Shaping Ageing

Health, independence and social responsibility

Image: share of the world's population aged 65+, 1950 (left) to 2100 (right); lighter is lower, darker is higher. Drawn from UN World Population Prospects 2024 data.

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About me!

I …

… am Mehdi Farzaneh.

… was born in 1991 in Iran – Shiraz.

… have BSc and MSc in Mechanical Eng. from Iran.

… am currently studying MSc in Biomedical Eng. at Furtwangen University.

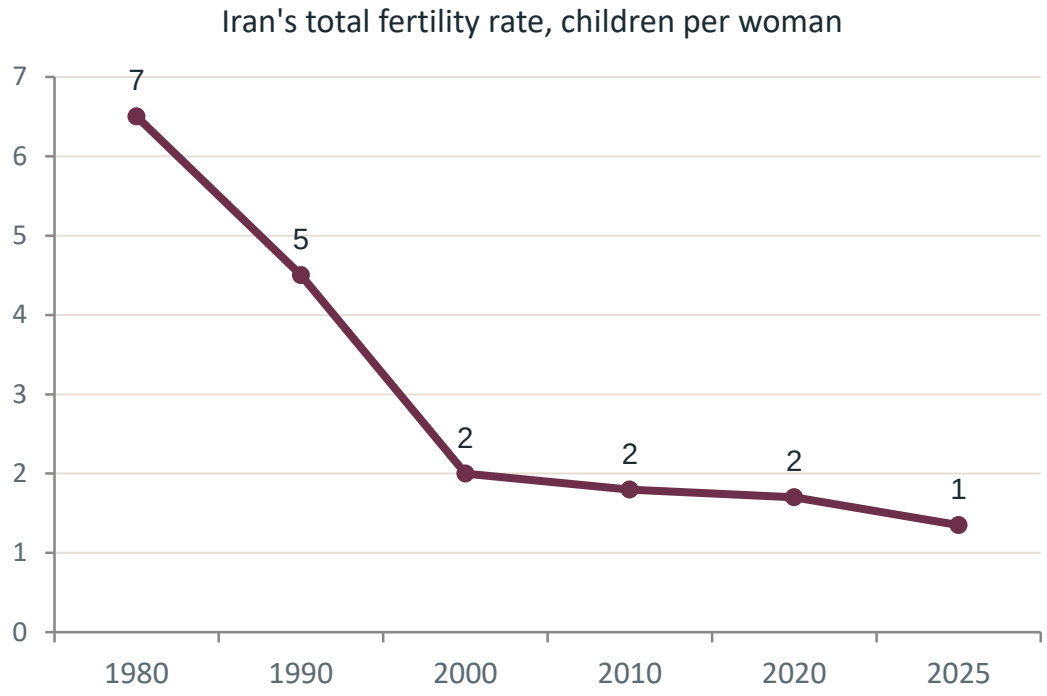
… like to go hiking, running, playing video-games, watching science-fiction movies, and reading novels.

My home-town: Shiraz



Image: www.legendaryiran.com/blog/top-10-places-to-visit-in-shiraz

Iran: a very fast transition



2nd fastest

ageing country in the world (2015–2050), behind only South Korea

22–31%

of Iranians projected to be 60+ or 65+ by 2050, vs. about 8% today

2.1

is the replacement rate; Iran's is now ~1.35–1.7

Sources: Abbasi-Shavazi et al., Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology (2021); Carbon Brief/WANA and bne IntelliNews reporting (2025–26); Demographics of Iran.

2

Terminology

What is population ageing?

What is population ageing?

Societies are growing older: the share of people who are older is rising in almost every country on Earth.

It happens for a good reason: people live longer and have fewer children than before. “Shaping ageing” means deciding, deliberately, how health systems, cities, workplaces and families adapt to that shift.

10.3%

of the world's population was 65 or older in 2024 — almost double the 5.5% of 1974

Healthy ageing

Developing and maintaining the functional ability that lets a person keep doing what matters to them in older age.

Population ageing

A society-wide shift in age structure, driven by lower fertility and longer life expectancy, not by anyone living unnaturally long.

Sources: UNFPA (2025); UN World Population Prospects 2024; WHO, Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action 2021–2030.

How the shift happens

FEWER BIRTHS

Fertility has fallen from about 5 children per woman in 1950 to 2.2 today, near the replacement level of 2.1.

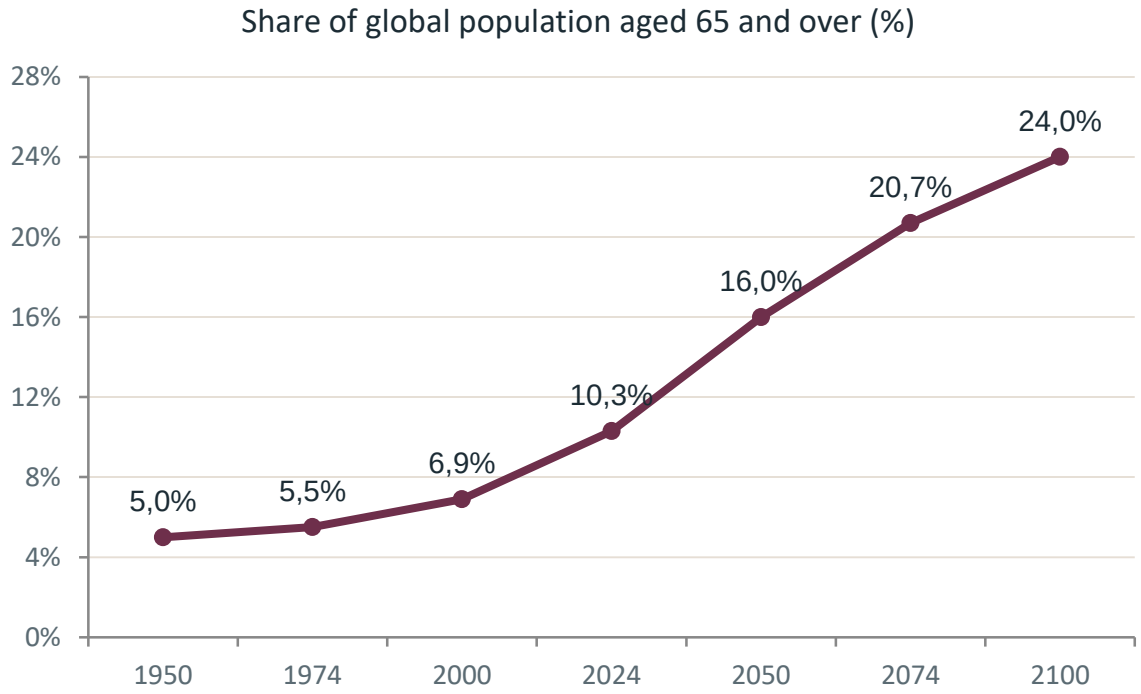
LONGER LIVES

Global life expectancy at birth reached 73.3 years in 2024, up 8.4 years since 1995.

1. **Fewer children are born**
   The average family has fewer children than a generation ago, almost everywhere.
2. **Older age groups grow**
   With fewer young people entering and more people surviving to old age, the age pyramid widens at the top.
3. **The median age rises**
   Societies shift from young, pyramid-shaped populations to older, column-shaped ones.
4. **The pattern spreads**
   Over 60% of the world's population now lives in a country below the replacement fertility rate.

Sources: UNFPA (2025); WHO, Ageing: Global population (2025); UN World Population Prospects 2022.

A world growing older



1.1bn → 2.1bn

people aged 60+ worldwide: 2023 figure, rising to a 2050 projection

2.2 billion

people will be 65+ by the mid-2070s, overtaking those under 18

1 in 6

people worldwide will be over 65 by 2050

Sources: UN World Population Prospects 2022 and 2024 (medium variant); UNFPA (2025); WHO (2025).

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Importance

What does it matter?

Health and independence



Functional ability

The WHO's core measure of healthy ageing: can a person meet their basic needs, learn, move, build relationships and contribute, on their own terms?



Long-term care

Hundreds of millions of older people need daily help with care. Many countries have no public system set up to provide it.



Mental health

About 15% of adults aged 70+ live with a mental health condition; loneliness and ageism are among the leading risk factors.

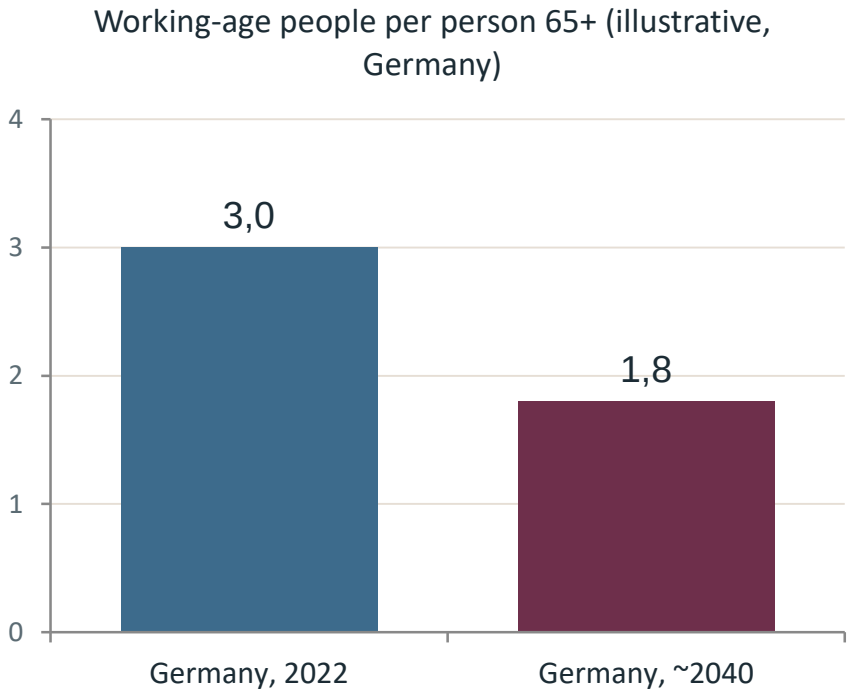


Age-friendly places

Homes, streets and transport that work for an 80-year-old also work better for everyone else, a parent with a stroller, a person with an injury.

Sources: WHO, Healthy ageing and functional ability (2025); WHO, Mental health of older adults (2025); WHO, Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020).

The economy and the workforce



+$62bn

a year is the estimated gain to Australia's economy from employing just 5% more people over 55

37%→35%

projected fall in Germany's statutory pension replacement rate as the population ages

$63bn

a year in excess US health-care costs linked to ageism, one single-country estimate

Sources: EU Ageing Report 2024, Germany country fiche; WHO, Global report on ageism (2021).

Families, care and social life

Who provides care	Families remain the largest source of care for older people worldwide, but smaller families and migration mean fewer relatives are nearby to give it.
Loneliness and isolation	About 1 in 4 people aged 65+ are socially isolated, and roughly a quarter to a third of older adults' experience loneliness, a recognised risk factor for dementia and heart disease.
Ageism, both ways	1 in 2 people worldwide hold ageist attitudes, which affect older and younger people alike, from hiring decisions to how seriously a young person's ideas are taken.
Generations in contact	Programmes that bring younger and older people together, from shared housing to mentoring, consistently reduce loneliness on both sides.

Sources: WHO, Mental health of older adults (2025); loneliness meta-analyses (2024); WHO, Global report on ageism (2021).

Not felt equally

55.7%

of people 65+ worldwide are women, who also do more unpaid caregiving and face a larger gender pension gap

80%

of the world's older population will live in low- and middle-income countries by 2050, often with the least developed pension and care systems

Who is most exposed

- Older women, who live longer but save and earn less across their lives
- People in countries with no universal pension or health coverage
- Rural older people, farther from clinics and long-term care
- People ageing without nearby family, due to migration or smaller families
- Countries ageing fast before they have grown rich, "growing old before growing rich"

Sources: UN World Population Prospects 2022; UNFPA (2025); loneliness and public-health literature on global ageing (2024).

Global: where things stand

10.3%

of the world's population was 65+ in 2024, up from 5.5% in 1974

73.3 years

global life expectancy at birth in 2024, up 8.4 years since 1995

1 in 2

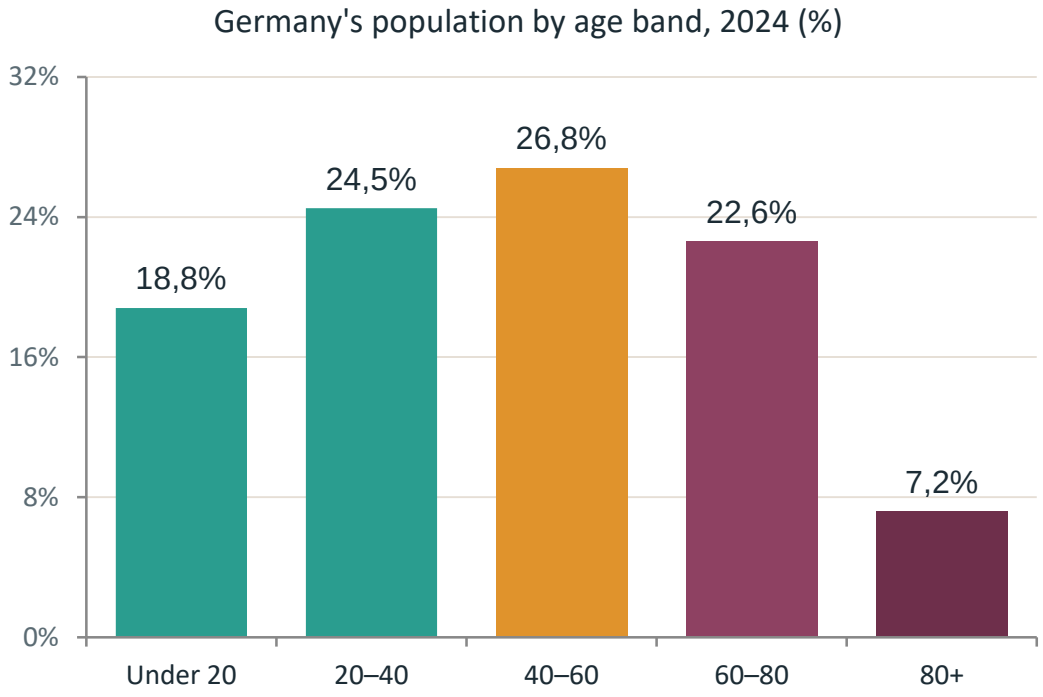
people worldwide hold ageist attitudes, toward older or younger people

1 in 6

older adults' experiences abuse, usually from their own carers

Sources: UNFPA (2025); WHO, Ageing: Global population (2025); WHO, Global report on ageism (2021); WHO, Mental health of older adults (2025).

Germany: an older society, already here



1 in 5

people in Germany were already 67+ (retirement age) in 2024

1 in 4

will be 67+ by 2035, Destatis projects, under every scenario modelled

67

the statutory retirement age, rising gradually from 65, reached in full by 2031

Sources: Destatis, Population by age groups (2025); Destatis press release 446/2025; EU Ageing Report 2024, Germany country fiche.

Germany: caring for an older population

Pension system under strain

The ratio of working-age people to retirees is falling from about 3:1 toward roughly 1.8:1 around 2040, pushing the pension replacement rate down from about 37% to 35% of wages.

Long-term care insurance

Germany's Pflegeversicherung, a mandatory long-term care insurance introduced in 1995, is a widely studied model other ageing countries look to.

Working-age population shrinking

51.2 million people were of working age (20–66) in 2024; this pool is expected to keep shrinking even with continued immigration.

Sources: Destatis press release 446/2025; EU Ageing Report 2024, Germany country fiche; Pensions in Germany (overview).

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Solution

What can we do?

What governments and systems can do

Age-friendly design

4 areas

of WHO's Decade of Healthy Ageing: combating ageism, age-friendly environments, integrated care, and long-term care

Keep people working

+$62bn

estimated yearly gain to one national economy from a 5-point rise in employment among people over 55

Fund long-term care

1995

the year Germany introduced mandatory long-term care insurance, a model other ageing countries now study

Sources: WHO, Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action (2021–2030); WHO, Global report on ageism (2021); Pensions in Germany overview.

What communities and each of us can do

Bring generations together	Mentoring, shared housing and intergenerational programmes reduce loneliness measurably on both sides.
Support healthy habits early	Functional ability in old age is shaped by decisions made decades earlier: activity, diet and preventive care across the whole life course.
Check in on isolation	With about a quarter of older adults socially isolated, a regular visit or call is a simple, low-cost intervention with real health effects.
Question ageist assumptions	With one in two people holding ageist attitudes, noticing and correcting them, in hiring, healthcare, or daily language, is something anyone can start today.

None of this requires waiting for policy. Communities, workplaces and families already shape how ageing feels.

Sources: WHO, Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030); WHO, Global report on ageism (2021); loneliness intervention literature (2024).

Shaping ageing means choosing, deliberately, how we grow old together.

1. **It is a success story first**
   Longer lives and smaller families are the result of real progress.

2. **It is already here**
   10.3% of the world is 65+ today, and the pace varies hugely by country.

3. **Health means independence**
   Functional ability, not the absence of disease, is the real goal.

4. **Responsibility is shared**
   Governments, employers, communities and individuals each have a role.

5. **Speed matters for some**
   Countries ageing fast, like Iran, have far less time to build systems than Germany had.

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