



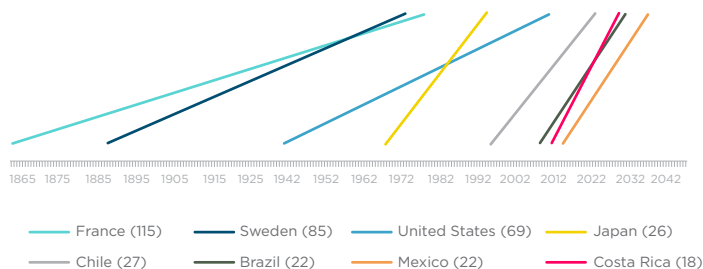
Latin America and the Caribbean is Aging

Latin America and the Caribbean is aging at an accelerated pace. According to data from the United Nations, 11 percent of the region's population is over 60 years old.

This level is close to the level of those over 60 among the world population (12 percent) and substantially lower than the percentages observed in Europe, North America, East Asia, and Oceania (24, 21, 17, and 16 percent, respectively). However, the population of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is aging at an unprecedented rate. In 2030, the population over 60 years old will represent 17 percent of the total population (United Nations 2017), and it is estimated that by 2050, within only 35 years, one in every four inhabitants of LAC will be over 60 years old. Europe took 65 years to experience a similar increase and, according to forecasts, it will take North America around 75 years to reach those levels.

The following graph represents a way to visualize the speed of aging in different countries: the lower horizontal axis shows the year in which the population age 65 and over represents 7 percent of the population, while the upper axis shows the year in which that population reaches 14 percent of the total; the steeper the line joining these two points, the quicker the transition between the two situations. As can be seen, the aging process in LAC is expected to be considerably faster than in Europe or the United States.

Years Required for the Population Age 65 and Over to Go from 7 to 14 Percent of the Total Population



Source: Prepared by the authors based on Kinsella and Gist (1995) and the U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base.

In 2050, the proportion of adults over 60 in LAC will be similar to that observed today in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, and other European countries.

However, regional data hide strong heterogeneity. On the one hand, countries such as Belize, Bolivia, Guatemala, Guyana, and Haiti will be like China today, with around 15 percent of the population over 60 years old. On the other hand, The Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay may be comparable to Germany, Finland and even Japan, with a proportion of older adults close to 30 percent.

The increase in life expectancy (both absolute and conditioned upon reaching old age) results in not only an **increase in the proportion of the older adult population in the total, but also in a prolongation of old age**, which is reflected in more older elderly persons among the elderly population. Thus, by 2030 it is estimated that those over 80 years old will represent 15 percent of the total number of older adults in LAC. **By the year 2050, this figure is projected to reach 26 percent**, more than double the current 11 percent. In countries like Chile, the proportion of people over 80 years old among the older adult population will even exceed 30 percent in the next 30 years.

This process imposes unprecedented pressures on the field of long-term care services. The pressure is

even greater if one considers that the increase in the demand for support services to enable the elderly to carry out activities of the daily living (ADLs) is occurring in a context of reductions in the informal provision of those services due to the greater participation of women in the labor market and the decline in the size of families.

In this context, the governments of the region must prepare themselves to face future pressures to support long-term care in order to alleviate social exclusion in old age.

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