



HAL
open science

Africa's Rapid Population Growth and Migratory Pressures

John May, Gérard-François Dumont

► **To cite this version:**

John May, Gérard-François Dumont. Africa's Rapid Population Growth and Migratory Pressures. Norrag News, 2016, 53, pp.112-113. hal-01351502

HAL Id: hal-01351502

<https://hal.science/hal-01351502>

Submitted on 3 Aug 2016

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Africa's Rapid Population Growth and Migratory Pressures

John F. May, Population Reference Bureau, Washington, DC
Gérard-François Dumont, University of Paris-Sorbonne, Paris

Emails: jmay@prb.org; gerard-francois.dumont@wanadoo.fr

Keywords: Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; fertility; job creation; migration push and pull factors; governance

Summary: Rapid population growth in Africa, and especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, will fuel migratory movements toward Europe. Migration push factors will be aggravated by the poor governance that continues to plague many African states.

In mid-2015, Africa had 1.2 billion people. The continent is expected to reach the 2.5 billion mark in 2050 and, according to the United Nations Population Division's 2015 projections, Africa could have 4.4 billion inhabitants at the end of the century assuming a sharp decrease in the fertility levels.

Africa had historically experienced a stagnant population. Between 1500 and 1900, the continent's population was estimated at about 85 million or less. With the beginning of the demographic transition, however, Africa's population was multiplied by a factor of seven during the 20th century alone. The 21st century will bring another quadrupling of the African population, this time from a much larger base. Indeed, the 21st century will be the century of African demography and this will have far-reaching consequences not only for the continent itself but also for the rest of the world.

To a large extent, this situation is explained by rapid improvements of mortality conditions, especially of infant and child mortality levels in contrast to the slow erosion of high levels of fertility. Moreover, many African countries have experienced protracted fertility stalls (when fertility does not decline for several years or decades). To the mortality and fertility components, one should add the phenomenon of the population momentum, namely the effect that young age structures

will have on future demographic growth. Even if young couples have less children than their parents, there are so many couples in the reproductive age range that the number of births will remain large for decades to come.

The main challenge for Africa will be to create jobs for its ever expanding youth. The International Monetary Fund has estimated that the sub-Saharan region will need to create 18 million new jobs per year between 2010 and 2035—an astonishing 450 million new jobs in just a quarter of a century. As Africa is urbanizing at a rapid pace, a large portion of these new workers will need to find job opportunities in the cities. However, most workers will have to find employment either in the agricultural sector or the informal sector. Nonetheless, not all workers will find decent jobs. Hence, the emergence of migration push factors for increased emigration to other countries in the continent and/or to other countries on the fringe of the African region, namely in Europe. Other migration push factors include the still deficient governance in many African countries. Migration pull factors comprise the need of some European economies for workers to fill low-paid jobs requiring minimal qualifications.

Currently, Europe is receiving a relatively large influx of immigrants. In 2015 alone, Germany had to accommodate about one million immigrants. This is in addition to the one million immigrants that the European Union receives already on average every year. These 2015 immigrants are mostly refugees coming from countries at war, namely Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Citizens from other repressive regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa, e.g., Eritrea, have also emigrated in large numbers. However, it is estimated that about 20 percent of immigrants to Europe are economic migrants and many come from Sub-Saharan countries. With the rapid population growth to take place in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is probable that the number of economic migrants

from Africa will increase dramatically in the coming decades. The number of refugees coming from Africa could also increase rapidly should poor governance continue to plague a number of African countries.

NORRAG
NEWS
53

MAY
2016

**REFUGEES,
DISPLACED PERSONS
AND EDUCATION:
NEW CHALLENGES
FOR DEVELOPMENT
AND POLICY**



norrage

Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training