

**Upcoming Demographic
Changes in Islamic Countries
1–3 November 2010**

Conference Report

**Swiss Re
Centre for Global Dialogue**

World Demographic & Ageing Forum



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Foreword

In November 2010, the World Demographic & Ageing Forum (WDA Forum) and the Swiss Re Centre for Global Dialogue organised a three-day symposium on the demographic changes taking place in Islamic countries. No doubt, this topic seemed to be rather “exotic” and except for a small community of demographers, executives of development agencies and diplomats serving in this region, it is relatively unknown. This applies in particular to policy makers in Europe who have focused their attention on an ageing and shrinking population, whereas, in general, their knowledge about unfolding demographic trends in developing regions such as Africa, Asia and the Middle East is limited. Thus, this topic does not receive the public attention it deserves. The forecasts indicating that countries with significant Islamic populations will represent approximately one quarter of the world’s population in 2030 is either hidden knowledge or ignored.

However, demographic change is a global phenomenon of the 21st century, affecting the developed, emerging and the developing world. This inevitable change is not just about the growth or the shrinkage of a given nation’s population – it is also about changing age structures in populations with new aspirations among young, middle age and old generations as well as between genders. The totally unexpected disruptions – at least for the public – in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region highlight the future challenges in this region in redefining political governance, social structures and the economy. In addition, this change might also affect the quality of relations among single nations and regions.

The aim of this three-day symposium was:

- To shed some light on the main demographic trends in Islamic countries
- To provide a deeper demographic analysis of Turkey, Egypt, I.R. Iran, Gulf States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Yemen, Jordan and Algeria
- To discuss the implications of these trends in a broader societal, political and economic context
- To analyse existing educational systems and assess their ability to provide effective learning that is relevant for a changing workplace

This symposium clearly showed that there are no stylised observations that apply to Islamic countries uniformly, and the heterogeneity among these countries is enormous. Thus, although European policy makers often refer to the “Islamic countries”, with regards to their demographic developments, there is no common denominator that would justify such a classification. Population explosion, youth bulge, well-below replacement rate fertility, different levels of literacy and in- as well as out-migration are phenomena that can be observed throughout the entire Islamic world – however, to different degrees in terms of both quantity and timing.

Annabelle Hett
Head Swiss Re Centre
for Global Dialogue

Hans Groth
Symposium Chairman,
WDA Forum

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the numerous speakers – mostly from the Islamic region – for their valuable contributions, without which this symposium would not have been possible.

The organisers would also like to thank the members of the programme committee for their significant support in designing the symposium and attracting an extremely distinguished faculty.

These persons are:

Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi (University of Tehran, Iran), Abdulkhaleq Abdulla (United Arab Emirates University, UAE), Nicholas Eberstadt (American Enterprise Institute, USA), Felix Gutzwiller (University of Zurich and Member of the Upper House, Swiss Parliament, Switzerland), Rainer Münz (Erste Group, Austria), Ruprecht Polenz (Member of the German Parliament, Germany), and Alfonso Sousa-Poza (WDA Forum & University of Hohenheim, Germany).

We would also like to thank the following donors: Clariden Leu Ltd., Ecoscientia Foundation, Mr Arthur Eugster, Swiss National Science Foundation, ZURICH Assurances Maroc and Qatar Museums Authority & Museum of Islamic Art for their support.

Opening remarks

In his opening address, Hans Groth, member of the Board of Directors of the WDA Forum, explained that the WDA's mission was to create platforms for global debate on demographic issues and, to that end, it had built up a tremendous worldwide network of experts on demography and related themes.

He explained that, against the background of an overall increase in world population, there are some regions where population is growing rapidly, others where it is stabilising and some regions where the population is shrinking. In some areas, ageing of the population is extreme, while other regions have large numbers of young people in what are called "youth bubbles" In the next twenty years, when world population is set to rise by 20%, the increase will be 35% (560 million) in the 57 countries of the Islamic Conference, and only 3.7% (15 million) in the 15 countries of the old EU, plus Norway and Switzerland. The latter group will experience reductions in the 0–14 and 15–65 (workforce) age groups and a considerable increase in the population over 65. Islamic countries will see a rise in the 0–14 and a very large increase in 15–65 age groups, which means that enormous numbers of people of working age in those countries will all be looking for jobs. At the same time, there will also be huge rises, in percentage terms, in the 65+ and 80+ groups in Muslim countries.

Hans Groth handed over to Abdulkhaleq Abdulla from the United Arab Emirates University, who had played a key role in drawing up the symposium programme. Abdulla emphasised the great diversity of the Islamic world and commented that the theme of the symposium constituted a good approach to considering the challenges facing Muslim-majority countries. He found the event timely in view of the need to dispel the current confusion and tensions between Islamic countries and the West, and the need to reinforce the bridges between them.

Ernst Mohr, President of the University of St. Gallen, then briefly described the cooperation between his university and the WDA, consisting of a yearly conference (the World Ageing & Generations Congress) and a joint programme of lectures and research. He thanked Hans Groth for the major role he played in realising the symposium.

Rick Perdian of the Swiss Re Centre for Global Dialogue also welcomed the participants, pointing out that demography is important to Swiss Re's business strategy as, because of the Company's interest in the life insurance area, it needs to be aware of the implications of increasing longevity, and it is also very active in emerging markets.

Finally, Alfonso Sousa-Poza, Secretary of the Foundation of the WDA Forum, introduced the actual symposium proceedings, beginning with a "setting-the-scene" session.

Demographic evolution of Islamic countries

Keynote speaker: Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi

Experts: Terence H. Hull, Zeinab A. Khadr, Rainer Münz

Moderator: Alfonso Sousa-Poza

For Professor Abbasi, the subject of the conference was one of the most important demographic issues and one of the most interesting themes of the 21st century, and he joined Professor Abdulla in hoping that the symposium would contribute to constructive dialogue at a time of tension between the Muslim world and the West. He provided the basic “take-home messages” of his talk at the beginning:

- Muslims are distributed throughout the world, but with dense concentrations in a few areas.
- They are diverse in culture and ethnicity.
- There are big differences between Muslim countries in terms of socio-economic development.
- Despite an overall movement by Islamic countries towards convergence with global population trends, there are major country-specific differences which prevent generalisation.

There are an estimated 1.57 billion Muslims, accounting for 23% of the world’s population. Around 62% of them live in the Asia-Pacific region, a little over 20% in the Middle East and North Africa, roughly 15% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2.4% in Europe and 0.4% in the Americas. Although the highest number of Muslims lives in the Asia-Pacific area, the highest concentration as a proportion of the overall population is in the Middle East and North Africa with 91.2%. This is followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with a concentration of 30.1% and then Asia-Pacific, where the proportion is 24%.

Muslims regard themselves as making up a unique Ummah nation, but they are a very heterogeneous grouping, being divided into Shia and Sunni sects, speaking dozens of languages and belonging culturally to the approximately 300 ethnic groups forming the Ummah. Some 87%–90% of Muslims are Sunnis and 17%–20% Shias, with over one third of the latter living in Iran, while most of the other Shia Muslims live in Pakistan, India and Iraq. Professor Abbasi emphasised this diversity as a key factor to bear in mind when considering Muslims as a group.

The socio-economic differences between Muslim countries are apparent when they are grouped according to a high, medium or low human development index (HDI – based on life expectancy, education and GDP). The 12 high HDI countries include oil-producing states in the Gulf, as well as Brunei, Turkey, Lebanon, Malaysia and Albania. The ten low HDI countries are all in Africa, with the exception of Afghanistan, and the remaining 25 Muslim-majority countries form the medium-range HDI group.

The rate of natural increase (%) in population in Muslim-majority countries is generally above the overall rate for the world. This is because mortality has declined rapidly, fertility has been high until recently, partly due to religious teachings, and population momentum has also influenced population growth in some countries. But major changes have been taking place over the last few decades as total fertility rates (TFR) have declined to a figure of 2–3 births in the majority of countries. Although TFR remain high, though falling, in Niger, Afghanistan, Somalia, Chad and Burkina Faso, it has now dropped below replacement level in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia and Albania. And this fertility transition has taken place very rapidly compared to Western countries. The process that took up to two centuries in, for example, France and the USA happened in less than twenty years in the six Muslim countries mentioned. Iran has experienced the sharpest decline in TFR ever recorded. The gradual nature of the demographic transition and accompanying social change in the developed countries gave these populations time to adapt, while the rapidity of the process in Islamic and developing countries has tended to generate anxiety and conflict.

Infant mortality has greatly declined in most Islamic countries due to higher living standards, improved public health and also wider access to education by females. In poor, undeveloped countries like Afghanistan and Chad, infant mortality remains high. Since the 1960s, life expectancy has risen in the majority of Muslim countries from between 40 and 50 to 65+ today. Again, this transition has been very rapid compared to the process in the developed countries. There is a significant amount of migration within the Muslim countries, as is illustrated by the labour force in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, or by the three million Afghans living in Iran. There is also an outward migration to non-Muslim countries, primarily the European countries, North America and Australia. This has led to concerns in the host countries about the long-term demographic effects of a high birth rate among Muslim migrants. Research shows, however, that immigrants adapt rapidly to the host countries in this respect, as Professor Abbasi's examples of Lebanese in Australia and Afghans in Iran demonstrate.

Islamic countries generally have a young age structure, which implies continuing population growth and challenges as regards the provision of education and employment in the coming decades. After 2030, ageing of the populations, particularly those where fertility is now very low, will greatly accelerate.

An initial point emerging from the panel discussion was that Islam does not prescribe a high birth rate. In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, Muslim clerics are not against contraception and have spoken out in favour of family planning when it has been necessary for population control. While there is a correlation between strong religious feeling and high fertility, this applies to Muslim, Christian and other groups. High fertility is also connected with socio-economic factors, in particular poverty and a lack of education and these, in turn, are associated with a high degree of religiosity, again irrespective of which religion is concerned.

Long-term economic development in Western Europe and the Arab world, 800 – 2000

Keynote speaker: Jan Luiten van Zanden

Experts: Abdulkhalek Abdulla, Cornelia Meyer

Moderator: Daniel Hoffmann

Between 800 and 1000 AD, the Arab world was much more developed, urbanised and tolerant than Europe and it formed the most prosperous part of the global economy, possibly rivalled by China. But between 1000 and 1500, this changed fundamentally. A comparison of GDP estimates for England, Holland and the Ottoman Empire/Arab world from 1270 to 2000 shows the latter lagging far behind from the Middle Ages onwards. The European figures rise dramatically and divergence widens accordingly during the period of industrialisation from around 1800. Similarly, a comparison of urban population figures between Europe and the Arab world shows a steady growth in urbanisation in Western Europe and the Balkans, interrupted only by the Black Death, and almost no increase in the urbanisation figures in the Arab world up to the year 2000. While the Islamic world had few, but very large, cities, even before 1000 AD, Europe experienced a development of many smaller towns until its own major conurbations grew quickly in the 19th century.

Professor van Zanden described four hypotheses that attempt to explain the historical divergence occurring between Europe and the Arab world. The first sees the cause in the different origins of Islam and Christianity; the second states that European institutions from medieval times onwards generated growth and prosperity. According to the third theory, the European exploitation of sea routes to Asia and the Americas account for the difference in development, while the fourth regards the industrial revolution as the decisive factor. For Professor van Zanden, an underestimated element in the divergence maybe the different urban structures in Europe and the Islamic countries. European towns were largely what Weber calls “producer cities”, forming a dense network, not subject to strong capital city effects, dependent on long-distance trade, located near the sea, and basically focussed on economic performance and dynamics. The Arab cities were, to a considerable extent, “consumer cities” – large, not near the coast, far from other cities, focussed on the political elite and not very dynamic.

Moving from the “macro” level of city and state to the level of “micro behaviour”, Professor van Zanden stressed the importance, for economic development, of the European system of consensus-based marriage, which began in medieval times, especially in north western Europe. This resulted in an increase in the age of the woman at the time of marriage and that, often combined with a considerable level of education, resulted in lower fertility and better chances of economic success for the offspring. According to the theory, this element of “agency”, or capacity for autonomous decision at the micro level, was accompanied by the “agency” of political participation, either directly or in terms of voting, in parliaments, city administration or guilds. The theory states that “agency” enhances economic development. In many Muslim countries, changes at the micro level, like education and higher marriage ages for females, drive increased “agency.”

In the panel discussion, which concentrated on current developments, it was pointed out that the Middle East is highly varied, by no means all Arab, containing some countries with huge oil and gas reserves and others with few natural resources of any kind. In some of the latter especially, great population bulges are imminent, and the region as a whole, excluding the small Gulf States with large immigrant populations, needs to produce 100 million jobs in the next ten years. Governments need to create the structures for and atmosphere conducive to investment. Failure to resolve the coming employment crisis

would result in radicalisation tendencies, severe unrest and mass emigration. Reasons put forward to explain why the MENA region is still “lagging behind” the West were that it is one of the least democratic and most violent areas of the world. Only its oil-rich states are wealthy and it carries the burden of the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. The large foreign military presence in some areas was viewed as a further reason. Liberalisation and democratisation tendencies have not been reinforced by the creation of institutions, and the attempt to “impose” democracy on Iraq has set an unfortunate example. With the possible exception of Turkey, none of the MENA countries has matched the Asian tigers or certain Latin American countries in terms of economic and political development. Other participants found this view too extreme: Great progress has been made in many countries with regard to education, including the education of women, and health. Moreover, there are democratic institutions like a flourishing and critical press, and most Middle Eastern countries are not characterised by feelings of insecurity or omnipresent violence.

Impact of demographic changes on the insurance industry

Keynote speaker: Dato Aminuddin Md Desa

Expert: Daniel Staib

Moderator: Rick Perdian

The world's 1.57 billion Muslims, spread over about 300 ethnic groups and many countries, make up a culturally and socially highly diversified group, accounting for 23% of the global population. Until recently, the birth rate in all Muslim-majority countries was high, but while it remains so in the poorer Islamic countries, it has fallen sharply in others – to below replacement level in certain cases. Most Muslim countries have a high percentage of young people in their populations, but life expectancy is increasing and this, combined with falling birth rates, will lead to rapid ageing of populations after 2030. Overall, Islamic countries are experiencing demographic transition in the same direction as other countries, but the rates of change vary greatly.

According to UN projections, life expectancy in Islamic countries is rapidly converging to the levels in developed countries, and the proportion of elderly (65 and over) in the populations of Muslim countries is rising more rapidly than has been the case in the developed world. Traditionally, in the Middle East as in other parts of the Muslim world, ageing parents have been taken in and cared for by their grown offspring. But as people produce fewer children, this will become problematic and less a matter of course. Throughout the world, demographic pressure influences state pension schemes, and employers' pension funds move to a defined contribution system with uncertain benefits. So the longevity risk implies a need for more savings, in whatever form, to cover a longer period of retirement. Insurance companies have developed products to address longevity risk, such as life annuities and long-term care insurance, and as product innovation continues, the pension and annuity business increases in developed markets.

Insurance penetration, however, is much lower in Muslim countries than in mature markets, but within the Islamic world it is far higher in South East Asia, especially Malaysia, than in the Middle East. In certain countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt and Bahrain, life insurance is almost non-existent. Although conventional insurance is unacceptable according to the Shari 'a (Islamic law) as it contains elements such as uncertainty and interest impermissible in Islam, the general Takaful (non-life insurance) and family Takaful (life insurance) forms are in line with religious doctrine.

So why is there still so little enthusiasm for such coverage, especially for family Takaful, in the Middle East? Against the background of religious objections, there is a very low consumer awareness of Takaful (and of the concept of insurance generally). This means that companies find it very difficult to find employees with insurance and Shari 'a expertise to create innovative solutions like Shari 'a compliant Takaful pension and annuity products. There is also a shortage of Shari 'a scholars to sit on the boards of Takaful insurers to assist them in taking more decisive action to tackle the longevity risk. Communication activities are necessary as well to highlight to the public the need to save beyond state pensions. Finally, governments must raise awareness of family Takaful by fostering more harmonised operating models, and they need to promote deeper Islamic capital markets to enhance investment opportunities. The Malaysian market, to some extent, reflects the realities of other Muslim-majority countries. Malaysia will be facing some of the same demographic difficulties confronting Western countries. It still has a young population with 50% below the age of 25, but the below-15 age group is diminishing, while the

over-65 group is steadily increasing. There is a lack of awareness of the risks posed by increasing life expectancy and an ageing population, especially as most people hold to the basic cultural premise that the elderly will be cared for by their grown children. The challenge for the insurance and Takaful sector is to increase awareness and seize opportunities associated with retirement cover and healthcare.

A problem with the Malaysian statutory pension scheme – the Employee Provident Fund (EPF) – is that 90% of contributors have less than 100 000 Malaysian Ringgit (approx. CHF 31 000) in their EPF accounts. This is too little, especially as the retirement age is 55 years for the private sector and 58 years for government employees. About 70% of retirees spend their EPF capital within three years of stopping working. The government has introduced a second pension fund to supplement the EPF and for non-contributors. Insurance and Takaful also have an important role to play in offering private pension plans and other retirement schemes to complement the social security provisions.

Healthcare is a further area of opportunity. A good national health service is provided by the state, but in a changing socio-economic landscape with a growing middle class population, Malaysians are increasingly requesting private healthcare insurance, and medical Takaful is expected to grow strongly. As more people go into higher education and tuition fees rise, there is also a growing demand for schemes to cover these high costs. So against this background and as financial literacy advances, the population will increasingly require insurance/Takaful products for their financial planning.

What are the policy makers' responses?

Experts: Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi, Felix Gutzwiller, Terence H. Hull, Livia Leu, Ruprecht Polenz
Moderator: Barbara Beck

Barbara Beck asked the panel what they considered the key challenges facing Islamic countries to be.

Ruprecht Polenz, German MP and Chairman of the German Foreign Affairs Committee, thinks that Islamic countries need to take measures to enhance freedom (of speech), the rule of law and social participation. In his view, the main responses to these challenges have been authoritarian or religious, seeing Islam as a universal solution. He considers that only Turkey has really responded well to the current challenges and he is pessimistic regarding the other countries.

Felix Gutzwiller, a member of the Swiss Federal Parliament and Professor of Public Health, pointed out that the demographic challenges are global, differing mainly in the timing. Provision of jobs, while important everywhere, is key in the Islamic world because of the age structure. Employment depends on economic growth, which is feasible only with free trade, avoidance of protectionism, and the necessary legal frameworks, but global tendencies in that respect make him pessimistic. The challenge of greying populations, already a reality in Europe and also pending for Muslim countries can only be met with adequate education, social security and healthcare provision. Again, that depends on economic growth.

Livia Leu, Switzerland's ambassador to Iran, took the example of her host country as a demographic success story. When it was realised that over-rapid population growth had to be slowed down in post-Revolution Iran, the politicians discussed the matter with the religious leaders and introduced effective family planning measures with their support. The policy of furthering education at all levels for females also had a positive effect, and the fact of increasing urbanisation was likewise a significant factor.

Jalal Abbasi agreed that ageing was becoming a problem, but he sees the challenges in most of the Islamic countries in terms of seizing the opportunities offered by the current young age structures. The countries should concentrate on developing the human resource by providing education, especially for women, as this also has a positive effect on the process of democratisation. Professor Abbasi reiterated the need to look at each Islamic country individually with its own culture and traditions rather than to generalise. Government commitment is essential for the successful implementation of any policies and is the reason for some of Iran's demographic successes, just as a lack of government commitment in other countries has led to failure. Professor Hull described the structure of Indonesia as fragmented, since the country consists of 3 000 islands and at least 300 ethnic groups. Islam serves the politics of integration, but is also used as a political

tool to accentuate difference. Policy is made in Indonesia in 700 districts that practise micro-politics and sometimes exploit religious influences. For example, Shari'a and restrictions on the freedom of women have been introduced in some districts not run by religious parties, but by the old party of Suharto, former president of Indonesia, attempting to win votes. With similar motivation, a few right-wing religious groups have started to attack family planning, which is generally popular, especially among the feminist Muslims. So in Indonesia it is the civil society that has to cope with the challenges posed by the policy makers.

Discussion points

The population at large in all countries are often ahead of their governments in realising what needs to be done, but government commitment is vital when it comes to formulating and implementing the appropriate policies. The success of post-Revolution family planning in Iran illustrates this principle.

Policy makers in Muslim countries were right to focus on the fertility issue first, but the challenge now is to meet the needs of the enormous numbers of young people and cope with the imminent greying populations. This requires timely action on education and development, and a willingness to seize economic opportunities.

Muslim societies face the difficulty of adapting rapidly to social change. European societies had 150 years or more for analogous social adaptation.

In Islamic countries the backing of religious leaders is helpful – or even vital – for policy implementation. That backing is easier to obtain when the politicians thoroughly brief the clergy on the issues involved.

Country presentations: Pakistan, Iran, Turkey

**Experts: Zeba A. Sathar, Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi,
Ayse Banu Ergocmen
Moderator: Mehmet Hulki Uz**

Pakistan

In Pakistan, fertility began to decline about 1990, which was later than in other Asian countries. Over the last decade, contraceptive prevalence has stagnated and even begun to fall, though the high rate of pregnancy terminations by induced abortion indicates that there is a widespread desire to avoid pregnancy and regulate fertility. Age at marriage has been rising steadily and at an average of 23 for women is the highest in Southern Asia. The numbers of children attending school have risen but are still low, especially for girls, lagging far behind the rates in Iran and Turkey.

The most optimistic estimate for Pakistan achieving replacement level fertility is by 2030. Viewed realistically, however, it will probably happen much later. The country's population, currently 173 million, is expected to rise by 37 million by 2020 and 67 million by 2030. The working age population will increase sharply over the next 20 years, with a likely jobs gap of 62 million for women and 22 million for men. The challenge posed by this is all the more daunting as the economy is still largely agrarian. In addition, millions of young people who missed out on an education will be severely disadvantaged when they start to look for jobs.

There are great differences in population structure between poor and rich households, with the age structures of the poorest resembling those of sub-Saharan Africa, while the rich are in a more advanced stage of demographic transition. Poor families have far more children than non-poor, and research has revealed that unwanted fertility is rife in the poor group. Good-quality and widely available family planning services would make a huge difference. Children of poor families, especially girls, are much less likely to receive an education than non-poor.

Conclusions

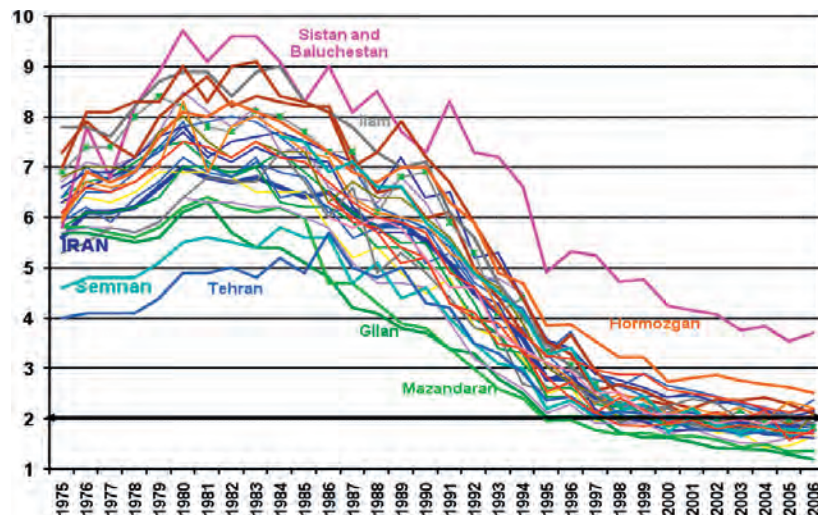
Sathar describes Pakistan's favourable age structures as "demography's gift to the economy," though their positive effects are not evenly spread; they will benefit the non-poor households much more than the poor. The country needs to focus on providing employment in such a way as to benefit broad sections of society. It must also transform its rural economy without compromising jobs, a major aim being to enable it to compete better in international markets. Good family planning services have to be provided more evenly to help smooth out the differences in fertility decline between rich and poor households, which exacerbate economic inequality.

Iran

With 74 million inhabitants, Iran is one of the most populous countries in the Middle East. One of its most striking demographic features is a huge 15–29 age group, which will continue to grow for the next ten years. Life expectancy has doubled over the last 50 years, reaching 71 for women, and this is expected to rise to 78 in the coming decade. Government programmes to reduce the number of deaths due to traffic accidents should play a role in increasing life expectancy.

Official population policy was pro-natalist in the immediate post-revolution period, but the government adopted an anti-natalist approach in 1989, though many people had actually started to practice birth control about five years earlier. The government's action, making family planning advice and free contraception available, resulted in an extremely sharp drop in fertility in just about two decades. The decline has slowed down, with overall fertility now below replacement level. There is only a narrow gap between all provinces as well as the urban and rural areas, though fertility remains relatively high at around 3.6 in the Sistan and Baluchestan province, located in the south-east border of Iran. There is also a convergence in the patterns of age-specific fertility rates in rural and urban areas, indicating a shift in childbearing age to the late 20s. It is expected that childbearing will be further postponed to the early 30s.

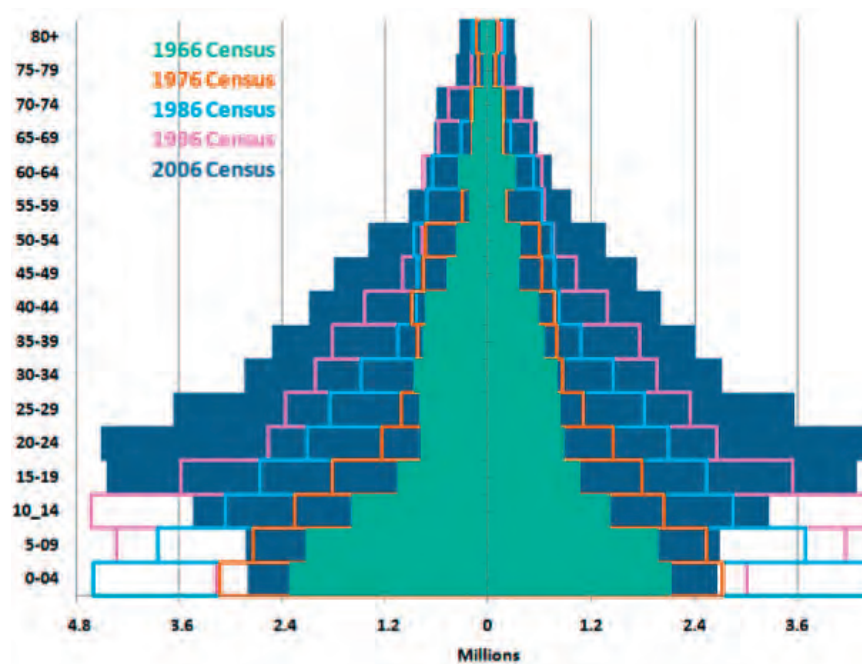
Provincial Own-Children Estimates of Total Fertility Rates – Iran, 1972–2006



The driving forces behind low fertility in Iran are the expansion of education particularly for women, urbanisation, rural development, expansion of the health network system, the reduction in infant mortality and the increase in age at marriage. These factors are associated with the idea of a quality lifestyle with a smaller ideal family size and the postponement and early cessation of childbearing. The easy and widespread access to family planning services is clearly a further driver of low fertility. The age structure of the population with its huge proportion in the 15 to 29 age group is a “demographic window” of opportunity, which accounts for around 36% of the population. With the increase in the availability of education to advanced levels, many young people are at

university and, if the government is able to implement appropriate policies and planning, will be able to make a significant contribution to the further development of the country. A key factor in this is job creation for the young, and one measure already taken to achieve this is early retirement for government officials to make way for newcomers.

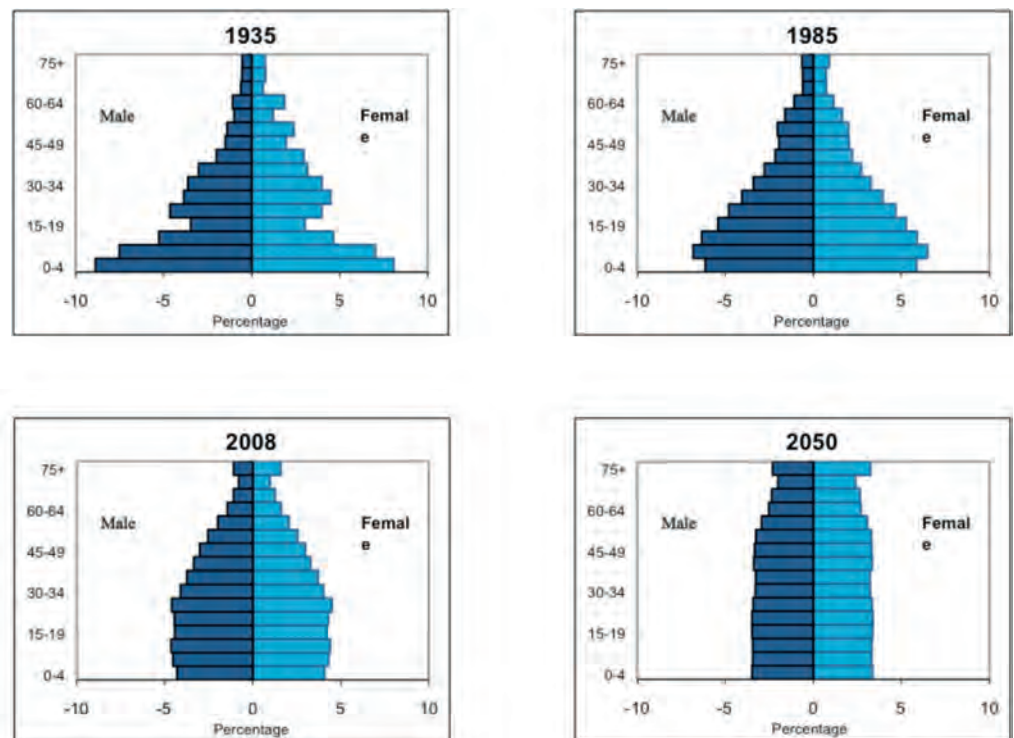
Population Pyramid of Iran in Last 5 Censuses



Most demographers think there will be a further reduction in fertility in Iran. Forecasts for the future indicate that the differences in fertility between rural and urban areas will continue to diminish, and provinces with a relatively high fertility will converge to the national level. Urbanisation will push ahead and education will continue to expand, with women increasingly taking advantage of the trend. For the last five years, more females than males have enrolled at Iran's universities. Because of longer periods of study and career concerns, the age at marriage will probably rise further leading to a decline in fertility over the next decade. There is currently a debate up to government level about whether it is advisable to maintain the current level of fertility or to take a more pro-natalist stance and increase the population to a certain extent. The challenge posed by the large numbers of young people will be accompanied in the future by the prospect of an ageing population, and thus preparations must be made for this now.

Turkey

The population of Turkey has increased more than fivefold since the founding of the republic in 1923 and now stands at 73 million. The demographic structure of the country underwent substantial changes since the early 1920s and, due to the recently sharp declines in vital rates, the current demographic profile of Turkey is totally different from that of the past (see figures below).



Life expectancy has improved steadily and is now at 74 years for females and 69 for males. Increased life expectancy in recent decades has been driven by lower child mortality rates, coupled with the rising life expectancy for the adult population. Infant mortality has declined rapidly, falling by almost 70% since 1993. It was estimated as 17 per 1000 live births in the 2008 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS-2008) for the five-year period preceding the survey. Turkey is one of the few countries that has surpassed the 4th Millennium Development Goal (MDG4), which, by 2015, expects a two-third reduction in the under-five mortality rate from the 1990 level. This reflects the significant improvements made in ante-natal and post-natal care, as well as social and economic progress. With major enhancements in maternal and child health systems, mortality before the age of five has similarly declined by 72% since 1990. Improvements in the nutritional status of children have had positive health effects, as have very effective vaccination programmes.

The rapid decline in fertility is a major feature of the Turkish demographic profile. At a rate of 2.16, fertility is now very close to replacement level. The decrease is seen in all age groups, but especially the younger ones. The shift in peak rates, reflecting an increased desire to postpone childbearing, is one of the most striking characteristics of fertility transition in Turkey. The country is now in the late phase of fertility transition.

The age at which women in Turkey marry has increased significantly in the last 30 years, and the proportion of women who never married in the 25 to 29 age group tripled between 1978 and 2008. In the same period, contraceptive use increased by 15%, and the use of modern contraceptive methods went up by 46%. About 73% of women of child-bearing age utilise some form of contraception.

The population of Turkey is expected to reach 95 million by mid-century. The young (0–14) population will stabilise and the size of the economically productive age group will double within the next 25 years. Thus, Turkey's population shows potential for rapid ageing, and the growing proportion of elderly (estimated at 19% by mid century) will place high demands on social and economic life. However, the increasing numbers in the economically productive age group present a demographic window of opportunity, provided that appropriate economic and social policies are implemented.

Increasing literacy and access to higher education, economic development, social change globalisation of fertility attitudes and urbanisation were among the underlying factors in the country's demographic transition.





Discussion points

The Turkish Prime Minister has recently made pro-natalist statements, and it remains to be seen whether these will be translated into policy.

The fact that the use of contraception in Pakistan has levelled off, rather than continued to rise, is not due to lack of awareness. The issues are rather communication and quality of services. Access to contraception is suboptimal and there is a lack of counselling, especially regarding the perceived side effects of modern contraceptive methods, which are treated with suspicion. Religion and tradition are not barriers to contraceptive use and many women in the country apparently wish to restrict fertility, but there is not the widespread network of services that exists, for instance, in Iran.

There are regional differences in fertility in Pakistan, with the lowest figures (slightly above 2) observed in the Urdu-speaking communities in the big cities. Sathar predicts that replacement levels will not be reached for about 20 years, with Karachi leading the way, possibly in around five years.

The devastating floods in Pakistan in the fall of 2001 may produce a radical change in population distribution. Insufficient attention has been paid in the country, as elsewhere, to the potential effects of climate change generally and, in particular, to the effects on populations.

For Iran, the question arises of whether the current below-replacement-level fertility rates are sustainable given that significant ageing of the population will occur after 2040. The President last year announced incentives for families to produce more offspring, but women interviewed on the subject thought that the incentives offered were not in line with the high costs of bringing up children. Some believe that policies to increase fertility in Iran are not likely to succeed. Programmes to provide good education and employment opportunities for the young and policies designed to cope with the ageing of the population are a more feasible approach. A different view was that many people would like to have two or more children. If good education and good jobs are widely available, pro-natalist policies may work because families could then afford more children, without jeopardizing their achieved quality of life.

Country presentations: Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Gulf States

Experts: Zeinab A. Khadr, Ebba Augustin, Abdulkhaleq Abdulla

Moderator: Rainer Münz

Egypt

Egypt is one of the most populous countries in the Arab region and the most populous in North Africa. The 2006 census figure of 72.8 million appears to be an underestimate; the UN population estimate is 84 million. About 57% of the population live in rural areas, though these are no longer so isolated and lacking in facilities. Total fertility declined from the late 80s to reach 3.3 in 2008 and now appears to be at a plateau of 3.0. The mortality rate has been in decline since the 1950s. Infant mortality has gone down steadily; in 1985 it was 49.2 and now it is 18 per 1000 live births. Life expectancy, which was about 50 for both sexes in 1960, is now 69 for men and 74 for women.

The population pyramids show a decrease in the number of children below 15, with increases in the 15–60 age group and in the elderly group. The result is an imminent demographic dividend (also called demographic window or bonus), which should generate more resources to invest in the adult population. It is the period when the country has to increase the economic capacity of the younger adult population to carry the development process. If the government fails to prepare for and capitalise on the phenomenon when it occurs, the opportunity will be missed. The demographic window is expected to be “open” for about 30 years between 2014 and 2050.

The rate of population increase in Egypt will decline, but the rate of ageing will continue to climb. By 2050, there will be an estimated 13.1% of the population over 60, and unlike other countries, Egypt will have more old men than old women. The rate of education is far lower for women than for men and women are far less likely than men to have paid employment. Only 12.8% of women over 15 currently have a job. More women than men report health problems and stress.

According to Islamic tradition, the family rather than the government is responsible both for the children and the elderly. In an ageing population, a problem therefore arises for the adult population in the “sandwich” position, either taking care of children and old family members at the same time, or bringing up children and then without respite having to take care of elderly members of the family. Women have heavy burdens to carry in this social process and they, in particular, should receive more support.

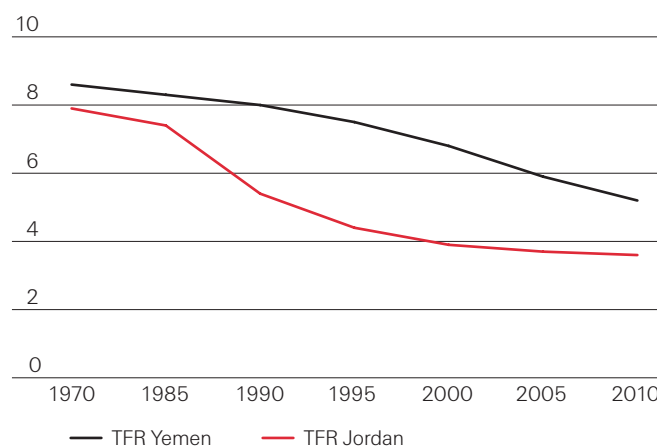
Yemen and Jordan

The Arab region that reaches from Morocco and Mauretania in the west to Oman in the East has until very recently been characterised by a rapid population growth rate of 3.4% per year, making it the fastest growing region world-wide. Fertility levels in the last two decades have begun to decline in the region, but the pace and intensity change varies dramatically between countries with total fertility rates ranging from 1.85 in Lebanon to 5.2 in Yemen.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Republic of Yemen are both countries in early stages of demographic transition with a decline in fertility rates; however, despite commonalities, the overall situation under which the transition is taking place differs significantly. Both countries are severely tested by resources scarcity (for and foremost in water) and a “youth bulge”; Jordan, with a population of 6,270,000 is a relatively political stable, highly urbanised middle-income country, despite having taken in 800,000 Iraqi refugees after the Iraq war. Yemen, with 22,860,000 inhabitants is a rural country in crisis, with a secession movement in the South, tribal fighting in the North and the presence of Al Qaeda groups. Yemen is home to 155,000 mainly Somali refugees and the country is still adversely affected by the lawlessness in the horn of Africa.

Yemen is in a very early stage of demographic transition; its total fertility rate has dropped from a very high 8.7 to 5.2 in the last 20 years. Nevertheless, the country’s population will double in fewer than 25 years if the current rate persists. According to forecasts, Yemen’s population will reach almost 32 million in 2020, making it a major driver of population growth in the region. Jordan’s population is set to rise to just over 8 million in 2020.

While studies indicate that Yemen has a well drawn up population policy, implementation is lagging behind. Jordan’s government has been aware since the 1990s of the need to manage its population, and the fertility rate of 5.2 in 1990 underwent a decline before stagnating at the current TFR of 3.6. Jordan’s National Agenda envisions a drop in fertility rate to 2.5 children per woman in reproductive age in 2017 if the country is to enjoy the demographic opportunity (burgeoning labour force and declining dependent population) in the early thirties.

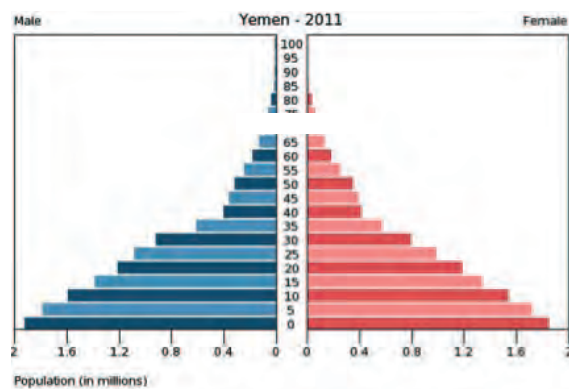


With more than one third of its population between 15 and 24 years of age, the Arab World is very young. While the young nature of Jordan, with 38% of its population below the age of 15, could pose an opportunity if the birth-rate continues to drop, Yemen's young population (46.2% under 15) is a major source of political and social instability in a country that is unable to provide the required resources for its growing population. The fact that 75% of the population is below the age of 30 and that over 50% of men under 24 are unemployed (reliable figures are hard to come by) makes for an explosive situation. Jordan is also a "young country", with 38% of the population below 15 and its youth unemployment of 25% a serious issue. What stands out in the case of well-educated Jordan is its extreme low female participation in the labour force, at 16%. Society in both countries is largely tribal and patriarchal; with men bringing their brides into their parents' house in largely arranged marriages. The personal status laws of both countries uphold the subordinate position of women to men. The average age of women at marriage is 25 in Jordan, but only 16.5 in Yemen. Slightly more than one third of Yemeni women are literate (compared to 90% in Jordan), and declining water tables force many Yemeni girls out of school to fetch household water at increasingly long distances from home.

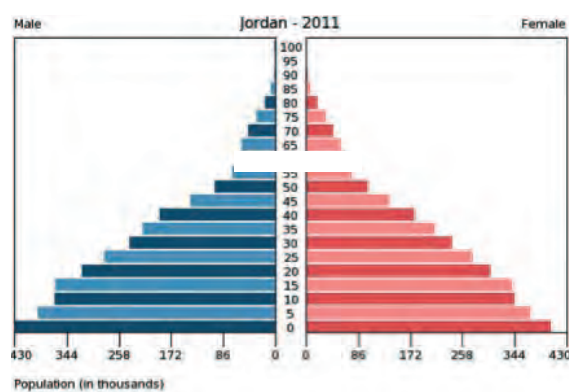
Jordan has a highly educated population and an efficient health system, while in Yemen little more than half of the Yemeni population is able to read and write; in Yemen almost 90% of women give birth at home and less than 40% do so with a trained birth attendant, let alone medical help. This abysmal situation is reflected in the very high maternal mortality rate in Yemen; one in 39 women dies in child-birth. Also infant mortality rates in Yemen stand with 58.4 per 1000 live births at more than double the rate (21 per 1000 live births) found in Jordan. In addition, 50% of Yemeni children are malnourished.

Women’s access to quality education and gainful employment, and hence their increased status in society, are key factors in determining demographic developments in transition countries. Yemen ranks last of 134 countries in the World Economic Forums “Global Gender Gap Report 2009”, while Jordan holds a low 113th place. While significant progress in women’s rights and resource access have been made in both countries, continued development is slow and it is particularly women’s extreme low labour force participation (and low literacy rate in Yemen) that seriously undermines the efforts of both governments to balance population growth with the very scarce resources available to them. Women’s rights are intimately linked to civil rights, and both countries, albeit for a different set of reasons, restrict the latter. Balanced population growth in the Arab World requires increased civil and women’s rights and a feeling of ownership by the citizenry for their own country. These three ingredients are currently in short supply.¹

Yemen – 2011



Jordan – 2011



¹ Population pyramid, source: International databank, US Census Bureau, January 2011

Gulf States: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman

Oil has made the six Gulf States fabulously wealthy. Saudi Arabia is the biggest Arab economy and also the biggest of the six countries, with a local population of over 22 million. The other five states have much smaller local populations. The UAE, for instance, has a native population of 800 000, but constitutes the second largest Arab economy and has a GDP twice as big as that of Egypt. Qatar has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. The combined GDP of these states has now passed USD 1 trillion. To drive their ambitious economic strategies, they are compelled to bring in huge numbers of foreign workers, and in the smaller Gulf States the local populations are turning into shrinking minorities. About 80% of the resident population of the UAE is made up of foreigners, and the figure is similar for Qatar. For all six countries combined, foreigners make up 30% of the resident population. If the trend observed in the UAE continues, the local population will diminish to 10% in 2015, 5% in 2020 and will theoretically represent 0% by 2025.

For Professor Abdulla, this raises issues of cultural identity and citizenship as well as the question of who is going to be running the countries. In general, both the countries' governments and populations seem to be enjoying the benefits of their material wealth, with little or no regard to the social costs. On the positive side, Professor Abdulla finds the everyday situation to be one of social harmony with no anti-foreign sentiments. The states are politically stable and, in general, ideologically moderate. The World Bank considers them to be the most prepared in the region for the knowledge economy.

Discussion points

A few decades ago Egypt seemed poised for rapid economic growth, but this did not happen and GDP remains low. Instability in the region exerted a braking effect and demographic evolution has not been favourable so far. Family planning reduced fertility, but a fertility plateau was reached, where well-educated families tend to have three children and those with little education over four. Large numbers of children are now reaching school age, and the government is facing many different problems.

The fact that women in Yemen and Jordan have to stay at home rather than go to work constitutes an enormous squandering of talent. In Jordan, 50% of graduates are women; failure to employ them is a terrible and expensive waste of resources. There are many migrant female workers in Jordan, but the jobs they do are not considered culturally acceptable for local women. Women in employment in both countries feel that men regard them as competitors. In both countries, however, the situation must be viewed against the background of very high overall unemployment. Women in intensely conservative Saudi Arabia can work and even occupy high positions.

Country presentations: Indonesia, Algeria

Experts: Terence H. Hull, Arslan Chikhaoui

Moderator: Hans Groth

Indonesia

Indonesia is a secular state with a range of religions, some of its provinces being 90–100% Muslim. It has the largest Islamic population of any country. The 2010 census put the total population at 237.5 million. Shari‘a based regulations have been introduced by many local governments, but this is often intended as a vote-winning measure on the part of the secular Golkar party to attract Muslim votes away from more overtly religious based parties. In a nation of over 1000 ethnic groups and as many languages, religion is the primary form of identity for most citizens.

The previous governmental structure of top-down control has been replaced by a decentralised system in which local authorities are responsible for management of local budgets. Proponents of family planning claim the new system has had a deleterious effect.

Organised family planning over the last 40 years led to fertility decline from 5.6 in 1970 to 2.3 in 2007. Projections indicate a steady convergence to below-replacement fertility for most countries in Southeast Asia over the next 40 years. In the 1970s, the use of contraceptives was limited to less than one in ten married women. Over the past decade the proportion of Indonesian women using contraception has shown that six out of ten married women use contraception, irrespective of their religious affiliations.

A striking feature of the contraceptive mix is the high prevalence of injectables. Under the decentralised system, this method is heavily promoted by private health services and midwives. Their enthusiasm may be partly due to the fact that injectables are more lucrative for them than other methods. IUDs are now also gaining in popularity. Indonesia has the highest rate of abortion, though the legal restrictions embedded in a number of laws mean that it is very difficult to gather data on this sensitive issue. There is a trend towards singlehood in the region, as increasing numbers of women prefer to postpone or discount marriage for the sake of study and salaried employment.

The Indonesian, Philippine, Vietnamese and Malaysian populations are increasingly impacted by climate change and the strong tectonic processes of the “Ring of Fire”. It is not surprising that news reports of social conflicts often refer to the metaphors of explosions and tidal waves to describe how cultural and religious conflicts may impact on these societies. It is also understandable that these metaphors are tinged with a sense of inevitability.

Algeria

Against the background of decolonisation thinking in the early 1970s, there was an official policy of population growth and fertility was at its highest with a figure of 7.4. In the wake of a family planning campaign initiated in 1982, the fertility rate declined to 5+. A dramatic decline began in 1991, however, due to an uncertain political situation and security problems, which generated anxiety regarding the future. By 2006, the fertility rate had fallen to 2.4 and by 2008 to 2.3. The incidence of marriage fell between 2001 and 2003, but began to rise again in 2007 when the government started to provide housing and other assistance for couples. Nevertheless, the fertility rate is predicted to fall further in the next 5–10 years.

Discussion points

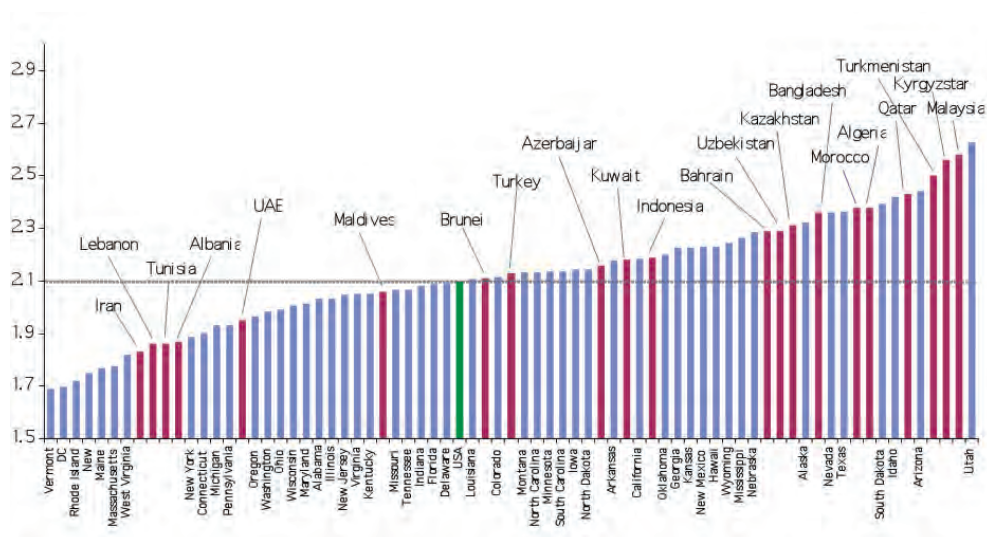
The idea of wanted fertility is not necessarily shaped by culture or related to income. The influences are not consistent and, in particular, the view that Muslim traditions are hostile to fertility change has been challenged from the Maghreb to Southeast Asia. A preference for male children is likewise not consistent throughout the Muslim world.

Coverage of the three clusters of countries has shown a high degree of diversity and no single pattern. Economically, there are extremes like Yemen at one end of the scale and the Gulf States at the other, with varying levels between. In Europe, there has been a steady decline in fertility over the last century without fertility plans. In Islamic countries, fertility plans have been implemented with dramatic effects in some cases and more gradual influences in others. One of the greatest demographic challenges facing those countries is the youth bulge, with the immediate task of giving this generation a vision of the future in which they can believe and strive to create.

The other revolution: unexpected demographic changes in the Muslim world and their implications

Keynote speaker: Nicholas Eberstadt

Muslim-majority countries have undergone a decline in fertility, which has been slight in some cases and in others quite dramatic. For example, the absolute decline in total fertility in Algeria between 1975 and 2005 was five births per woman, and the unweighted average decline for all Muslim countries in the same period was higher than for the Least Developed Countries as a whole. According to US data and UN Population Division estimates, some 21 Muslim majority countries had TFRs for 2005–2010 that fell within the range of TFRs recorded by USA's fifty states as of 2006 –with six of them below the US average.



A thought-provoking result of research into what determines fertility is that wanted or desired total fertility rates have a strong association with total fertility rates. The association was shown to be less strong for contraceptive availability, income and literacy.

Professor Eberstadt estimates the total Muslim population of the Western European countries at between 12 and 15 million. A comparison of the fertility rates of immigrant groups and the receiving populations is regarded as providing an indication of the degree of integration. In the case of the UK, there are big differences in fertility rates between the native population and the Pakistani immigrants. In the Netherlands, the fertility rates of the population of Indonesian origin and the native population are similar.

A major challenge of the rapid decline in fertility in Islamic countries is that of the “youth quakes”, which some Muslim countries are experiencing and others will experience in the future. These pose huge challenges with regard to the provision of education and then jobs. A further challenge is the ageing of populations. In a decade or so, some Muslim countries may be approaching the same level of “greying” as the Western world is already experiencing today.

Women, education and fertility in Islamic countries

Keynote speaker: Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi

Experts: Ebba Augustin, Zeinab A. Khadr, Mohammad H. Nicknam

Moderator: Katja Gentinetta

Islam is pro-education. It places an obligation on men and women to continue learning throughout their lives. Some Muslim countries have made great progress with respect to education for women, a good example being Iran, where 65% of students enrolling at universities are now female. But the picture is extremely varied and some other Muslim countries, especially gender-stratified states like Yemen or Afghanistan, lag very far behind.

Higher education is associated with lower fertility. Educated women have a greater degree of economic and social autonomy and, in general, the further they advance in their education the higher their age at marriage. Educated women are more likely than uneducated to have clear desires regarding family size and to use contraception. Infant mortality is lower among the offspring of educated mothers, and well-educated parents tend to want a high quality of life and good education for their children too. All these factors steer fertility towards small family sizes.

The very considerable variations in levels of education of women in the Islamic countries are attributable to differences in socio-economic development, contextual gender stratifications and cultural diversity. The general fertility decline in the Islamic world varies widely in degree depending on the country concerned, and is associated with improved education and greater autonomy of women.

Family planning programmes in the I.R. Iran

A decisive factor in the promulgation and implementation of family planning (FP) in Iran was to discuss its necessity at the outset with the religious leadership, initially Imam Khomeini and subsequently Ayatollah Khomeini. Their approval and support very significantly broadened acceptance for FP measures among the population.

Family planning services in Iran are provided free of charge for all clients and in cooperation with the private sector. Access to these services and to healthcare in general is secured for all sections of the population, urban and rural, through a service delivery and referral chain, at the top of which are the university teaching hospitals, followed by the district general hospitals, then the health centres and finally the health posts and community health houses. A wide range of FP methods is offered together with counselling to provide accurate information and dispel myths, for instance regarding side effects. The contraceptive prevalence rate for modern methods was at 60% in 2005.

The FP and healthcare programmes have been a great success, with a sharp decline in TFR, as well as impressive reductions in infant mortality and maternity mortality rates.

Discussion points

The Yemeni girls who carry water instead of going to school are aware of what they are missing, as are their mothers, but faced with severe water shortages, the families see no alternative to keeping them away from school. Changes would entail a restructuring of power in the villages and a redrawing of gender roles.

Programmes to educate women are quite successful in Egypt, especially in Upper Egypt and the Cairo slums. The aim is not rapid change, however, which the men in particular would probably resist.

Women in Iran are being educated to increasingly high levels, but are under-represented in the labour force. However, more women wish to work than before and they may, in the future, come into competition with men for jobs, especially as unemployment is also high among male graduates. At present, women tend to look for employment in education or in government departments. When more of them start working in other areas, the companies may try to offer them lower pay than men. Some families regard university-level education as a means for young women to secure a good marriage.

In some of the Gulf States, women often embark on higher education while young men go into working life fairly soon. This can be inimical to marriage, because the women do not wish to “marry down” in terms of academic level. Egyptian women seem more prepared to marry a man with lower educational qualifications. Private sector companies there employ men rather than women, fearing that they would lose female employees when they get pregnant or that married women would find the hours too long to reconcile with family life. Egyptian women also prefer working for government departments.

The salient points of the further discussion were that educational opportunities for women differ greatly among Islamic countries. The attitude of religious leaders is important, but the clergy displays different degrees of enthusiasm for the educational advancement of women, which men in some countries actively resist, apparently feeling it to be a threat to their privileged position in society. Integration of graduates, female and male, into the national economies is problematic: There is a lack of jobs for both the highly qualified and less qualified. This is exacerbated by the youth bulge phenomenon, which, in certain countries, constitutes a ticking time bomb.

Clash or encounter? The demography of Muslims and Western societies

Keynote speakers: Cornelia Meyer, Arslan Chikhaoui

Experts: Coskun Bedel, Shada Islam, Frank Jehle, Reiner Klingholz

Moderator: Chris Singleton

For Cornelia Meyer, a clash of cultures is not an option, because “we are all in it together.” The European populations are ageing rapidly; the populations in the MENA region for example are growing fast, and the MENA countries will need 100 million extra paid jobs in a decade or so. Therefore, the migratory pressures are here to stay. The percentages of Muslim immigrants in European countries are small, but not negligible, and they are growing. Colonial history often determines which countries immigrants choose to move to, which is why large numbers of people originally from the Indian sub-continent are in the UK and why France has many immigrants of North African origin.

The European countries have maintained a multicultural approach to their Muslim immigrants, in the UK to a very marked degree. While this enables the newcomers to preserve their cultural identity, it emphasises separateness and can generate resentment in the majority population. It has produced ghettos in some cities. In the US, which developed as an immigrant society, the traditional approach of mass assimilation makes for a more integrated society. Singapore practises forced integration, which works effectively, though it can be seen as repressive. International comparison shows that there is no silver bullet.

The absolute key enabler for integration is language, closely followed by education, in particular to give young and second-generation immigrants access to the labour market. Equal access to resources like housing and healthcare is likewise an important factor. A further element of successful integration is an understanding on the part of the host nation of the culture and history of the immigrants and – as the UK found out rather late – it is vital to be aware of early signs of radicalisation.

Arslan Chikhaoui reiterated the drastic imbalance in terms of population and ageing between the countries along the southern shore of the Mediterranean and the countries of Europe. The prosperity of the EU acts as a magnet to immigrants, legal and illegal, coming from or through North Africa. Many Europeans believe that Muslim immigrants pose a social and economic challenge and a cultural threat, as well as a danger to internal security and stability. But because of its own demography, Europe will be a region of immigration for the next 20 to 25 years. The newcomers will compensate for the birth deficit and ensure that the workforce maintains the required size and quality. Europe is shifting to more selective immigration criteria, which is leading to a brain drain and flight of skills from the poorer countries. At the same time, the main difficulty faced by

the MENA countries is unemployment, which is set to get worse over the next decade. The fact that these countries lag behind in education and training is another big disadvantage. They need to take measures to ensure sustainable economic development in their region. These would include making schools' and universities' curricula more relevant to the present and future labour markets and strengthening the skills of the young, especially of young women. They should also remove gender-related obstacles to women wishing to join the labour force and facilitate management and technical training for women. Giving women easier access to finance would promote female entrepreneurship.

Discussion points

The main hope of very many young people in the North African countries is to go to Europe. The pressures on them are social and economic. More foreign direct investment (FDI) from Europe would help to stabilise the situation and to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. Without such help, the pressure will grow.

A different view expressed on FDI and the MENA countries was that European governments would find it impossible to explain to their citizens that they were paying large amounts to solve the population problems of other countries. In Germany there is concern that around 25% of long-stay immigrants are very poorly integrated and the educational standards, even of the second generation, are unacceptably low for some immigrant groups. If Germany introduces a quota system, its government will probably recruit well-qualified personnel from countries like Russia, I.R. Iran, India and China, where educational standards are much higher than in MENA.

What we are experiencing is neither a clash nor an encounter between European and Muslim cultures, but a complex transition at a time of economic uncertainty and of struggling governments in Europe. Islam-bashing and anti-foreigner sentiments are generally on the increase and bring in votes. The challenge is to change the current toxic narrative, which is based on myth and prejudice. The media focus on negative stories, rather than examples of successful integration. To change that, the media need to be made aware of this fact too. Europe risks losing out in the competition for talent from outside: Because of the European countries' current image, the flow of qualified people from the South is much stronger to Australia, Canada and the US.

Impact of demography on political space in Islamic countries

Keynote speaker: Alexandre Fasel

Demographic research can anticipate evolutions, but it takes time before these have consequences to which the policymakers feel compelled to respond. The youth bulge in the Middle East was forecast a long time ago, but its effect on politics eventually differed from what was generally anticipated. The political space has remained closed and the lack of jobs and perspectives for a more prosperous future has fuelled growing frustration. Factors specific to the Middle East are the influence of a longstanding conflict, the abundant presence of natural resources in certain countries, and the high degree of external interests. Political Islam was able to become a growing force and faith-based organisations have gained in importance, in some cases achieving democratic legitimacy through the ballot box.

European countries face the task of managing a new kind of diversity created by immigration. The issue is crystallised in Switzerland in the attempt to find a good balance between a liberal approach, seeking political justice based on the universality of fundamental rights, and a republican approach anchored in the primacy of civic autonomy as a foundation of identity. The fact that the latter represents a strong force in the country accounts for the recent majority vote in favour of prohibiting the building of minarets. The measure gained most support in areas where no Muslims live and was ultimately a protest against an abstract idea of Islam not based in reality. Fear and mistrust in some sections of the public could be largely dispelled if the immigrant Muslims were given a voice and greater visibility. As is the case at international level, the problem could be addressed by concretely tackling practical problems of common concern and interest.

What are the views of the young generation about this topic?

Experts: Coskun Bedel, Anna Pirhofer, Simon Ullrich, Odd Sverre Volle

The main insights gained by students who attended this conference as part of their academic curriculum at the University of St. Gallen were:

- Religion is a key factor for change in Islamic countries, as it was in the past in Europe.
- Micro-level strategies are needed to foster the autonomy of women, and macro-level strategies are vital for education, health and family planning.
- To cope with demographic evolution, the role of women should be boosted, and this requires the support of men.
- Jobs are urgently needed in Muslim countries, especially for young people, and more women should join the labour force.
- Rapid change is possible, as the results of family planning in certain countries show.

In terms of “next steps” the students used the word ACTION as an acronym, made up of the words awareness, causality, trust, interaction, organisation and “now.” They recognise the need to raise awareness of the issues in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, which would involve delving into the issues and understanding them. They realise that trust has to be built and interaction enhanced between cultures and generations. For the students, “organisation” means facilitating change and utilising systems to stimulate employment and “now” stresses the need for a sense of urgency in tackling the issues.

Odd Volle considers that with regard to immigration from Islamic countries, the most pressing need in his home country of Norway is to raise awareness of the facts about Muslims to reduce or eliminate prejudice. He suggests that Muslim countries could copy the Norwegian system of quotas for women in management and leadership positions. Since there are not enough qualified women to fill these quotas in Norway itself, he could imagine appropriately qualified women from Islamic countries stepping in.

For Austria, Anna Pirhofer thinks it is essential to dispel the fear many people feel regarding Muslim countries, which is actually fear of what is different and unknown. Coskun Bedel described how Turkey, located on the edge of Europe, is ideally placed to act as the bridge for dialogue between the Muslim and non-Muslim cultures. This is especially so as a discussion between secular, forward-looking groups and a more conservative group in the population is already ongoing there.

Prospects and implications of demographic change in the Muslim world

Keynote speakers: Adulkhaleq Abdulla, Robert Cailliau

For Professor Abdulla, the symposium yielded a wealth of information and stimulating ideas, and it raised three essential questions:

- Is Islam the determining factor behind the demographic trends and changes in Muslim countries?
- To what extent will those demographic trends influence Islam and its future?
- How is the demographic situation in Islamic countries going to influence the world and global relationships? Will it be a curse or a blessing, a factor for cohesion or separation?

His final message was that “we need to engage rather than enrage each other.”

A “leitmotiv” of the symposium for Robert Cailliau was the often-repeated message that education and empowerment of women are vital and can exert a powerful positive influence on Islamic countries, both demographically and generally. Another recurring theme was the youth bulge and the need for jobs for the growing number of young people. He is optimistic that many jobs will be created automatically as a growing population creates an increased need for goods and services.

He feels that many of the problems described are not generated by Islam, rather by traditional ways of thinking that were perhaps appropriate hundreds of years ago but not today. A serious study of influential traditions would pave the way to changing them. It is worth remembering that tradition-based problems are not exclusive to Muslim countries.

For him, two underlying assumptions of this conference, which were not called into question, have ceased to be valid. One is the classical concept of growth and economics; he thinks it is time to stop measuring progress in terms of growth and instead measure it in terms of change. The other assumption is that energy and food will continue to be plentiful and cheap, whereas the opposite will be the case.

In his closing comment, Robert Cailliau declared that people find it difficult to change their mindset, even in the face of evidence, but it is vital for us to be able to do precisely that.

List of speakers, moderators and active discussion participants

Mohammad Jalal ABBASI-SHAVAZI, Professor of Demography, University of Tehran, Iran, and Senior Fellow, Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute (ADSRI), Australian National University, Australia

Abdulkhaleq ABDUL A, Professor of Political Science, United Arab Emirates University, UAE

Nasser Yousif AL HAMMADI, Curator, Qatar National Museum, Qatar

Dato' AMINUDDIN MD DESA, Chief Executive Officer / Director of Mayban Fortis Holdings Berhad, Malaysia

Ebba AUGUSTIN, Consultant, Expert on Human Development in the Arab World, Jordan

Barbara BECK, Special Reports Editor, The Economist, UK

Coskun BEDEL, Turkey, Student, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Christian BLICKENSTORFER, former Swiss Ambassador to the USA, Germany, Iran and UAE, Switzerland

Robert CAILLIAU, Member, Global Agenda Council on Population Growth, World Economic Forum, France

Arslan CHIKHAOUI, Chairman & CEO, Nord-Sud Ventures Consultancy Centre, Algeria

Eugen DAVID, Member of the Swiss Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Switzerland

Nicholas EBERSTADT, Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy, American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Member of the Global Agenda Council on Population Growth of the World Economic Forum (WEF), USA

Ayse Banu ERGOCMEN, Professor and Deputy Director, Institute of Population Studies, Hacettepe University, Turkey

Alexandre FASEL, Ambassador, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Political Affairs, Switzerland

Katja GENTINETTA, Deputy Director, Avenir Suisse, Switzerland

Hans GROTH, Senior Director, Pfizer Europe, Member of the Executive Board, Pfizer Switzerland, Member of the Board of Directors of the WDA Forum, Switzerland

Felix GUTZWILLER, Professor of Public Health, University of Zurich, Member of the Swiss Federal Parliament, Switzerland

Daniel M. HOFMANN, Group Chief Economist, Zurich Financial Services Inc., Switzerland

Meimanat HOSSEINI-CHAVOSHI, Senior Demographer, Department of Population and Family Health, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Iran, Research Associate, Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute, Canberra, Australia

Terence H. HULL, Professor of Demography,
Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute (ADSRI), Adjunct Professor
of the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH), Australia

Shada ISLAM, Senior Programme Executive, European Policy Centre, Belgium

Frank JEHLE, University Chaplain emeritus, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Zeinab A. KHADR, Professor, Department of Statistics,
Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, Egypt

Reiner KLINGHOLZ, Director,
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