



Sociology
of Population

Call for Papers

**Population dynamics in the Global North and the Global South:
Age structural transitions, migration, and changing places**

Conference of the International Sociological Association (ISA)
Research Committee on Sociology of Population (RC41)
Madrid, Spain, 10-11 September 2026

Population studies are a field of study in which the interests of diverse scientific disciplines intersect, such as anthropology, demography, economics, geography, history, mathematics, political science, public health, sociology, and statistics. At the same time, the analysis of population structures and dynamics has been of significant interest to policymakers, planners, and administrators. This academic and practical relevance is partly explained by the combination of biological, social and cultural processes involved in producing population changes and the numbers by which they are represented.

In recent decades, demographic research has increasingly emphasised the importance of age-structural transitions and the demographic dividends that may be associated with them. Changes in age structure are not deterministically linked to demographic dividends; rather, they open windows of opportunity whose realization depends on social, economic, and political conditions. Demographic dividends are shaped by the timing and speed of age-structural transitions as well as by the public policies adopted in response to them.

Concepts of the first demographic dividend have highlighted the role of an expanding labour supply, investments in human capital, and rising savings rates in shaping productivity, welfare, and social sustainability in ageing societies. The second demographic dividend has been conceptually linked to the successful management of the first dividend and to capital accumulation driven by increased savings at older ages. More recently, the notion of a third demographic dividend has been associated with the preventive effects of healthy lifestyles and with the potential to harness the social capital of older populations through policies promoting active and healthy ageing.

The practical relevance of demographic analyses is emphasised by distinguishing between structural and numerical ageing indicators (relative and absolute numbers), and by tailoring age groups to functional societal sectors.

Nevertheless, these debates often do not translate into effective policy. While there are many potential reasons for a gap between research and policy, two of them appear to be conceptual limitations: First, the demographic focus on cohorts and natural growth tends to play down the political relevance of migration, which is frequently a contentious issue and may divert political attention away from effective public policy. In 'post-migration societies', immigrants have been scapegoated to the extent that other public issues are crowded out of the political agenda. Secondly, demographic analyses typically focus on the national level, overlooking the spatial heterogeneity of political territories. At the same time, political attitudes often originate from the perception of local living conditions in particular places. In the case of depopulation and disinvestment, these places are seen as 'left behind' and nurture populist protest votes.

Underpinning these issues is a more general point that also deserves our attention: The demographic information infrastructure provided by the state is currently facing significant opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, new data and methods of analysis are becoming available. On the other hand, the institutional autonomy of statistical offices and census bureaus is increasingly being undermined by administrative measures, whether overt or covert. While population scholars have tended to take the availability of official data infrastructure and the methodological decisions implied by it for granted, it seems worthwhile to pay more attention to the politics of population data governance.

This conference aims to bring together scholars and policy experts from the Global North and South to explore the interaction between changing age structures, migratory flows, human capital, institutions, and territorial dynamics.

We welcome theoretical, empirical and policy-oriented contributions.

Please send your abstracts of no more than **300 words** to alberto.veira@uc3m.es and walter.bartl@soziologie.uni-halle.de by **30 April 2026**.

We look forward to receiving your submissions and seeing you in Madrid!