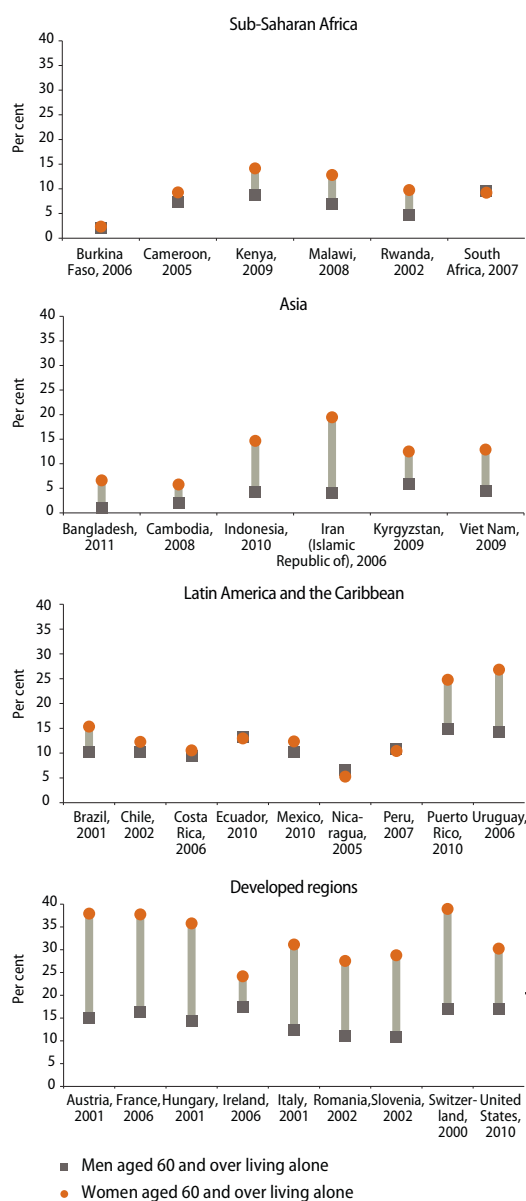
⁸⁶ Fostering refer to sending children to live with relatives or other persons that are not biological parents while at least one of their parents is alive.

⁸⁷ Unweighted averages for 30 countries based on the latest available DHS data over the period 2015–2013 (accessed January 2015).

⁸⁸ United Nations, 2013l.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Figure 1.21
Proportion of persons aged 60 and over living alone, by sex, selected countries with available data



Source: Computed by UNSD based on IPUMS-International (IPUMS-International, 2014). Note: The percentages indicate the percentage of women or men living alone among the female and male population aged 60 and over.

At older ages, women are more likely than men to live in one-person households

Globally, older women are more likely than older men to live in one-person households (19 per cent versus 11 per cent, respectively) and less likely than men to live with a spouse and no children (22 per cent versus 29 per cent, respectively).

Living arrangements differ greatly between developed and developing regions. Overall in developed regions, older persons are more likely to live independently of younger family members. The differences in living arrangements between women and men are also wider in developed regions. The proportion of older persons living alone is 33 per cent for women and 16 per cent for men, and the proportion of older persons living with a spouse and no children is 37 per cent for women and 58 per cent for men. In developing regions, living arrangements for older persons are similar between women and men.⁹⁰

Figure 1.21 presents the proportions of women and men aged 60 years and over living alone in selected countries with data available. In many countries, the proportions of women in that group living alone are higher compared to men of the same age. Wide variations are found across regions and countries in the proportion of women of this age living alone. In Switzerland, for example, it is close to 40 per cent, while among their counterparts in Burkina Faso, in sub-Saharan Africa, it is less than 2.5 per cent.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*