

IUSSP - Webinar – March 3rd 2026

# Resilient populations



IUSSP – Brisbane – 2025:  
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# First, what is resilience?

## **What resilience is NOT: “bouncing back.”**

Resilience is instead the ability to adapt and **change**, to **reorganize**, while coping with disturbance, in order to maintain (or even improve) a set of ideals/values

## **Resilience is not the same as robustness**

A robust institution is one that is not exposed to disturbance, i.e. it is built or designed to withstand disturbances

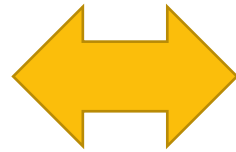
## **Resilience is not inherently positive**

Dictatorships and psychotic states in people can be very resilient.

# Empirical facts about resilience

## Individuals & households

- Human capital
- Health
- Community & neighborhoods
- Social networks



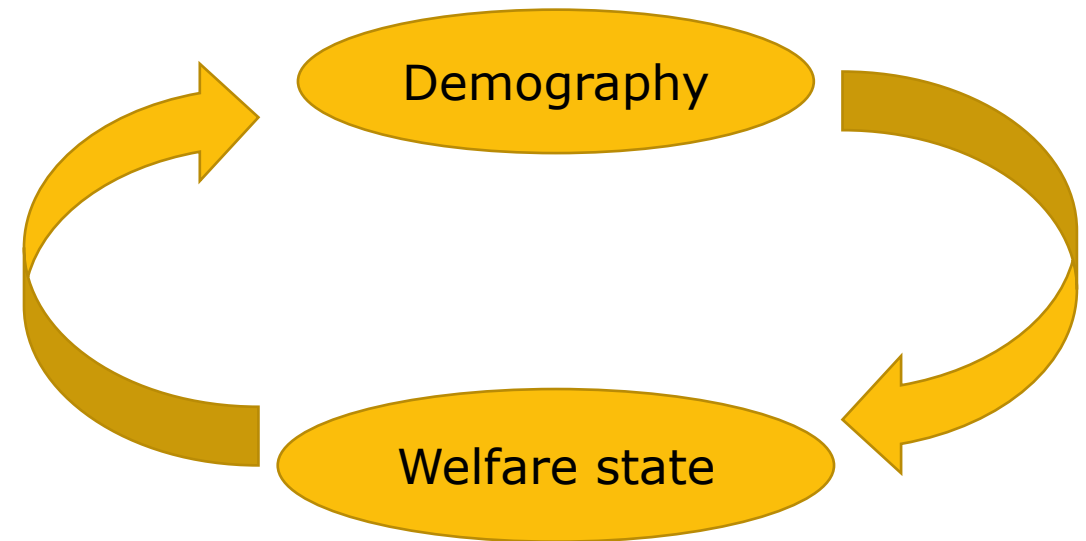
## Policy makers & institutions

- Public sector effectiveness
- Learning
- Readiness to transform
- Response diversity
- Political cycles

**There is a strong correlation between micro resilience (i.e. individuals) and macro resilience (i.e. institutions)**

# Why does demography matter for resilience?

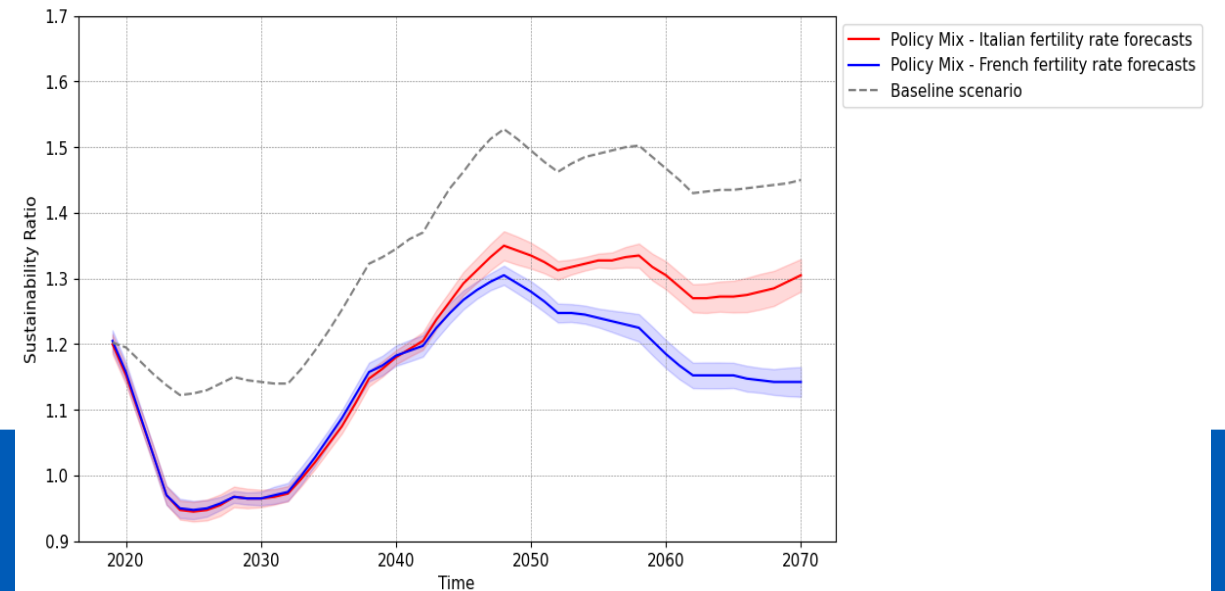
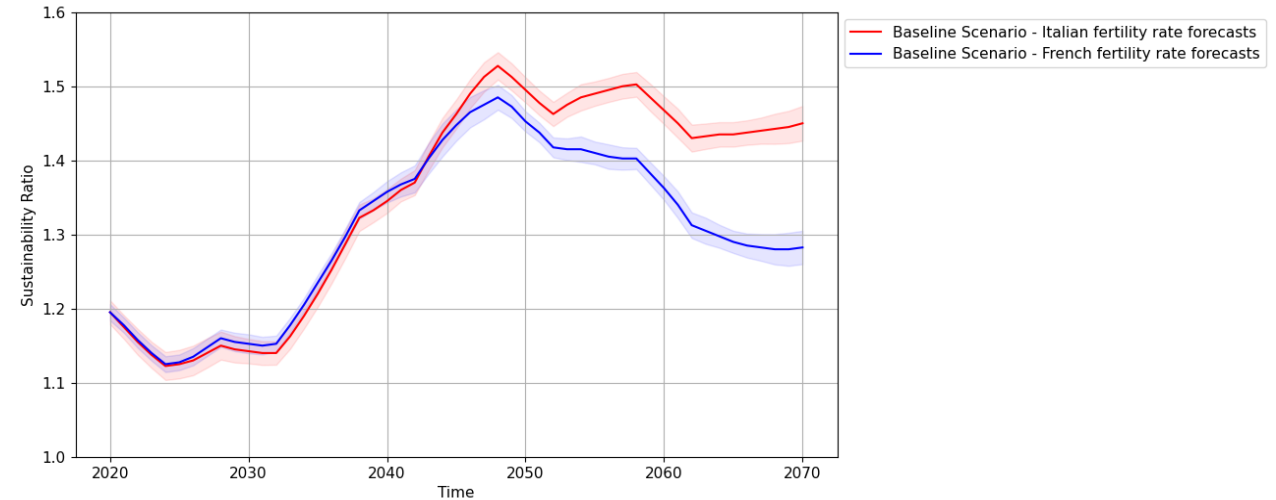
- The welfare state was introduced and designed as a function of the demography of the 50s
- And the demography of the 50s was the foundation of the social contract



# Challenge (one of them): sustainability of the Italian pension system (simulated by ABM)

Case 1: Simulated sustainability of the Italian pension system, but with imposing projected French fertility rate (blue line)

Case 2: Simulated sustainability of the Italian pension system, but with policy interventions, and, imposing projected French fertility rate



# Resilience and policy pointers

- **Youth** – now a minority group in many countries – increase education and sort out the housing crisis.
  - Still, young adults of the future will be increasingly **dependent upon family wealth** and their resources
- **Education - Low human capital** in combination with **smaller youth cohorts** is a toxic combination
  - Harnessing talent is critical – but getting more talents seems more urgent
- Fertility – is **not a viable policy** lever for ageing in the **short/medium term** – but **matters nevertheless for the longer term.**
- With projected population decline, there is **NO way you can avoid depopulated areas.** Depopulation needs to be managed carefully
- **Resilience is multi-dimensional.** Prioritizing one dimension is not sufficient to create a virtuous resilience cycle
- **The political cycle**