

II. POPULATION SIZE AND GROWTH

In late 2011, the world's population surpassed the 7 billion mark and it is currently growing by an additional 78 million persons every year (United Nations, 2011a). By 2050, the world's population is likely to reach an unprecedented size between 8.1 billion and 10.6 billion people. Most of the future population growth will occur in developing countries, particularly in least developed countries. Presently, many developing countries still have population growth rates that, if sustained, would undermine their development and put pressure on future generations. Consequently, stabilizing population growth is a goal in many of these countries that must be achieved in order to preserve the options for the future and ensure sustainable development. In contrast, developed countries and some middle income countries are experiencing below-replacement fertility levels (less than 2.1 children per woman), declining population growth rates, and in some cases, declining population size. These countries are facing shrinking working-age populations, rapid population ageing, and associated implications for renewability of the labour force and sustainability of social security and health care systems.

Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, many Governments in developing countries have realized the importance of reducing high rates of population growth in order to ease pressures on resources, combat climate change, prevent food shortages, and provide decent employment and basic social services to all their inhabitants. Many of these Governments have also realized that effective implementation of population policies requires the creation of an institutional framework that ensures the integration of population variables into development planning with adequate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. While Governments in developing countries have adopted measures to reduce population growth rates, a growing number of Governments in developed countries have expressed concerns about low rates of population growth.

VIEWS ON THE RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH

Globally, the percentage of Governments that viewed their rate of population growth as too high has been declining since the mid-1990s and there has been a corresponding increase in the percentage of Governments that viewed their rate of population growth as too low, whereas the percentage that viewed it as satisfactory has remained unchanged (table II.1). In developed countries, the percentage that viewed their rate of population growth as too low did not show a clear trend between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s, but it has doubled since the mid-1990s—from 27 per cent in 1996 to 53 per cent in 2011. On the other hand, although rates of population growth have continued to decline in developing countries, from an average annual rate of 2.4 per cent in 1970–1975 to 1.3 per cent in 2005–2010 (United Nations, 2011a), nearly half of developing-country Governments (46 per cent) still viewed their rate of population growth as too high in 2011. Among the least developed countries, the percentage of Governments that viewed their population growth as too high rose from 26 per cent in 1976 to 80 per cent in 2005 and remained at that level in 2011.

By 2011, Africa had the highest percentage of countries (65 per cent) whose Governments considered their rate of population growth as too high, down from 74 per cent in 1996 (table II.1). At the other extreme, Europe had the highest percentage of countries (55 per cent) whose Governments considered their rate of population growth as too low, up from 30 per cent in 1996. In 2011, all but 2 of the 26 developed countries whose Governments viewed their rate of population growth as too low were in Europe. In Asia, where most countries have experienced substantial declines in fertility in recent years, 40 per cent of Governments viewed their rate of population growth as too high, and 28 per cent viewed it as too low. Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region where the percentage of Governments that viewed the rate of population growth as too high has been decreasing steadily, from 39 per cent in 1996 to 21 per cent in 2011.

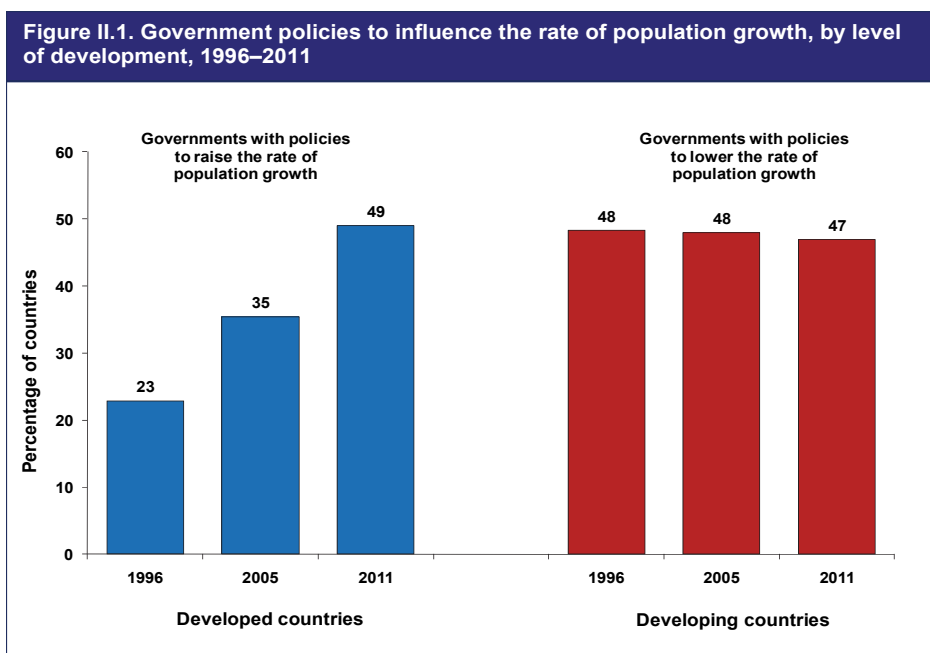
POLICIES TO INFLUENCE THE RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH

To a large extent, concerns about the consequences of high and low population growth rates have been translated into policy interventions. In 2011, 36 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 44 per cent of Governments had policies to maintain the current rate of population growth or did not intervene to influence it (table II.2). While the percentage of Governments with policies to lower population growth rate has remained largely unchanged since 1996, the percentage with policies to raise fertility has increased steadily, from 13 per cent in 1996 to 20 per cent 2011.

Not surprisingly, and consistent with concerns about low rates of population growth in developed countries and concerns about high rates of population growth in developing countries, there was a marked distinction in the policies to influence population growth rates by level of development. In 2011, 49 per cent of Governments in developed countries had policies to raise their rate of population growth and only 2 per cent had policies to lower it. In contrast, 47 per cent of Governments in developing countries had policies to lower the rate of population growth and 10 per cent had policies to raise it (table II.2).

Over time, as population growth rates have declined, the percentage of Governments with policies to raise the rate of population growth has increased steadily in developed countries, from 23 per cent in 1996 to 49 per cent in 2011 (figure II.1). In developing countries, where some have seen considerable declines in population growth rates while others continue to have high rates, the percentage of Governments attempting to lower the rate of population growth has remained mostly unchanged since 1996. However, in least developed countries where population growth rates have remained high in most cases, 82 per cent of Governments had policies to lower the rate of population growth in 2011, up from 55 per cent in 1996, 29 per cent in 1986 and 14 per cent in 1976 (table II.2).

As in the case of least developed countries, the percentage of Governments having policies to lower the rate of population growth has increased steadily in Africa since the mid-1970s, from 25 per cent in 1976 to 60 per cent in 1996 and 70 per cent in 2011 (table II.2). Conversely, the



percentage of Governments in Africa that did not intervene to influence the rate of population growth has continued to decline, from 60 per cent in 1976 to 15 per cent in 2011.

In contrast to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean had a declining percentage of Governments with policies to lower the rate of population growth, from 39 per cent in 1996 to 21 per cent in 2011. This decline in Latin America and the Caribbean was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the percentage of Governments attempting to maintain the rate of population growth.

On the other extreme, in Europe, the percentage of Governments with policies aimed at raising the rate of population growth has doubled since the mid-1990s, from 26 per cent in 1996 to 52 per cent in 2011. This increase has been accompanied by a corresponding decline in the percentage of Governments that did not intervene in the rate of population growth. Asia has also seen a slow, but steady increase in the percentage of Governments attempting to raise the rate of population growth, from 17 per cent in 1996 to 23 per cent in 2011, while the percentage attempting to lower it has remained mostly unchanged (table II.2).

The changes in Government views and policies described above have been generally matched by a slowdown in population growth in many countries. Whereas in 1970–1975, 35 countries had population growth rates of 3 per cent or more and 70 countries had growth rates ranging between 2 per cent and 3 per cent, the corresponding figures for 2005–2010 were 12 and 40, respectively (United Nations, 2011b). Only two countries (Marshall Islands, Nauru) with population growth rates below 1 per cent in 2005–2010 still considered their growth rates as too high in 2011. Likewise, two countries (Cameroon, Nauru) whose Governments considered the rate of population growth as too high in 2011 did not have policies to influence it, and four countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Palau) whose Governments considered the rate of population growth as too low also did not intervene. Among the 17 countries

with negative population growth rate in 2005–2010, the Governments of 14 felt that the growth rate of their populations was too low in 2011 and 13 had policies to raise it. Only the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina which considered its rate of population growth as too low did not intervene to raise it.

Chapter II

Tables

Table II.1. Government views on the rate of population growth, 1976–2011

Year	By level of development							
	Number of countries				Percentage			
	<i>Too low</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Too high</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Too low</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Too high</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>World</i>								
1976	34	67	49	150	23	45	33	100
1986	26	73	65	164	16	45	40	100
1996	31	83	79	193	16	43	41	100
2005	37	81	76	194	19	42	39	100
2011	44	83	69	196	22	42	35	100
<i>More developed regions</i>								
1976	11	22	1	34	32	65	3	100
1986	6	28	0	34	18	82	0	100
1996	13	34	1	48	27	71	2	100
2005	21	27	0	48	44	56	0	100
2011	26	22	1	49	53	45	2	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>								
1976	23	45	48	116	20	39	41	100
1986	20	45	65	130	15	35	50	100
1996	18	49	78	145	12	34	54	100
2005	16	54	76	146	11	37	52	100
2011	18	61	68	147	12	41	46	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>								
1976	6	25	11	42	14	60	26	100
1986	4	20	24	48	8	42	50	100
1996	2	11	36	49	4	22	73	100
2005	0	10	40	50	0	20	80	100
2011	0	10	39	49	0	20	80	100

Table II.1. (Continued)

Year	By major area							
	Number of countries				Percentage			
	Too low	Satisfactory	Too high	Total	Too low	Satisfactory	Too high	Total
<i>Africa</i>								
1976	7	24	17	48	15	50	35	100
1986	3	18	30	51	6	35	59	100
1996	1	13	39	53	2	25	74	100
2005	1	14	38	53	2	26	72	100
2011	1	18	35	54	2	33	65	100
<i>Asia</i>								
1976	11	12	14	37	30	32	38	100
1986	13	13	12	38	34	34	32	100
1996	11	16	19	46	24	35	41	100
2005	12	15	20	47	26	32	43	100
2011	13	15	19	47	28	32	40	100
<i>Europe</i>								
1976	11	18	0	29	38	62	0	100
1986	6	23	0	29	21	79	0	100
1996	13	29	1	43	30	67	2	100
2005	20	23	0	43	47	53	0	100
2011	24	19	1	44	55	43	2	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>								
1976	4	10	13	27	15	37	48	100
1986	3	14	16	33	9	42	48	100
1996	2	18	13	33	6	55	39	100
2005	1	23	9	33	3	70	27	100
2011	2	24	7	33	6	73	21	100
<i>Northern America</i>								
1976	0	2	0	2	0	100	0	100
1986	0	2	0	2	0	100	0	100
1996	0	2	0	2	0	100	0	100
2005	0	2	0	2	0	100	0	100
2011	1	1	0	2	50	50	0	100
<i>Oceania</i>								
1976	1	1	5	7	14	14	71	100
1986	1	3	7	11	9	27	64	100
1996	4	5	7	16	25	31	44	100
2005	3	4	9	16	19	25	56	100
2011	3	6	7	16	19	38	44	100

Table II.2. Government policies on the rate of population growth, 1976–2011

Year	By level of development									
	Number of countries					Percentage				
	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total
<i>World</i>										
1976	28	0	39	83	150	19	0	26	55	100
1986	26	12	53	73	164	16	7	32	45	100
1996	25	16	71	81	193	13	8	37	42	100
2005	29	32	70	63	194	15	16	36	32	100
2011	39	41	70	46	196	20	21	36	23	100
<i>More developed regions</i>										
1976	8	0	0	26	34	24	0	0	76	100
1986	8	8	0	18	34	24	24	0	53	100
1996	11	6	1	30	48	23	13	2	63	100
2005	17	8	0	23	48	35	17	0	48	100
2011	24	7	1	17	49	49	14	2	35	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>										
1976	20	0	39	57	116	17	0	34	49	100
1986	18	4	53	55	130	14	3	41	42	100
1996	14	10	70	51	145	10	7	48	35	100
2005	12	24	70	40	146	8	16	48	27	100
2011	15	34	69	29	147	10	23	47	20	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>										
1976	5	0	6	31	42	12	0	14	74	100
1986	4	3	14	27	48	8	6	29	56	100
1996	1	1	27	20	49	2	2	55	41	100
2005	0	4	35	11	50	0	8	70	22	100
2011	0	3	40	6	49	0	6	82	12	100

Table II.2. (Continued)

Year	By major area									
	Number of countries					Percentage				
	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total
<i>Africa</i>										
1976	7	0	12	29	48	15	0	25	60	100
1986	4	3	20	24	51	8	6	39	47	100
1996	2	2	32	17	53	4	4	60	32	100
2005	1	6	35	11	53	2	11	66	21	100
2011	1	7	38	8	54	2	13	70	15	100
<i>Asia</i>										
1976	9	0	14	14	37	24	0	38	38	100
1986	13	1	12	12	38	34	3	32	32	100
1996	8	5	18	15	46	17	11	39	33	100
2005	10	12	19	6	47	21	26	40	13	100
2011	11	15	18	3	47	23	32	38	6	100
<i>Europe</i>										
1976	8	0	0	21	29	28	0	0	72	100
1986	8	6	0	15	29	28	21	0	52	100
1996	11	6	1	25	43	26	14	2	58	100
2005	16	8	0	19	43	37	19	0	44	100
2011	23	7	1	13	44	52	16	2	30	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>										
1976	3	0	9	15	27	11	0	33	56	100
1986	0	0	15	18	33	0	0	45	55	100
1996	1	2	13	17	33	3	6	39	52	100
2005	0	5	8	20	33	0	15	24	61	100
2011	2	9	7	15	33	6	27	21	45	100
<i>Northern America</i>										
1976	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
1986	0	1	0	1	2	0	50	0	50	100
1996	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
2005	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
2011	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
<i>Oceania</i>										
1976	1	0	4	2	7	14	0	57	29	100
1986	1	1	6	3	11	9	9	55	27	100
1996	3	1	7	5	16	19	6	44	31	100
2005	2	1	8	5	16	13	6	50	31	100
2011	2	3	6	5	16	13	19	38	31	100

