



Demographics

Impact of the Demographics and Health scenario on Africa's population structure

Jakkie Cilliers

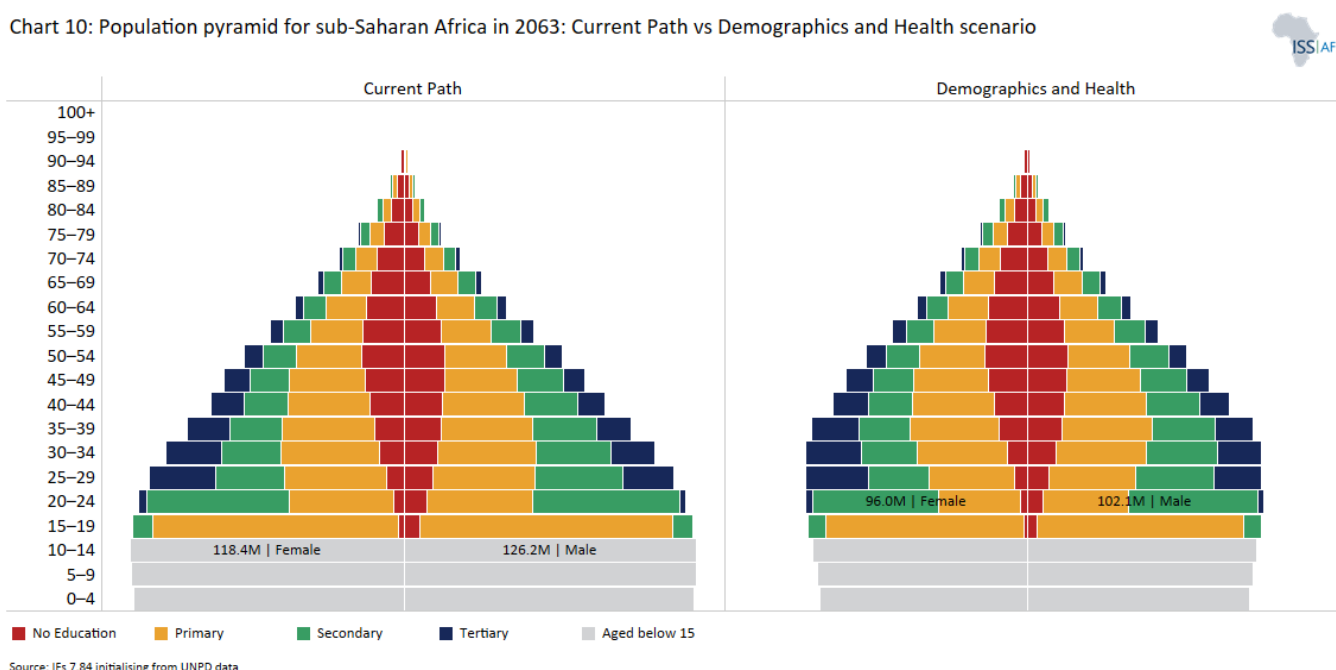
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Because North Africa is much further along in the demographic transition, it benefits little from the Demographics and Health scenario. Chart 10, therefore, shows the effects of the Demographics and Health scenarios on the population structure and education outcomes for sub-Saharan Africa by 2063 compared to the Current Path forecast. In the Demographics and Health scenario, sub-Saharan Africa gets to the 1.7:1 ratio of working age Africans to dependants in 2043 and exits in 2095, about the same period as it spends in this favourable window in the Current Path forecast. The Demographics and Health scenario also advances the onset of sub-Saharan Africa's peak demographic dividend by nine years (from 2077 to 2068) and increases the ratio of working-age persons to dependants from 2.0:1 to 2.2:1. The dates and ratios for Africa are quite similar. The continent will therefore enter the demographic window of opportunity in 2043 (instead of in 2051) and peak at 2.1:1 in 2067 (instead of 2:1 in 2074).

In the Demographics and Health scenario, Africa has a more mature population structure, with a distinctive bulge along the midriff, compared with the more youthful structure seen in the Current Path forecast.

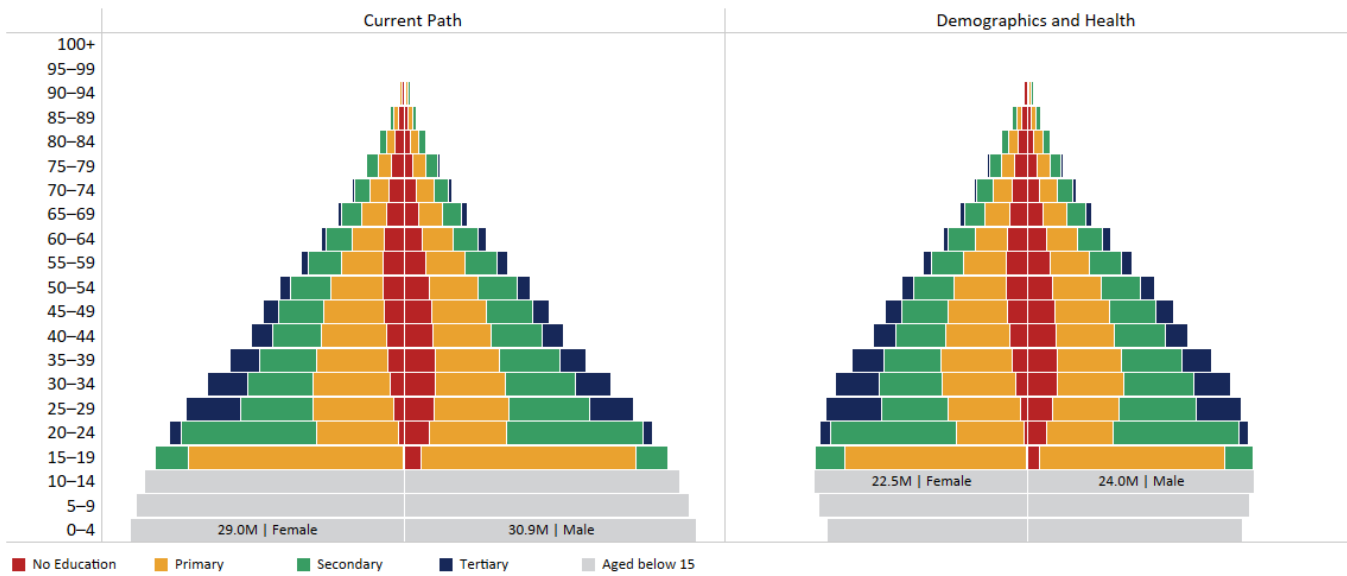
Chart 10: Population pyramid for sub-Saharan Africa in 2063: Current Path vs Demographics and Health scenario



By 2043, more Africans (as a per cent of totals) will be enrolling and completing all levels of education since more funds will be available to spend on the smaller number of students. Mean years of education will increase, particularly for the younger cohorts and education quality will also improve given the larger pots of money now available for fewer students. All these effects are due to the impact of reduced fertility and better health and not the result of additional budget allocations. The result over time is a more productive labour force, more rapid economic growth and higher standards of living.

The population pyramids for Nigeria (Chart 11), Africa's most populous country, show a similar trend. The beginnings of a population transition emerge as Nigeria begins to move from the less-developed pyramid shape to the more oval shape of a more developed demography by 2063.

Chart 11: Population pyramid for Nigeria in 2063: Current Path vs Demographics and Health scenario



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About the authors

Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees, head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the Institute, and is an extraordinary professor at the University of Pretoria. His 2017 best-seller *Fate of the Nation* addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, *Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution* (March 2020), *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (April 2021), and *Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity* (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

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Scenarios and forecasting can help Africa identify and respond to opportunities and threats. The work of the African Futures & Innovation (AFI) program at the Institute for Security Studies aims to understand and address a widening gap between indices of wellbeing in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The AFI helps stakeholders understand likely future developments. Research findings and their policy implications are widely disseminated, often in collaboration with in-country partners. Forecasting tools inspire debate and provide insights into possible trajectories that inform planning, prioritisation and effective resource allocation. Africa's future depends on today's choices and actions by governments and their non-governmental and international partners. The AFI provides empirical data that informs short- and medium-term decisions with long-term implications. The AFI enhances Africa's capacity to prepare for and respond to future challenges. The program is headed by Dr Jakkie Cilliers.