



2025 WINTER FORUM ON DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITIONS

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC
TRANSITIONS ON THE WORLD OF WORK

2 – 4 DECEMBER 2025

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Reflections on digital tech and the demographic transition

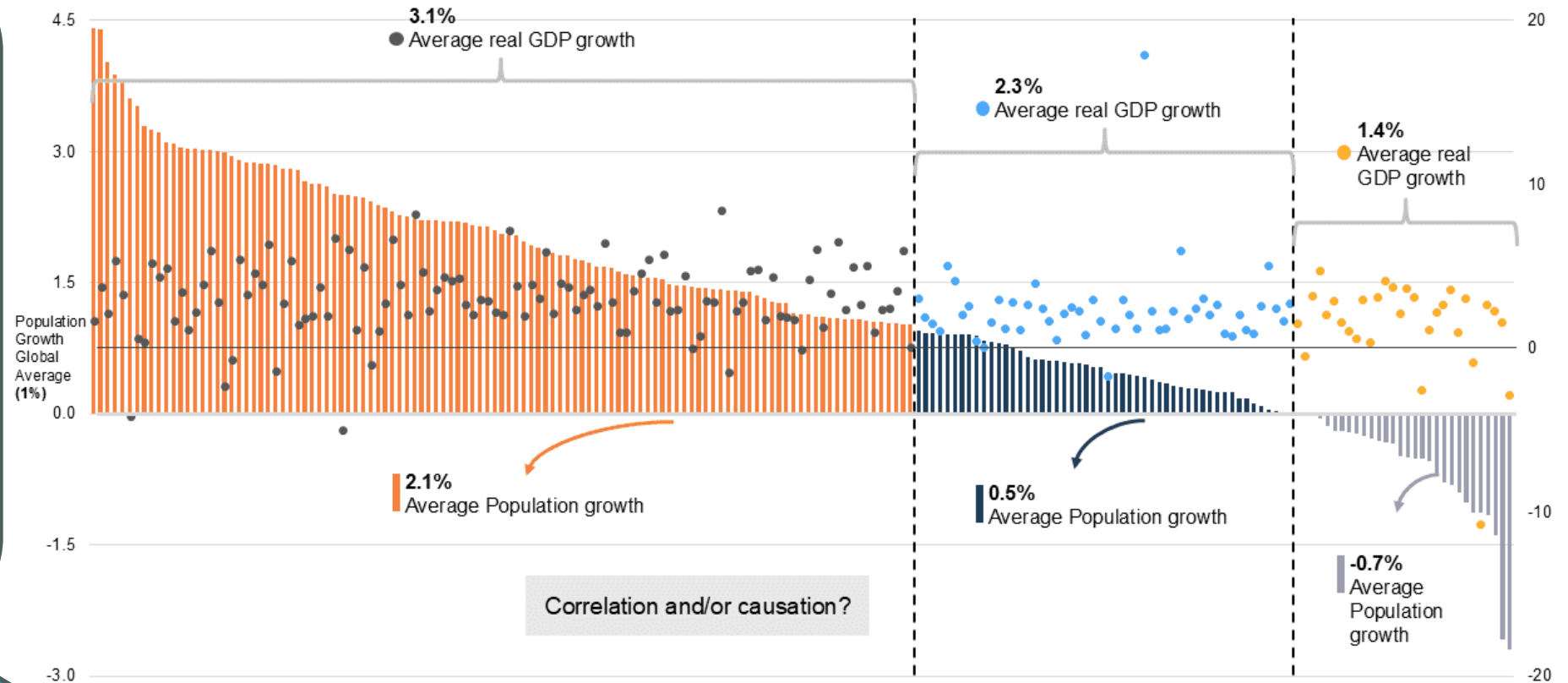


Economic Growth and Demographic Growth

"To grow, economies need people and a high population growth rate. Over the last decade, there was a direct correlation between population growth and economic growth: Countries with a higher population growth rate also had higher real GDP growth, and conversely, fewer people meant lower economic growth"

(Andaman Partners, 2024)

Average Population Growth (LHS) & Average Real GDP Growth (RHS), All Countries, % (2014-2023)



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook 2024, ANDAMAN PARTNERS Analysis

<https://andamanpartners.com/2025/01/the-correlation-between-population-and-economic-growth/>

Reflection One

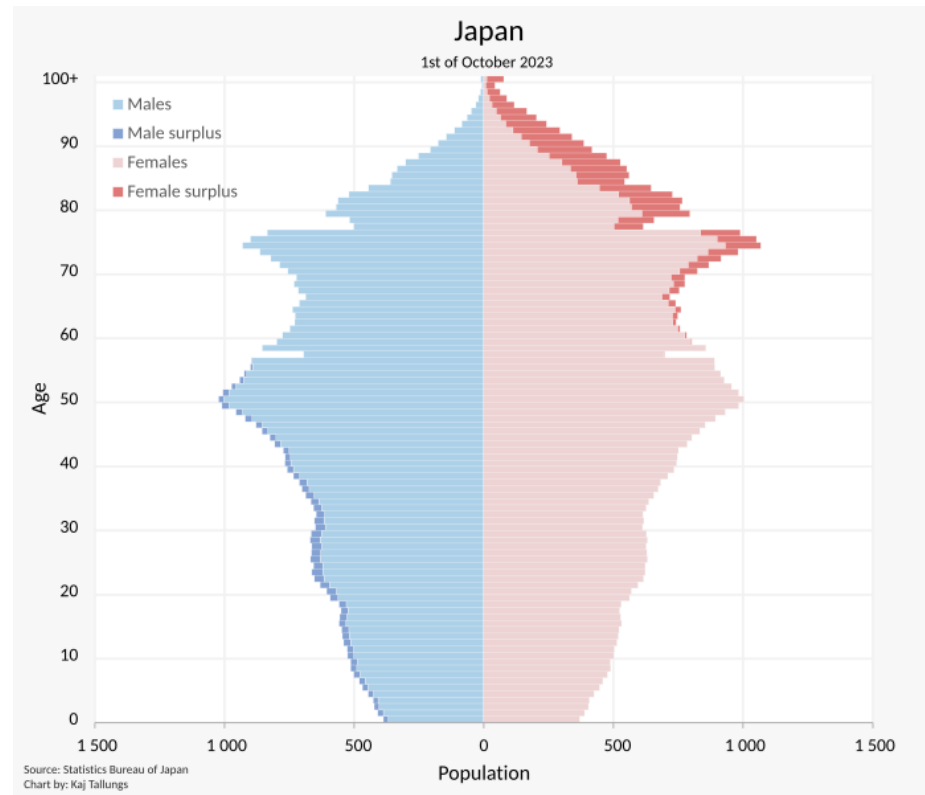
- The world's population has grown in my lifetime from 2.8 billion to 8.2 billion
- We need to rethink the demographic transition models we have held dear
 - They are mere descriptions of the past
- Decoupling the belief that demographic growth and economic growth together are “good”
- Why have we forgotten the Club of Rome's warnings in *Limits to Growth* (1972) ?
 - And why is neo-Malthusianism seem as being so “bad”
- The need to focus as much on equity as on growth
 - Alongside relative rather than absolute definitions of poverty
- Great global variation in labour implications



Thomas Malthus
1766-1834

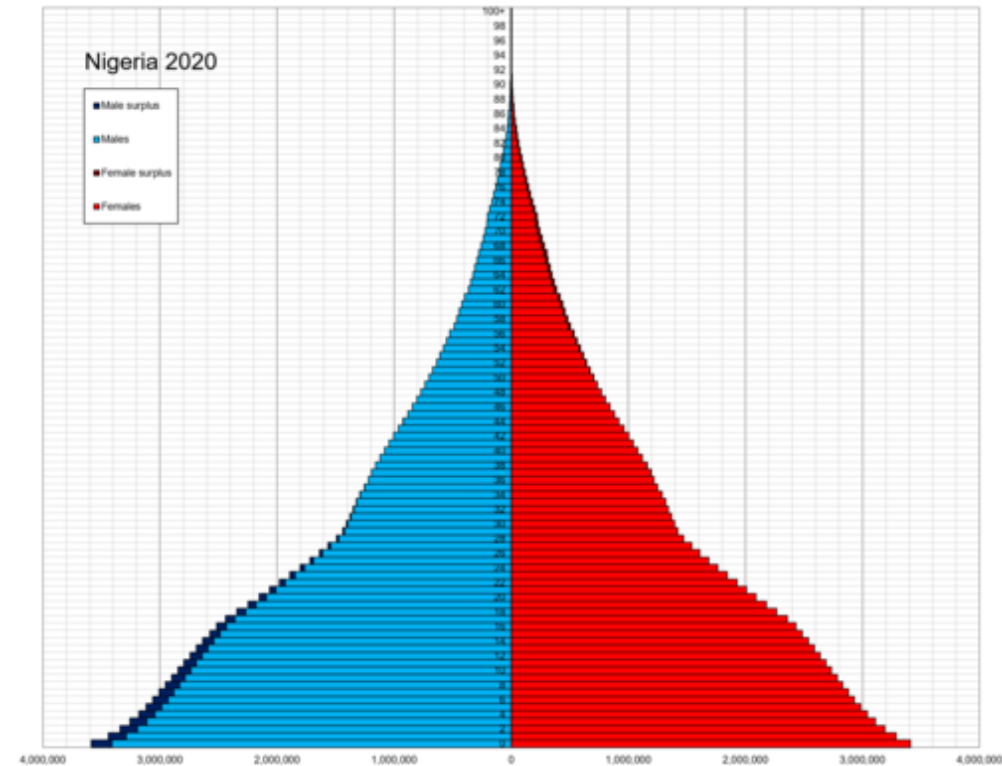
Population pyramids

Japan, 2023



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Japan

Ethiopia, 2020



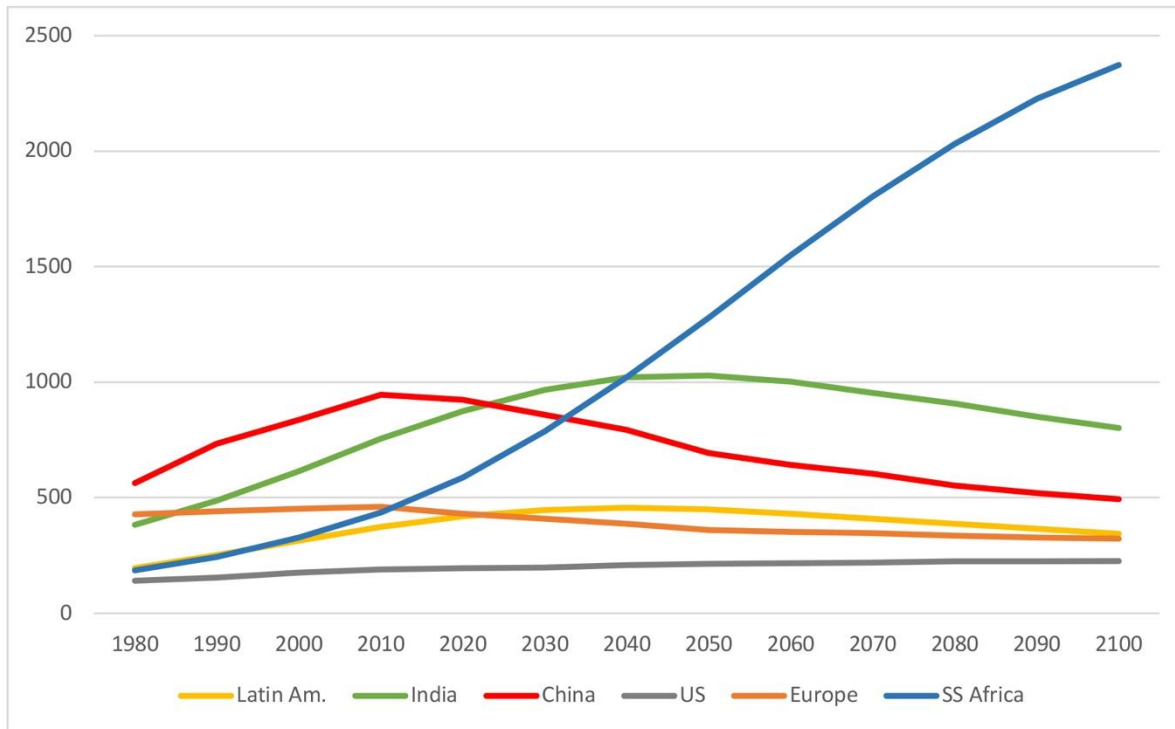
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Nigeria

Reflection Two

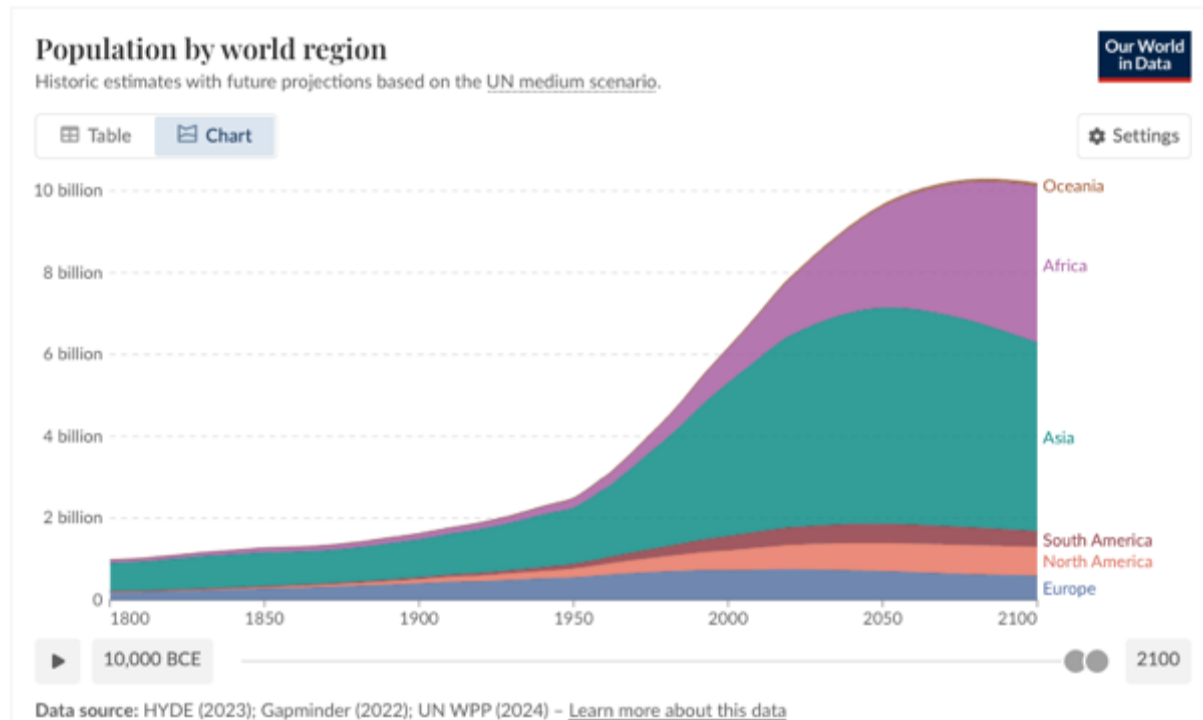
- Why do economists and policy makers generally see Japan's as problematic and Ethiopia's as exciting?
- Why do many praise Alphabet and Musk, Putin and Xi in their aspirations to live until they are 150?
- Technology can play a very significant role in:
 - Increasing labour productivity (of the few)
 - And providing services for the elderly (cyborgains)
 - Can we imagine a world where labour becomes less necessary?
- Echoes of “the one who died; and the four who survived”
 - Death is the one certainty in life
 - Those who have focused on reducing death (through vaccines) have usually failed to ensure that those who survive have better and fulfilled lives
- Communal and family structures
 - A return to the extended family?



Population projections: the rise of Africa and the “youth dividend”



https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/goldstone_africa_2050_demographic_truth_and_consequences_revised1-20.jpg



<https://ourworldindata.org/region-population-2100>

Reflection Three

- Much is said about the African youth dividend
 - But is it in reality a potential millstone around Africa's neck?
- Africa's education systems are not producing a sufficiently educated workforce
 - Yet they are creating enormous numbers of "certified" graduates
- Alongside insufficient employment opportunities
 - Especially at the level to fulfil aspirations of younger "certified" generation
 - Despite increasing efforts of employers to provide training
 - TVET a Cinderella sector
- The socio-political implications *must* be considered



Conclusions

- We need a shift in our thinking from economic growth to equity
- Digital tech can be used to significantly to benefit all of humankind, but only if it is explicitly designed to do so
- We need a complete rethink about how digital tech can best be used in an African context



Siddharth Rajsekar, 2023