



Decade
of healthy
ageing



Progress report on the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021-2023

Executive summary



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This progress report on the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021–2030 [the Decade] developed by UN partners, provides comparisons of 10 national progress indicators for the Decade in 2020 and 2022. It is based on the four areas of action for the Decade and its specific aims are to:

- assess the extent of progress made in the first phase of implementation of the Decade, from 2021 to mid-2023;
- present contributions to the Decade being made by stakeholder groups, including Member States, UN agencies, civil society, academia, the private sector, community groups and older people themselves; and
- inspire and motivate stakeholders to collaborate in their continued efforts to implement the Decade at country level and scale up interventions to ensure healthy ageing.

When Member States adopted the Decade, they requested UN partners and WHO to report on progress in implementing the Decade to both the UN General Assembly and to the World Health Assembly, in 2023, 2026 and 2029. Progress is monitored by measuring 10 national progress indicators developed for the *WHO Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health [2016–2020]*, and endorsed for the Decade by Member States, within a broader monitoring and evaluation framework. Member States' reporting on the 10 indicators forms the basis of this report, in which progress is defined as "an increase from baseline in the proportion of countries with policies, strategies, action plans, programmes and data to support implementation of the four action areas of the Decade".

Progress has been made in the first phase of the Decade, despite the challenges the world has faced since 2020. Increases in implementation between 2020 and 2022 were greater than 20% for four of the indicators: having legislation against age-based discrimination, having legislation to support older people's access to assistive products, having a national programme for age-friendly cities and communities, and having a national policy on comprehensive assessments of health and social care needs. Member States have also developed new policies, strategies and frameworks, established new mechanisms and strengthened collection of data on healthy ageing. A wide range of stakeholders have formed partnerships and advocated for change. Older people themselves are engaged and are raising their voices.

When countries were asked about the political support and resources they had received for action in each of the four Decade action areas, however, less than a third reported that the resources were adequate or substantial, and some countries reported that no resources had been made available. Thus, while many countries have developed policies, made commitments and established mechanisms, lack of resources may limit their action.



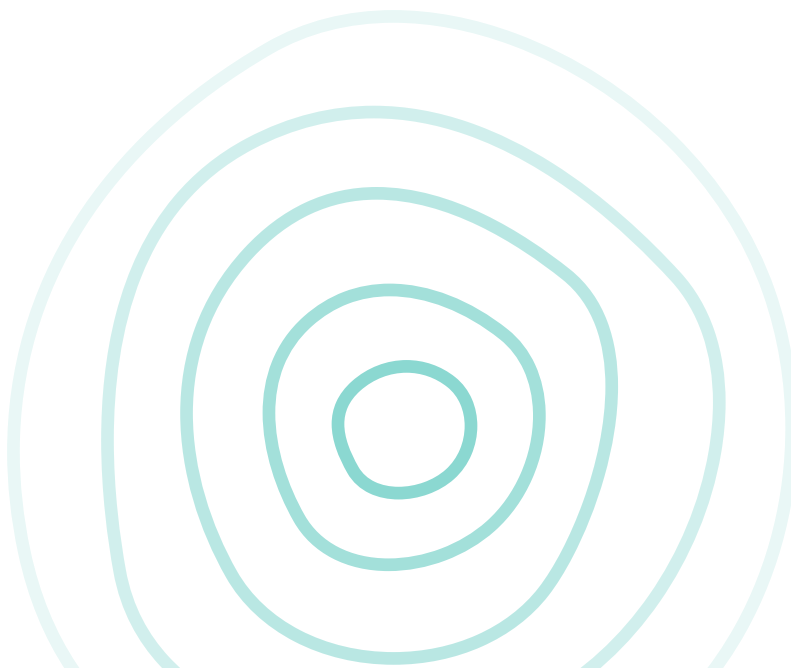
A key commitment of the Decade is ensuring that older people are central to its implementation. Actions undertaken in the first phase of the Decade demonstrate the importance of working with all older people, particularly those who are often left behind. A range of initiatives is being implemented around the world with older women; older people from indigenous populations; older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual and more

[LGBTQ+] people; older refugees; and others. Despite these encouraging signs, greater attention is needed, particularly on ensuring that strategic approaches are taken to enable the meaningful engagement of older people as the Decade progresses. The range of activities highlighted in this report provides vital lessons and an opportunity to advocate for older people's engagement where it is currently lacking.

Key findings

The main findings of the report are:

- Progress has been made in the first phase of the Decade, despite the challenges the world has faced since 2020.
- The Decade provides a framework to achieve a world in which all people live long and healthy lives. The opportunity we have must be seized.
- Member States have developed new policies, strategies and frameworks, established new mechanisms and strengthened data collection on healthy ageing.
- A wide range of stakeholders have been taking action, forming partnerships and advocating for change.
- Older people themselves are engaged, raising their voices and creating change, but a more systematic approach to older people's meaningful engagement is needed.
- The wealth of experience and learning, at all levels and with all stakeholders, provides an opportunity for strengthened collaboration and action.
- Resources for work towards healthy ageing remain limited, and more commitment and investment are crucial.
- Concerted and accelerated action is needed to support healthy ageing in low- and middle-income countries, where 80% of the world's older population will live by 2050.



Progress by Decade action area

Action area 1. Changing how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing

More and more countries have national legislation to prevent discrimination related to age, and effective strategies to combat ageism are available and being used. New data collected for the Progress report on the Decade show that over 60% of countries have mechanisms to promote and protect the rights of older people and specific legal, administrative and other effective means to protect older people who have been subject to discrimination. Intergenerational activities have been undertaken to address ageism in **Singapore** and an Ombudsman for older people has been appointed in **Finland**.

Action area 2. Ensuring that communities foster the abilities of older people

The percentage of countries with national programmes to support the activities of the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities has increased. WHO's Age-friendly Cities and Communities framework supports Member States in meeting their commitment to foster the abilities of older people. Examples of action to support age-friendly environments include transport initiatives in the United States of America [**USA**], researching and addressing social isolation and loneliness in **India** and **Japan** and responding to a humanitarian emergency in **South Africa**. The Age Friendly **Ireland** initiative is a coordinated, comprehensive approach to fostering age-friendly environments, led by the Government, with meaningful engagement of older people.

Action area 3. Delivering person-centred, integrated care and primary health services responsive to older people

More countries had national policies to support comprehensive assessments with older people in 2022 than in 2020. WHO's Integrated Care for Older People [ICOPE] approach has generated wide interest among Member States, and many have undertaken pilot projects to assess their capacity to implement and to initiate training of health and care workers in the approach. Various initiatives have been undertaken to meet the needs of older people for comprehensive health and care, including innovative approaches to often neglected issues. They include training for health and care workers in **El Salvador** and **Qatar**, access to COVID-19 vaccines in the **United Republic of Tanzania**, establishment of a dementia learning centre in **New Zealand** and a sexual rights charter for older people in the **United Kingdom**. Many countries, however, reported challenges in providing integrated care, including human resource constraints.

Action area 4. Providing access to long-term care for older people who need it

National and regional initiatives have been conducted to strengthen long-term care for older people, including national policy development. At regional level, initiatives are being put in place to support Member States, including adoption of the European Care Strategy by the European Commission in 2022. There is widespread recognition of the human resource challenges in relation to long-term care, including the reliance on family care, usually provided by women, many of whom are older. It was found that 60% of countries have programmes in place to support carers, but this figure is as low as 25% in some regions. Various stakeholders are addressing this challenge, with training being provided to care workers in **Chile** and the **Maldives** and a return of older people, such as retired nurses and carers, to the workforce in **Romania**.



Doing things differently in the Decade

The Decade represents an opportunity to do things differently. The Decade enablers are:

- listening to diverse voices and enabling meaningful engagement of older people, family members, caregivers, young people and communities;
- nurturing leadership and building capacity for integrated action across sectors;
- connecting stakeholders around the world to share and learn from the experience of others; and
- strengthening data, research and innovation to accelerate implementation.

These enablers provide the framework for a different approach. The Decade Platform has been established as a digital space that makes experiences, expertise and knowledge on ageing available for everyone, connecting stakeholders around the world.

In 2022, the ITU, ILO, OHCHR, the UNDESA, the World Economic Forum and WHO launched the "Healthy Ageing 50", celebrating 50 leaders who are transforming the world into one that is a better place to grow older and nurturing leadership and capacity-building for integrated action. Research and innovation have been strengthened, from the development of the [WHO Ageing Data Portal](#), to UNFPA and WHO developing a guide for situational analyses, and population surveys planned in [Kuwait](#) and [Uzbekistan](#). To monitor the progress of the Decade, the Technical Advisory Group on Measurement, Monitoring and Evaluation of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing [TAG4MHA] was established to review and assess evidence and make recommendations to advance measurement, monitoring and evaluation.

Accelerating action

The progress and limits to implementation of the Decade described in the Progress report on the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2023 indicate how action could be accelerated in the next phase. Reports of lack of resources for action indicate that political commitment and allocation of dedicated budgets are necessary to support healthy ageing. The many programmes and initiatives being implemented at all levels offer great potential. The challenge will be to learn how the initiatives can be used and scaled up to reach greater numbers of older people.

A priority for the next phase of the Decade will be implementation in lower-income countries, many of which still lack the policies, strategies programmes and data for implementation. As the Decade moves forward in the coming years, we must "walk the talk" on meaningful engagement of older people, who must be central to the Decade's implementation.







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