

Information you'll find in only one source

GENERAL TRENDS

- The Region of the Americas continues to experience three major demographic shifts: population growth, urbanization, and aging. Since 1950, the regional population has almost tripled, reaching 900.6 million inhabitants in 2006, according to the latest United Nations population revision. Under a mid-fertility variant scenario, this population is projected to surpass the mark of 1 billion people, more than 600 million of them in Latin America and the Caribbean, in 2016.
- In almost all countries, chronic degenerative diseases have replaced communicable diseases as leading causes of illness, disability, and death. Diseases of the circulatory system, malignant neoplasms, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes have become the leading causes of death, along with external causes such as accidents, homicides, and other sources of violence.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRENDS

- Around 2005, national health expenditure for all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for approximately 7% of the region's gross domestic product or an annual expenditure of approximately US\$ 500 per capita. Approximately 45% of this expenditure corresponded to public spending on health—on services by ministries of health, other central government and local government institutions, and through compulsory contributions to privately run health funds or social security institutions. The remaining 55% corresponded to private expenditure, including direct out-of-pocket expenditure to purchase health goods and services and to cover health services consumed through private health insurance plans or prepaid health care plans.
- Violence resulting from unhealthy social environments in marginal urban areas is taking a deadly toll. Official registries show that in the last 10 years 110,000-120,000 homicides and 55,000-58,000 suicides occurred in the Region. Governments and the health sector in a number of Latin American countries are growing increasingly concerned about juvenile violence, which is leading to the formation of gangs that conduct such transnational operations as kidnapping, human trafficking, and weapons and drug smuggling.

PUBLIC HEALTH TRENDS

- In 2002 the Americas registered approximately 374,000 deaths due to road traffic accidents, and every year many hundreds of thousands suffer injuries and disabilities due to these accidents. Road traffic injuries ranked as the ninth leading cause of death for the Region overall for 2002.

- From 1981 to 2005, more than 1.7 million persons with AIDS were officially reported in the Americas, with 38,000 of these cases younger than 15 years of age. The percentage of females with AIDS reported in the Americas increased from 6% of all prevalent AIDS cases in 1994 to approximately 31% in 2005, with this general trend repeated in all subregions.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

- According to the 2001 Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), over the course of the 20th century the global temperature had increased 0.2–0.6°C and the sea level had risen 10–20 cm. Projections show a global warming of 1.4–5.8°C by 2100. As a result, along with other regions of the world, the Americas will experience periods of intense precipitation, hurricanes, and flooding that will severely affect human health and well-being.
- Availability of drinking water has improved in the Americas since 1990, but that improvement has not grown at an even pace throughout the hemisphere. By 2002, 93% of the population in the Americas used improved sources of drinking water, while coverage in the North American region (the United States and Canada) was 100%, in Central America was 83%, and within that subregion, in Guatemala the proportion of the population using improved sources of drinking water was only 75%.

POPULATION AND MORTALITY TRENDS

- The two population groups with the fastest growth in the Americas are the 60 and older and the 80 and older age groups. In North America, where the population-aging process began earlier, people 60 years of age and older went from representing 12.4% of the total population in 1950 to 16.7% in 2005; it is projected that this population group will increase to 20.1% of the total population in 2015 and to 27.3% in 2050. In Latin America and the Caribbean, on the other hand, the 60 and older age group comprised 5.6% of the 1950 population, increasing to 9.0% in 2005; it is projected to reach 11.3% of the total population in 2015 and 24.3% in 2050.
- Infant and child mortality have fallen significantly: the under-5 mortality rate decreased from 54 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 25 per 1,000 live births in 2005—a 64% drop. The infant mortality rate decreased from 42 to 19 per 1,000 live births (from 2001 to 2005, depending on the country).