

DEMOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL DATA OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE HISPANIC CARIBBEAN

(Complementary information compiled by the Conference Coordinators)

The purpose of this complementary document is to show some information related to the demographic and cultural factors that this data represents as a challenge to the mission of the church. Becoming aware of some of this data is of great importance when considering strategic priorities and has to do with the utilization of scant human, material or financial resources that we have.

TOTAL POPULATION

Currently Latin America and the Caribbean together have 8.6% of the world's population, situated in an area of 20,537,000 Km² that is equal to 15.1% of the earth's area. Composed of 46 countries, of which only 21 belong to the Spanish or Portuguese speaking world.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Growth Rate</i>	<i>Density</i>
2000	519,131,119	+ 1.59%	25/km ²
2010	595,023,969	+ 1.31%	29/km ²
2025	696,641,498	+ 0.93	34/km ²

URBAN/RURAL POPULATION¹

All the countries that make up Latin America have a projected urban population to 2005 of 77%, varying from country to country. Country by country data are the following: Argentina 91%, Chile 87%, Uruguay 93%, Paraguay 60%, Brazil 82%, Bolivia 68%, Peru 68%, Ecuador 66%, Colombia 77%, Venezuela 89%, Costa Rica 52%, Nicaragua 57%, Honduras 52%, El Salvador 58%, Guatemala 40%, Mexico 77%, Cuba 82% and the Dominican Republic 63%. In general, the South American countries tend to have balance between urban and rural. This fact is important in regard to the type of strategies to develop according to each reality. For example, it would be inadequate in the case of Guatemala to follow a strategy that is primarily urban since the country is mostly rural.

Within the region there are 52 cities that have populations greater than one million inhabitants, and Mexico City and São Paulo are two of the world's largest cities.

SIGNIFICANT AGE-RELATED CHARACTERISTICS²

The population under the age of 15, that is to say children, is projected to be 29.6% in 2005, almost a third of the population. If we consider the population up to 24 years of age, also

¹ UN, *Demographic Bulletin No. 63*, January 1999.

² CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), "Population Estimates and Projections for Latin America", 2002.

Demographic and Cultural Data (Conference Coordinator)

2005 projections, it means that 48.30% or almost half of the total population of Latin America and the Caribbean is between infancy and early youth. If we decide to include young people up to the age of 29, the percentage rises to 56.99%.

Unfortunately the current condition of youth in Latin America presents diverse weaknesses. Since almost 80% of the youth in this region live in urban areas, in first place, this leads to the growing poverty of said concentration; in second place, while one part is able to acquire the necessary human and social resources, others see the impossibility of accessing such opportunities; in third place, the youth are affected directly by the weakening educational system due to lack of family resources or due to the precarious conditions that the state offers in the face of this situation. All of this is reflected in a situation of poverty among the youth in poor urban strata, creating in them a sense of isolation from the dynamic center or even worse, a situation of social exclusion.³

On the other hand, if we take into account the older adult, over 65 years of age, for 2005 this population will reach 5.82%. If we consider those 60 or older, it reaches 8.51% that is projected to reach 14.0% by 2025, indicating the gradual importance that this sector, called the third age, will be gaining.

RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

This information is taken mostly from national census, based on the statements given by individuals about their type of religious adherence. This offers us comparative numbers that allow us to analyze “coldly” our progress, and from there, the actual demographic gravitation that taken together, to think in the type and reach of transformational influence that can be done, in our case, from the members of the evangelical churches.

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Percentage of population</i>	<i>Number of adherents (in millions)</i>	<i>Annual growth rate</i>
Christian	91.65	476.6	+ 1.52%
Non-religious	4.28	21.4	+ 2.66%
Ethnic	2.73	14.7	+ 1.17%
Islamic	0.34	1.4	+ 2.88%
Jewish	0.20	1.1	+ 1.47%
Baha'i	0.18	0.829	+ 3.11%
Buddhist/Eastern	0.16	0.723	+ 1.81%
Hinduism	0.13	0.894	+ 0.38%
Sikh	0.01	0.000040	- 0.70%
Others	0.33	1.9	+ 5.67%

³ For Latin America the lines of stratification that affect the society are very clear; for those in the poorest strata (the majority) there is immediacy for survival. The states that see the obligation to create policies focused on the rapid solution to the problems that are present, this implying a reduction of continuous investment (as in education), weakening the development of capacities and blocking the idea of a better social condition, which directly affects the youth. Currently in the middle and lower socio-economic classes there is a reduction in assistance to educational facilities so that now the conditions of life given are insufficient and obligate individuals to be more interested in satisfying their immediate needs without thinking of the future. This lack of assistance especially affects those between 13 and 24 years of age.

Demographic and Cultural Data (Conference Coordinator)

It is worth mentioning that the influence of Spiritism has grown rapidly in Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay and Venezuela, and it has always been very strong in Haiti.

In the grouping of the population that is considered Christian (91.65%), the average considered evangelical in Latin America is 10.6%, varying from country to country: Argentina 10.8%, Bolivia 11.8%, Brazil 12.6%, Chile 16.8%, Colombia 4.7%, Costa Rica 12.4%, Cuba 4.6%, Dominican Republic 7.6%, Ecuador 6.1%, El Salvador 21.7%, Guatemala 26.0%, Honduras 17.7%, Mexico 6.7%, Nicaragua 16.3%, Panama 18.2%, Paraguay 4.8%, Peru 8.7%, Uruguay 4.5% and Venezuela 10.1%.

ETHNICITY

The racial mixture is such that a detailed analysis of the different ethnic groups can only be an approximation. In general, there is more class awareness than racial, and there are great differences from country to country in their ethnic composition. The five major groups are:

1. Euro Americans: Constitute 40.5% and are the majority in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba and Uruguay, and a considerable minority in Chile, Paraguay, Mexico and the Andean republics. They dominate the political arena throughout the continent. Some European communities have retained their language and cultural distinctiveness in many lands, but in a gradual manner are being absorbed by the culture where they live.
2. Mixed racial group: Constitute 39.1% and are the majority in nine countries. The cross between European and Andean is called “mestizo” en South America and “ladino” in Central America. Many Amerindians became to be considered “mestizos” when they adopted Spanish as their language. “Mulato” is the term applied to the cross between European and African.
3. Amerindians: Constitute 10.2% and are the descendents of the original inhabitants. They are the majority in Guatemala and Bolivia, almost half of the population in Peru and Ecuador and a significant minority in Mexico and Paraguay. They are recently emerging politically in some of the countries.
4. Afro-Americans: Constitute 9.1% and are the descendents of the African population that was brought to America as forced labor. They constitute the majority in the Caribbean countries but the highest number live in Brazil. In other countries they are located along the coasts.
5. Asians: Constitute 1.1% and are the majority in Guyana and Surinam and a significant minority in Trinidad. In Latin American countries they are a small minority. There are approximately one million Chinese in Latin America and very few have been evangelized. Their number is growing due to immigration from Taiwan and continental China. The most Japanese are found in Brazil and Peru.

Among other communities of immigrants it is necessary to consider the ethnic groups from the Muslim world, principally Arabs, who are growing rapidly due to immigration from the

Demographic and Cultural Data (Conference Coordinator)

Middle East. There is very little evangelistic work among them. The same with Jews as they are mostly located in the southern part of Latin America and are one of the largest concentrations of their type, very few reached also.

It is not possible to leave to one side Gypsies who reach almost one million and are distributed throughout most of the Latin American countries. They customarily remain somewhat marginalized.

Taking into account the totality of the ethnic groups, including those on a tribal level, throughout Latin America there are 1,509 of which 89 belong to the least evangelized part of the world. Of these last ones, 16 are in Brazil, 15 are in Peru, 8 are in Colombia, 5 are in Venezuela, 5 are in Bolivia, 4 are in Ecuador, 4 are in Mexico, 2 are in El Salvador, 2 are in Paraguay and one each are in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Cuba.

SOME *ETHOS* TRAITS IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA

Recognizing that in each country there are culture particularities to consider in terms of the contextualization of the mission, it is still necessary to take into account the pertinent fact that Latin America is in a western setting and participates in the contemporary world culture. Among the important traits that present a challenge to the mission of the church are the following:

Globalization: The affirmation is well known that the world is now a Global Village. This is partially true. It is more accurate to say the every “village” is part of the global village in the manner that it has access to every village by those who have power and make use of it. In a village everyone usually has access to the news but this is not the case today. Economic conditions have changed. In many places, the people are unemployed, and under the disguise of commercial liberalization policies, that affect the local economy and production.

Postmodernism: Although it is possible to see in Latin America the juxtaposition of pre-modern, modern and post-modern, in the large urban areas we see the influence of the wave of postmodernism as an extensive phenomena of the era, showing ambiguity, and in its negative facet, revealing critical signs of an individualistic ethic, hedonistic and indifferent to the problems of social transformation in favor of a needy world. Taken in conjunction with a neo-liberal economy, the postmodern mentality reflects a consumerist, bland, narcissistic and libidinal ethic. On the other hand, this postmodern environment obliges that unilateral and discursive communication be left aside, demanding a dialogic and committed communication with a demonstrative ethic, closer to the Biblical ideal.

Pluralism: Presents a strong current challenge. On one side, this obliges liberty in expression and equal rights for all; but on the other side, obligates churches to center themselves on the singularity of Christ. This trait is totally associated with the postmodern wave, and in terms of confrontation with other systems of religious thought, although this is more relevant in Asia and in the West affected by large waves of immigration; this does not stop having importance in our continent.

Demographic and Cultural Data (Conference Coordinator)

Materialism: This appears to be the most serious of the challenges in the context where the church finds itself. It appears even in the way evangelism is done or not done. The manifestations of the “Prosperity Gospel” are evident in the theology and practices of many churches. The poor are frequently left behind in the search for material well-being. The churches with the greatest income appear to be less committed with evangelization than poorer churches, given that members are more preoccupied with earning or gaining material betterment than to help those in need.

Technological advances, especially in the field of communications. The advent of satellite television and computer technology has had a huge influence in societies, establishing new standards of behavior. The technological wave of MTV and Internet, associated with the same phenomena of globalization and postmodernism are changing the ethical perceptions and criteria of the new generations. From the ecclesiastical point of view, church members see televised religious programming that influence their theology and practice, many times bordering on the heretical. Although we can see that these technological advances give great possibilities for communicating the Gospel, their use many times is not the most adequate and not all churches can access or afford this type of medium.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

CEPAL. “Estimaciones y Proyecciones de la Población en América Latina”. 2002.

Johnstone, P. and J. Mandryk. *Operation World*. 21st Century Edition. Atlanta: WEC/Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001.

ONU. *Boletín Demográfico*, No. 63. January 1999.

Sogaard, Viggo. “Evangelizing Our World: Insights from Global Inquiry”. 2004 Forum for World Evangelism. Thailand, 2004.