

'Gerontogrowth' vs. Population Ageing: Why the distinction matters?

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Introduction

The short and direct answer to the question in the title is: All countries are experiencing a progressive increase in the number of people aged 60 and over, but not all of them are experiencing an ageing population. These two distinct demographic dynamics can be accurately captured by distinguishing the widely used concept of 'population ageing' from the 'gerontogrowth' neologism.

What is 'Gerontogrowth'?

As the word suggests - geronto + growth - means the increase in the number of elderly people (60 and over). The growth of the elderly population is a more certain phenomenon than the ageing population; It depends solely on the reduction of mortality in general, and among the elderly in particular, while population ageing depends mainly on reduced fertility.

What is 'Population Ageing'?

Population ageing is the process that results in increasing proportions of the elderly in the total population. It can be measured by the 'Ageing Index' (AI), a demographic indicator that relates the proportion of the elderly to the proportion of the young. It is usually expressed as the number of people aged 60 and over (or 65+) for 100 people under the age of 15; a number less than 100 means that there are fewer elderly than young people.

Analysis

Table 1: The Different Characteristics Between Gerontogrowth and Population Ageing

Gerontogrowth	Population Ageing
Definition	
Increase in the number of elderly people in a given population.	Increase in the proportion of older generations in a given population.
Intensity factors	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase in the life expectancy of the elderly; 2. Effects of demographic inheritance; 3. Migratory contribution of elderly people (cases in public services in Maputo City). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fall of fertility at different speeds; 2. Increase in the survival rates of the elderly; 3. Composition by age and fertility behavior due to migration; 4. Effects of demographic inheritance (factors to be analyzed in a specific way if it concerns the working population, the population of a company).
Measuring Indicators	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Measures of variation of the number of elderly, in absolute (effective) and relative (growth rate of the elderly age groups) terms; 2. Life expectancy in the elderly groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ageing Index (AI); 2. Median age and mean age of the population; 3. Total Fertility Rate and Life Expectancy at Birth.
Perspectives after 2015 in Mozambique	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow structural changes, unless external factors arise; 2. Gerontogrowth should continue depending on the external influence (import of technological innovations and external savings). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Population ageing likely to be delayed, depending on the intensity of rejuvenation, the onset and speed of fertility transition.



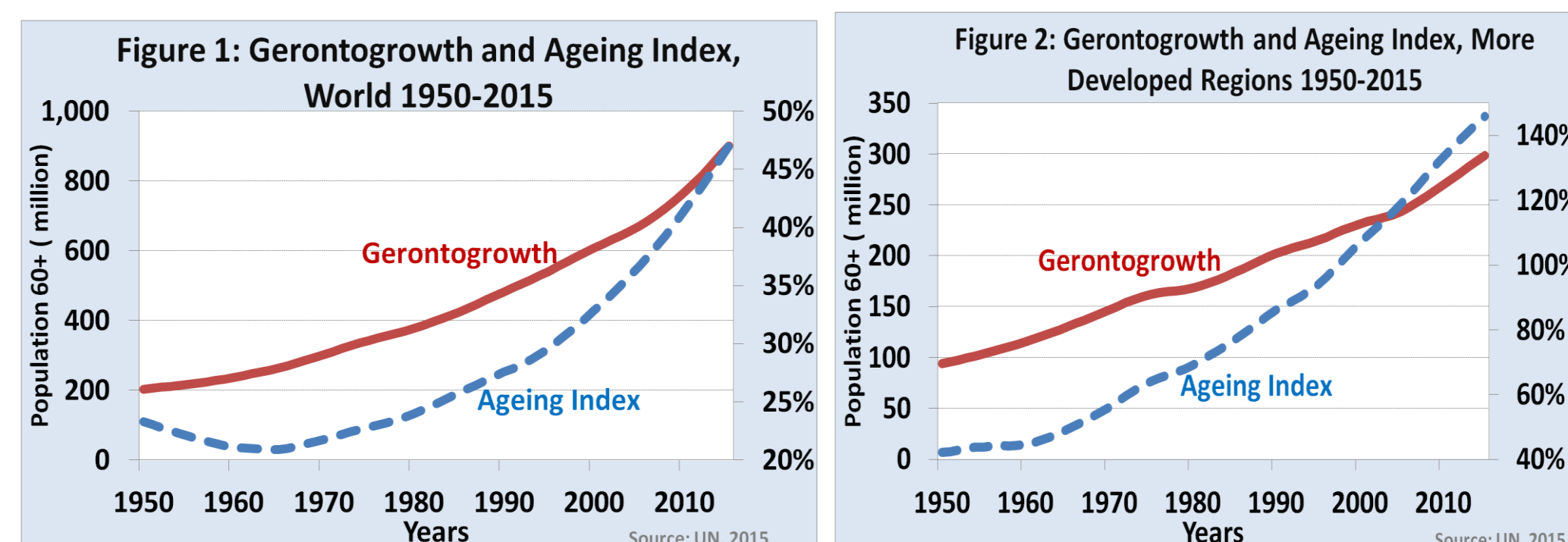
Results

Table 2: Population Structure Indicators: Percentage of Elderly, Ageing Index (AI), and Median Age of the Population, 2015 and 2050

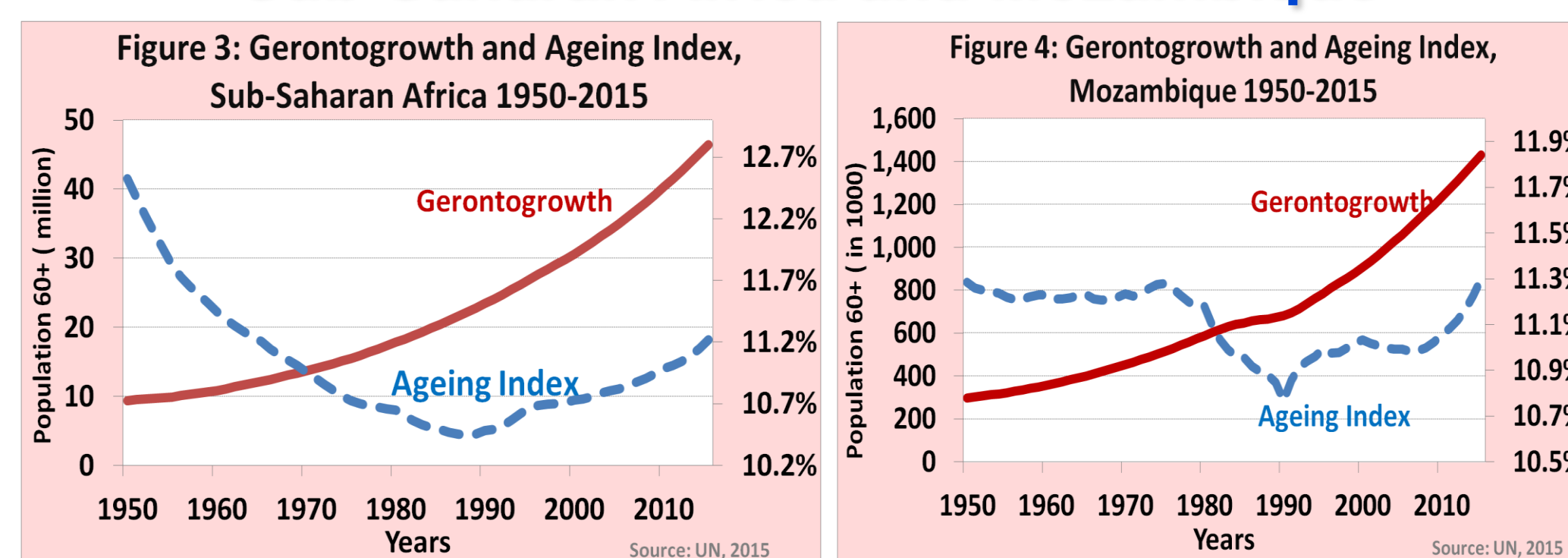
Selected countries	60+ (%)	AI (%)	Median age (years)	60+ (%)	AI (%)	Median age (years)
2015						
WORLD	12.3	47.0	29.6	22	111	36.1
More developed regions	24.0	146.0	41.2	33	209	45.1
Less developed regions	10.0	35.2	27.8	20	89	34.9
High-income countries	22.0	128.0	39.7	32	203	44.7
Middle-income countries	11.0	39.8	28.9	22	108	37.1
Low-income countries	5.2	12.2	18.5	8	26	24.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.8	11.2	18.3	8	23	23.7
AFRICA	5.4	13.3	19.4	9	28	24.8
ASIA	12.0	47.3	30.3	25	136	39.9
EUROPE	24.0	151.9	41.7	34	226	46.2
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	11.0	43.5	29.2	26	149	41.2
NORTHERN AMERICA	21.0	111.8	38.3	28	165	42.1
OCEANIA	16.0	70.2	32.9	23	117	37.4
Australia/New Zealand	20.0	107.6	37.6	28	167	41.6

Source: HelpAge International 2015; UN, 2015

Gerontogrowth and ageing in the World and in More Developed Regions



Gerontogrowth and ageing (or rejuvenation?) in Sub-Saharan Africa and Mozambique



Conclusions

Gerontogrowth and the aging of the human population are two of the most significant achievements of the 20th century that are expected to be widespread and consolidated throughout the 21st century. Recognizing the difference between these two demographic processes is essential for three reasons: 1) to better understand the real and diversified nature of the demographic dynamics in progress; 2) To understand the differential impact dimension of the overall process of demographic transition resulting from the combined effect of changes in mortality and fertility; 3) Two different processes usually require distinct policies.

Today, the challenges faced by a significant number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa are still more due to rejuvenation than to the ageing of the population. Therefore, policy makers o not prioritize the issue of population ageing, as the greatest challenge they face in the short term stems primarily from population rejuvenation.

While it is unclear how long the process of rejuvenation in countries like Mozambique may last, international experience leaves no doubt that population aging only becomes relevant if and when the fertility transition becomes effective. Fortunately, sub-Saharan Africa already has some encouraging examples that this region does not remain an exception in the world (for example, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, South Africa and a few others).

References

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- Full length article
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