



## INTRODUCTION

According to the latest United Nations population estimates, world population reaches the six billion mark on 12 October 1999, an historic milestone in the growth of world population. The marking of a world of six billion just at the dawn of the new millennium is a convergence of events that is attracting widespread global attention. *The World at Six Billion* was prepared in response to this attention. It provides in tabular and graphic form salient characteristics of past, current and future world population growth.

The twentieth century has witnessed extraordinary population growth. During this century, world population increased from 1.65 billion to 6 billion, and experienced both the highest rate of population growth (averaging 2.04 per cent per year) during the late 1960s, and the largest annual increment to world population (86 million persons each year) in the late 1980s.

The world population growth rate has fallen from its peak of 2 per cent per year to around 1.3 per cent today. Nonetheless, world population will continue to increase substantially during the twenty-first century. United Nations projections (medium fertility scenario) indicate that world population will nearly stabilize at just above 10 billion persons after 2200. However, the twenty-first century is expected to be one of comparatively slower population growth than the previous century, and be characterized by declining fertility and the ageing of populations.

At the same time that the world population growth rate has declined from its peak, the average number of children per couple has fallen from 4.9 to 2.7 and life expectancy at birth has risen from 56 years to 65 years. The share of the world's population living in urban areas has increased from 36 per cent to 47 per cent and the number of megacities of 10 million persons or more has grown from 5 to 18. The number of persons who have moved to another country has risen to over 125 million today.

In the less developed regions, couples are currently having about two children less than couples did three decades ago. Even though fertility has declined to relatively moderate levels in many developing countries, and to below replacement level in some, a large and growing number of births are occurring annually, due to the continued growth in the number of women of childbearing age; a legacy of past high fertility levels. In the more developed regions, fertility declined from 2.4 births per woman during the late 1960s to an historic low of 1.6 for the current period. In Europe, Northern America and Japan, the current fertility rate is 1.5 births per woman or below.

In spite of the impressive gains in health and life expectancy that the world has exhibited during the past decades, much remains to be done. Recent years has shown a devastating toll from AIDS in a number of countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, in some countries of Eastern Europe, the health situation has been deteriorating and adult mortality, especially among males, has increased.

The twentieth century has witnessed the growth of urban centres and the concentration of population in urban areas. Half of the world population is expected to be urban by 2006. Giant urban agglomerations are becoming both more numerous and larger in size.

Another major transformation of the twentieth century has been population ageing. In 1999 there were 593 million persons aged 60 years or over in the world, comprising 10 per cent of the world population. By 2050, this figure will triple to nearly 2 billion older persons, comprising 22 per cent of the world population. This changing age structure will have wide-ranging economic and social consequences, affecting such factors as



economic growth, savings and investment, labour supply and employment, pension schemes, and health and long-term care. While once limited to developed countries, concern for the consequences of ageing has spread to developing countries.

This publication provides a set of boxes, figures and tables that provides country and regional and world-level data on population and demographic trends and corresponding population policies. The population and demographic data are taken largely from the official United Nations population estimates and projections prepared biennially by the Population Division for the United Nations system and are the consistent set of population numbers utilized by the United Nations system. Projections are from the medium-fertility scenario. Other scenarios, in particular the high and low, appear in other publications of the United Nations Population Division. Policy information is from the Population Policy Data Bank maintained by the Population Division for the United Nations. The full set of references used when compiling this publication is given in the Bibliography section at the end of the volume.

These boxes, figures and tables are intended to provide readers with an overview of the startling changes in the population and demography of the world during the twentieth century and earlier, and insight into how the world's demographics will change during the twenty-first century.

**BOX 1. THE WORLD AT SIX BILLION: HIGHLIGHTS**

1. World population is estimated to cross the six billion threshold on October 12, 1999.
2. World population is projected to cross the 7 billion mark in 2013; the 8 billion mark in 2028; the 9 billion mark in 2054. World population nearly stabilizes at just above 10 billion after 2200.
3. It has taken just 12 years for the world to add this most recent billion people. This is the shortest period of time in world history for a billion people to be added.
4. World population did not reach one billion until 1804. It took 123 years to reach 2 billion in 1927, 33 years to reach 3 billion in 1960, 14 years to reach 4 billion in 1974 and 13 years to reach 5 billion in 1987.
5. The highest rate of world population growth (2.04 per cent) occurred in the late 1960s. The current rate (1995-2000) is 1.31 per cent.
6. The largest annual increase to world population (86 million) took place in the late 1980s; the current annual increase is 78 million.
7. Of the 78 million people currently added to the world each year, 95 per cent live in the less developed regions.
8. Eighty per cent of the world currently reside in the less developed regions. At the beginning of the century, 70 per cent did so. By 2050, the share of the world population living in the currently less developed regions will have risen to 90 per cent.
9. The population of the world is ageing. The median age increased from 23.5 years in 1950 to 26.4 years in 1999. By 2050, the median age is projected to reach 37.8 years. The number of people in the world aged 60 or older will also rise from the current one-of-ten persons to be two-of-nine by 2050. Currently around one-of-five persons in the developed countries are aged 60 or older; in 2050 nearly one-of-every three persons will be aged 60 or older.
10. World life expectancy at birth is now at 65 years, having increased by a remarkable 20 years since 1950; by 2050 life expectancy is expected to exceed 76 years. However, in spite of these impressive gains, recent years have shown a devastating toll from AIDS in a number of countries. In addition, in some Eastern European countries, health has been deteriorating and mortality, particularly among adult males, has been rising.
11. Couples in developing countries today have on average 3 children each; thirty years ago they had six. More than half of all couples in developing countries now use contraception.
12. The number of persons who have moved to another country has risen to over 125 million migrants today from 75 million in 1965.
13. The world has become increasingly urban. Currently, around 46 per cent of the world population lives in urban areas; the majority of the world's population will be urban by 2006.

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Source: United Nations Population Division.



## BOX 2. WORLD POPULATION GROWTH

The rapid growth of the world population is a recent phenomenon in the history of the world. It is estimated that 2000 years ago the population of the world was about 300 million. For a very long time the world population did not grow significantly, with periods of growth followed by periods of decline. It took more than 1600 years for the world population to double to 600 million.

The world population was estimated at 791 million in 1750, with 64 per cent in Asia, 21 per cent in Europe and 13 per cent in Africa. By 1900, 150 years later, the world population had only slightly more than doubled, to 1.7 billion. The major growth had been in Europe, whose share had increased to 25 per cent, and in Northern America and in Latin America, whose share had increased to 5 per cent each. Meanwhile the share of Asia had decreased to 57 per cent and that of Africa to 8 per cent. The growth of the world population accelerated after 1900, with 2.5 billion in 1950, a 53 per cent increase in 50 years.

The rapid growth of the world population started in 1950, with reductions in mortality in the less developed regions, resulting in an estimated population of 6.1 billion in the year 2000, nearly two-and-a-half times the population in 1950. With the declines in fertility in most of the world, the global growth rate of population has been decreasing since its peak of 2.0 per cent in 1965-1970. In 1999, the world's population stands at 6 billion and is growing at 1.3 per cent per year, or an annual net addition of 78 million people.

According to the medium variant of the *1998 Revision* of the official United Nations estimates and projections, by 2050 the world is expected to have 8.9 billion people, an increase of nearly half over the 2000 population. By 2050, the share of Asia will be at nearly 60 per cent, that of Africa will have more than doubled, to 20 per cent, and that of Latin America nearly doubled, to 9 per cent. Meanwhile the share of Europe will decline to 7 per cent, less than one third its peak level achieved at the beginning of the twentieth century. While in 1900 the population of Europe was three times that of Africa, in 2050 the population of Africa will be nearly three times that of Europe.

The world population will continue to grow after 2050. The medium-fertility scenario from the United Nations latest long-range population projections indicates that the world would reach 9.7 billion by 2150 and nearly stabilize at just above 10 billion after 2200.

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*Source:* United Nations Population Division.



TABLE 1. WORLD POPULATION, YEAR 0 TO NEAR STABILIZATION

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population (in billions)</i>
0	0.30
1000	0.31
1250	0.40
1500	0.50
1750	0.79
1800	0.98
1850	1.26
1900	1.65
1910	1.75
1920	1.86
1930	2.07
1940	2.30
1950	2.52
1960	3.02
1970	3.70
1980	4.44
1990	5.27
<b>1999</b>	<b>5.98</b>
2000	6.06
2010	6.79
2020	7.50
2030	8.11
2040	8.58
2050	8.91
2100	9.46
2150	9.75
Near stabilization (after 2200)	Just above 10 billion

*Source:* United Nations Population Division.



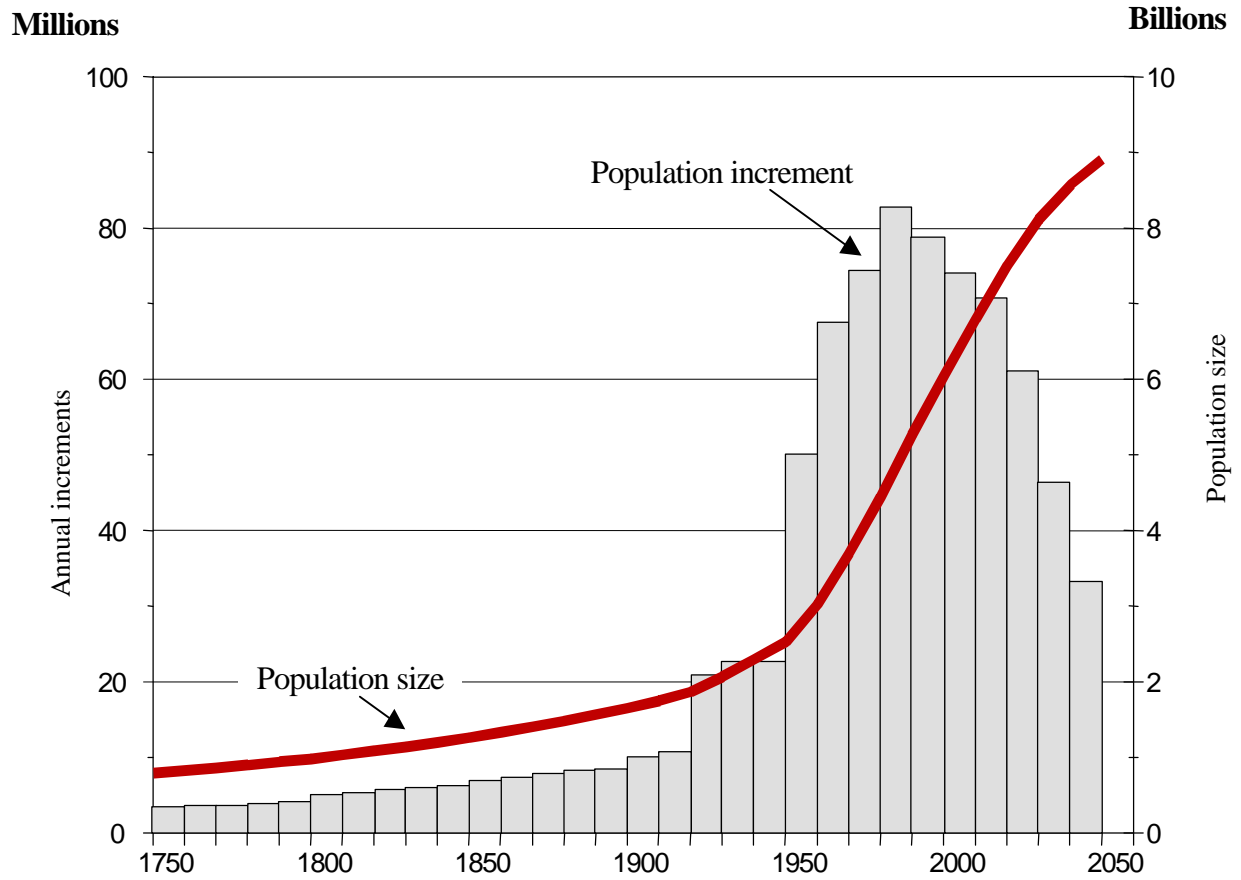
TABLE 2. POPULATION OF THE WORLD AND ITS MAJOR AREAS, 1750-2150

<i>Major area</i>	<i>1750</i>	<i>1800</i>	<i>1850</i>	<i>1900</i>	<i>1950</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2050</i>	<i>2150</i>
<i>A. Population size (millions)</i>								
World	791	978	1 262	1 650	2 521	5 978	8 909	9 746
Africa	106	107	111	133	221	767	1 766	2 308
Asia	502	635	809	947	1 402	3 634	5 268	5 561
Europe	163	203	276	408	547	729	628	517
Latin America and the Caribbean	16	24	38	74	167	511	809	912
Northern America	2	7	26	82	172	307	392	398
Oceania	2	2	2	6	13	30	46	51
<i>B. Percentage distribution</i>								
World	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Africa	13.4	10.9	8.8	8.1	8.8	12.8	19.8	23.7
Asia	63.5	64.9	64.1	57.4	55.6	60.8	59.1	57.1
Europe	20.6	20.8	21.9	24.7	21.7	12.2	7.0	5.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.0	2.5	3.0	4.5	6.6	8.5	9.1	9.4
Northern America	0.3	0.7	2.1	5.0	6.8	5.1	4.4	4.1
Oceania	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5

*Source:* United Nations Population Division.



Figure 1. Long-term world population growth, 1750 to 2050



Source: United Nations Population Division.



### **BOX 3. WORLD POPULATION MILESTONES**

#### **World Population reached:**

1 billion in	1804
2 billion in	1927 (123 years later)
3 billion in	1960 (33 years later)
4 billion in	1974 (14 years later)
5 billion in	1987 (13 years later)
6 billion in	1999 (12 years later)

#### **World Population may reach:**

7 billion in	2013 (14 years later)
8 billion in	2028 (15 years later)
9 billion in	2054 (26 years later)
10 billion in	2183 (129 years later)

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*Source:* United Nations Population Division.





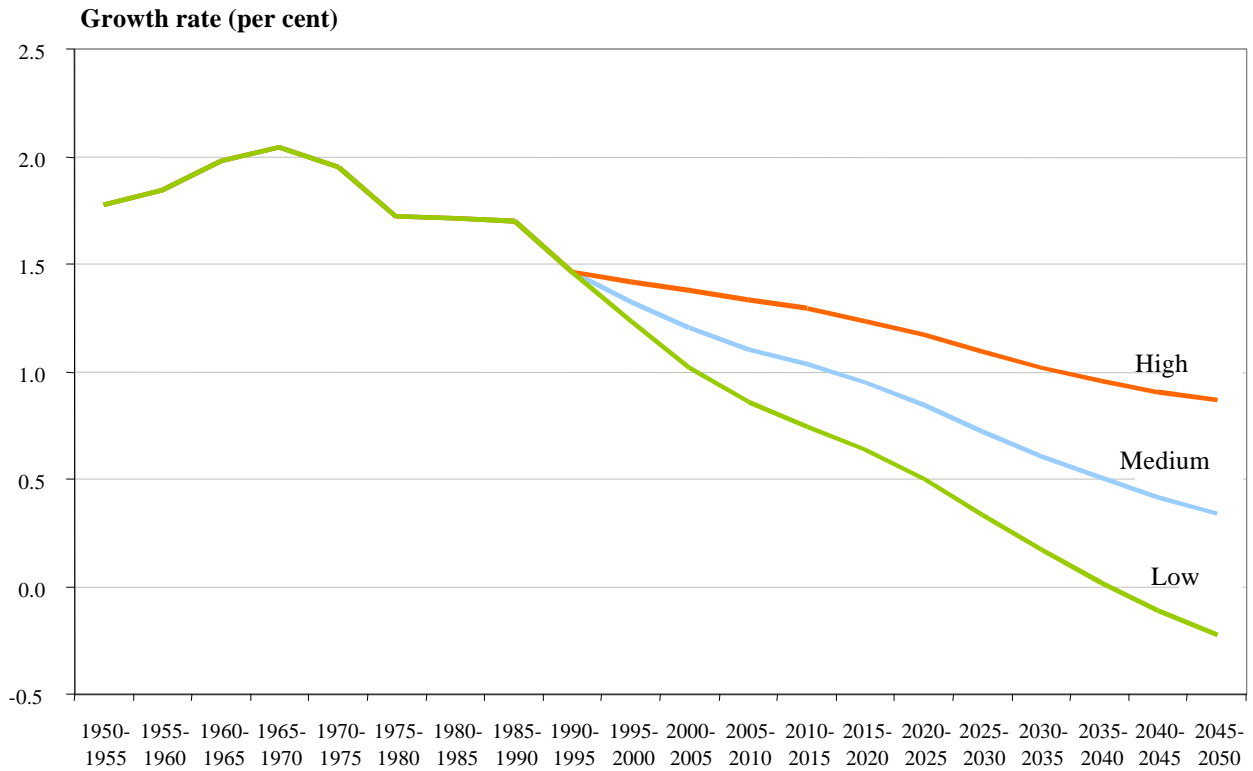
TABLE 3. POPULATION SIZE AND COMPONENTS OF GROWTH BY MAJOR AREA, 1995-2000

<i>Major area</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Births</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>1999</i>			<i>migration</i>	<i>growth</i>
	<i>(thousands)</i>	<i>(annual average, in thousands)</i>			
World total	5 978 401	129 810	52 072	0	77 738
More developed regions	1 185 174	13 224	11 951	1 971	3 243
Less developed regions	4 793 227	116 586	40 121	-1 971	74 494
Africa	766 623	28 115	10 331	-287	17 496
Asia	3 634 279	77 953	27 492	-1 207	49 254
Europe	728 934	7 493	8 248	950	195
Latin America and the Caribbean	511 345	11 554	3 245	-471	7 838
Northern America	307 202	4 172	2 528	930	2 574
Oceania	30 018	527	227	81	381

*Source:* United Nations Population Division.



**Figure 2. World population growth rates: past estimates and medium-, high- and low-fertility variants, 1950-2050**



Source: United Nations Population Division.



TABLE 4. CURRENT LEVELS OF POPULATION GROWTH, MORTALITY, FERTILITY  
AND CONTRACEPTIVE USE, BY MAJOR AREAS

<i>Major area</i>	<i>Population size, 1999 (millions)</i>	<i>Population growth rate, 1995-2000 (per cent)</i>	<i>Life expectancy at birth, 1995-2000 (years)</i>	<i>Total fertility rate, 1995-2000 (average number of children per woman)</i>	<i>Contraceptive use, 1990s (per cent of currently married women)</i>
World	5 978	1.3	65	2.7	58
More developed regions	1 185	0.3	75	1.6	70
Less developed regions	4 793	1.6	63	3.0	55
Africa	767	2.4	51	5.1	20
Asia	3 634	1.4	66	2.6	60
Europe	729	0.0	73	1.4	72
Latin America and the Caribbean	511	1.6	69	2.7	66
Northern America	307	0.8	77	1.9	71
Oceania	30	1.3	74	2.4	64

*Source:* United Nations Population Division.