

Demographic Transition in Latin America: Pace and Trends

Claudia Avila-Schmalko*, Catalina Torres and Vladimir Canudas-Romo

Abstract

The demographic transition in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has unfolded at an accelerated pace, with countries experiencing sharp declines in fertility and significant improvements in survival over relatively short periods. While convergence in demographic levels across the region has been documented, less attention has been paid to the speed and direction of change over time. This study examines the pace of demographic change in LAC from 1950 to 2025. Using data from the United Nations World Population Prospects 2024 revision, we analyze trends in five key indicators: total fertility rate, life expectancy at birth, population growth, old-age dependency ratio, and mean age of the population. We calculate annualized rates of change and compare their average velocities across three equal-length periods: 1950–1975, 1975–2000, and 2000–2025. Our results reveal a deceleration and convergence in life expectancy gains, persistent heterogeneity in the pace of total fertility rate reductions and an acceleration in trends associated with population aging. These findings highlight the uneven and multidimensional nature of demographic change in LAC and provide a comparative basis for understanding transition patterns in this Global South region, going beyond absolute changes in key indicators.

* Corresponding author

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