

## PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

### Whole country

There are more Palestinian nationals abroad than in the still-disputed Palestinian Territories whose boundaries remain unsettled even after the 1993 Oslo-Washington Accords. These uncertainties must be borne in mind in what follows.

The Palestinian Territories' population size, structures and parameters are better documented since the



Palestinian Authority's 1997 survey and census. The Gaza Strip has a population of 1.119 million, the West Bank and East Jerusalem 2.031 million.

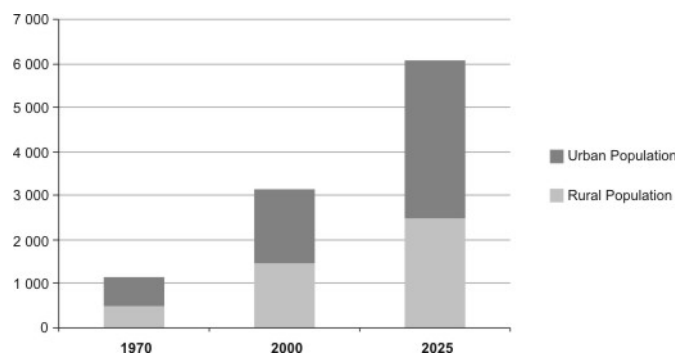
Palestinian fertility is much better documented than before. In the mid-1990s, fertility stood at 7.44 children per woman in Gaza (a world record), 5.61 on the West Bank (excluding Jerusalem) and 3.95 in East Jerusalem. Overall parity in the Palestinian Territories, therefore, was close to 6 in 1995, much higher than in neighbouring Arab countries.

Allowance made for the exceptional circumstances, the usual fertility determinants, especially educational level, are much less important than elsewhere. So, in a country where illiteracy among childbearing age women has almost been eliminated (and now affects just 2.6% of women aged 15-19, 4.4% of 20-24 year-olds, 7.9% of women aged 25-34, and 17.8% of 35-44 year-olds), the fertility impact of education has lessened. Woman with below-secondary education have 6.62 children, secondary-educated women, 5.57 (i.e., just 16% fewer), university graduates, 4.72 (a further decrease of 15%).

Fertility trends in the Palestinian Territories are harder to project than elsewhere, because they are linked to political circumstances. Fertility, a more or less deliberate weapon in the fight against occupation, rose significantly from its already very high levels with the first *Intifada*. A continuation of the "cold peace", or a resumption of hostilities, would probably rule out any decrease. Notwithstanding, fertility is projected to decline to 2.92 children per woman by 2025.

The urban population of 53.4% in 2000 will more than double (2.1-fold), rising to 58.8% by 2025, at rates of increase above 25 per thousand between 2020 and 2025.

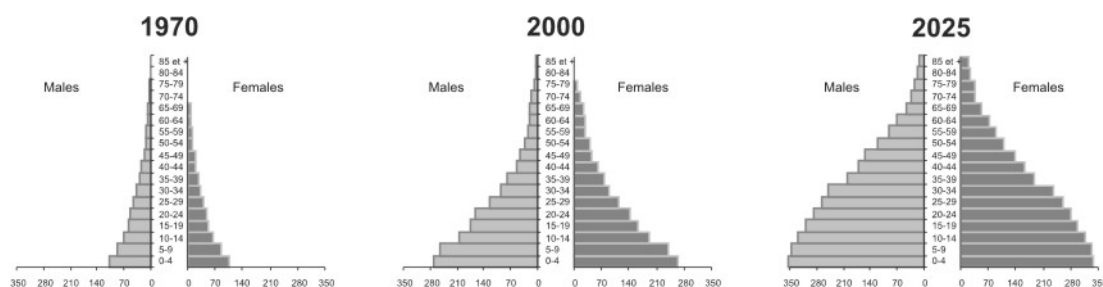
**Figure 80. Rural population and urban population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**



Even on a zero migration hypothesis, the Palestinian population is expected grow significantly in the coming years: 6.1 million by 2025 (6.2 in UN projections). Annual rates of growth - a record

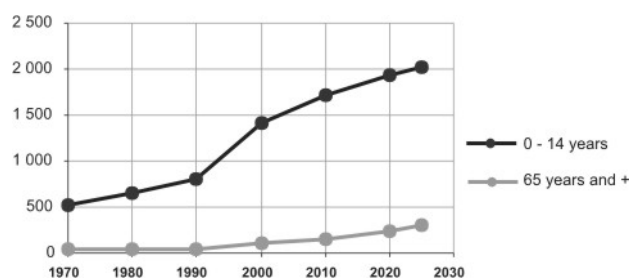
34 per thousand at present - will remain very high over the next twenty-five years: 22 per thousand in 2020-2025. As a result, the territory's population will age only slightly: from 3.6% of over-65s to just 5.0% in 2025.

**Figure 81. Population age structure (by 5-year age groups) 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**



The Palestinian Authority will have to address two population growth issues which are more acute here than elsewhere in the Arab world. One is the environment, especially the Gaza Strip. This tiny, 365 km<sup>2</sup> ribbon of land with a population density of 2 300 persons/km<sup>2</sup> is already overcrowded and can only get more cramped. Also, the late fertility transition may be catastrophic for employment as labour force entries could rise from 60 000 in 2000 to 113 000 by 2025, which is a major challenge considering the uncertainties of foreign labour demand from neighbouring countries, not least Israel.

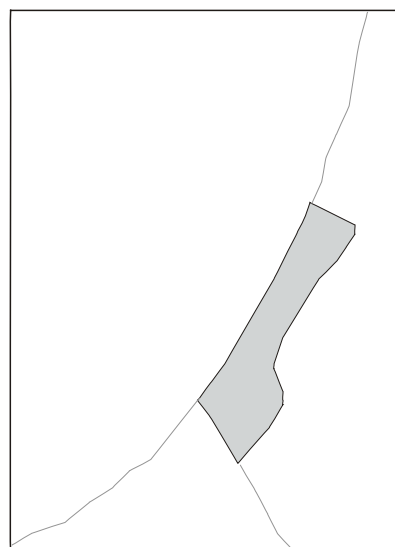
**Figure 82. Populations aged 15-and-under and 65-and-over, 1970-2025 (in thousands)**



### Mediterranean coastal regions

The Palestinian Territories' Mediterranean coastal zone - basically the Gaza Strip - accounts for just over a third of their total population. Notwithstanding its higher fertility, the Gaza Strip has in the past grown more slowly than the West Bank and East Jerusalem, at a mean annual rate of 3.6% compared to 4.3% between 1970 and 1995. One reason is that international emigration has been higher from Gaza than the West Bank.

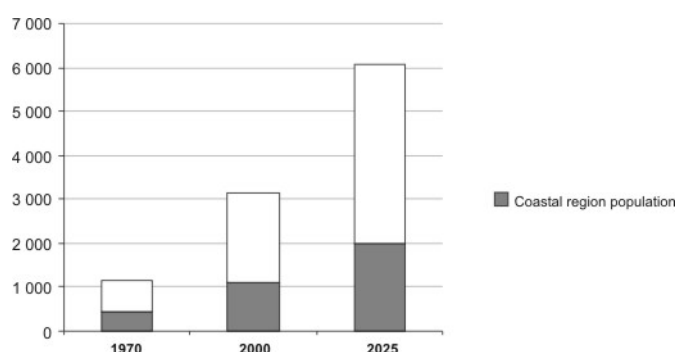
Over the next 25 years, the Gaza Strip's population will almost double from 1.119 million in 2000 to nearly two million in 2025, at a 2.34% mean annual rate of growth. This will almost certainly be higher than the other Mediterranean regions might experience, and



could be a source of concern given the tiny size of the Gaza Strip. It must be emphasized that this is just a minimum estimate on the working assumption of zero-immigration into the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Statistical Office's estimates are much higher: 2.9 million people in 2025, a

mean annual rate of growth of 3.9%. Population growth in the Gaza Strip will almost certainly be below that of the more resource-rich, immigrant-pulling West Bank (2.8% a year).

**Figure 83. Mediterranean coastal regions population as a share of total population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**



Despite its small size, not all the Gaza Strip's population is concentrated in large urban areas (over 10 000 people). The - admittedly minimal - rural population (57 000 people in 1995, against 26 000 in 1970) has grown at the mean annual rate of 3.2%, slightly faster than that of Gaza's urban areas and refugee camps (421 000 people in 1995), Khan Yunis (228 000), Rafah (115 000) and Daye el Balaa (89 000), with an aggregate mean annual rate of growth of 2.9%.

Growth in the urban areas and camps will approximately keep pace with the all-Gaza Strip rate, rising from 1 million people in 2000 to 1.9 million by 2025. The urbanization rate will hold steady at a maximum 94 to 95%, unlike the much less densely urbanized West Bank, which will increase from 31% to 41% over the period.

**Figure 84. Rural and urban population of the Mediterranean coastal regions 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**

