

# 2023 ESCAP Population Data Insights



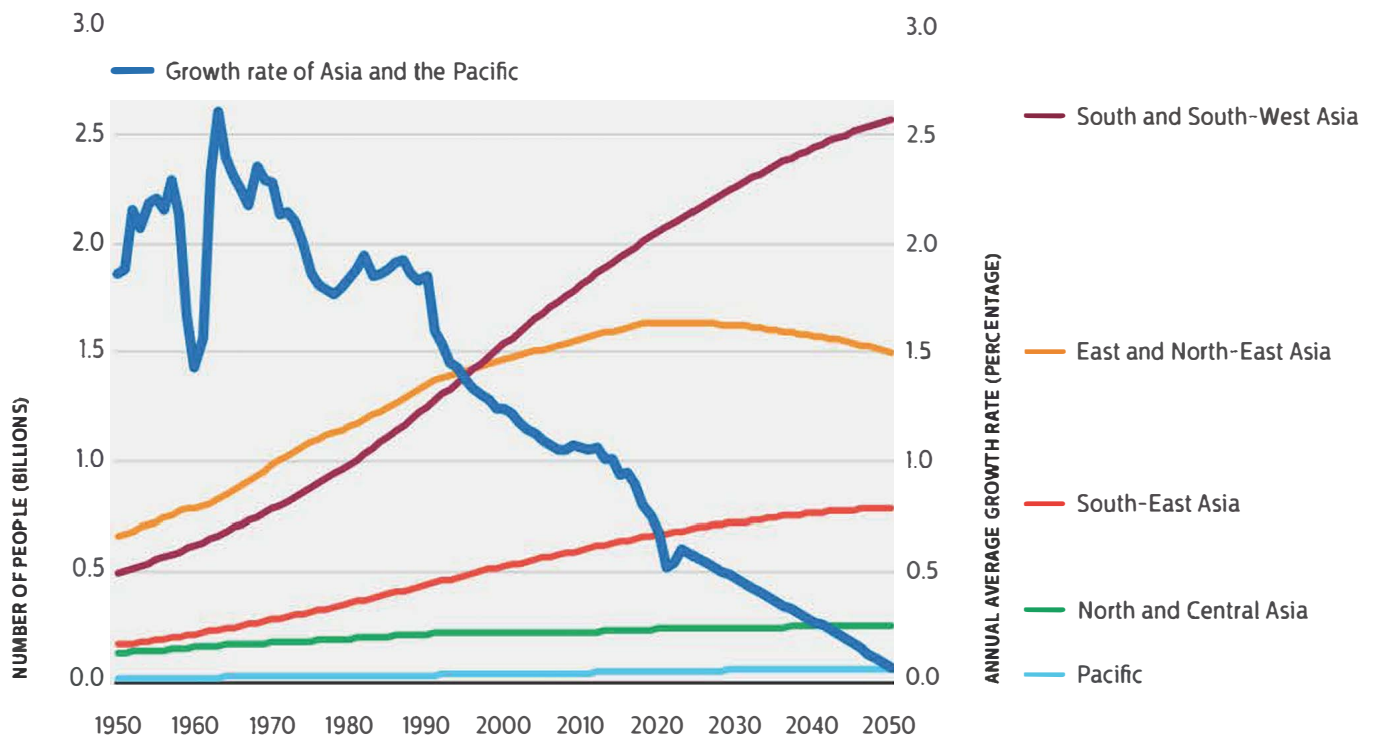
**ESCAP**

Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific



# While the population in Asia and the Pacific continues to grow, the overall growth rate is declining significantly

Figure 1: Population size, by Asia-Pacific subregion, and annual growth rate for Asia and the Pacific, 1950–2050

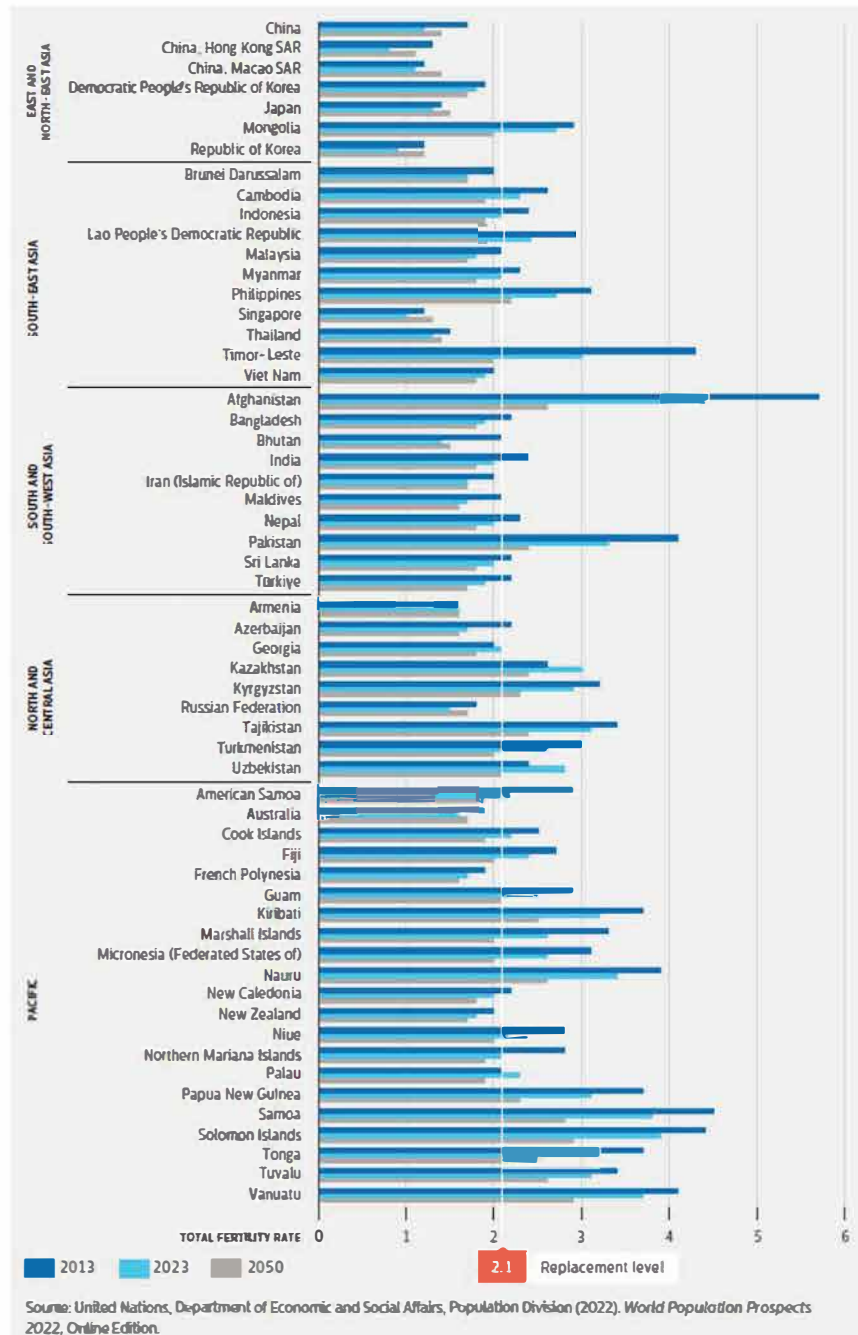


Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). *World Population Prospects 2022*, Online Edition.

The population in Asia and the Pacific continues to grow, but at a declining rate. In 2023, there were 4.7 billion people living in the region, representing about 60 per cent of the global total. Projections for 2050 indicate a rise to 5.2 billion. In 2023, for the first time, the population of India outnumbered that of China. Population stagnation and decline pose challenges and opportunities for countries which should be addressed from a people-centered and human rights perspective.

# Fertility rates are declining rapidly across Asia and the Pacific, with many countries' rates falling below replacement level

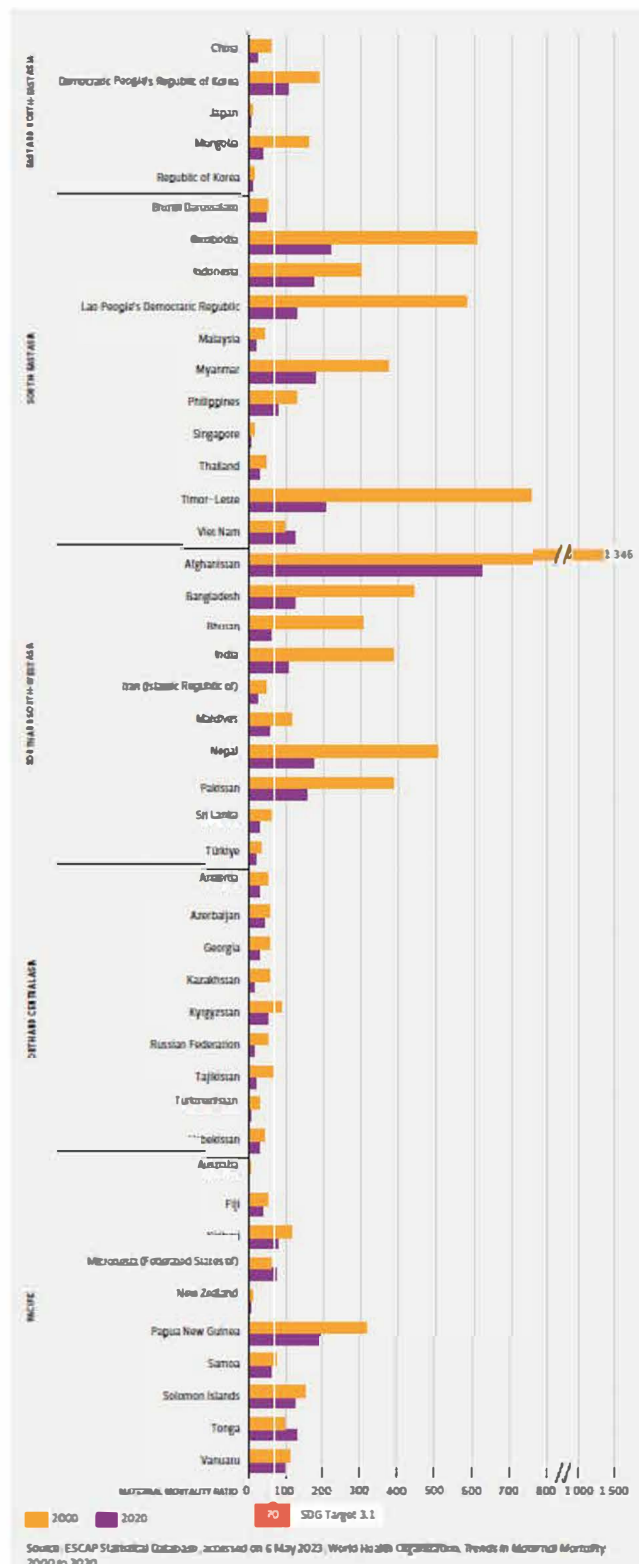
Figure 2: Total fertility rates, live births per woman aged 15–49, by Asia-Pacific country and subregion, 2013, 2023 and 2050



Fertility decline, combined with a decrease in mortality rates, has contributed to slowing population growth in the region. From a peak of 6 children per woman in the 1960s, the total fertility rate, or the number of live births per woman, has declined to an average of 1.9 children per woman in 2023. The decline in fertility is influenced by several factors, including delayed age at marriage, increased use of family planning methods, migration from rural to urban areas, and the growing pursuit of education and employment by women. Yet, in several countries in the region, unmet need for family planning, including for modern methods, remains high; this must be addressed.

# Although progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality across Asia and the Pacific, some countries are still far from reaching the SDG target

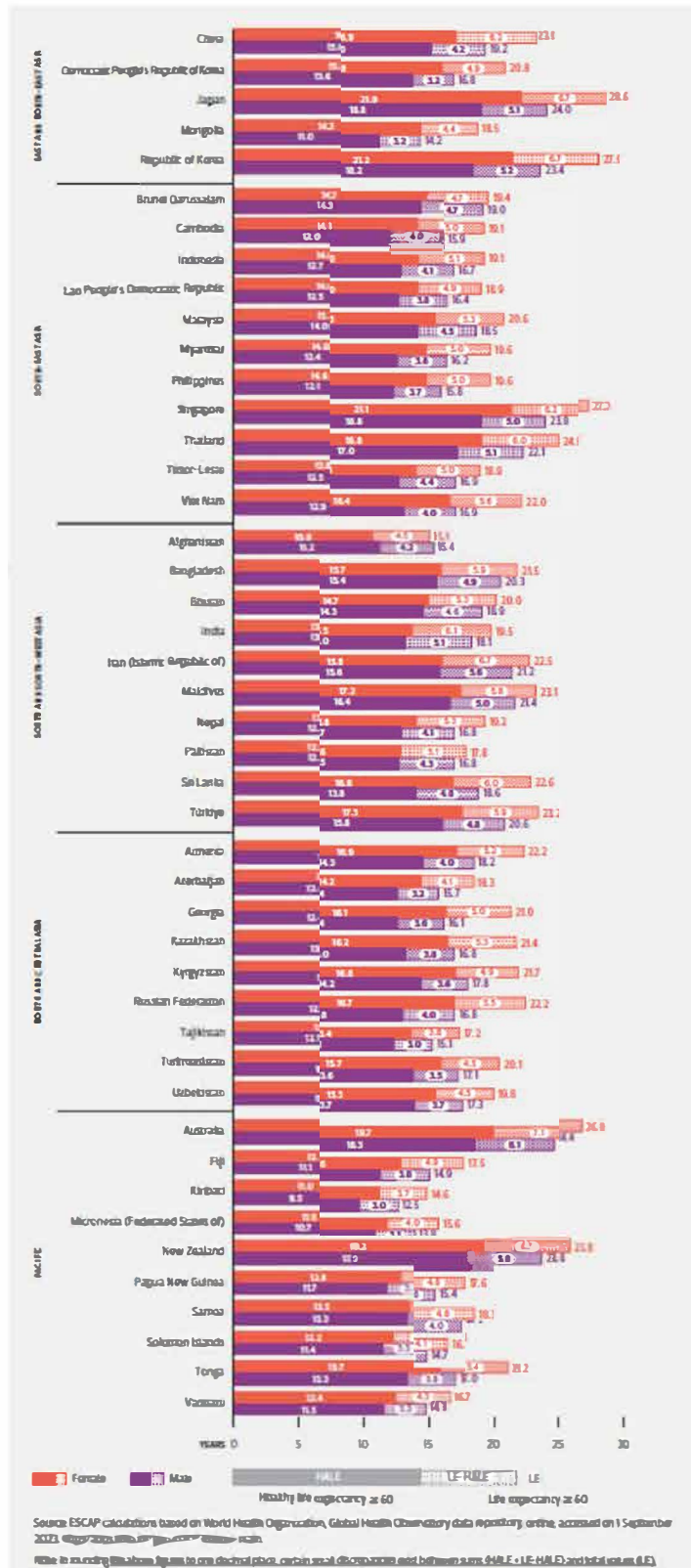
Figure 3: Maternal mortality, deaths per 100,000 live births, by Asia-Pacific country and subregion, 2000 and 2020



Most countries in Asia and the Pacific have experienced a decline in maternal mortality over recent decades. However, reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 remains a distant goal for several countries in the region, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts in maternal health initiatives.

# While women outlive men, the quality of those additional years of life is compromised due to health issues

Figure 4: Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at age 60 (years), by sex and by Asia-Pacific country and subregion, 2019

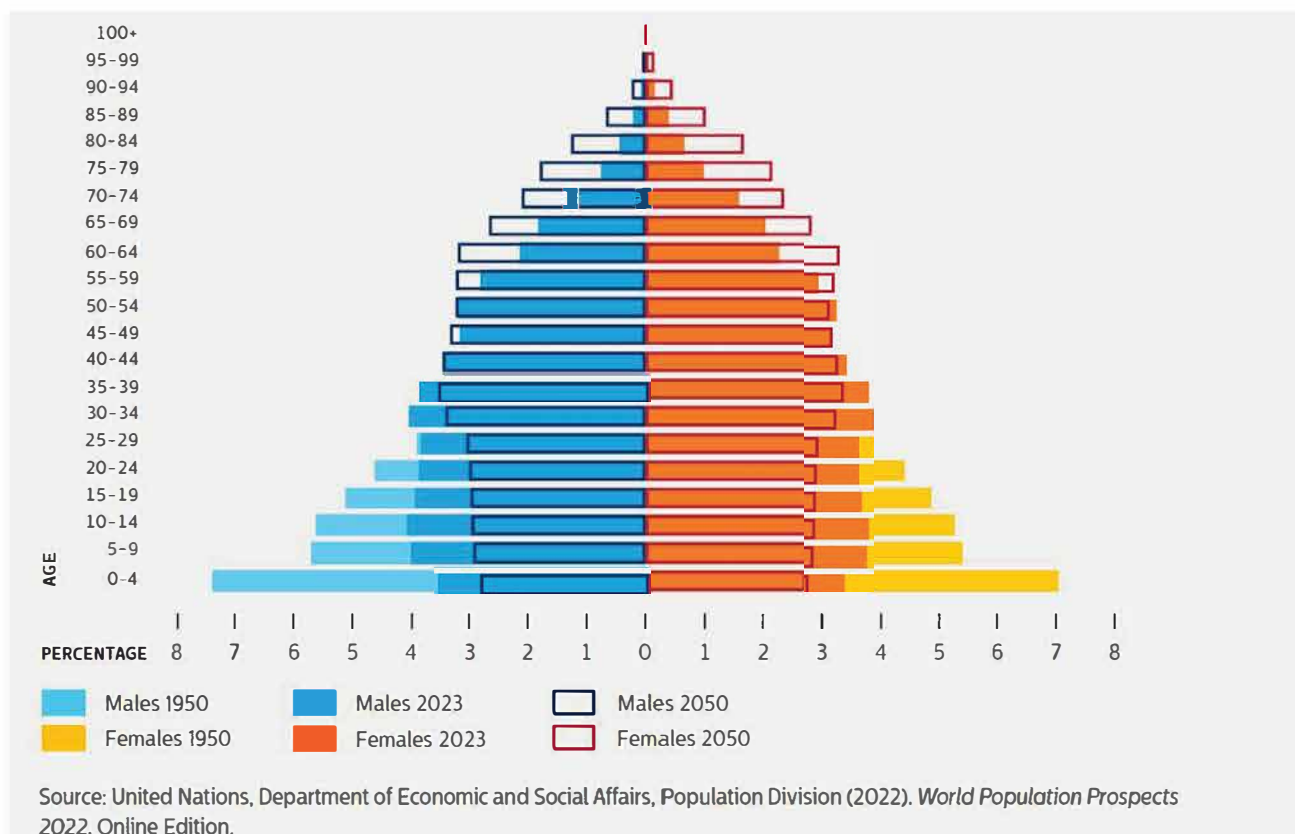


Life expectancy at birth has increased from 42.9 years in 1950 to 75.0 years in 2023. Women can now expect to live, on average, about 5 years longer than men – the figures for women and men being 77.6 and 72.4 years, respectively.

Despite the longevity advantage for women, longer life does not necessarily mean that women spend their additional years in good health. Differences between life expectancy at age 60 and healthy life expectancy at age 60 show that women often spend an additional 5 years in poor health. There are also disparities across subregions and countries, signalling a call to action for health systems to focus on enhancing the quality of life as populations age.

# Fertility and mortality rates are declining, resulting in changing population age structures in Asia and the Pacific

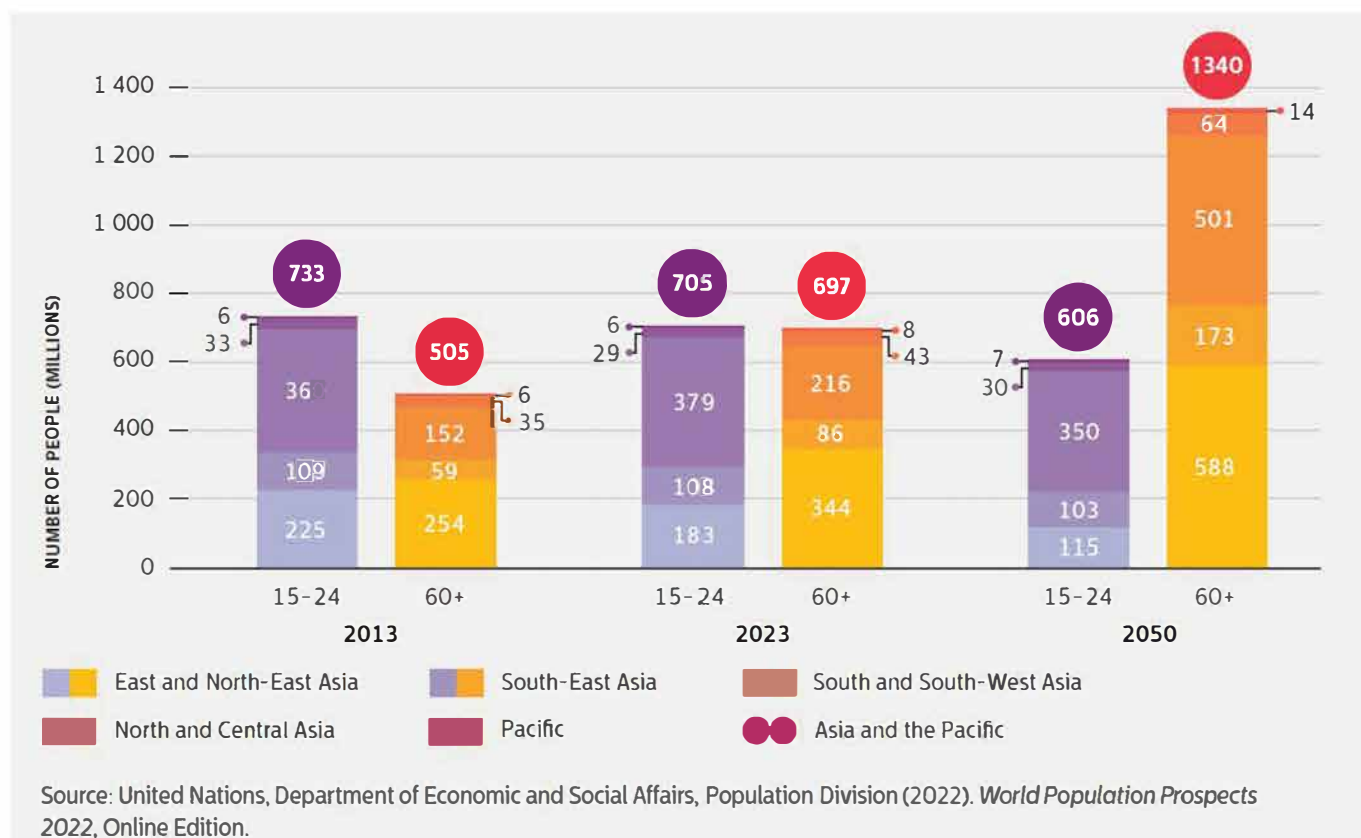
Figure 5: Age and sex distribution of the total population in Asia and the Pacific, 1950, 2023 and 2050



The population pyramids display the profound changes in age structures from those in 1950 to projections for 2050, reflecting declining mortality and fertility rates. In 1950, a broad base of younger age groups dominated, but by 2023, a noticeable narrowing of the base exists, with further contraction projected to occur by 2050. Additionally, the pyramids highlight the increasing proportion of older age groups, particularly for older women, indicative of their longer life expectancy. Changes in the age structure of the population are a cause for celebration and positive consequences of socioeconomic development related to improved health, education and medicines, as well as greater agency of women and increased interconnectedness.

# While the youth population aged 15–24 is shrinking, the population aged 60 or over is expanding rapidly

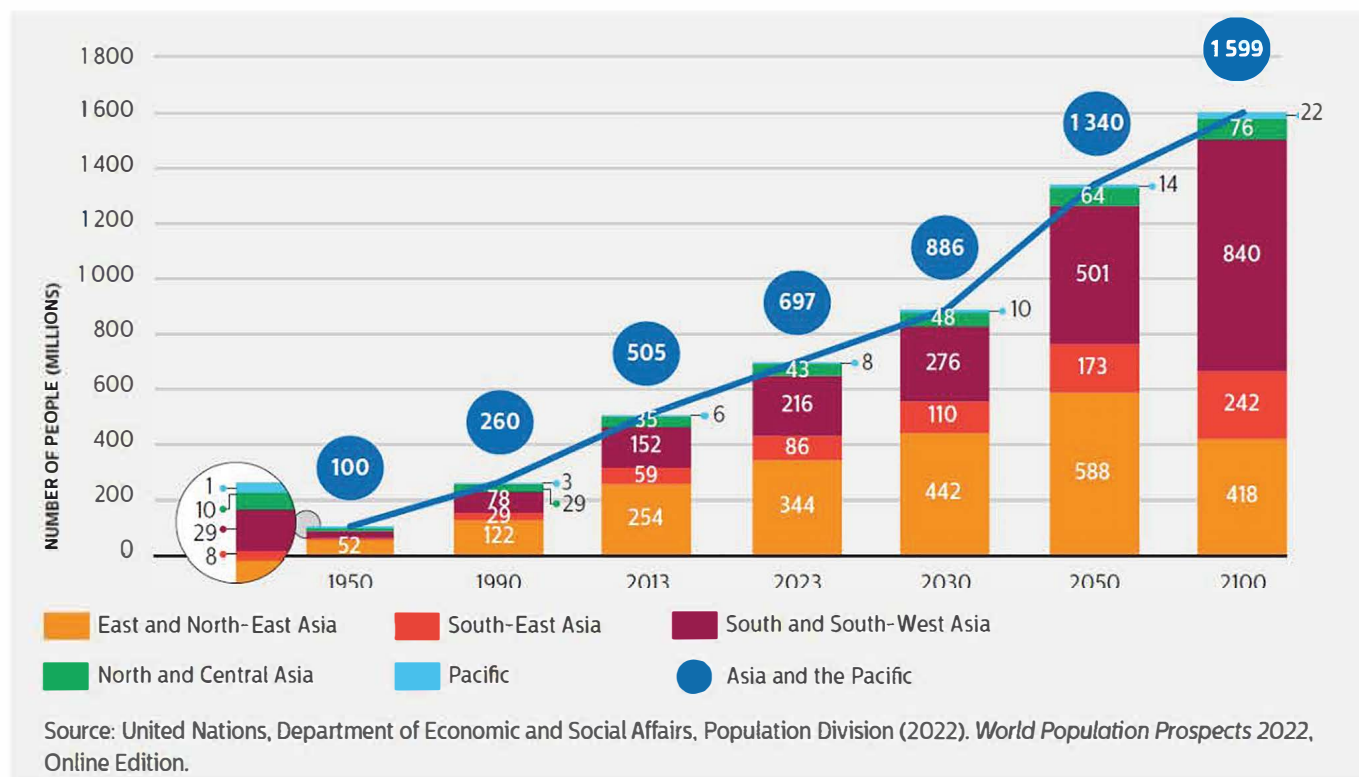
Figure 6: Youth population (15–24) and older adult population (60+), by Asia-Pacific subregion, 2013, 2023 and 2050



The demographic shift between the youth and older adult populations within Asia-Pacific subregions shows that the proportion of youth has decreased from 2013 to 2023 and is projected to decline further by 2050. Conversely, the population aged 60 or over continues to grow, with projections for 2050 revealing a substantial increase, particularly in East and North-East Asia and South and South-West Asia. Thus, countries of Asia and the Pacific are changing in fundamental ways, transitioning towards societies that are older and more multigenerational.

# The number of older persons (60+) is growing in all subregions in Asia and the Pacific

Figure 7: Number of people aged 60 years or over in Asia and the Pacific and by subregion, 1950–2100

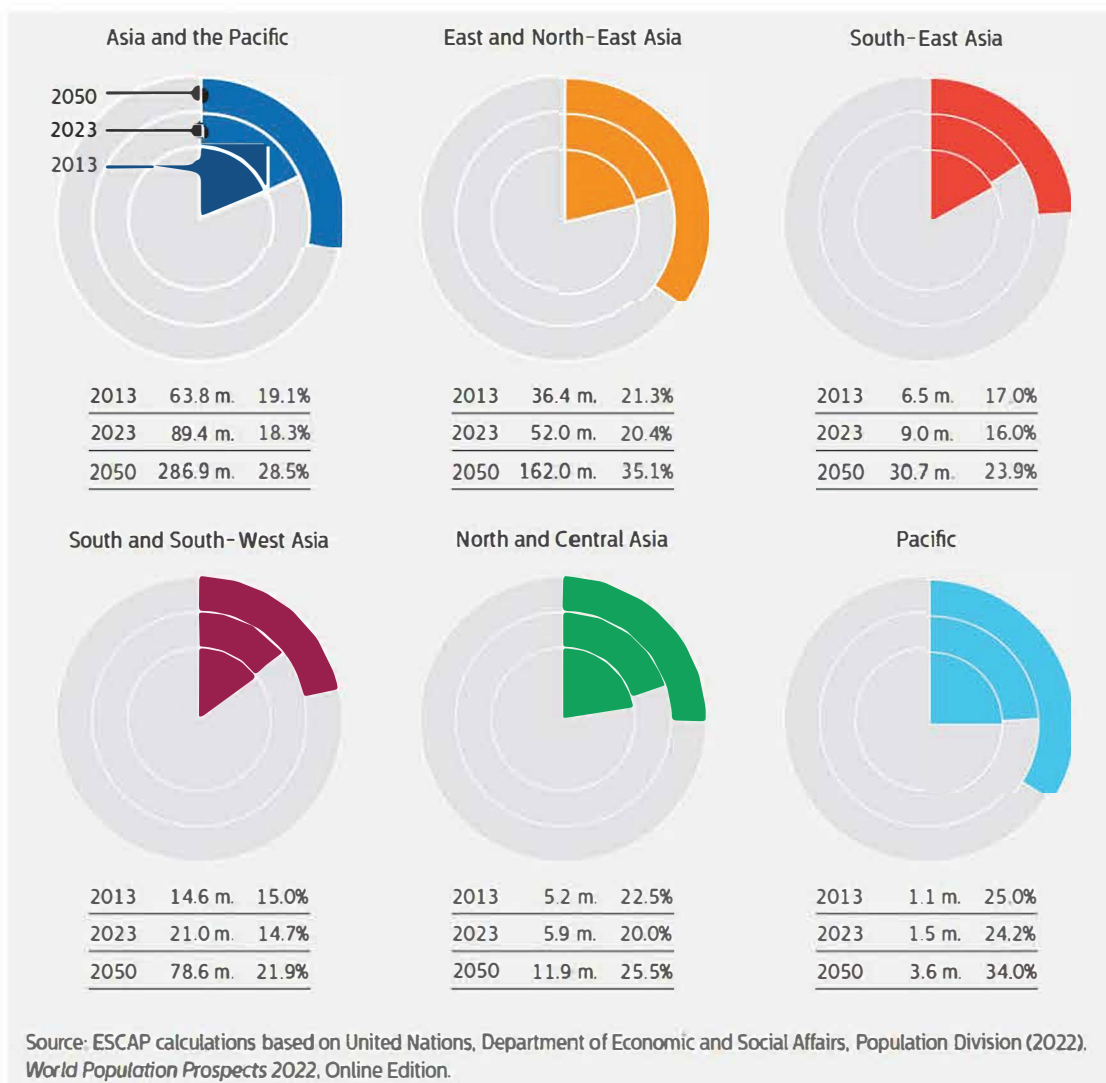


As Asian and Pacific countries have undergone demographic transitions, their age structures have changed. Resultantly, the number and share of older persons has increased. In 2023, the region is home to 697 million people aged 60 years or over, representing 14.8 per cent of the total population. By 2050, this number of older persons is projected to double to 1.3 billion, representing 25.9 per cent of the population. Population ageing has been particularly fast in Asia and the Pacific due to the rapid decline in fertility, calling on countries to take swift action to address its challenges and opportunities.



# The oldest-old population (80+) is growing at an accelerated pace, albeit with variations in growth rates across Asia-Pacific subregions

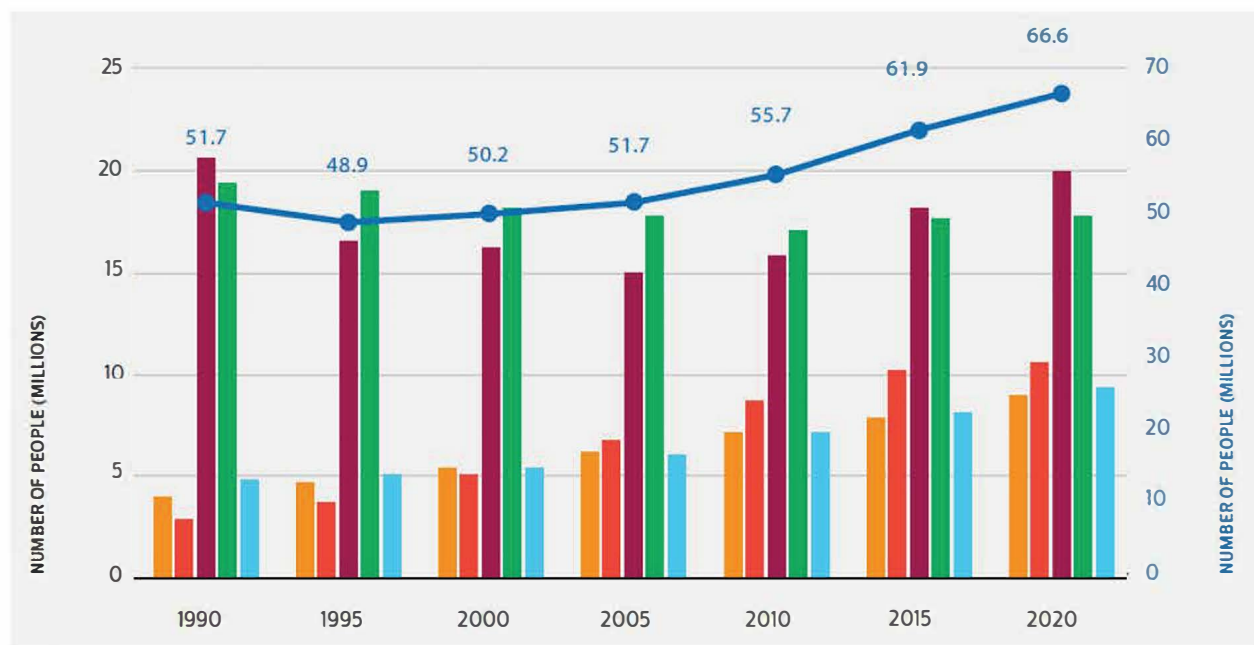
Figure 8: Oldest-old population (80+) in Asia and the Pacific, and by subregion, 2013, 2023 and 2050



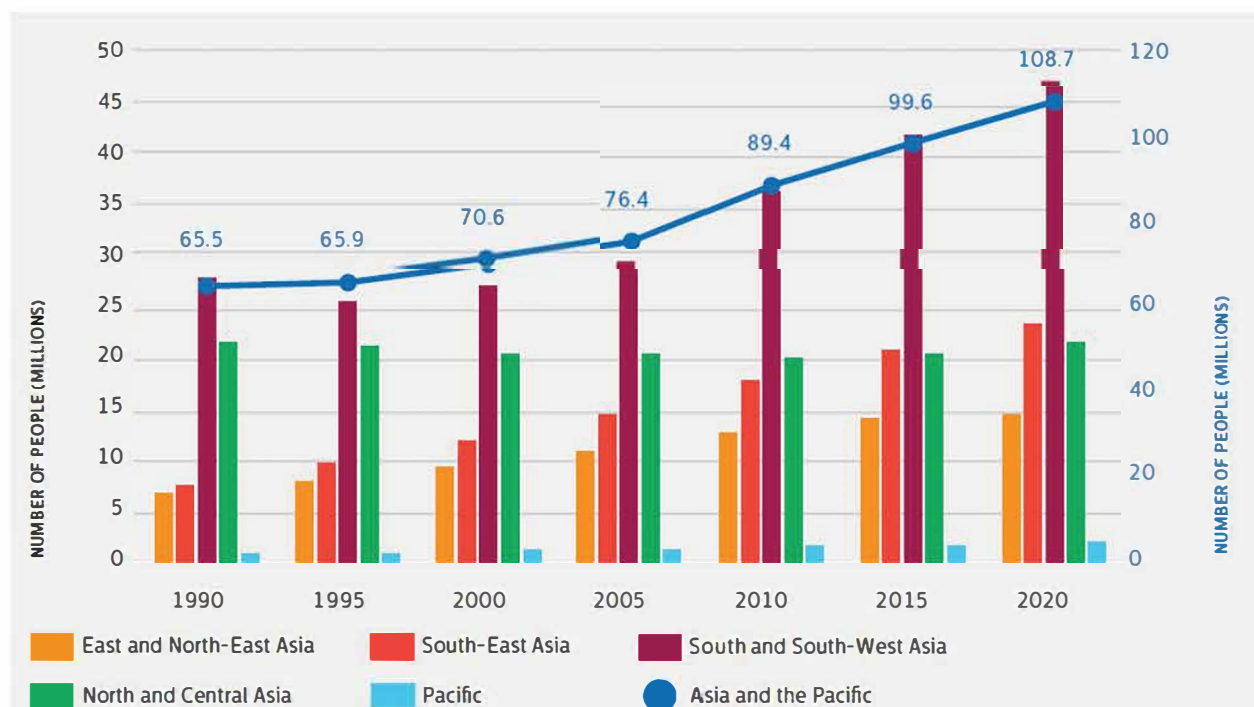
There has been a significant growth of the oldest-old population in Asia and the Pacific. In 2013, there were 63.8 million people aged 80 years or over, which represented 19.1 per cent of the older population (65+). It is projected that, by 2050, the number of oldest-old will be 286.9 million, or 28.5 per cent of the population 65 years or over. There are disparities in growth rates of the oldest-old population across different subregions, indicating a need for nuanced and region-specific policy responses to support this rapidly expanding age group.

# The number of immigrants to and emigrants from Asia and the Pacific is on the rise

Figures 9a: Immigrants (migrant stock) in Asia and the Pacific, by subregion, 1990–2020



Figures 9b: Emigrants (migrant stock) from Asia and the Pacific, by subregion, 1990–2020



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). *International Migrant Stock 2020*.

Migration remains an important factor in shaping the Asia-Pacific demographic landscape. The number of international migrants in the region has grown from 51.7 million to 66.6 million between 1990 and 2020, representing approximately a quarter of the 2020 global international migrant stock of 281 million. There are significant variations between subregions, with migrants comprising 0.5 per cent of the population in East and North-East Asia, compared to 22.0 per cent in the Pacific.

Furthermore, the region has seen a substantial number (nearly 109 million) of its people, living outside their country of birth, constituting 39.0 per cent of the global migrant population. Importantly, most migration in Asia and the Pacific is regional in nature, calling for regional cooperation to address challenges and opportunities of increased mobility.