

# Fertility and Population Growth



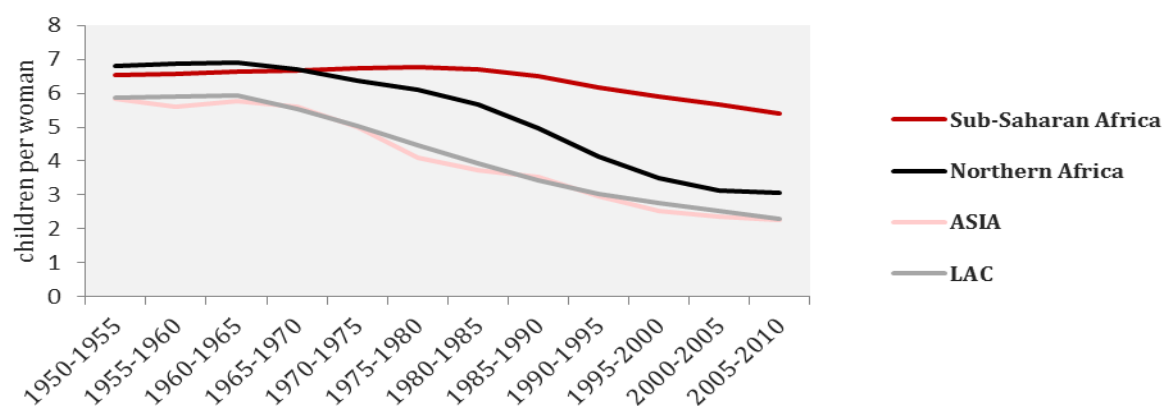
Population Horizons Factsheet No.1

Spring 2014

Fertility rates in Latin America and Asia started to decline in the mid-1960s. Total fertility in these two regions stood at about 6 births per woman until the 1960s, and has now (2005-2010) reached 2.3 births per woman (though there are large variations between the sub-regions of Asia). Fertility also started

to decline in Northern Africa at about the same time, though from a higher level – about 7 births per woman – and now stands at about 3 births per woman. The fertility transition in Africa did not begin until the late 1980s.

## Total Fertility by Region, 1950-2010

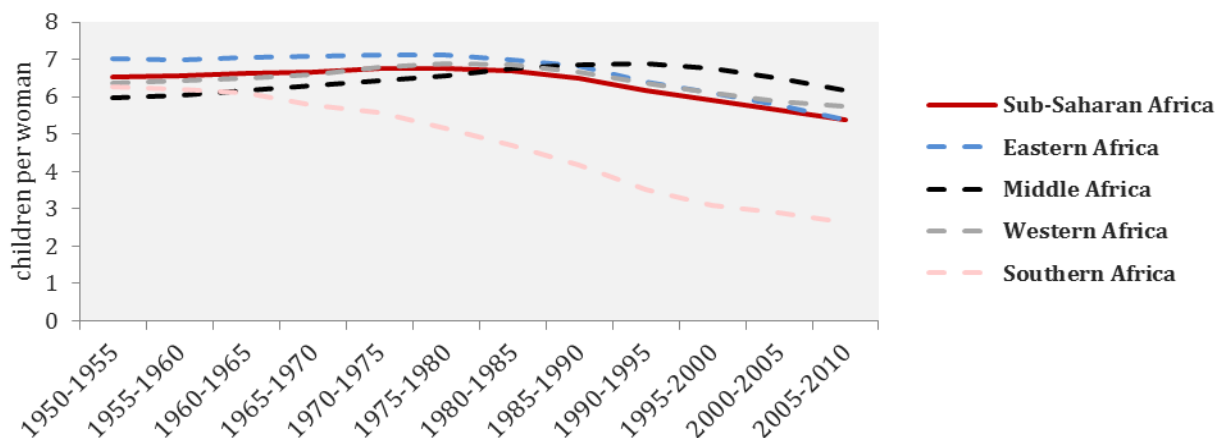


Source: World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision

The highest total fertility in 2005-2010 remains in sub-Saharan Africa with 5.4 children per woman, the estimated TFRs for 2005-2010 are between 2.3 and 3.1 for Northern Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The pace of fertility decline in sub-Saharan Africa -

0.4 children per decade – has been slower than in Asia and Latin America. There are only 11 countries in the region with total fertility below 4.0 children per woman; and the mainland populations in this category are concentrated in Southern Africa.

## Total Fertility, sub-Saharan Africa and its sub-Regions, 1950-2010



Source: World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision

Middle Africa is the sub-region of Sub-Saharan Africa with the highest total fertility (6.2 children per woman), and it has seen an increase in total fertility since the 1950s.

In its 1984 World Development Report, the World Bank argued that annual population growth rates of more than 2% make it difficult for a country's institutions and technologies to keep up with expanding population pressures. A growth rate of 2% means that the population will double in 35 years. At 3% growth the population will double in less than 25 years.

Nearly all the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa have population growth rates of more than 2%, and most governments in the region regard their rates of population growth as too high (United Nations, 2013).

Unlike some other parts of the world where high rates of population growth are the result of high rates of immigration, in Sub-Saharan Africa high fertility is the driver of population growth. Growth rates are especially high in the Sahel region.

**Population Growth rate, 2005-2010**



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013); World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision.

**References**

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013) *World Population Policies*. New York.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013): *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision*. New York.