



## *Facts You'll Find in Only One Source*

### GENERAL TRENDS

- Over the past 20 years, the demographic transition of the countries of the Americas has intensified, spurred by reductions in the birth rate, overall mortality, fertility, and natural population growth.

The Region has also experienced "epidemiological polarization," in which the population's mortality profile is affected simultaneously, and to nearly the same degree, by both communicable and noncommunicable diseases.

- Globalization has led to greater homogeneity in consumption and lifestyle patterns throughout the Region, with significant health implications. These include the spread of disease or vectors, such as cholera, foot-and-mouth disease, and dengue fever, and the introduction of unhealthy behaviors and lifestyle choices, such as smoking, obesity, use of illegal drugs, and violence.

### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRENDS

- In 1990, 41% of the households in Latin America (some 200 million people) were living in poverty, and this percentage fell to 36% by 1997. The distribution of the population living below the poverty line varied greatly from country to country, with a low of 5.9% in Canada to a high of nearly 65% in Haiti.
- Illiteracy decreased between the beginning of the 1980s and the end of the 1990s, but nearly 13% of the population in the Region was still illiterate in 1998, with a high of 52.2% in Haiti and a low of 0.5% in the United States.

### ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

- Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, and droughts, have significantly affected the Region over the past three decades. In Latin America and the Caribbean, some 82,000 people died and 11.9 lost their homes as a result of these disasters, with damage totaling approximately US\$ 45 billion between 1972 and 1999.
- As a result of the countries' population growth, energy needs, and development policies, between 1990 and 2000, approximately 37,000 km<sup>2</sup> of forest in Latin America was lost each year to deforestation. This represents an average annual loss of 0.5% of forest cover. If this trend continues, 5% of forest cover will have been lost by 2010.

### PUBLIC HEALTH TRENDS

- In 2000, life expectancy at birth ranged from 54.1 to 79.2 years, meaning a difference of more than 25 years in the Region's countries between those with the longest life expectancy at birth and the shortest. Between 1950–1955 and 1995–2000, the difference in life

expectancy between men and women increased from 3.3 to 5.7 years in Latin America, from 2.7 to 5.2 years in the Caribbean, and from 5.7 to 6.6 years in North America.

- Vaccination coverage for measles, one of today's most important measures of health services, has increased from 48% in 1980 to 93% by 2000. During this same period, measles incidence has fallen from 408 new cases per 1,000,000 inhabitants to 2 new cases per 1,000,000 inhabitants.

### POPULATION AND MORTALITY TRENDS

- The estimated population of the Americas for 2000 was 823.3 million, or some 14% of the world population. This represents a 25% increase over 1980 figures. The estimate for 2002 is 854 million, or 4% more than in 2000. North America will be the most populous subregion, with some 320 million persons, 85% of whom live in the United States. Brazil is second, followed by the Andean countries and Mexico. The Caribbean is the least populous subregion, with just under 8 million, even though it has the most countries and political units.
- Around 2000, the average number of deaths per year was 5.8 million. The subregion with the highest number of deaths is North America, (43% of all deaths), followed by Brazil (20%). The high number of deaths in North America is due not just to population size, but also to the percentage of older individuals in the population, which is very high in relation to the other subregions.

### MIGRATION AND URBANIZATION TRENDS

- According to estimates, more than a million people will enter the Americas in 2002. However, only two subregions attract immigration: North America, with more than 1.35 million persons, and the Southern Cone, with 12,000 immigrants per year. In contrast, Mexico has the highest emigration balance, with nearly 300,000 people leaving in 2002, followed by the Latin Caribbean, with more than 43,000 leaving the subregion annually.
- The speed of urbanization differs markedly among the countries in each subregion. In the Andean countries, Ecuador's urbanization process is the most rapid, and Peru's is the slowest, while in the Southern Cone, Argentina is showing rapid urbanization, while Chile's is slow.



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