

Observed and projected rates of population growth

According to the census counts, there were 9.2 million more human beings in West Pakistan in 1961 than in 1951, an increase of 27.1 percent over the ten-year period (corresponding to an annual rate of increase of 2.4 percent). At this rate, every five minutes ten more mouths must be fed; every year the population increase would fill two cities the size of Cincinnati or Denver.

The rate of increase shown by the two censuses of 1951 and 1961 is higher than that estimated by demographers prior to the 1961 census. For the country as a whole, the Planning Commission of Pakistan predicted ⁽⁷⁾ a 1960 population three million less than the census count. Even the highest estimate for West Pakistan, made by the United Nations, was 0.7 million lower than the recorded figures. A small part of this increase was due to immigration - several hundred thousand more people came into West Pakistan than left it during the decade 1951 to 1961. ⁽⁸⁾ But the major part must have resulted from the excess of births over deaths.

The United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs has estimated that, at present, about forty-four children are born and twenty-two human beings die each year per thousand persons in West Pakistan. In projecting future populations, the United Nations has assumed that the annual birth rate would decline within twenty years to somewhere between forty-two and twenty-eight children per thousand, and that there would be a marked decrease in mortality during the same period to between sixteen and twelve deaths per year per thousand people. As indicated in Table 1.3 (column 2), the higher birth rate estimated by the United Nations, if combined with a rapidly declining mortality, could nearly double the population of West Pakistan in the next twenty-five years. On the other hand, if the decrease in mortality is accompanied by markedly lower fertility, the population will increase by somewhat less than sixty percent over this period (column 4).

(7) See Report of the Food and Agriculture Commission, p. 558; Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, November 1960.

(8) Part of the increase may be an artifact, resulting from under counting in the 1951 census, which was taken before the country had fully recovered from the disturbances of partition. Under counting in 1951 is supported by the fact that, between 1941 and 1951, the census figures showed a population increase of only 5.4 million people, or 19.1 percent, whereas in the previous decade the increase was 20 percent. However, it is more likely that the low rate of increase between 1941 and 1951, as compared with 1931-41, was due to under counting in 1931 and over counting in 1941. Resistance activities in 1931 led to non-cooperation with the government, while in 1941, political rivalry among religious groups as the time of partition drew near made both sides try to swell their numbers in the census.