

LIBYA

Whole country

Libyan demography has until lately remained largely uncharted territory, when its considerable size and wealth, geostrategic position, and population mix, ought logically to have excited more interest. But things are changing rapidly, and the just-published preliminary findings of a recent survey put projections on a sounder basis. Libya's fertility is now much better charted: the TFR fell to 3.9 children per

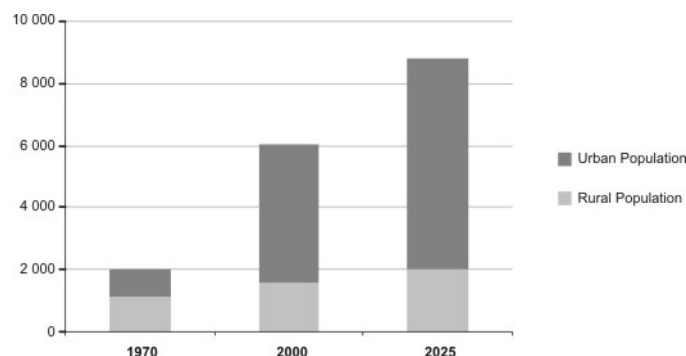


woman in 1993-95, a much lower level than thought - United Nations 1996 estimates had credited Libya with 6.4 children per woman at that date. So, fertility is declining sharply, probably due to rising living standards delivered by the rent-seeking economy, plus a recent sharp contraction from the problems besetting the oil economy: in fact, the rate of fall has increased over the past 10 years, bringing the share of young people aged under 15 below the 40% mark to 37.1% in 1995.

There are also clear education-specific fertility differentials: 4.8 children per woman among the illiterate population; 4.2 for those with basic literacy skills; 3.7 for completed primary education; 3.5 among middle school educated; and 3.2 for secondary-educated and above. Libya has much going for it to achieve a rapid fertility transition: a high urbanization rate (74% of its population lives in urban areas of over 10 000 people in 2000, and 77% by 2025) and above all an enviable, especially female, educational potential. Despite the pro-natality policy, officially-sanctioned contraception is widespread, affecting 45% of married women of childbearing age.

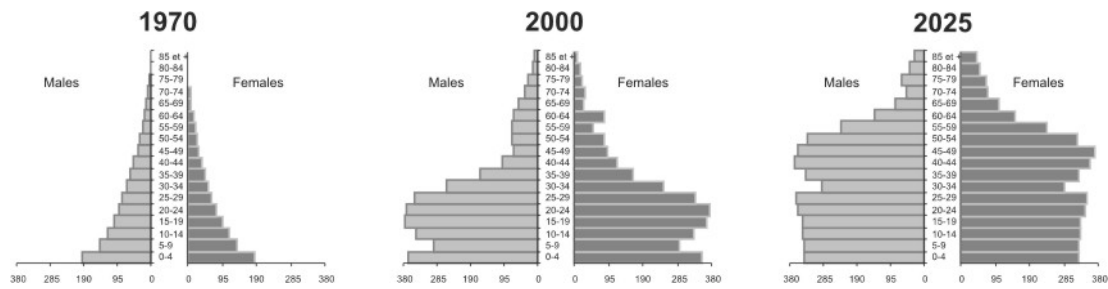
Libya's demographic transition will be promoted by its high population concentration in urban localities of over 10 000 people, where over 4.4 million of its 6 million people live in 2000 (73.7% of the population), projected to rise to 6.8 million (77%) by 2025, due to a rate of urban growth outpacing the all-country rate.

Figure 93. Rural population and urban population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)



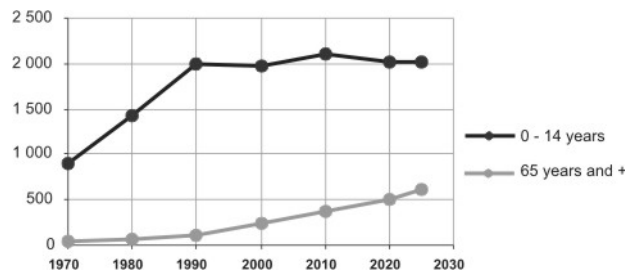
Current trends could bring Libyan fertility close to replacement level by 2010. But growth will remain very high compared to its Maghrebin and Middle Eastern neighbours. The 6 million of 2000 will rise by 46% to 8.8 million by 2025. The United Nations puts it slightly lower at 8.6 million.

Figure 94. Population age structure (by 5-year age groups) 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)



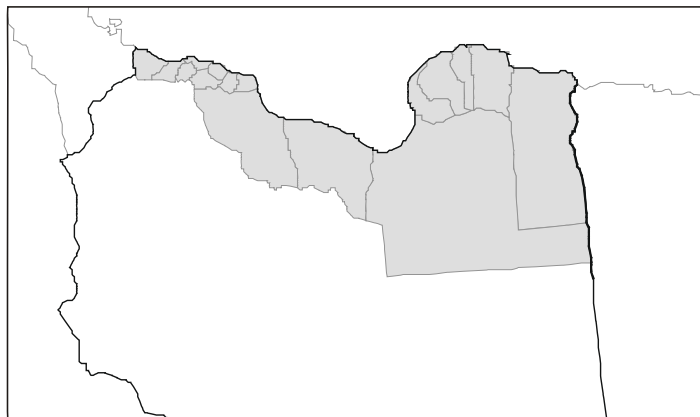
The “normalization” of Libya’s population processes is also revealed by other trends, not least decreasing population pressure from its young people, whose total population share will fall from a third (32.8%) in 2000 to under a quarter (22.7%) in 2025. But Libya’s population will age less than that of its neighbours: the proportion of over 65s will rise from 4% in 2000 to just 6.9% by 2025.

Figure 95. Populations aged 15-and-under and 65-and-over, 1970-2025 (in thousands)



Mediterranean coastal regions

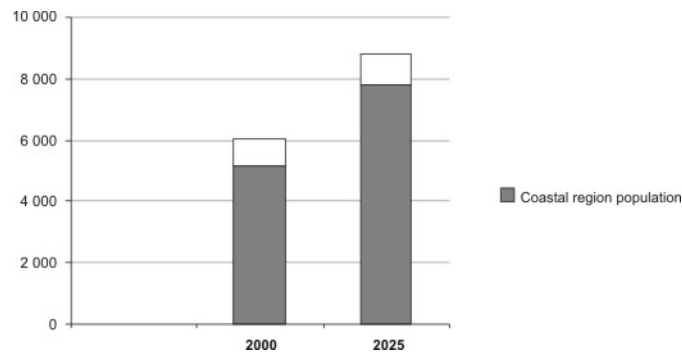
The lack of consistent all-country statistics makes it difficult to accurately reconstitute the population distribution pattern between Libya’s Mediterranean and inland mohafazats. However, an approximate reconstitution from older censuses reveals a gradual sun-seeking drift towards the Mediterranean regions, widely defined here as stretching to the desert in southern Libya: 68.8% of the total population in 1954,



70.3% in 1964 and 76.3% in 1973. This concentration on the Mediterranean shore is borne out by the most recent Blue Plan estimate (85.3% in 1995) and stems mainly from internal migration from the desert fringes to the more fertile and urbanized coast, combined with an influx of foreign workers, especially to the three mohafazats of Tripoli (population 1.648 million in 1995), Benghazi, (740 000) and Surt (706 000) which between them account for two thirds of the Mediterranean population.

The population of the Mediterranean mohafazats will continue to grow over the next 25 years, adding 2.605 million people to bring it from 5.179 million in 2000 to 7.784 million by 2025. This annual growth rate of 1.6% will be double that of the interior regions, which will increase from 0.859 to 1.049 million people between 2000 and 2025.

Figure 96. Mediterranean coastal regions population as a share of total population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)



The Libyan coast is highly urbanized, with more than 3.4 million people living in urban areas of over 10 000 people in 1995. This population has quadrupled since 1970 at the regionally unmatched mean annual rate of 6%. However, the admittedly sparsely populated inland urban areas have grown at the even higher mean annual rate of 8%.

Libya has only 4 towns and cities of over 100 000 people, however. Tripoli, the capital, with 1.325 million people in 1995, experienced remarkable population growth between 1970 and 1995 at the mean annual rate of 5.0%. Benghazi is the country's second main city both in terms of size (population 550 000) and growth rate: 4.2%. Exceptional natural increases and especially migratory growth have taken Misrata and Zawwiya from being small villages to medium-sized towns, with 210 000 and 123 000 people, and rates of increase of 7.5% and 6.5%, respectively. Aggregate growth of Mediterranean towns and cities of under 100 000 people took place at the very high rate of 6.4% a year between 1970 and 1995.

Urban growth in the Mediterranean region is projected to continue at the very much lower rate of 1.76% a year over the period 2000-2025, but still double that of the non-Mediterranean zone. Even this slower rate of increase will add 2.279 million people to the existing 4.172 million living in Mediterranean urban areas in 2000, upping the urbanization rate of this area slightly from 80.6 to 82.9%.

Figure 97. Rural and urban population of the Mediterranean coastal regions 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)

