



# Global Highlights

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## Demography

Clara Barrabés Solanes  
BBVA Global Trends Unit

[cvictoria.barrabes@grupobbva.com](mailto:cvictoria.barrabes@grupobbva.com)

### The Grey Revolution: Young at 65

- Often we think of ageing as something negative, even as a problem if we relate it to the sustainability of the Welfare State. Statistically, ageing can be measured as the percentage of people +65 over the total population and/or through the old age dependency ratio (percentage of old people over the active population). These two ratios are growing around the world. Nevertheless, ageing constitutes a human success. It is a direct consequence of the control of diseases, the increase in longevity due to medical advances and the control of fertility rates.

- The ageing process is consequence, in words of the demographer Jean-Marie Robin of [three demographic transitions](#). The first one started in 1800 with improvements in hygiene and nutrition that contributed to the fall of child and middle-age (mainly women) mortality rates. The second one, which started in 1965, is related to the decrease in fertility rates which brought important changes in family structure. The last one, which started in 1985-1990 is related to the decrease in mortality rates among old people. Obviously, these transformations have taken place in different moments and at different speeds.

- Demographic ageing comes hand in hand with a renewal of the characteristics of old people. In comparison with previous generations, elderly men and women nowadays enjoy better education, better social status, better purchasing power levels and most importantly better health conditions. And although the society assigns them a passive role, we are now witnessing a revolution: [The Grey Revolution](#)

- Better nutrition and life quality allow people to reach an advanced ages in such good condition that it is normal to see families with the coexistence of four or even five generations that change traditional patterns assigned to old people or to already established social relations between young and old.

- Some time ago [Anthony Giddens from LSE](#) talked about a rejuvenation of the population: old people that are younger, more active and healthier than in the past. Definitely a 65 years old man today is much more able and younger than a 65 year old man forty years ago.

- A retiree nowadays has a life expectancy of more than 22 years in developed countries, while fifty years ago this was more the exception than the rule. This fact constitutes a revolution in terms of the use of time. There are a diversity of life-styles across members of different generations: while some of them would like to enjoy their leisure time travelling others would [prefer keep on working](#) or to devote their time to individual activities or responsibilities (like child-caring)

- All demographic changes are both cause and consequence of economic, social and political transformations. Therefore, one of the main challenges that the developed world should face up to is not only the longevity (how their citizens live longer and longer), but also how to transform social and economic conditions so as to make the coexistence of different generations easier.