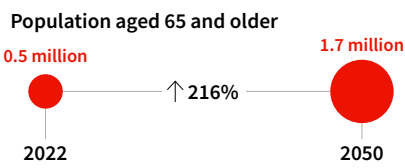




Malawi's population is primarily rural and youthful. Older adults struggle amid a lack of resources and social protection while politicians focus on the voting population. While strides have been taken by Malawi's civil society to advocate on behalf of older adults, and while there is some existing legislative protection, these forces are held up by under-resourced institutions and a lack of the political will and urgency required to implement interventions directly targeting older adults.

Demographic

The share of the population aged 65 and older will increase from 3% to 5% in 2022-50.



Sources: UN, International Labour Organization, World Inequality Database, Economist Impact.

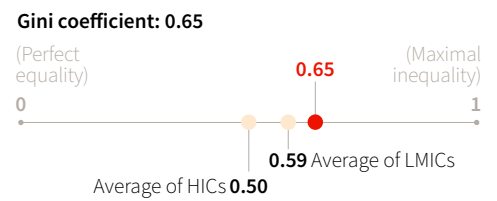
Informal employment

The majority of workers are employed informally, who do not have secure employment contracts or workers' benefits.

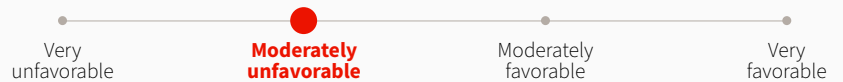


Income inequality

The income inequality is higher than both the averages for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and high-income countries (HICs).



Ecosystem for equitable healthy aging:



	Forces enabling equity				Strength	Equitable healthy aging	Strength	Forces resisting equity			
	1	2	3	4				4	3	2	1
Public institutions	<p>Social protection: An existing Social Cash Transfer Program positively impacts food security and incomes for households that are identified as both ultra-poor and labor-constrained, which frequently includes older adults. However, not all districts are covered by this program.¹</p> <p>Despite some efforts, overall coverage remains low, with only 21% of the population receiving at least one social protection benefit. There is no universal social pension. Only 2.3% of older adults are covered by pension schemes, with 4.3% of Malawians contributing to pensions.²</p>				2	Equitable healthy aging	2	<p>Healthcare access: Healthcare is provided at a community level by Health Surveillance Assistants, community health workers who complement health posts and rural hospitals through door-to-door visits.³ These Assistants work under the supervision of clinicians and nurses, based out of health centers.⁴ Still, there are virtually no healthcare facilities specifically designed for older adults,⁵ and older persons in need of care face challenges such as long distances to facilities and insufficient health insurance coverage.⁶</p>			
								<p>Educational access and quality: Older men are more likely than older women to have an education at the primary level or higher.⁷ In addition, significant educational gaps remain among groups by location (urban vs. rural) and wealth.⁸</p>			
Legislative and policy landscape for aging	<p>Aging policy: AAs of 2016 there is a national Policy for Older Persons that makes a commitment to mitigate the struggles experienced by the country's older populations. The Policy also outlines a structure for an Elderly Committee working at the nexus of government and community to solve the issues that older adults face.^{9,10} The Elderly Committee should be operating at the community, district, and national levels.</p>				3	Equitable healthy aging	3	<p>Policy implementation: While the government has taken steps to provide for older persons and there is awareness of the aging population in its National Policy, many projects—such as the establishment of the Bingu Silvergrey Foundation under President Bingu wa Mutharika—have struggled to gain momentum following changes in political leadership during the 2010s. Existing systems laid out in policy, such as the Elderly Committee, have yet to be implemented, and concrete steps taken on a national level are not moving quickly enough to create meaningful impact.^{12,13} Parliamentary approval of programs for older adults lag, and politicians often view older persons as a waste of resources—focusing instead on the proportionally large voting younger population.¹⁴</p>			
	<p>Age-friendly data: The National Statistical Office collects nationwide data on demographic characteristics of older persons, providing a baseline from which to formulate policy. Other agencies, such as the Ministry of Health, also collect data on older persons but rarely disaggregate them by the age and sex.¹¹</p>				3						
Age-friendly society	<p>Civil society: There is an active network of non-government organizations (NGOs) advocating for older persons in Malawi, including the Malawi Network of Older Persons' Organisations (MANEPO), an umbrella organization of local NGOs.¹⁵ Organizations under MANEPO's umbrella work on essential services such as healthcare provision for rural areas and platforming older adults' voices at the national level.</p>				3	Equitable healthy aging	3	<p>Networks of care: A vast majority of older adults—over 90%—live in rural communities, which means that they rely on extended family for support.¹⁶ However, this support is slowly disappearing as the country urbanizes, leaving older adults increasingly alone or reliant upon a spouse.^{17,18}</p>			
								<p>Ageism: Older persons experience ageism, including being accused of causing community misfortunes. Older women are particularly vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft and may face banishment from their communities.¹⁹ In addition, banks often discriminate against older persons based on their age, seeing them as high risk.²⁰</p>			

Methodology: As part of the ARC 4.0 initiative, Economist Impact employed a technique to evaluate the ecosystem for achieving equitable healthy aging in 10 countries based on Kurt Lewin's force field analysis. This approach compares forces that either promote or resist change, allowing for analysis of factors that may not be readily comparable within and across all countries. Building on our desk research and supplemented by expert interviews, we outline the forces that enable and hamper aging equity. We then conduct a qualitative assessment to score their relative strength on a scale from 1 ("weak") to 4 ("strong"). All scores were independently assessed by two raters (with an inter-rater reliability—Cohen's kappa—of .72), who then reconciled differences.

Lack of inclusion of a force does not necessarily indicate its absence from a country. It typically means that we decided to focus elsewhere or that there was not adequate research available on the particular subject. Moreover, because of the nature of evaluation—complex matters are collapsed into simple scores—we note that not all readers will agree with all scores. Further, these scores are not intended to facilitate explicit rating or ranking, but rather to foster qualitative examination of complex dynamics through simplified heuristics. It is our hope that these overviews will encourage reflection and action.

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- Economist Impact interview with Andrew Kavala. April 2022.
- Economist Impact interview with Andrew Kavala, Executive Director, MANEPO and Regional Advisor for East & Southern Africa, START Network. April 2022.
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