

HIGHLIGHTS

In the two decades since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), as the world has made progress in addressing population and development issues, new population patterns and trends have emerged that require renewed, differentiated policies and programme efforts at both national and international levels. Using information on Government views and policies on population issues gathered in the World Population Policies Database, the current report documents changes in population policies and related indicators between 1976 and 2013 for all 193 Member States, two Observer States and two non-member States of the United Nations. Following are the highlights of the report:

POPULATION SIZE, GROWTH AND AGE STRUCTURE

POPULATION SIZE AND GROWTH

- In the past two decades, many Governments in less developed regions have realized the importance of reducing high rates of population growth, while a growing number of Governments in more developed regions have expressed concerns about low rates of population growth and population ageing.
- In 2013, 37 per cent of Governments worldwide had policies to lower the rate of population growth, whereas 20 per cent had policies to raise it. The remaining 43 per cent of Governments had policies to maintain the current rate of population growth or did not intervene to influence it.
- Since 1996, the percentage of Governments with policies to lower the population growth rate has remained largely unchanged, but the percentage to raise it has increased steadily, from 13 per cent in 1996 to 20 per cent in 2013.
- Nearly half of the Governments in more developed regions had policies to raise their rate of population growth, and only 2 per cent had policies to lower it in 2013. In contrast, nearly half of the Governments in less developed regions had policies to lower the rate of population growth, and 10 per cent had policies to raise it.
- In 2013, 26 out of 83 Governments with population growth rates below 1 per cent in 2010–2015 were not intervening to influence their growth rate. Of the 18 countries with negative population growth rates in 2010–2015, all but Bosnia and Herzegovina had policies to raise it.
- The percentage of Governments having policies to lower the rate of population growth has increased steadily in Africa, from 60 per cent in 1996 to 72 per cent in 2013. In contrast, the percentage of Governments with policies aimed at raising the rate of population growth has doubled in Europe, from 26 per cent in 1996 to 52 per cent in 2013.

POPULATION AGEING

- More than half (55 per cent) of the Governments worldwide considered population ageing in their countries as a major concern in 2013. Governments in more developed regions were more than twice as likely (92 per cent) as those in less developed regions (42 per cent) to consider population ageing as a major concern.

- Between 2005 and 2013, the percentage of Governments that considered population ageing as a major concern has increased in more developed regions (from 76 per cent to 92 per cent), but it has changed little in less developed regions (from 43 per cent to 42 per cent).
- More than 9 out of 10 Governments in Europe and Northern America considered population ageing as a major concern in 2013, compared with only 33 per cent of Governments in Africa and 38 per cent in Asia.
- Among the 189 countries with available information, Governments of 61 countries (47 per cent) changed their statutory retirement age and Governments of 89 countries (38 per cent) reformed their pension system in the past five years. Forty-seven (25 per cent) Governments changed both the retirement age and reformed their pension system in the past five years, while a little less than half (46 per cent) of Governments neither changed the statutory retirement age nor reformed their pension system.

FERTILITY, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

FERTILITY

- Whereas most countries in more developed regions have completed the fertility transition and are experiencing below-replacement fertility levels, many countries in less developed regions, particularly in Africa and Asia, are still experiencing moderate to high levels of fertility.
- Among major regions, the fertility level was estimated to be highest in Africa (4.7 children per woman) and lowest in Europe (1.6 children per woman) in 2010–2015. The fertility level for countries in Europe as a group has remained at this below-replacement level since 1996, while that for Africa has declined from an aggregate of 5.7 children per woman.
- In 2013, 27 per cent of Governments worldwide had policies to raise the level of fertility, 43 per cent had policies to lower it, and the remaining 30 per cent either had policies to maintain fertility at current levels or were not intervening to influence it.
- While the proportion of Governments with policies to lower fertility has remained virtually unchanged since 1996, the proportion with policies to raise fertility has almost doubled—from 14 per cent in 1996 to 27 per cent in 2013.
- In 2013, more than two thirds of Governments in more developed regions had policies to raise the level of fertility in their countries, compared with only one third having such policies in 1996. In contrast, only 14 per cent of Governments in less developed regions had policies to raise fertility in 2013 and 57 per cent had policies to lower it. The proportion of Governments in less developed regions with policies to lower fertility has remained around this level since 1996.
- A growing number of Governments worldwide have expressed concern about high rates of adolescent fertility. The percentage of Governments that expressed a major concern about the level of adolescent fertility in their countries has increased from 46 per cent in 1996 to 67 per cent in 2013. Seventy-six per cent of Governments in less developed regions and 40 per cent of Governments in more developed regions expressed a major concern about the level of adolescent fertility in their countries in 2013, up from 53 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively, in 1996.
- In 2013, nearly 9 out of 10 Governments worldwide had policies to reduce adolescent fertility, up from 6 out of 10 in 1996. Governments in both more developed regions and less developed regions have increasingly adopted policies to reduce adolescent fertility.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

- Globally, in 2013, 160 out of 197 Governments (81 per cent) provided direct support for family planning. The proportion of Governments providing direct support has risen steadily since 1976 when less than two thirds (63 per cent) of Governments provided such support. Governments of 20 countries provided only indirect support for family planning through the private sector or non-governmental organizations. The remaining 17 Governments did not support family planning, including the Holy See, which did not allow family planning programmes or services within its jurisdiction.
- Since the mid-1990s, the percentage of Governments providing direct support for family planning has continued to increase in less developed regions, from 82 per cent in 1996 to 93 per cent in 2013. Conversely, in more developed regions, the percentage of Governments providing direct support declined from 58 per cent in 1996 to 38 per cent in 2005, but then increased somewhat to 45 per cent in 2013.
- In 2013, more than 9 out of 10 Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean (97 per cent), Africa (96 per cent) and Oceania (94 per cent) provided direct support for family planning, whereas, less than half of Governments (45 per cent) did so in Europe. In Africa, in 2013, only one country did not support family planning, down from four countries in 1996.
- In 2013, 97 per cent of Governments permitted abortion to save a woman's life. Only the Governments of Chile, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, the Holy See, Malta and Nicaragua did not permit abortion under any circumstances.
- A growing number of countries have liberalized their abortion policies since 1996, yet in about two thirds of countries in 2013 abortion was permitted only when the physical or mental health of the mother was endangered, and in about half of the countries only when the pregnancy resulted from a rape or incest or in cases of foetal impairment.
- Abortion policies continue to be much more restrictive in developing countries than in developed countries. For instance, in 2013, 86 per cent of countries in more developed regions allowed abortion when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest or in cases of foetal impairment, compared with only about 40 per cent in less developed regions.
- Between 1996 and 2013, 57 countries (21 in Africa, 12 in Asia, 12 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 8 in Europe and 4 in Oceania) increased the number of legal grounds for abortion, while 8 countries (3 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2 in Africa, 2 in Asia and 1 in Oceania) reduced the number of grounds on which abortion is permitted.
- In 2013, all but 10 Governments (95 per cent) had adopted some legal measures or policies to prevent domestic violence, including 78 per cent with legal measures, 90 per cent with policies and 73 per cent with both legal measures and policies. Governments in more developed regions were more likely to have adopted such measures than those in less developed regions.

HEALTH AND MORTALITY

- Improvements in child mortality have been associated with a growing number of Governments that viewed the level of child mortality in their countries as acceptable. Yet in 2013, about two thirds of all Governments (65 per cent) worldwide still considered the level of under-five mortality in their respective countries as unacceptable.

- Governments in less developed regions (78 per cent) were about three times as likely as those in more developed regions (27 per cent) to consider the level of under-five mortality in their countries as unacceptable. All 49 Governments of least developed countries viewed the level of under-five mortality in their countries as unacceptable in 2013.
- Maternal mortality has been declining, but most Governments in less developed regions continue to view their level as unacceptable. In 2013, 76 per cent of Governments in less developed regions and 96 per cent in least developed countries considered the level of maternal mortality in their countries as unacceptable.
- Despite encouraging progress in recent years, HIV remains a major source of ill health and death worldwide. At the end of 2012, an estimated 35 million people (adults and children) were living with HIV, and 2.3 million people newly acquired HIV infection in 2012.
- In 2013, an overwhelming majority (80 per cent) of Governments expressed a major concern about HIV/AIDS in their countries. Governments in less developed regions (83 per cent) were somewhat more likely than in more developed regions (71 per cent) to consider HIV/AIDS as a major concern. All Governments in least developed countries considered HIV/AIDS to be a major concern.
- Over the years, a growing number of Governments have adopted measures to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, such as routine blood screening, condom distribution, provision of antiretroviral treatment, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, and anti-discrimination legal measures. Yet in 2013, one third of countries lacked any legal provision to prevent discrimination against people living with HIV.

MIGRATION

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND INTERNAL MIGRATION

- Only 10 per cent of all Governments in the world were satisfied with the current spatial distribution of the population within their countries in 2013. Sixty per cent of Governments desired a major change in their spatial distribution in 2013, an increase from 42 per cent in 1996.
- In 2013, a much greater proportion of Governments in less developed regions (70 per cent) desired a major change in the spatial distribution of population than in more developed regions (29 per cent).
- Among 185 countries with available data in 2013, 80 per cent of Governments had policies to lower rural to urban migration, an increase from 38 per cent in 1996.
- In 2013, the proportion of Governments that had policies to lower rural to urban migration was higher in less developed regions (84 per cent) than in more developed regions (67 per cent). Between 1996 and 2013, the proportion of Governments with such policies had increased in both more and less developed regions, as well as across major regions.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

- Over the years, international migration has increased in magnitude, complexity and impact. In 2013, the number of international migrants worldwide reached 232 million, up from 154 million in 1990. Currently, the global population of international migrants is growing at about 1.6 per cent per year.

- A growing number of Governments have shown openness to regular immigration in recent years. In 2013, about three quarters of all Governments either had policies to maintain the level of immigration or they were not intervening to change it, while 15 per cent had policies to lower and 11 per cent had policies to raise the level of immigration.
- Since the mid-1990s, the percentage of Governments that had policies to lower immigration has declined from 40 per cent in 1996 to 15 per cent in 2013, while the percentage seeking to raise immigration has increased from just 4 per cent in 1996 to 11 per cent in 2013.
- Between 1996 and 2013, while the percentage of Governments seeking to lower immigration has declined substantially in both more and less developed regions, the percentage of Governments seeking to raise immigration has risen sharply in more developed regions (from 2 per cent to 24 per cent), but not in less developed regions.
- Receiving countries have shown greater selectivity towards highly skilled workers. The percentage of Governments that had policies to raise immigration of highly skilled workers increased from 22 per cent in 2005 to 40 per cent in 2013.
- The majority of Governments recognize that successful integration of migrants into the host society is essential to maximize the opportunities afforded by migration. Globally, about two thirds (63 per cent) of Governments had policies in place in 2013 to promote the integration of non-nationals, an increase from 44 per cent in 1996.
- In 2013, 94 per cent of Governments in more developed regions had policies to promote integration of non-nationals, compared with only about one half of Governments in less developed regions (49 per cent) and less than one third in least developed countries (29 per cent).
- About two thirds (64 per cent) of all Governments in the world had less restrictive naturalization policies in 2013. Seventy-six per cent of Governments in more developed regions allowed less restrictive acquisition of naturalized citizenship in 2013, compared with 60 per cent of Governments in less developed regions and 47 per cent of least developed countries.
- In 2013, one out of four Governments worldwide had policies to discourage emigration. Since the mid-1990s, the proportion of Governments with policies to lower emigration has remained virtually unchanged, while the proportion with policies to raise emigration has increased steadily.
- In 2013, slightly over half of all Governments (55 per cent) had policies that allowed their citizens abroad to retain their citizenship of origin without restriction when acquiring a second country's citizenship, another 19 per cent allowed dual citizenship under certain conditions, and the remaining 26 per cent did not have any provisions to allow dual citizenship. A much smaller proportion of Governments in more developed regions had a total prohibition of dual citizenship (14 per cent) than in less developed regions (30 per cent) or least developed countries (33 per cent).
- In 2013, out of 128 countries with available data on six key measures to attract investment by diaspora, Governments of only 50 countries had instituted at least one of the six measures. Among these, streamlined bureaucratic procedures for investment was the most frequently adopted measure (23 per cent of the countries), followed by tax exceptions or breaks (15 per cent) and preferential treatment in providing credit (14 per cent). Countries in less developed regions were more likely to have adopted diaspora investment measures than those in more developed regions.