



Rhodes MRC 2026 High School Edition

Study Guide

For

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**Topic Area: “The Silver Dividend: Balancing Work and Social Protection in an
Ageing Society”**

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1. Welcoming Letter

Distinguished Ministers,

It is with great joy and heartfelt excitement that we welcome you to the Rhodes Model Regional Cooperation High School Edition 2026. It is both an honour and a privilege to have you join us in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. As your board, we are thrilled to meet you and guide you through this experience. OECD is an Intermediate Committee, which means that most of you probably know what to expect; in any case, you don't have to worry since we are here to support you every step of the way and to ensure that you feel comfortable and confident in our committee.

This year, the committee will be focusing on "The Silver Dividend: Balancing Work and Social Protection in an Ageing Society." We have prepared this document to act as a guide for your preparation for the conference. The study guide was prepared to give you a deeper understanding of the issue at hand and help you research the topic meticulously. During the conference, you will need to step into the shoes of OECD leaders and embody both the spirit and the skills of the Ministers.

We strongly encourage you to read thoroughly through both the Rules of Procedure and this Study Guide to be able to understand and thrive in the Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions. We are looking forward to seeing you in Rhodes for an unforgettable experience.

Kind regards,

Aggelika Chatzigeorgiou, Chairperson

Alexandros Georgallis, Secretary General

2. Introduction to the Committee

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization where member states collaborate to develop and promote policymaking so that the economies can improve. It was founded in 1961 and its headquarters are housed in Paris. The Organization consists of 38 member states, primarily from Europe and the Americas. Additionally, the OECD maintains close institutional relations with the European Union, which holds a unique status allowing full participation in its work, while major global players such as China, India, and South Africa are formally designated as Key Partners.¹ The purpose of the OECD is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The Ministerial Council Meeting meets once a year and the ministers have the chance to share data and information and eventually come up with common solutions to major global challenges.²

Concerning its work, the OECD does not pass legally binding documents. Instead, its sessions focus on research, dialogue, and policy recommendations, which cover a wide range of areas,



such as taxation, education, employment, trade, digitalization, and environmental sustainability. Its mandate is derived from the founding Convention on the Organisation and mainly from the first two articles. Specifically, Article 1 clearly states that the OECD's

purpose is to promote policies that achieve sustainable economic growth and employment, promote financial stability, and foster world trade expansion on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis. However, Article 2 mentions the committee's key functions, including economic policy coordination, trade facilitation, and regulatory cooperation. Furthermore, the Organization's mainly advisory mandate is regularly expanded via decisions and recommendations made by the main decision-making organ, the Council of the OECD.³

¹ OECD, "Our History," OECD, n.d., <https://www.oecd.org/ageingen/about/history.html>.

² OECD, "The OECD: Better Policies for Better Lives," OECD, n.d., <https://www.oecd.org/en/about.html>.

³ OECD, "How We Work," OECD, n.d., <https://www.oecd.org/e,n/about/how-we-work.html>.

The advisory nature of the OECD means that its primary output is the Recommendation. Delegates must understand the structural reality of this mandate, since OECD Recommendations require unanimity, any single member-state can block a proposal to protect its national interests. Additionally, since these documents are soft law products, meaning they are non-legally binding, their power relies on peer pressure, economic benchmarking, and political credibility. Thus, the goal of the committee is not to pass a vague text, but to negotiate a meaningful policy framework that all economies involved can support.

3. Introduction to the Topic Area

Developed nations are undergoing a demographic crisis unprecedented in their history. The dramatic drop in fertility levels alongside increased longevity has drastically altered the old-age dependency ratios in the OECD. It is creating an immediate fiscal crisis in which the pension systems will collapse, the healthcare infrastructure will become unmanageable, and there will be labor shortages limiting GDP growth in the future.

While the theory of 'Silver Dividend' postulates the ability of elderly populations to generate economic gains due to extended work life, accumulation of organizational



knowledge, and special consumption needs, its practical implementation is a highly debatable issue. The government finds itself caught in a zero-sum dilemma in which increasing the retirement age leads to huge protests, and keeping the current policy creates a danger of financial instability.⁴

⁴ Donghyun Park and Kwanho Shin, "Global Population Is Aging but a Silver Dividend May Be the Silver Lining – Suara SEACEN," Seacen.org, April 21, 2026, <https://suara.seacen.org/global-population-is-aging-but-a-silver-dividend-may-be-the-silver-lining/>.

In this year's Rhodes MRC HSED, the ministers of the committee of the OECD are called to explore ways member-states can respond to this phenomenon while being inclusive and sustainable economically. More specifically, ministers will address issues such as striking a beneficial balance to maintain the sustainability of pension systems, encouraging older adults to participate in the workforce, and ensuring fairness in labour across generations. Of course, ministers shall address how they can achieve international cooperation and come up with policies to strengthen the OECD economies while maintaining social welfare.

4. Keywords and Definitions

Labour shortage: Occurs when the demand for workers exceeds the available qualified candidates, making it harder for employers to fill job vacancies.⁵

Active labour market policies (ALMPs): Government interventions designed to help unemployed people to enter the working industry to improve their skills or maintain employment. In the context of ageing, ALMPs focus heavily on mid-career reskilling, digital literacy for older cohorts, and hiring subsidies for workers aged 55+, moving away from mere unemployment support.⁶

Population ageing: The increase in population which results in a higher number of older people and a lower number of young adults.⁷

Silver dividend: The potential economic growth and benefits incoming by an ageing society, driven by healthier and older people staying in the working industry longer.⁸

Semi-dense areas: Intermediate settlements that are between urban and rural areas, roughly containing 5,000 citizens.⁹

⁵ "LMI Insights Report No. 3, What's in a Name? Labour Shortages, Skills Shortages, and Skills Mismatches," LMIC-CIMT, October 2018, <https://lmi-cimt.ca/publications-all/lmi-insights-report-no-3-whats-in-a-name-labour-shortages-skills-shortages-and-skills-mismatches/>.

⁶ "What Works? Active Labour Market Policies as Pathways to Decent Work," International Labour Organization, September 3, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/what-works-active-labour-market-policies-and-their-joint-provision>.

⁷ "What Is Population Ageing?," HelpAge International, 2022, <https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/society-for-all-ages/population-ageing/>.

⁸ Donghyun Park and Kwanho Shin, "Population Aging, Silver Dividend, and Economic Growth," ADB, March 2023, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/864241/ewp-678-population-aging-silver-dividend-economic-growth.pdf>.

⁹ Lewis Dijkstra et al., "How Do We Define Cities, Towns, and Rural Areas?," World Bank Blogs, March 10, 2020, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/sustainablecities/how-do-we-define-cities-towns-and-rural-areas>.

Demographic shifts: Significant, long-term changes in population structure, which include age, gender and geographic distribution, driven by altered birth rates, deaths and migration.¹⁰

Nuclear family: A household containing two parents and their children, all living under one residence.¹¹

The Lump of Labour fallacy: Argues that work is not a fixed amount. It evolves around the idea that new workers or even technology (e.g. AI) permanently “steal” jobs.¹²

Passive Social Protection: Government or institutional interventions that provide financial support to people during economic struggle, illness or old age without directly forcing them into training or employment.¹³

LRT: Longevity Readiness Tool

HR: Higher Rank

5. Legal Framework

OECD Recommendation of the Council on Ageing and Employment Policies (2015)

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Ageing and Employment Policies was adopted on December 14, 2015. It simply urges member states to promote longer working lives while maintaining the quality of life in order to combat the phenomenon of population ageing. Some of the key aspects of the Recommendation include the enhancement of incentives to work longer, boost employability and improve working conditions (e.g. promoting lifelong learning).¹⁴

¹⁰ “Demographic Shifts in Project Management: Definition, Causes & Solutions,” QRP International, June 9, 2022, <https://www.qrpinternational.be/blog/project-management/demographic-shifts-in-project-management-definition-causes-and-solutions/>.

¹¹ Cambridge Dictionary, “NUCLEAR FAMILY | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary,” Cambridge.org, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nuclear-family>.

¹² Julia Kagan, “Lump of Labor Fallacy,” Investopedia, September 24, 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/l/lump-of-labour-fallacy.asp>.

¹³ “Types of Social Protection,” GSDRC, n.d., <https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/social-protection/types-of-social-protection/>.

¹⁴ OECD, “Recommendation of the Council on OECD Legal Instruments Ageing and Employment Policies 8,” December 14, 2015, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/333/333.en.pdf>.

OECD Strategy: Live Longer, Work Longer

The key change in policy that explicitly debunked the ‘Lump of Labor’ fallacy in all member countries. The principle laid down that employing older people in the workforce will not take away employment opportunities from young people. This is the starting point for all current policy changes in the OECD, signifying the beginning of a move from early retirement to long-term economic activation.¹⁵

ILO Convention No. 111 on Employment Discrimination

The ILO Convention No.111 signed in 1958, is one of the most fundamental international labour treaties that requires its signatories to eliminate discrimination in employment. Discrimination is defined as any kind of exclusion, preference or distinction based on sex, race, age, religion, political opinion, nationality or even social origin, thus giving citizens equal employment opportunities.¹⁶

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 23 & 25)

Articles 23 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights mention and establish protections regarding the right to safe work, equal pay and joint trade unions for everyone. Furthermore, it is guaranteed that everyone has the right to adequate living conditions (meaning food, healthcare and medical care); it also ensures state provision in periods of unemployment, serious sickness or even old age. These two articles are fundamental to ensure that everyone has the financial and physical means to live with dignity.¹⁷

¹⁵ OECD, *Ageing and Employment Policies Live Longer, Work Longer* (OECD Publishing, 2006).

¹⁶ Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, June 25, 1958, 362 U.N.T.S. 31 (entered into force June 15, 1960).

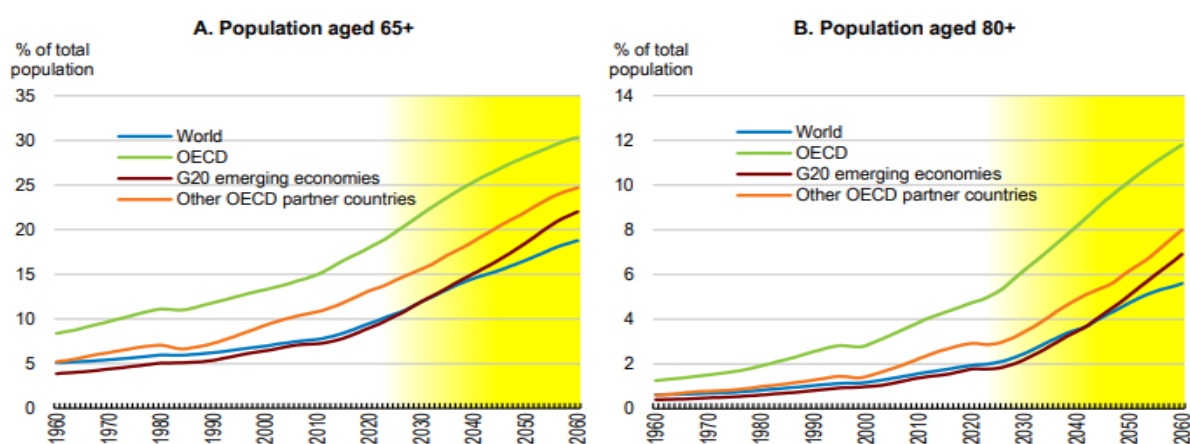
¹⁷ United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” United Nations, December 10, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

6. Main Discussion of the Topic

6.1. Demographic Shifts and Population Patterns in OECD Economies

6.1.1 Fiscal and Social Pressures Arising from Accelerated Population Ageing in OECD countries

Population ageing is a great macroeconomic shift within the OECD. At present, the older population (aged 65+) is estimated at 18% of the overall population, a number that is expected to rise to 30% by the year 2060.¹⁸ The accelerated population shrinkage is responsible for increased government expenditure on pensions, long-term care, and healthcare facilities.



The global population is going through a big demographic change whereby there is a fast-growing rate of ageing citizens. Whereas the advanced economies of the OECD have traditionally been leaders in this demographic trend, the problem is becoming increasingly widespread. The constant increase in the number of years that people can live, along with the structural dependency ratio, is posing risks to the shrinking tax base. Thus, even developing economies are approaching their respective inflection points, where they are experiencing an increase in the number of elderly people without having any financial reserves to cope with the public burden.¹⁹

¹⁸ Vassiliki Koutsogeorgopoulou and Hermes Morgavi, "Ageing Populations, Their Fiscal Implications and Policy Responses," *OECD*, October 21, 2025, [Ageing populations, their fiscal implications and policy responses | OECD Economics Department Working Papers](#).

¹⁹ Vassiliki Koutsogeorgopoulou and Hermes Morgavi, "Ageing Populations, Their Fiscal Implications and Policy Responses," 2025, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/10/ageing-populations-their-fiscal-implications-and-policy-responses_be4bd619/6aec03b3-en.pdf.

6.1.2 Declining Fertility Rates and Their Contribution to Population Ageing and Youth Infrastructure Reduction

The driver of accelerated demographic ageing is the prolonged collapse of fertility rates across the OECD, dropping from an average of 3.3 children per woman in the 1960s to a contemporary low of 1.5, significantly below the net replacement rate of 2.1. This permanent contraction of younger cohorts triggers an immediate structural mismatch in public resource allocation.²⁰

As school enrolments face a steady decline, local authorities are increasingly forced to downsize youth infrastructure, converting traditional neighbourhood schools and childcare facilities into day care centres and assisted living facilities for senior citizens.²¹ This systemic decay of youth infrastructure signals a broader, zero-sum fiscal challenge: the shrinking tax base of young, active workers is increasingly insufficient to fund the swelling public liabilities of pension and healthcare services, causing states to divert funds away from future economic innovation to cover immediate age-related welfare costs.²² Thus, budget constraints arise at the state level, forcing necessary expenditures on future innovation to be used instead for supporting pension and elderly health care systems.²³

6.1.3 Urbanisation Trends, Regional Ageing Disparities, and Their Socioeconomic and Political Implications

Divergence of demographic trends is even more pronounced in terms of changes in urbanization trends within the OECD countries. During the period between 2000 and 2020, urban population increased by 24%, while towns and semi-urban regions grew by only 8% and rural regions grew by 6%. It is expected that cities will grow by 5% more by 2030, while

²⁰ "The Challenges of Population Ageing: Women, Work and the Population Puzzle," OECD, 2025, [Women, work and the population puzzle Gender-sensitive responses to demographic change](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/reports/2025/05/shrinking-smartly-and-sustainably_f94497c0/f91693e3-en.pdf).

²¹ OECD, "Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably Strategies for Action," 2025, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/05/shrinking-smartly-and-sustainably_f94497c0/f91693e3-en.pdf.

²² OECD, "A Policy Framework and Policy Recommendations to Address Demographic Change: Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably," OECD, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/shrinking-smartly-and-sustainably_f91693e3-en/full-report/a-policy-framework-and-policy-recommendations-to-address-demographic-change_9bb55cde.html.

²³ OECD, "Rapidly Ageing Populations Will Continue to Put Pressure on Pension Systems," Oecd.org, 2025, <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2025/11/rapidly-ageing-populations-will-continue-to-put-pressure-on-pension-systems.html>.

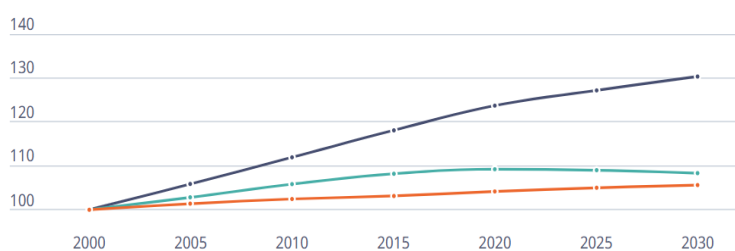
intermediate regions will increase by only 1%.²⁴ Younger generations migrating to urban areas results in rapid and extreme demographic ageing among those rural and periphery areas. This causes great stress on the healthcare systems and social security system of these sparsely populated communities due to their severe shortage of local workforce and their inability of elderly workforce to cater to community needs. On the other hand, more densely populated urban areas have younger workforce that increases economic production and is required to build the required structure to get silver dividend.

These spatial and demographic disruptions fundamentally alter social organization, urban economics, and political stability. The traditional nuclear family model is systematically

Population trend from 2000 to 2030 by degree of urbanisation

Population growth from base year 2000

-- Cities -- Towns and semi-dense areas -- Rural areas



Source: Global Human Settlement Population layer GHS-POP R2023A (Schiavina et al., 2023)

declining, replaced by a rise in single-parent and reconstituted households, smaller family units, and delayed childbearing.²⁵ These spatial and demographic disruptions fundamentally alter social organization, urban economics, and political stability.

The traditional nuclear family model is systematically declining, replaced by a rise in single-parent and reconstituted households, smaller family units, and delayed childbearing.²⁶

6.2 Economic Impact of Population Ageing and the Necessary Adaptation of the Labour Market

Impelled by life expectancy increases and government policies to increase statutory retirement ages, sustained economic activity has evolved from a personal matter into a macroeconomic necessity. Within the last few decades, the demographic aging phenomenon and low birth rate have created a situation where there is a rise in the participation rate of older employees in almost all OECD member states. Yet the labor and employment policy

²⁴ "Demographic Trends in OECD Countries: Towards a Definition of Depopulating Places: Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably," OECD, n.d., https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/shrinking-smartly-and-sustainably_f91693e3-en/full-report/demographic-trends-in-oecd-countries-towards-a-definition-of-depopulating-places_4f092035.html.

²⁵ "Modern Families," OECD, n.d., https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/modern-families_7270e633-en.html.

²⁶ OECD, "Shrinking Smartly? Urban Responses to Demographic Change," OECD, n.d., <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/directorates/centre-for-entrepreneurship-smes-regions-and-cities.html>.

regimes have been consistently outpaced by these changes and pose a great structural issue for national governments. In light of increasing numbers of elderly people while the size of the working-age population declines, there is a pressing need for member states to redesign the labour paradigm and make it more sustainable for career and workforce development.²⁷

In a realistic sense, the macroeconomic problem lies with the fast decline in the old-age dependency ratio. It should be noted that each generation of individuals over the age of 65 has been considered dependent; however, such a yardstick does not make sense anymore due to the changing dynamics of health and longevity in developed economies. On the other hand, as the ratio of retired individuals to employed people keeps increasing, the result from a financial standpoint is an unsustainable growth in the life cycle of retirement. This will create an immense financial burden for the rest of the active tax base.²⁸

If left unresolved, such a structural misalignment is bound to become an inherent threat to macroeconomic stability in OECD countries, as exemplified by low GDP growth rates, structurally constrained labour force availability, limited productive capacity, and innovation potential. Such disturbances affect manual labour-intensive industries and public service provision first. Specifically, the health and social care sector is experiencing acute shortages in terms of its labour force, thereby posing challenges in terms of providing quality, affordable public services amid the growing demands from older generations.²⁹

6.2.1 Labour Shortages and Active Labour Policies

Consequently, owing to the structural phenomenon of population aging and changing demographic composition, there are labour shortages in the OECD countries. The structural shortage is occurring due to the fact that a numerically dominant generation is approaching the age of retirement, while at the same time low fertility rates guarantee a shortage of younger generations who can take their place. This structural problem is particularly clear in

²⁷ OECD, "Ageing," OECD, n.d., <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/ageing.html>.

²⁸ OECD, "OECD Employment Outlook 2025: Navigating the Golden Years: Making the Labour Market Work for Older Workers," OECD, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-employment-outlook-2025_194a947b-en/full-report/navigating-the-golden-years-making-the-labour-market-work-for-older-workers_2bc681ed.html.

²⁹ OECD, "OECD Job Markets Remain Resilient but Population Ageing Will Cause Significant Labour Shortages and Fiscal Pressures," Oecd.org, 2025, <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2025/07/oecd-job-markets-remain-resilient-but-population-ageing-will-cause-significant-labour-shortas-and-fiscal-pressures.html>.

those members who have experienced long-term sub-replacement fertility levels, namely Germany and Italy.³⁰

The economic consequences of these labour shortages at the macro level jeopardize aggregate economic performance. Firms are experiencing structural problems with hiring due to which their production becomes limited and capital output gets affected. The labor shortage problem affects the pay structure as firms have to increase pay rates to attract fewer young workers. Although the nominal rise in pay is beneficial at the micro level, it results in increased production costs structurally, adding to unit labour costs.³¹

To address the challenges posed by the demographic situation described, the OECD recommends that policies focus on encouraging labour market participation by demographics that have traditionally not been active in the workforce, such as senior citizens, women, and people with disabilities. In particular, the emphasis is on implementing policy changes in the structure of child care and leave systems, to release women's labour force participation.³²

From a practical perspective, controlled economic migration is regularly assessed as a demographic instrument aimed at solving local labor shortages through the influx of younger foreign labor. Nevertheless, migration continues to be an extremely delicate political factor that ties into issues of national sovereignty, border policy, and internal sociopolitical opposition.³³



Therefore, the restructuring of labor markets depends upon the institution of 'active aging' strategies. Departing from the outdated 20th century model of complete retirement at 65 years of age, the OECD supports the development of policy measures designed to encourage extended economic participation. Through the use of frameworks based on lifelong learning

³⁰ United Nations, "World Population Prospects 2024," United Nations, 2024, <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

³¹ OECD, "OECD Employment Outlook 2025," OECD Employment Outlook (OECD Publishing, July 9, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1787/194a947b-en>.

³² OECD, "Employment," OECD, 2024, <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/employment.html>.

³³ OECD, "Ageing and Employment," OECD, 2026, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/en/topics/ageing-and-employment.html>.

and phased retirement programs, the OECD hopes to maintain adequate labour supply and safeguard GDP growth in longevity economies.³⁴

Additionally, the age at which workers retire and become recipients of pensions is being indexed to changes in life expectancy levels. This has been done in order to ensure that there is a constant ratio between the two phases of life.³⁵

Besides changes in the formal age criteria for retirement, well-structured active labour market programs take into account the structural flexibility of the working environment. Development of phased retirement schemes, part-time arrangements, and telecommuting creates an opportunity for the elderly generation to reduce their workload incrementally. Such measures will help to avoid abrupt withdrawal from the labour market while retaining both productivity and good health condition.³⁶

6.2.2 Skills Development and Technological Change

Despite the fact that older individuals have much institutional knowledge, experience and capability of mentoring the younger generations, their employability is threatened by fast technological development. The combination of the growth of the industry's digitalization, automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) means that the knowledge of the older generation will soon become out-of-date due to their lack of proper training to use such technologies.³⁷

In order to reduce structural age discrimination and early exit from the labour market, member countries need to engage in pre-emptive strategies through digital education and re-education programs. The problem of closing the gap in digital literacy has thus become a major concern for macroeconomic policy in all OECD countries. This entails concerted effort from both the state and private sectors in creating a continuous learning program for the adult population.³⁸

³⁴ UNITED NATIONS, "World Population Ageing 2020 Highlights | Population Division," Un.org, 2020, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/world-population-ageing-2020-highlights>.

³⁵ OECD, "Changes in Employment Rates of Older Workers: Pensions at a Glance 2025," OECD, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/11/pensions-at-a-glance-2025_76510fe4/full-report/changes-in-employment-rates-of-older-workers_b7554479.html.

³⁶ Julia Kagan, "Phased Retirement," Investopedia, April 28, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/phased-retirement.asp>.

³⁷ OECD, "Adult Skills and Work," OECD, 2024, <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/adult-skills-and-work.html>.

³⁸ Leah Abrams, Daniel Schneider, and Kristen Harknett, "New Technology, Older Workers: How Workplace Technology Is Associated with Indicators of Job Retention," *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, June 27, 2025, 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959420.2025.2523122>.

6.2.3 Productivity and the Silver Dividend

The whole concept of the silver dividend revolves around the potential economic growth that comes from longer, healthier lives that allow citizens to remain active for longer periods of time. For that reason, we choose to focus on opportunities that are usually associated with an ageing population and not view the phenomenon solely as an economic burden.³⁹

The elderly also play an important role beyond their labour force participation as important agents of economic demand via specialized consumption, investment, and wealth creation.



This changing demographic profile has fuelled the fast growth of the Silver Economy, a multifaceted market consisting of specialized pharmaceutical products, private long-term insurance policies, retirement services, and health care technology.⁴⁰

As such, the advanced vision of OECD policies aims at harnessing the positive externalities resulting from the process. This involves creating incentive targets that are geared towards private investment and commercialization in the silver economy industries, so that member nations create job opportunities and capitalize, thereby offsetting the costs resulting from declining demographics.⁴¹

6.3 Sustainability of Pension and Social Protection Systems

The structural sustainability of systems of public pensions and social protection is one of the biggest macroeconomic challenges that OECD countries face. The reason for such a vulnerability lies in the fact that historically the system was designed in the period when there was demographic stability, which was reflected in a high total fertility rate and low life

³⁹ "The Rise of the Silver Economy: Global Implications of Population Aging," IMF, July 29, 2021, <https://www.imf.org/en/videos/view/6371484331112?sort=mostrecent&page=1>.

⁴⁰ World Economic Forum, "The Future of Jobs Report 2025," World Economic Forum, January 7, 2025, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>.

⁴¹ European Commission: Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, Oxford Economics and Technopolis, "The Silver Economy - Publications Office of the EU," Publications Office of the EU, 2018, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a9efa929-3ec7-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

expectancy. Such a structure ensured a high proportion of active people contributing taxes in relation to passive ones who benefit from the system.

However, nowadays, such demographic stability does not exist anymore and causes serious problems for macroeconomic sustainability. Due to the fact that legislative structures did not evolve in accordance with the changes in longevity of the population, governments are experiencing a problem of an increasing number of people receiving pensions and healthcare over their lifetime period. Such a growth of liability comes together with the decline in birth rates and creates a serious structural imbalance.⁴²

6.3.1 Pension Systems: Public and Private Models

The common practice among the OECD economies is a hybrid system of both public and private pension systems. The public pillar of the system is usually state-run pay-as-you-go (PAYG) programs, which intend to minimize poverty in old age. At the same time, there is the occupational pillar, usually private or employer-supported plans, although it is not mandatory in every country. Lastly, there is the personal pillar, which is also voluntary; it refers to the personal savings accounts for retirement that are incentivised by tax breaks.

This combination is used so that pressure can be lifted from the taxation of workers since the ratio is significantly declining. However, it has been noted that while this system helps with the burden on the active workers, it also creates inequalities regarding the income levels.⁴³

6.3.2 Retirement Age and Healthcare Pressures

One of the most commonly discussed reforms is the retirement age reform since life expectancy and the quality of life after 60 years old have significantly changed. Some argue that raising the retirement age can lift the pressure on public finances and create room for economic growth. However, this is one of the reforms that states debate the most since it can be politically controversial. Factors that should be kept in mind are the possible public

⁴² OECD, "Changes in Employment Rates of Older Workers: Pensions at a Glance 2025," OECD, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/11/pensions-at-a-glance-2025_76510fe4/full-report/changes-in-employment-rates-of-older-workers_b7554479.html.

⁴³ OECD, "Private Pensions Series Private Pensions Systems ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS and REFORMS INSURANCE and PENSIONS «," 2001, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2001/03/private-pensions-systems_g1ghgb2a/9789264189805-en.pdf,

opposition to such reform, or the existence of unequal life expectancy rates across different socioeconomic groups, or even physically demanding professions that are age-restricted.⁴⁴

With an ageing population comes stronger demand for healthcare services. Older citizens require more frequent medical care and observation, or even long-term care services are more and more needed. This is not only putting pressure on publicly available budgets, but also gaps are created since we are already facing a serious shortage of workers; doctors and nurses become less and less available while the demand and the need for them is rising dangerously.⁴⁵ Moreover, long-term care services such as nursing homes, home-care services and individual caregivers are becoming an extremely critical issue that requires immediate attention from the states, since most of the aforementioned are usually publicly funded. In order to be able to maintain accessible healthcare systems and sustain the national economy, governments must address the situation.⁴⁶

6.4 Past Actions and Current Developments

6.4.1 Comprehensive Policy Frameworks for Active Ageing and the Integration of Older Workers into the Labour Market

The 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Ageing and Employment Policies⁴⁷ marked a structural paradigm shift in the multilateral governance of the mature workforce. Moving beyond isolated pension adjustments, this instrument institutionalized a comprehensive 3-Pillar Strategy⁴⁸ designed to systematically eliminate fiscal disincentives to prolonged economic participation.

The first pillar is concerned with changes in tax-benefit arrangements with the aim of incentivizing individuals to work for extended periods of time and making exit options at an early age nonviable. Under this pillar, it will be required that early retirement led to actuarially neutral cuts in benefits, but that delays in retiring have financial rewards associated with

⁴⁴ OECD, "Asset-Backed Pensions," OECD, 2024, <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/asset-backed-pensions.html>.

⁴⁵ World Health Organization, "Ageing and Health," World Health Organization, October 1, 2024, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>.

⁴⁶ OECD, "Health," OECD, 2025, <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/health.html>.

⁴⁷ "Recommendation of the Council on OECD Legal Instruments Ageing and Employment Policies 8," n.d., <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/333/333.en.pdf>.

⁴⁸ "Report on the Implementation of the OECD on Ageing and Employment Policies," OECD (OECD, June 2, 2022), [https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN\(2022\)6/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN(2022)6/en/pdf).

them. This means that the system would reflect in pensions paid out the contributions made by individuals. In addition, this pillar would focus on national systems where the possibility exists for unemployment and disability benefits to provide informal channels to retirement through stringent medical testing and job search requirements. Finally, the pillar supports flexible pension withdrawals whereby part-time work and pension receipt is possible.⁴⁹

The second pillar attempts to tackle the issue of demand side obstacles through structural incentives which motivate employers to keep and employ mature employees. The OECD mentions that while incentives and pension changes are useless in this case if there is institutional age discrimination preventing mature individuals from being employed. As a result, this pillar works as a perfect complement to the policy of raising the retirement age without protecting mature individuals from unemployment. In the course of this policy, crossing a certain statutory age limit should not be a ground for firing the individual. Thus, Pillar 2 tries to find the structural obstacles preventing senior employment. In particular, it proposes a switch from the seniority-based pay system to productivity-based one to overcome the economic myth regarding the excessive expenses associated with mature individuals. This structural solution helps to make mature individuals more competitive. Moreover, this policy requires adaptation of the workplace through specific management skills, allowing managing multigenerational teams.⁵⁰



The third pillar revolves around employability for the whole working lifespan of an individual. This pillar is specifically aimed at individuals between the ages of 45 and 50 where infrastructure of lifelong learning will be used to make sure that they are always adapting to changes brought about by the digital economy so as not to become technologically redundant. In addition, it ensures there are health and safety changes made at workplaces,

⁴⁹ "Report on the Implementation of the OECD on Ageing and Employment Policies," Pillar 1, pages 10-14, articles 22-37, (OECD, June 2, 2022), [https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN\(2022\)6/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN(2022)6/en/pdf).

⁵⁰ "Report on the Implementation of the OECD on Ageing and Employment Policies," Pillar 2, pages 15- 22 articles 38-58, (OECD, June 2, 2022), [https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN\(2022\)6/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN(2022)6/en/pdf).

with a view to making sure that there are no occupational injuries or even mental stress. The displaced older employees should receive special assistance through wage subsidies.⁵¹

OECD clearly points out the dependent relationship between those three pillars. Pillar one, which supports the rise in retirement age without pillar two, which supports removing employer bias, results in old age poverty because people can't get jobs and pensions. On the other hand, pillar three, which supports training without pillar one, results in a skilled but unemployed ageing population who retire early.

6.4.2 OECD Approaches to Ageing and Labour Market Participation

The 2006 "Live Longer, Work Longer"⁵² report was the OECD's first action regarding the demographic shift. It is the main contributor of modern ageing policies because it successfully dismantled the economic logic of the 20th century. The greatest contribution of the 2006 report was its rejection of the Lump of Labour fallacy. So, the OECD proved by collecting data from member states that countries with high employment for older workers also had high employment for younger populations.

This finding has thus made the conventional approach of the Passive Social Protection paradigm redundant. In the past, national governments had been using the mechanism of subsidized early retirement programs to structurally address the problem of aggregate unemployment. The report highlighted that the threat posed by demography was not only of living longer, but that of leaving the workforce prematurely.⁵³ In 2006, the OECD identified that in many member states retirement age was much lower than the regulated retirement age. It blamed unintended incentives and social protection systems, specifically the use of long-term unemployment benefits in disability schemes as an excuse for early retirement. A major breakthrough in the 2006 analysis was the connection between continued activity and health. The OECD explained that working under good conditions preserves mental function

⁵¹ "Report on the Implementation of the OECD on Ageing and Employment Policies," Pillar 3, pages 23-31, articles 59-80, (OECD, June 2, 2022), [https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN\(2022\)6/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/C/MIN(2022)6/en/pdf).

⁵² "Ageing and Employment Policies Live Longer, Work Longer the the ' OECD PUBLISHING," February 6, 2006, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2006/02/live-longer-work-longer_g1gh607a/9789264035881-en.pdf the .

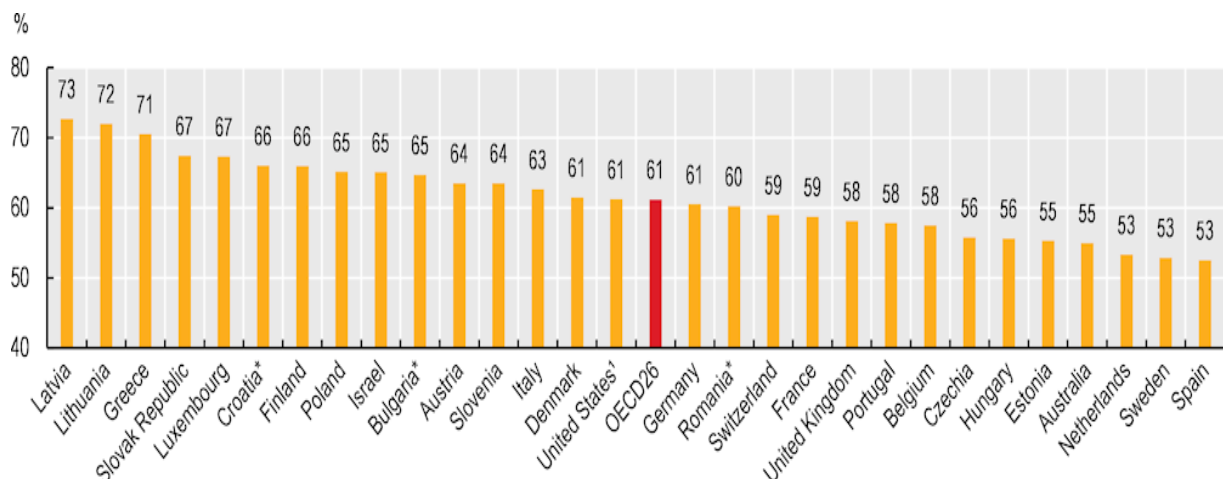
⁵³ OECD, "Ageing and Employment Policies," OECD, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/serials/ageing-and-employment-policies_g1gha2e1.html.

and physical health, thereby reducing the future burden on healthcare systems. As a result, this transformed “working longer” from fiscal punishment into a public health strategy.⁵⁴

6.4.3 The Longevity Readiness in OECD Policy Frameworks

The Longevity Readiness Tool (LRT) officially launched on 11 May 2026 represents the turn from crisis management of ageing to a forward-thinking readiness strategy.⁵⁵ Unlike previous iterations of the policy, which were mostly based on statutory retirement age increases, the LRT serves as a multidimensional diagnostic tool intended to assess systemic resilience. The core concept of this program is the understanding that macroeconomic and fiscal sustainability will not be achieved in cases when the labour force suffers from continuous physical or mental exhaustion, or when the domestic system of social safety nets does not incorporate the notion of ageing people caring for an ageing population. The LRT moves away from the conventional Old Age Dependency Ratio to multidimensional Longevity Readiness Scores. The key purpose of this diagnostic tool is to allow member states to test their domestic policies in light of a reality in which living up to one’s 100th birthday is considered normal.

6.4.4 OECD Approaches to Long-Term Care and Labour Market Participation



The Integration of Long-Term Care (LTC) and Employment is a basic development for 2025–2026, showcasing a strategic change in how OECD views social protection. Traditionally, care and work were treated as separate sectors. Today, the OECD frames them as a single

⁵⁴ OECD (2015), *Fit Mind, Fit Job: From Evidence to Practice in Mental Health and Work*, Mental Health and Work, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264228283-en>.

⁵⁵ “Launch-of-The-Longevity-Readiness-Tool,” Oecd.org, 2026, <https://www.oecd.org/en/events/2026/05/launch-of-the-longevity-readiness-tool0.html>.

economic challenge; labor market attrition. The 2025–2026 agenda focuses on "Care-Inclusive Growth," ensuring that the 13% of the population aged 50+ who provide informal care are not forced into early retirement or poverty.⁵⁶

The OECD's Health at a Glance 2025 report provides the analytical starting point for the integration of the "Care-Labor Attrition" Analysis. With the problem being the OECD findings that intense informal caregiving reduces economic growth by approximately 0.5% in annualized terms due to labor market attrition, the target, with women making up 61% of informal carers, is to prioritize this integration as the primary way to close the gender pension gap.⁵⁷

Another major development in 2025 was the promotion of "Carer-Inclusive Workplaces" for employers, a framework being piloted to help employers keep older, experienced staff. The OECD is pushing for a three way coverage for working carers which offers Flexible Work Rights by presenting a legal right to request flexible hours specifically for eldercare, a "Paid Caregiver Leave" by moving beyond unpaid leave to short-term paid leave funded through social insurance and providing workplace toolkits to help HR departments implement internship programs for those who took extended breaks for caregiving.⁵⁸

6.5 Key Stakeholders

Among the OECD member states, some have made remarkable progress, thus setting a few of the possible examples of how the silver dividend could be addressed, primarily by not seeing older citizens as a burden but by treating them equally and using them as human capital.

Japan

Japan stands as a global leader in active ageing, effectively transforming its aged demographic from a fiscal burden into a vital source of human capital. A key highlight is the Act on Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons, incentivizing companies to retain employees

⁵⁶ OECD, "Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs," OECD, n.d., <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/directorates/directorate-for-employment-labour-and-social-affairs.html>.

⁵⁷ "Informal Carers: Health at a Glance 2025," OECD, November 13, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/health-at-a-glance-2025_8f9e3f98-en/full-report/informal-carers_6f243c4d.html.

⁵⁸ OECD, *Pensions at a Glance 2025, OECD Pension at a Glance/Pensions at a Glance* (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1787/e40274c1-en>.

until the age of 70.⁵⁹ To support this extended workforce, Japan has heavily invested in “AgeTech”, designed to reduce physical strain and prolong productive working years.⁶⁰

Nordic Region

The Nordic Region, which includes Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland, has been found to exhibit the best senior employment ratios among all member countries in the OECD by virtue of establishing solid learning and re-skilling networks throughout their lifetimes. Based on the macroeconomic philosophy of investment in human capital being perpetual for maintaining productivity, these countries offer heavy subsidies on mid-life career re-skilling initiatives. Such an approach ensures protection against becoming technologically obsolete.⁶¹

7. Conclusion

All in all, population ageing and the demographic shift generate numerous challenges for the OECD member states both economic and social. The constant build of increasing pressure on the labour markets, the pension budgets and the healthcare services generated from this phenomenon are some of the consequences we will have to face if we leave it untreated.

The concept of the silver dividend is the use of all the potential benefits this phenomenon can have both on the economy and the social life of the citizens, if the ageing population is active and healthy. The economy grows while older workers or retirees still play a pivotal active role in economic productivity and sustainable social balance. However, for the governments to fully embrace the silver dividend, they have to address the problem and find common ground and innovative solutions within the OECD sessions.

Essentially, this topic and the challenges it generates call upon the delegates to develop innovative cooperative policies with long lasting results in order to transform the drawbacks of this phenomenon into benefits and opportunities for growth.

⁵⁹ “Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons - English - Japanese Law Translation,” www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp, n.d., <https://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/en/laws/view/2621/en>.

⁶⁰ Tom Miller, “The Agetech Revolution in Japan & Korea: A Call to UK Innovators - Intralink,” Intralinkgroup.com (Intralink Limited, April 14, 2025), <https://www.intralinkgroup.com/latest/intralink-insights/april-2025/the-agetech-revolution-in-japan-korea-a-call-to-uk>.

⁶¹ Torben M. Andersen, “Pensions and the Nordic Welfare Model,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4394846>.

8. Points To Be Addressed

1. How can member states coordinate labour market policies to respond to demographic shifts while maintaining strong social protection systems?
2. How can member states address the growing urban-rural divide caused by demographic shifts while ensuring equitable access to economic opportunities and social protection?
3. How can economic decline due to an imbalanced working-age ratio and labour shortages be prevented?
4. Should member states consider raising the retirement age, and if so, what reforms could be applicable, effective, and socially acceptable?
5. What measures can be recommended to ensure that older workers remain active without compromising their quality of life?
6. How can member states promote lifelong learning and reskilling (including digital literacy) so that they can support older workers?
7. What policies, both economic and social, can be drafted for the OECD member states to utilize the Silver Dividend so that the phenomenon of population ageing turns into an opportunity for growth?

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