

I. TOTAL POPULATION

International objective

Recognizing that the ultimate goal is the improvement of the quality of life of present and future generations, the objective is to facilitate the demographic transition as soon as possible in countries where there is an imbalance between demographic rates and social, economic and environmental goals, while fully respecting human rights. This process will contribute to the stabilization of the world population, and, together with changes in unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, to sustainable development and economic growth (para.6.3 of ICPD Programme of Action).

DEFINITION

Total population refers to the mid-year population.

RECENT SITUATION

Population size is relevant to the goals of recent United Nations conferences as a background indicator that approximates a country's demand or need for basic social services.

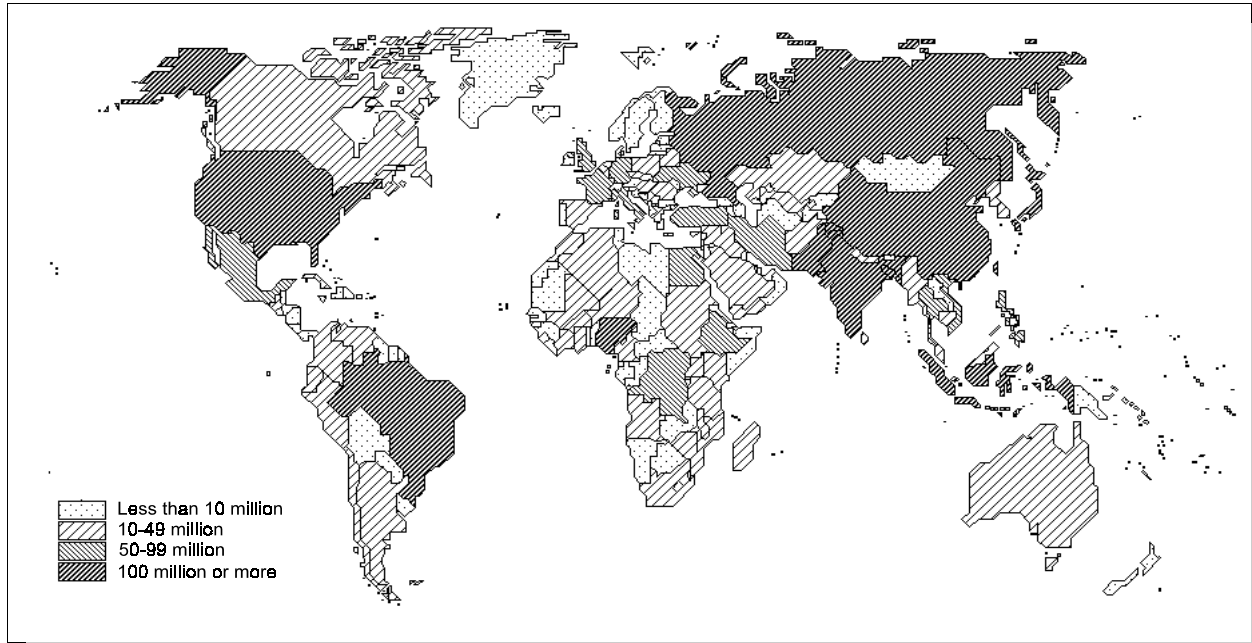
Although there are no Conference goals for population size, the ICPD Programme of Action notes that early stabilization of the world population would make a crucial contribution to the achievement of sustainable development (paras. 1.11, 3.14, 6.3). In addition, it is expected that implementation of the goals and objectives contained in the Programme of Action—which address many of the fundamental population, health, education and development challenges facing the human community—would result in world population growth at levels below the United Nations “medium” projection (para. 1.4).

During October 1999, world population reached 6 billion persons, doubling in size in under 40 years. World population is still growing at a rate of 1.3 per cent per year, with an average annual addition of 78 million persons during 1995-2000.

As of 1999, countries with a population of 100 million or more are China, India, United States of America, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Bangladesh, Japan and Nigeria (fig. I.1).

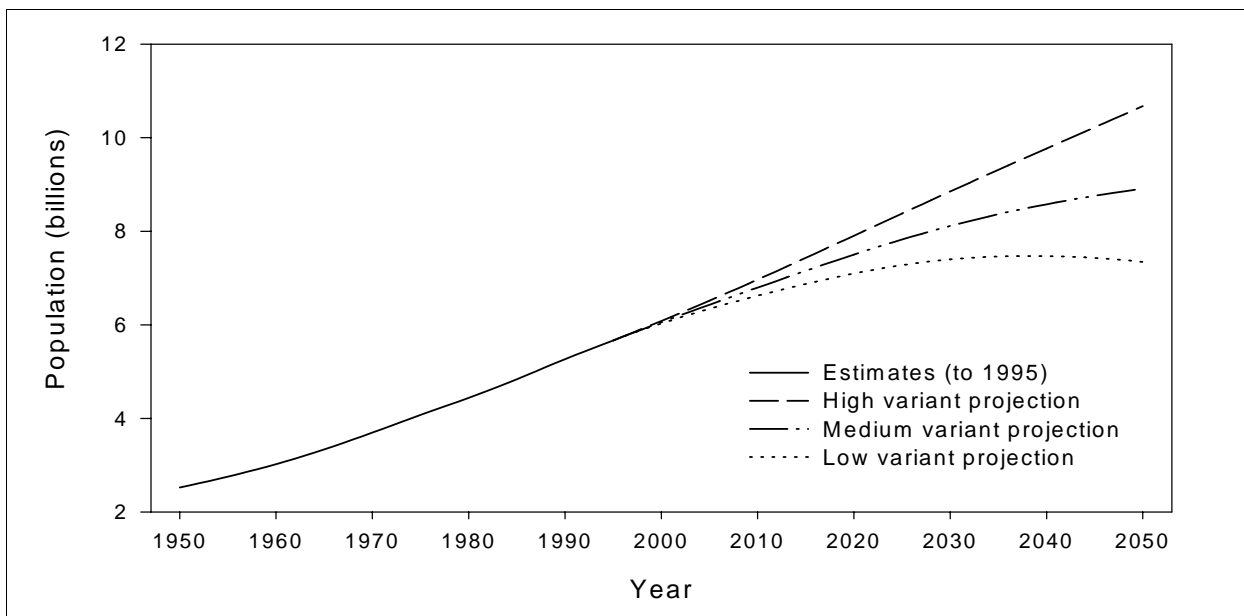
Both the annual growth rate and the annual addition to numbers are projected to decline in the coming years, but the pace of future change is uncertain. According to the medium variant of the United Nations population estimates and projections (United Nations, 1999), world population will reach 7.2 billion by the year 2015, which is the reference date for achieving many of the Conference goals (fig. I.2). Population will still be growing by about 50 million persons per year during 2010-2015, according to the medium-variant projections. By the year 2050, population is projected to reach 8.9 billion. However, according to the high and low variant projections, which are considered to be plausible alternatives, population size could be as high as 10.7 billion in 2050 or as low as 7.3 billion.

Figure I.1. Total population, 1999



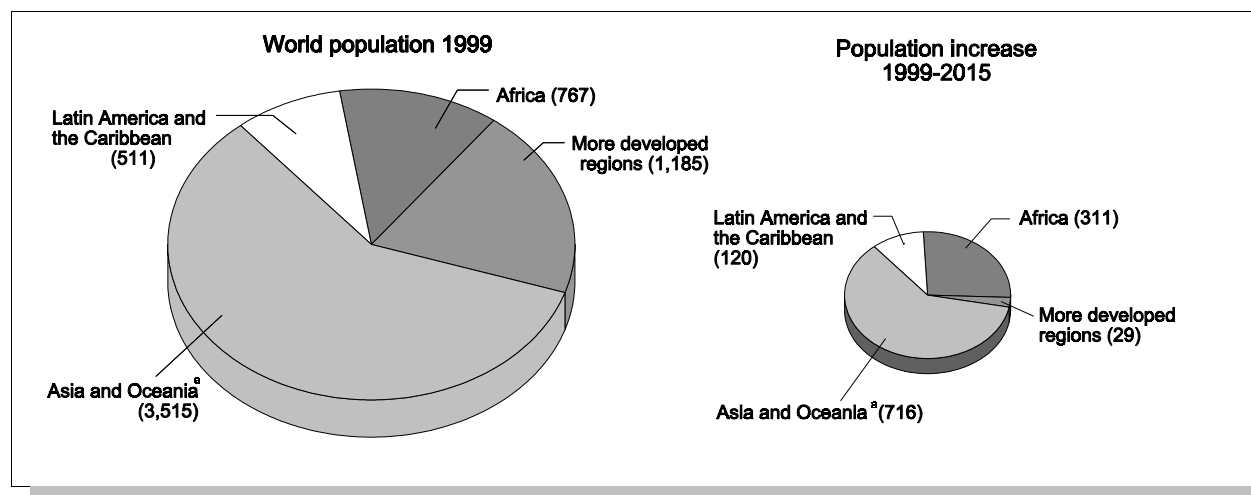
Source: *World Population Prospects: The 1998 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.XIII.9).

Figure I.2. Estimated and projected growth of the world population, 1950-2050



Source: *World Population Prospects: The 1998 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.XIII.9).

Figure I.3. Distribution of world population, 1999, and the increase in population, 1999-2015
(Millions)



Source: *World Population Prospects: The 1998 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.XIII.9).

^a Excluding Japan, Australia and New Zealand, which are included in the more developed regions.

Roughly one fifth of the world population currently lives in the more developed regions, including Australia/New Zealand, Europe, Japan and North America (fig. I.3). The remaining 80 per cent live in the developing countries of Africa (13 per cent), Asia and Oceania (58 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (8 per cent). The less developed regions are projected to absorb 98 per cent of the population growth occurring between 1999 and 2015.

SOURCES OF DATA, COVERAGE AND QUALITY

Estimates of total population are calculated and biennially updated by the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat, within the framework of the official United Nations world population estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division.

Data underlying the population estimates are national and subnational census data and data on births, deaths and migrants that are available from national sources and publications, as well as from special country questionnaires sent to national statistical offices by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. For all countries, census and registration data are evaluated and, if necessary, adjusted for incompleteness by the Population Division as part of its preparations of the official United Nations population estimates and projections.

TOTAL POPULATION

The Population Division updates and publishes estimates of total population in its *World Population Prospects* series. The most recent publication is *World Population Prospects: the 1998 Revision* (United Nations, 1999). Data are available for all countries and areas of the world. Estimates are presented for 5-year periods from 1950 through 1995. Projected total populations are given through 2050.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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REFERENCES

United Nations (1999). *World Population Prospects: The 1998 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables*. Sales No. E.99.XIII.9.