

## INTRODUCTION

Timely and accurate information about population trends is in high demand. Knowledge about the current size and structure of a country's population is needed for the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in almost all areas of public life. Because policies are aimed at achieving goals in the future, knowledge about future population trends is required. What is true for individual countries also holds for the international community. United Nations activities in areas as diverse as health and environment, poverty reduction and promoting social progress and economic growth rely on comprehensive and consistent demographic information. The population estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) provide that information.

The Population Division has been preparing the official United Nations estimates and projections of the world's population since 1951. The *2004 Revision of World Population Prospects* is the nineteenth set of global estimates and projections completed by the Population Division since that date. Until 1978, revisions of the global set of population projections were published every five years, but since that date the Population Division has issued revisions of the estimates and projections for all countries and areas of the world every two years (see bibliography below).

The data produced for each revision of *World Population Prospects* represent a unique set of comprehensive, consistent and internationally comparable estimates and projections of population by age and sex as well as estimates and projections of mortality and fertility schedules by age and sex and estimates of net international migration for each country. Such data serve as a basis for the calculation of sectoral estimates and projections produced by the various agencies and bodies of the United Nations system. Given the numerous uses of the Population Division's estimates and projections as well as the fact that future world population trends are inherently uncertain, it is important to ensure that the official set of population estimates and projections of the

United Nations system are kept as up-to-date as possible. This goal is met by revising the official set of projections every two years and, in the process, incorporating the most recent demographic information available for each country of the world.

The results of the *2004 Revision* are published in three volumes. Volume I presents all major demographic indicators, for all countries and their aggregates, in the form of demographic profiles and indicator-specific data tables. Volume II presents detailed information about the composition of populations by age and sex. This third volume is devoted to the analysis of the results, the methodological underpinnings and the documentation of the data sources of the *2004 Revision*. In addition, the results of the *2004 Revision* are available in digital form on three CD-ROMs, as well as on the Population Division's website at <http://www.unpopulation.org>. A wall chart showing population estimates and projections for 2005, 2025 and 2050 for all countries of the world and corresponding demographic indicators has also been issued.

The *2004 Revision* provides estimates and projections for 228 countries. For 192 countries of the world that had an estimated population of 100,000 inhabitants or more in the year 2000, the projections are carried out using the cohort-component method, which requires explicit assumptions on future fertility, mortality and migration trends for each country. For 36 countries that in 2000 had fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, projections of the total population are made on the basis of assumptions about the future rate of population growth. Such methodology does not require or produce information on future fertility, mortality and migration levels.

Estimates and projections are made and presented for each country separately. The estimates cover the period 1950-2005 and the projections cover the period 2005-2050. Results are also presented for the world as a whole, its 21 regions and six major areas. In addition, countries are organized by level of development. The sets of coun-

tries that constitute each region, major area and development group are listed in the explanatory notes.

The *2004 Revision* includes seven projection variants and three AIDS scenarios. The seven variants are: low, medium, high, constant-fertility, instant-replacement-fertility, constant-mortality, and zero-migration. The first five variants, namely, low, medium, high, constant-fertility and instant-replacement-fertility, differ among themselves exclusively in the assumptions made regarding the future path of fertility. The sixth variant, named constant-mortality, differs from the medium variant with regard to the path followed by future mortality. The seventh variant, named zero-migration, differs from the medium variant only with regard to the path followed by future international migrations. Projection variants differ from each other only for the period 2005-2050. The low, medium and high variants constitute the core of the official projections. They encompass the likely future path of population growth for each country of the world. The low and high variants provide lower and upper bounds for that growth. The medium variant is a useful central reference for trends over the longer term. The constant-fertility, instant-replacement-fertility, constant-mortality, and zero-migration variants have been produced for illustrative purposes, to permit an assessment of the effects that future assumptions on fertility, mortality and international migration in the medium variant have in relation to these scenarios.

In addition, the *2004 Revision* includes three AIDS scenarios named No-AIDS, high-AIDS and AIDS-vaccine. These scenarios are variations of the medium variant and differ from each other and from that variant on the path of mortality because they are based on different assumptions regarding the course of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Note that only 60 countries are considered to be significantly affected by the epidemic. Consequently, the AIDS scenarios produce different projections only for those countries.

The No-AIDS scenario applies the mortality likely to be exhibited by the non-infected popula-

tion to the whole population, thus excluding the direct impacts of the epidemic. The high-AIDS scenario assumes that the AIDS modeling parameters determining the path of the HIV/AIDS epidemic remain constant at their 2005 level. The AIDS-vaccine scenario assumes that there are no new HIV infections starting in 2006. The estimates associated with the No-AIDS scenario (that is, the figures for 1980-2005) differ from the estimates of the other variants because AIDS started affecting the populations in the majority of the highly affected countries around 1980. By comparing these results with those of the estimates and medium variant that explicitly include the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the user can infer the impact of the epidemic. The two other AIDS scenarios (high-AIDS and AIDS-Vaccine) provide alternative bounds on the possible course of the epidemic.

Volumes I, II and III present results for the three main variants: medium, high and low. Additionally, projection results from the constant-fertility variant are shown in volume I. The results of the three additional variants, instant-replacement, constant-mortality and zero-migration, and of the three special HIV/AIDS scenarios are not included in the first two volumes. However, the results of these additional variants and scenarios are contained in the CD-ROMs entitled "Comprehensive" and "Extended" (see order form, chapter VIII).

This third volume of the *2004 Revision of World Population Prospects* combines analysis and documentation. It provides, in its first five chapters, a comprehensive overview about current settings and long-term trends of population size and its composition (chapters I and II), fertility (chapter III), mortality (chapter IV) and international migration (chapter V). The next two chapters present a description of the methodologies used and the assumptions made for the preparation of the *2004 Revision* (chapter VI) and documentation of country-specific data sources and estimation methods (chapter VII). The final chapter contains information about and a form for ordering the data from the *2004 Revision* on CD-ROM (chapter VIII).

This report includes an executive summary of the main results and a summary of the assump-

tions of the *2004 Revision* in all six official languages of the United Nations.

