



Article

## Demographic Changes in Arab Societies

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**Abstract:** This study dealt with demographic changes in Arab societies and their impact on social and economic aspects. Fertility rates, migration, and age composition of populations were analyzed in five Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon). The results showed that countries with high fertility rates face pressure on resources and employment, while countries with low fertility rates suffer from the phenomenon of population ageing. The study also highlighted the role of migration in shaping population distribution, with some countries experiencing brain drain while others benefit from expatriate labor. The study found the need to adopt comprehensive policies to manage demographic changes, with a focus on education, the labor market, and health care to achieve sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Climate, Climate Change, NDWI, Water Area, Lake Habbaniyah

### 1. Introduction

In recent decades, Arab societies have been witnessing major demographic shifts that are both challenges and opportunities. Demographic change is defined as the change in the composition of a population in terms of its number, age composition, growth rates, and migration. These changes directly affect economic and social development, linked to major challenges such as unemployment, internal and external migration, and increased pressure on infrastructure and public services, demographic change is not only challenging, but presents multiple opportunities if properly exploited, such as increasing the young workforce and boosting economic productivity, therefore, it has become necessary to study the factors that contribute to these transformations, analyze their effects, and provide sustainable solutions to deal with them in a way that ensures the promotion of stability and progress in Arab societies [1].

This research proceeds from a comprehensive vision aimed at shedding light on the factors affecting demographic changes in the Arab world. Analyses their economic and social impacts, and propose strategies to balance the requirements of development with the challenges of population growth. The research is based on real case studies and analysis of statistical data from different Arab countries, this promotes a deep understanding of the issue and paves the way for appropriate and effective policy development.

#### Research Problem:

Arab societies are witnessing rapid demographic changes characterized by increasing population growth rates, changes in the age structure of the population, and internal and external migration. These transformations cast a shadow on the economic and social structure, as pressure increases on vital sectors such as education, health, housing, and infrastructure.

The main problem is how to deal with these demographic changes to ensure sustainable development that meets the needs of the population and meets the attendant

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challenges. How can Arab societies use these transformations as an opportunity for economic and social growth? What policies can be followed to minimize the negative effects of these changes and ensure sustainable development?

#### **Research Objectives:**

1. Analysis of factors affecting demographic change: The study of economic, social, and political factors that affect population changes in Arab countries.
2. Identify the impact of demographic changes on development: explain how these shifts affect different sectors, such as education, health, labor market, and infrastructure.
3. Explore opportunities resulting from demographic changes: highlight the opportunities presented by these shifts, such as benefiting young people in promoting economic growth.
4. Assessing the challenges resulting from demographic changes: identifying the problems faced by Arab societies as a result of these changes, such as unemployment, immigration, and resource pressure.

#### **Research Hypotheses:**

This research is based on a set of hypotheses that seek to guide the study and analysis of the demographic phenomenon in Arab societies, including the following:

1. There is a direct relationship between high population growth rates and increased pressure on public resources and services in the Arab countries.
2. The change in the age structure of the population (increase in the proportion of youth or old age) significantly affects the labor market and economic and social systems.
3. The disparity in the rates of demographic change between Arab countries contributes to creating a development gap between rich and poor countries.
4. Inadequate or incomplete government policies are one of the main factors that increase the challenges resulting from demographic changes.

#### **Theoretical Framework:**

1. Definition of demographic change and its significance

Demographic change is defined as shifts in population structure in terms of number, age structure, sex, fertility, mortality, and migration, this change is the result of multiple factors including social, economic, and political transformations, as well as technological development and environmental changes.

Demographic change has wide-ranging impacts on societies, it is considered one of the most important indicators that affect the formulation of population and economic policies, a change in age structure, for example, leads to drastic changes in the labor market, increasing the proportion of youth can represent an opportunity to boost productivity and economic growth if properly invested. In contrast, the increasing proportion of older persons is an economic and social challenge that requires the provision of adequate health and social care services.

In addition, migration rates affect the population distribution between urban and rural areas, this brings about changes in the population structure and creates challenges related to the equitable distribution of resources and services, on the other hand, demographic change can provide opportunities for the development of societies, such as increasing the proportion of young people who are able to contribute to the labor market, and stimulating innovation and economic development if it is well exploited.

The importance of studying demographic change is evident in Arab societies that witness great variation in population growth rates and age structure between countries.

Understanding these changes helps to develop effective population and development policies that contribute to achieving sustainable development and reducing the negative effects of these transformations [2].

#### **Historical Overview**

During the past decades, Arab countries have witnessed major demographic transformations influenced by social, economic, and political conditions. These changes

can be traced across different time phases to understand how the current demographic reality is forming in the region [3].

a. **Fifties and Sixties:**

With the end of colonialism in many Arab countries, the region witnessed an increase in population growth rates due to improved health services and reduced mortality rates, especially among children. This phase was associated with high fertility rates, which led to a rapid increase in the population.

b. **Seventies and Eighties:**

This period was characterized by a population boom in the Arab countries as a result of the continued high birth rates, and the beginning of improvement in economic conditions in some countries thanks to oil revenues, however, a demographic gap is emerging between the oil-rich states and other countries with limited resources, this has led to an increase in internal and external migration in search of better job opportunities.

c. **The Nineties:**

During this period, population growth rates began to slow in some countries due to gradual improvement in education levels, especially among women, and increased awareness of the importance of family planning, however, demographic challenges continued to emerge, such as increased urbanization and population movement from rural areas to cities, leading to pressures on infrastructure and public services [4].

d. **The New Millennium (2000-2024):**

This stage was characterized by greater changes in the age structure of the population. In some countries, such as the Gulf states, the proportion of expatriate workers has increased significantly, changing the demographic fabric, in contrast, other countries, such as Egypt and Yemen, faced challenges related to increasing the number of youths compared to fewer job opportunities, which led to the phenomenon of "youth unemployment" [5].

e. **Current Period:**

As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, Arab societies are facing new challenges such as the aging of populations in some countries, such as Lebanon and Tunisia, while other countries continue to face rapid population increases, add to this the effects of political crises and armed conflicts that have caused mass migrations and forced demographic changes.

**Influencing Factors**

Demographic change is the result of the interaction of several basic factors that significantly affect the demographic composition of Arab societies, including: [6]

a. **Immigration:**

Migration is one of the most important factors contributing to demographic changes in the Arab region, many Arab countries have witnessed an increase in internal and external migration rates as a result of economic, political, and war changes, for example, the migration of Arab labor to the Arab Gulf states has contributed to changing the demographics of countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Meanwhile, the conflicts and wars witnessed by some Arab countries have led to waves of forced migration from areas such as Syria and Iraq, which had a significant impact on the demographics of the host countries.

b. **Fertility:**

Fertility rates are one of the main factors affecting population growth, some Arab countries have witnessed a significant decline in fertility rates as a result of improved education, especially among women, and changing social patterns, however, some countries still experience high fertility rates, which contributes to accelerating population growth [7].

c. **Deaths:**

Most Arab countries are witnessing a significant improvement in life rates as a result of developments in health care, this has led to lower mortality rates, especially among

children. This improvement in health care has led to an increase in population as deaths decline, however, some countries still face challenges in providing health care in remote areas.

d. **Population Policy:**

Population policies adopted by governments in Arab societies significantly affect population growth, for example, policies to stimulate reproduction or encourage internal and external migration contribute to changing the population structure, some countries have adopted strict population policies to reduce population growth, while others have adopted policies that encourage population expansion to support economic growth [8].

**Socio-Economic Impact**

Demographic changes significantly affect the social and economic aspects of Arab societies, and these effects range from challenges to opportunities: [9]

a. **Challenges:**

1) **Unemployment:**

The growing number of young people, especially in countries such as Egypt and Yemen, is one of the biggest challenges facing Arab societies, high population growth leads to an increase in the number of job seekers, raising unemployment rates and putting significant pressure on the labor market.

Although migration may be an opportunity for some, mass displacement due to conflict or the search for better opportunities can lead to social problems in host countries, increased migration may drain efficiencies in some countries and put pressure on resources in others.

b. **Opportunities:**

1) **Increase Youth Employment:**

A high percentage of young people is a great opportunity if these energies are properly invested, this young workforce can be a key driver of economic growth if education, training, and employment opportunities are provided, this can help boost sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and services, boosting the national economy [10].

2) **Stimulating Innovation:**

Young people can contribute significantly to innovation and technological development. This age group may be more willing to embrace new technologies and creativity in areas such as entrepreneurship.

**Development Opportunities**

The demographic changes taking place in Arab societies offer great opportunities for development if effectively exploited. Among the most prominent of these opportunities are:

a. **Promote Investment in Education:**

Investing in education is one of the most important means of transforming demographic changes into real opportunities for development, by improving the quality of education and ensuring that it reaches all age groups, the skills and knowledge of younger generations can be enhanced. Focus on vocational and technical education, in addition to technology and innovation, it equips young people for a changing labor market [11], and increases their competitiveness in the global economy, investing in education contributes to enhancing the social and economic awareness of individuals, this helps reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. Education is also a key factor in women's empowerment, enhancing their participation in the labour market and increasing opportunities for economic growth [12].

b. **Increase Employment:**

Demographic changes can be a catalyst for new job creation if properly planned, a large proportion of the population in the younger age group can be a driver of economic growth by employing this workforce in productive sectors such as industry, technology, and services [13].

To spur increased employment, governments and businesses can adopt policies that support entrepreneurship and encourage SMEs to grow, investment in infrastructure and rural development can create new jobs and reduce unemployment, especially in densely populated areas, foreign investment can play a big role in job creation, especially if it is directed towards labor-intensive sectors, these opportunities can have a long-term positive impact on economic growth and social stability [14].

#### The Impact of Demographic Changes on Social Justice

Demographic changes play a pivotal role in shaping social justice in societies, changes in demographic composition affect the distribution of resources and services, leading in some cases to social and economic gaps [15], for example, in countries with a rapidly growing youth population, pressure on education systems and the labor market may increase, this contributes to reinforcing disparities between social groups if the needs of these groups are not adequately planned [16].

On the other hand, countries facing aging populations, such as Lebanon and Tunisia, may see rising health and social care costs, this weakens the ability to achieve equity in the distribution of resources between different generations, in addition, migration plays a major role in creating disparities between rural and urban areas [17], rural areas suffer from a lack of resources as people move to cities in search of better jobs and services, studies show that demographic changes are not just a statistical phenomenon, but a fundamental factor affecting the balance and stability of society, achieving social justice in these transformations requires comprehensive policies that focus on reducing economic and social inequalities and promoting equal opportunities for all population groups [18].

## 2. Materials and Methods

### Practical Framework:

#### First: Research Methodology

An integrated methodology has been adopted to study and analyze demographic changes in Arab societies, through the use of two main approaches:

##### a. Descriptive and Analytical Approach:

It is used to analyze population and statistical data related to demographic changes in the Arab countries, with a comprehensive description of the influencing factors, such as fertility rates, mortality, and migration, this approach relies on collecting and analyzing data from diverse sources to understand the relationships between demographic variables and their impact on social and economic development.

##### b. Comparative Approach:

Used to compare the impact of demographic changes between different Arab countries. Emphasis is placed on analyzing the differences between countries with high population growth rates (such as Egypt and Iraq) and countries with low population growth rates (such as Lebanon and Tunisia), to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by each country.

#### Second: Research Tools

##### 1. Raw data:

It was collected using questionnaires that included closed and open questions directed to a sample of the population representing different age and geographical groups in the countries studied, in addition to interviews with experts and specialists in the fields of demography and population policies.

##### 2. Secondary data:

It relied on published statistical reports from international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and regional organizations such as the League of Arab States. Previous academic studies on demographic changes in the region were also analyzed.



### Third: Study Design

The design of the study represents the main pillar on which scientific research is based, as it determines the general framework through which data is collected, analyzed, and conclusions are reached that serve the objectives of the research, in this study, the research is carefully designed to explore and analyze demographic changes in Arab societies and their effects on socio-economic aspects. This section describes the main elements of the study design.

#### Type of Study

The descriptive and analytical study was chosen to be the general framework for this research, as the descriptive approach aims to describe and analyze the demographic phenomenon in all its aspects, analysis allows to explain the relationships between different variables, such as fertility rates, migration and the labor market, the comparative approach was integrated to analyze differences between Arab countries and examine how cultural, economic, and political factors affect demographic changes.

#### Study Design Objectives

The design of the study aims to achieve the following:

1. Analyze factors affecting demographic changes: such as fertility rates, migration, mortality, and population policies.
2. Explore the impact of these changes on social and economic development: such as the labor market, education, health services, and the economy.
3. Comparison between Arab countries: to understand the diversity of demographic changes and their impacts.
4. Provide evidence-based recommendations: to enable communities to deal with these transformations effectively.

#### Study Sample

##### a. Sample Type

A representative stratified sample was adopted to ensure the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the results. This method aims to represent different population groups according to the following variables:

1. Age groups: (youth 15-24 years, adults 25-59 years, and seniors 60 years and above)
2. Gender: taking into account the equal distribution between males and females.
3. Geographical location: (urban, rural, and remote areas)

##### b. Sample Size

1000 participants were selected spread across five Arab countries (200 participants from each country). Participants were distributed by age, nationality and geography to ensure fair representation at Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample Size**

Country	Youth (15-24 years)	Adults (25-59 years)	Seniors (60 years and above)	Total
Saudi Arabia	80	100	20	200
Egypt	90	90	20	200
Iraq	85	95	20	200
Tunisia	70	100	30	200
Lebanon	60	100	40	200
Total	385	485	130	1000

#### Fourth: Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools play an essential role in achieving research objectives and understanding demographic changes in Arab societies, these tools are carefully designed to ensure accurate and comprehensive data collection that enhances the credibility of the results and supports quantitative and qualitative analysis, key research tools included targeted questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of secondary data sources.

#### Questionnaires

##### Questionnaire Design

A comprehensive questionnaire was prepared to collect quantitative data on demographic factors, population distribution, and the impact of these factors on socioeconomic domains. The questionnaire contains two types of questions:

Closed questions: designed to provide specific and statistically easy answers, such as:

1. Number of family members.
2. Level of education.
3. Number of children in the family.
4. Current profession.
5. Place of residence (urban/rural).

Open-ended questions: designed to gain more in-depth insights on issues such as:

1. Participants' opinion on the impact of population changes on public services.
2. Suggestions for improving population policies.
3. Problems they face as a result of demographic changes.

##### Distribution of Questionnaires

The questionnaires were distributed to a representative sample of the population in five Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon).

Several methods were used to distribute the questionnaires:

1. Traditional methods: such as paper distribution in population centers.
2. Electronic methods: Surveys were sent online using platforms such as Google Forms to reach hard-to-reach areas in the field.

##### Advantages of Using Questionnaires

1. Provide quantitative data that can be easily analyzed using statistical software.
2. Access to a large number of participants in a short time.
3. Reduce personal bias due to the standardized nature of the questions.

Sample closed and open questions in the questionnaire Table 2.

**Table 2.** The questionnaire Type

Q. Number	Question	Question Type
1	How many family members do you have?	Closed
2	What is the highest level of education you got?	Closed
3	What do you think of the health services available in your area?	Open
4	How have demographic changes affected your job opportunities?	Open

## 2. Personal Interviews

### Objectives of Interviews

Interviews were conducted to collect more in-depth qualitative data on demographic changes and their impacts, focusing on the perspectives of experts and the population on the topic. The interviews targeted:

1. Officials and decision-makers: to gain insight into the population policies adopted and their impact.
2. Communities: to learn how population changes have affected their daily lives.

### Design Interview Questions

The questions are designed in a flexible way that allows participants to express their opinions freely. Examples of questions:

What are the main challenges your area faces as a result of demographic changes?

How do you assess current government policies on population growth?

What solutions do you propose to address the challenges of demographic change?

### Type of Interviews

1. One-on-one interviews: conducted with officials and experts to provide deeper insights.
2. Focus Groups: Conducted with groups of residents to gain a thorough understanding of the impacts on their daily lives.

### Recording and Analyzing Interviews

1. All interviews were recorded after obtaining the consent of the participants.
2. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify key patterns and issues.

### Fifth: Data Analysis

#### 1. Fertility Rate Analysis

Fertility rates in the five Arab countries surveyed (Table 3) were analyzed to determine the relationship between fertility and its impact on population structure and the labor market, countries with high fertility rates, such as Iraq and Egypt, have been found to face significant challenges in providing basic services and employment opportunities, countries with low fertility rates, such as Tunisia and Lebanon, face ageing challenges.

**Table 3.** Fertility Rate Analysis

Country	Fertility rate
Saudi Arabia	2.3
Egypt	3.4
Iraq	4.1
Tunisia	2.1
Lebanon	1.9

### Analysis of Immigration and Unemployment Rates

The data showed at Table 4 that countries with negative migration rates (population displacement) suffer from high unemployment rates, such as Lebanon and Iraq, on the other hand, countries hosting expatriate workers, such as Saudi Arabia, are relatively stable in unemployment rates.

**Table 4.** Analysis of Immigration and Unemployment Rates

Country	Immigration rate (%)	Unemployment rate (%)
Saudi Arabia	-1.5	5.7
Egypt	-0.8	9.6

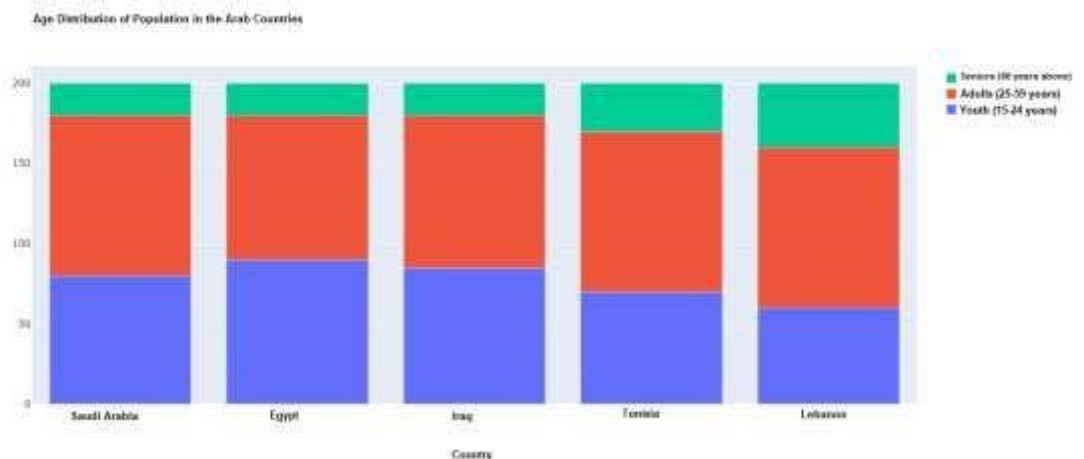


Iraq	-1.2	12.3
Tunisia	-0.5	15
Lebanon	-2	13.5

### Age Distribution of The Population

The graph at Figure 1 displays the distribution of the population in five Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon) by major age groups:

1. Youth (15-24 years): They represent the population group that depends on education and training, and constitute a potential source of future employment.
2. Adults (25-59 years): The most productive age group that actively participates in the labor market and economic activities.
3. Elderly (60 years and over): The age group that requires additional health and social services, and reflects the phenomenon of aging.



**Figure 1.** Age Distribution of The Population

### Chart Details

1. **Countries with a High Youth Rate:**
  - a. Iraq and Egypt have the highest youth ratios compared to other countries.
  - b. This percentage reflects challenges related to the provision of education, training and job opportunities to meet the needs of this group.
2. **Countries with a High Percentage of Older People:**
  - a. Lebanon and Tunisia have a large proportion of the population in the elderly category.
  - b. This refers to the phenomenon of population ageing, which requires the allocation of additional resources to health care and social services.
3. **Countries with Relative Balance:**
  - a. Saudi Arabia is characterized by a relative balance between the three age groups, this provides them with an opportunity for sustainable planning to exploit each age group in a balanced manner.

## 3. Results

### 1.1 Fertility Rates and their Impact on Demographic Change

The study showed that high fertility rates in some Arab countries lead to an increase in the proportion of young people in the population structure, this reinforces the challenges related to job creation and education. In contrast, low fertility rates in other countries lead to population ageing, this increases the challenges related to health and social care.

### 2.1 Migration Rates and their Impact on Society

The study showed that negative migration rates (displacement abroad) represent a major challenge for countries with economic and political crises such as Lebanon and

Iraq, this phenomenon leads to the depletion of human competencies and an increase in the burden on host countries. In contrast, countries like Saudi Arabia benefit from expatriate labor but face challenges in balancing locals and expatriates.

### 3.1 Age Distribution and its Impact on Resources

The study showed that the age composition of the population in the Arab countries varies greatly. In Iraq and Egypt, the proportion of young people is increasing dramatically, putting pressure on education systems and the labor market. In contrast, Tunisia and Lebanon face challenges associated with ageing populations, increasing the need for healthcare services.

## 4. Discussion

### a. Development Challenges Associated with Demographic Change:

#### 1) In countries with high fertility rates:

These countries face significant challenges in providing basic services such as education, health, and employment opportunities, for example, Iraq and Egypt need sustainable development plans to employ youth and reduce unemployment.

#### 2) In countries with low fertility rates:

Countries such as Lebanon and Tunisia are facing increasing pressure on health and social care systems due to the rising proportion of older people.

### b. Migration and its Impact on Demographic Change:

**Negative Migration:** leads to the depletion of human competencies, which exacerbates economic and social problems in countries of origin such as Lebanon and Iraq.

**Positive Migration:** It provides economic opportunities for receiving countries, such as Saudi Arabia, but poses social challenges related to integration.

### c. Demographics Investment Opportunities:

Countries with a high youth population have a golden opportunity to boost economic growth if investment is made in education and employment, countries facing ageing populations need reforms in social and economic welfare policies.

### Conclusions based on Results

1. Highly fertile countries: should focus on improving the quality of education and providing employment opportunities for young people to make the most of population energy.
2. Low-fertility countries: They should invest in health and social care systems to support older persons and mitigate the negative effects of population ageing.
3. Migration: Balanced policies should be developed that reduce displacement and support the utilization of human resources.

### Seventh: Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, a set of recommendations were developed that aim to achieve sustainable development and effectively manage demographic changes in Arab societies:

#### 1. Improve Population Planning and Development

- a. Develop comprehensive national population growth management plans that take into account fertility rates, migration and population age structure.
- b. Promote community awareness of the importance of family planning through educational and health programs

#### 2. Invest in Education and Training.

- a. Directing investments towards basic and vocational education to enhance the skills of young people and qualify them for the labor market.
- b. Establish training centers focused on modern skills such as technology and entrepreneurship.

3. Labor Support
  - a. Creating job opportunities for young people by supporting small and medium enterprises.
  - b. Attracting foreign investments that generate jobs in the productive sectors.
4. Coping with an Aging Population
  - a. Establishment of support programs for older persons, including health and social care.
  - b. Review pension systems to match demographic changes.
5. Organizing and Benefiting from Migration
  - a. Develop policies that manage migration in a balanced manner to maximize economic and social benefits.
  - b. Provide incentives to attract skilled migrants to return to their countries of origin.

## 5. Conclusion

Arab countries are witnessing major demographic shifts that are both a challenge and an opportunity, the study showed that fertility rates, migration and the age composition of the population play a key role in shaping the future of Arab societies, while some countries face challenges such as an increase in youth and a lack of job opportunities, others are experiencing aging populations and pressures on health care systems.

Demographic changes impose on Arab countries the need to adopt effective policies for the management of population resources in order to achieve a balance between development needs and population requirements, investing in education, improving infrastructure, and regulating migration are some of the steps that can contribute to turning challenges into opportunities for advancement.

In conclusion, the study confirms that population changes are not just statistical figures, but a fundamental driver that affects all aspects of economic and social life, with proper planning and sustainable strategies, Arab countries can turn these changes into a driving force towards a more stable and prosperous future.

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