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HOW FAST IS KAZAKHSTAN AGEING, AND WHO CARES FOR ITS OLDER PEOPLE?

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Abstract: Kazakhstan is younger than Russia or France, but its population is ageing. This study uses World Bank data for 1990-2025, based on the United Nations World Population Prospects, and projections to 2050 to measure how fast the share of people aged 65 and over is growing, and official statistics and a reported government statement on social care and pensions to ask who cares for older people. The share of people aged 65+ peaked at 7.48% in 2006 and fell to 6.38% in 2011, a pattern consistent with the small generation born during the Second World War reaching that age. It then rose to 9.0% in 2025, with growth speeding up from 0.10 to 0.27 percentage points a year. The yearly growth was highest in 2025 (0.35 points); in the projections it slows until the mid-2040s, and the share reaches 13.79% in 2050. The rise since 2011 is consistent with larger post-war generations reaching old age and with longer lives, while fertility, which rose strongly from the early 2000s, has worked against it. At the end of 2022, 13,624 age pensioners lived in organisations providing special social services, equal to 0.85% of the number of people aged 65+, and in 2025 home-care units served more than 28,000 older people living alone, equal to about 1.5% of the population aged 65+. Growth did accelerate in 2011-2025, but the projections do not support the author's expectation that it will keep accelerating. The figures show that formal care reaches only a small share of older people, which does not contradict her view that families provide most of the care.

Keywords: population ageing, older people, fertility, care homes, pensions, Kazakhstan

1. Introduction

In France, 22.5% of the population was aged 65 or over in 2025, and in Russia 17.8% [1]. Kazakhstan is much younger, with 9.0%, but the number of its older people is growing, and with it the question of who will look after them: the state, through care homes and social services, or the family. Pensions decide how much older people can pay for themselves and how much they depend on their children. Earlier work on Kazakhstan has looked at this question from the side of the family: a review of support for informal carers reports, citing earlier surveys, that 69% of people over 65 who need physical help turn to their children and 0.8% to social services, and concludes that state support for family carers is still being developed [7]; about 64% of older adults live in the household of family members or relatives [8]. This study adds the national figures on how fast the older population is growing and how many older people formal care actually reaches.

This study asks two questions: how fast the share of older people in Kazakhstan is growing and why, and what the official figures show about who cares for them.

2. Hypothesis

The description of the topic the author chose already stated that the share of people aged 65 and over grew from 6.4% in 2011 to 9% in 2025. Before she was shown any further data, she wrote (19 October 2026): "I believe that the share of older people in Kazakhstan will grow gradually at an accelerating pace. The state does not take special measures to raise the birth rate so as to bring the average age of the population to normal. Older people are now cared for mostly by their relatives, because the current state pensions and benefits are not enough for a full life. This increases the dependence of the adult generation on their children, financially and later physically" (translated from Russian).

3. Data and methods

Population data come from the World Bank's World Development Indicators [1]: the share of the population aged 65 and over, the number of people aged 65 and over, the old-age dependency ratio (people aged 65+ per 100 people aged 15-64), the total fertility rate, life expectancy at birth, and the shares of men and of women aged 60-64 and 65-69, for Kazakhstan and, for comparison, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and France. Projections to 2050 come from the World Bank's Population Estimates and Projections [2]. The World Bank names the United Nations World Population Prospects as the source of these population series. All series were downloaded on 30 October 2026 and again on 6 November 2026; the two downloads gave the same results. The speed of ageing was measured as the change in the 65+ share, in percentage points per year. Figures on social care and pensions come from the national statistics office [3], a news report of the Prime Minister's reply to a deputy's inquiry [4] and the government's public services portal [5, 6]; each figure was checked against its source on 6-7 November 2026.

4. Results

4.1. How fast the population is ageing

The share of people aged 65 and over in Kazakhstan rose from 5.74% in 1990 to a peak of 7.48% in 2006, fell to 6.38% in 2011 (and stayed at 6.38% in 2012) and then grew again, to 9.0% in 2025 (Tables 1 and 2). The growth sped up: 0.10 percentage points a year on average in 2011-2015, 0.18 in 2015-2020 and 0.27 in 2020-2025. The yearly growth was highest in 2025 (0.35). In the projections it slows every year from 0.34 in 2026 to 0.12 in 2044 (0.27 in 2030, 0.14 in 2040), before picking up again to 0.21 in 2050; the share reaches 13.79% in 2050. The number of people aged 65+ grew from 1,088,682 in 2011 to 1,876,501 in 2025 and is projected at 3,659,427 in 2050. The old-age dependency ratio rose from 9.4 older people per 100 of working age in 2011 to 14.6 in 2025 and is projected at 22.4 in 2050.

Table 1. Share of the population aged 65 and over, % [1, 2]

Country	2000	2025	2050 (projection)
Kazakhstan	6.7	9.0	13.8
Uzbekistan	4.6	6.1	10.4
Kyrgyzstan	5.4	6.0	10.1
Russia	12.3	17.8	23.8
France	16.0	22.5	27.6

Table 2. Kazakhstan: people aged 65 and over, 2011-2050 [1, 2]

Year	Share aged 65+, %	Number aged 65+	Aged 65+ per 100 aged 15-64
2011	6.38	1,088,682	9.4
2015	6.76	1,222,755	10.3
2020	7.65	1,490,147	12.1
2025	9.00	1,876,501	14.6
2030 (projection)	10.52	2,313,944	17.0
2040 (projection)	12.32	2,987,652	19.5
2050 (projection)	13.79	3,659,427	22.4

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4.2. Why the share fell and then rose

The fall between 2006 and 2011 is consistent with the small generation born during the Second World War. Men aged 60-64, born in about 1941-1945, made up only 2.01% of the male population in 2005, against 3.61% for men of the same age, born before the war, in 2000; five years later, as men aged 65-69, the war-time generation made up 1.38%. Among women the pattern is the same: 4.45% of women were aged 60-64 in 2000, 2.67% in 2005, and the same war-time generation made up 2.05% of women as 65-69-year-olds in 2010. Not only the share but also the number of people aged 65+ fell, from 1,203,757 in 2006 to 1,088,682 in 2011. Larger generations born after the war then began to reach 65, and by 2020 men aged 60-64 made up 4.05% of men and women of that age 4.94% of women. At the same time, people live longer: life expectancy at birth rose from 63.8 years in 2000 to 74.5 in 2024. Fertility moved in the other direction. The total fertility rate fell from 2.75 children per woman in 1990 to about 1.9 in 1999-2001, then rose to 3.32 in 2021 and was 2.98 in 2024. In 2023 it was 3.01, far above Russia (1.41) and France (1.66). The many children born since the early 2000s keep the share of older people lower than it would otherwise be.

4.3. Who cares for older people

At the end of 2022 Kazakhstan had 281 organisations providing special social services (245 state-owned and 36 private), 172 of them residential. In total, 40,321 people lived in these organisations, of whom 13,624 were age pensioners and 24,724 (61.3%) were people with disabilities [3]. The 13,624 age pensioners equal 0.85% of the 1,599,847 people aged 65 and over in 2022 [1]; all 40,321 residents, of every age, equal 2.5% of that number. The same source reports 53 care homes with 7,321 residents in 2021, and 48 medical-social institutions for older people and people with disabilities with 5,756 residents at the time of its release in March 2023 [3].

According to the Prime Minister's reply to a deputy's inquiry, reported in November 2025, the country had 45 state residential centres for older people (care homes) with 3,547 age pensioners living in them, and 134 home-care units serving more than 28,000 older people living alone [4]; the 28,000 equal about 1.5% of the population aged 65+ in 2025. In the same reply he concluded that the existing infrastructure covers the need of this group [4]. The care-home figures for 2021 and 2025 are not counted in the same way (all residents of care homes, against age pensioners in state care homes only), so they cannot be compared directly. In 2026 the minimum basic state pension is 35,596 tenge a month, 70% of the subsistence minimum of 50,851 tenge. People with at least six months of work before 1 January 1998 also receive a solidarity pension, which is at least 69,049 tenge a month for a full work record [5].

5. Discussion

The author expected the share of older people to keep growing at an accelerating pace. Growth did accelerate in 2011-2025: the yearly growth of the 65+ share nearly tripled, from 0.10 to 0.27 percentage points (the topic description she had seen gave only the 2011 and 2025 levels). The projections do not support her expectation for the future: the yearly growth is highest in 2025 and slows until the mid-2040s, although the share keeps rising. She also wrote that the state takes no special measures to raise the birth rate, implying that more births would keep the population younger. That direction is correct, but fertility in Kazakhstan has already risen strongly since the early 2000s and is among the highest of the countries compared; the rise in the share of older people is instead consistent with the arrival of the large post-war generations at old age and with longer lives. Whether state policy contributed to the rise in fertility was not examined.

Her second expectation, that relatives provide most of the care, cannot be tested directly with these figures. They show that formal care is small: age pensioners living in special-social-service organisations equal 0.85% of the population aged 65+, and the people served by home care about 1.5%. The Prime Minister's reply holds that this infrastructure covers the need; the figures do not show how many older people need care or who gives it to those outside formal services. They therefore do not contradict her view, and they agree with the surveys cited in [7, 8], but showing that families provide most of the care would need a survey of households. The figures also do not show whether pensions are enough: the basic pension alone is below the subsistence minimum, but

people who worked before 1998 also receive a solidarity pension, and average pensions were not analysed.

Limitations. Projections depend on assumptions about future fertility, mortality and migration. Large emigration in the 1990s also changed the age structure, and its effect was not separated from that of the war-time births; life expectancy at birth was used, not life expectancy at age 65. The World Bank figures were not compared with the population counts of the national statistics office. Pension age in Kazakhstan is 63 for men and 61 for women [6], so comparing age pensioners in care with the population aged 65+ is approximate. The care figures come from different years (2021, 2022 and 2025) and the pension figures from 2026. The 2025 figures are a news report of an official statement rather than published statistics, cover state care homes only, and do not define the age of the "older people living alone" served at home. Only legal minimum pensions were used.

6. Conclusion

The share of people aged 65 and over in Kazakhstan rose from 6.38% in 2011 to 9.0% in 2025, and its growth sped up over that period. The projections show the growth slowing after 2025, but the share still reaches 13.79% in 2050, when there will be about 3.7 million older people, nearly twice as many as in 2025. The rise is consistent with the arrival of large post-war generations at old age and with longer lives, while high fertility since the early 2000s has worked against it. State care reaches only a small share of older people, so as their number grows, the question of who cares for those who need help outside state services will matter more.

Data availability

All data are public [1-6]. The data tables and the analysis script are available from the author or her mentoring team on request.

Author contributions and use of AI tools

The author chose this study's topic, one of two proposed by her mentor (16 October 2026), and wrote the hypothesis quoted in Section 2 (19 October 2026). She found the three sources on social care and pensions [3-5] and the figures on the 281 social-service organisations, the 45 state care homes and their 3,547 residents, the 134 home-care units serving more than 28,000 older people and the minimum basic pension (23 October 2026). Her mentor read the remaining figures in Section 4.3 from the same sources and added the source on pension age [6] and the two published studies [7, 8]. The population data were downloaded and analysed, and the English text was drafted, by her mentor with the help of a generative AI assistant (Claude, Anthropic). The population figures were computed by the analysis script from the World Bank data; the care and pension figures are taken from the sources cited. The author read the draft of 30 October 2026 and checked its 0.85% calculation (6 November 2026).

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest. No funding was received for this study.

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