

Chapter I:

Population

The chapter focuses on the population of ESCWA member countries, covering size and distribution by age, sex and economic activity. Data were provided by the national statistical offices of ESCWA member countries.

Table I.1 presents estimates of population of the World, Arab and ESCWA region by broad age group, sex ratio, birth and death rates for the year 2007 and 2008. Currently, ESCWA has a population of 193 million as estimated by the UN population division, accounting for 58.2% of the population of Arab countries, and 2.9% of the World population. Geographic details on Arab and ESCWA member countries are given in the explanatory notes.

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Table I.2 provides estimates of population in ESCWA member countries by broad age group for 2006 and 2008. Elderly persons (65+) are 8.1 million, constituting 4.2% of the total population. On the other hand, the percentage of younger population (0-14) amounted to 69.8 million, accounting for 36.2% of the total population. The working-age population (15-64 years) totaled 114.7, accounting for 59.6%. As a result, the ratio of the dependent population (the sum of the elderly and younger age population divided by the working-age population) was 67.8%.

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Table I.3 provides estimates of birth and death rates, growth and fertility rates in ESCWA countries for the two periods 2000-2005 and 2005-2010. Owing to declining fertility, overall population growth in ESCWA countries has declined. Between 2000-2005 and 2005-2010, fertility fell from 3.6 births to 3.3 births per woman. Estimates suggest a current growth rate of 2.3% per year and an annual net addition of 4.4 million people. Fertility declines are associated with a decline in the number of births. While in 2000-2005, the birth rates in ESCWA countries were 28.4 births per 1 000 population, today this figure is estimated at 28.0. Death rates remain unchanged between the two periods.

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Table I.4 examines the census population in ESCWA countries by age group. Data refer to the *de facto* population. No data is presented for Lebanon, since population censuses have not been carried out in the country since 1932.

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Table I.5 presents the urban and total population in ESCWA members. Urban area is determined according to the respective national census definition. No data is presented for Lebanon as the last census was carried in 1932.

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Table I.6 provides vital statistics in ESCWA member countries for the period 2000-2005, including births and deaths, infant deaths, marriages and divorces. The rates were calculated using national estimates of population, except for Lebanon where UN population estimates were used.

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Table I-7 highlights the economic activity rates by sex in ESCWA countries, according to the latest available year. Overall, economic activity rates in ESCWA countries were within 37.7% in Jordan and 80.4% in Qatar in 2006. Female participation rates were generally lower than for males, usually within 10-50% versus 60-90% for males. Gender gap was most substantial- more than 50 percentage points in 9 out of 13 ESCWA countries. Patterns are also observed when looking at economic activity broken down by age group. Economic rates are usually lower among the age group 15-24years- an indication perhaps of the availability of educational services.

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Table I-8 highlights the adult and youth unemployment rates by sex in ESCWA countries, according to the latest available year. Unemployment rate for all ESCWA countries fell in the range 1 to 27 percent. Two countries showed had high rates- that are in excess of 15 percent: Iraq and Palestine. At the other end of the spectrum, relatively low unemployment rates, of less than 5 percent, were found in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Youth are generally predisposed to higher rates of unemployment than adults. Youth unemployment rates exceeded adult rates for all countries for which data are available and by at least twice as much in all countries. For

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example, youth unemployment rates were more than four times in Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Female youth show higher rates of unemployment than their male counterparts in almost all countries (9 out of 13 countries), a phenomenon which is more common among adults. Where male youth rates are higher, the differences are not substantial except in Iraq, where male youth unemployment rates is four times higher than corresponding rate of female youth.

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