

SYRIA

Whole country

Syria is the Mediterranean country for which the UN projections were most radically revised between 1994 and 1998, downscaling the estimated Syrian population by 21.5% to 26.3 million in 2025 from 33.5 in the 1994 revision. This was needed to factor in a very recent fertility transition: a sharp fall in the stable fertility level of close to 8 children per woman



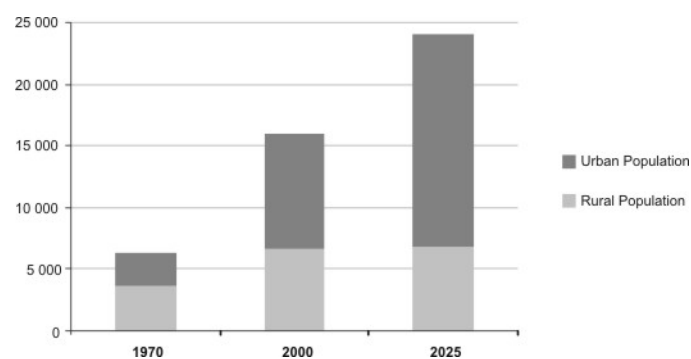
from 1960 to the mid-80s nearly halved the period fertility rate. This sudden drop is not a statistical artefact, but is corroborated by data from a range of sources.

But the UN revision could not account for the full magnitude of this fall. The projection method used here more clearly brings out the significant potential decrease inherent in the synergy between rising female educational levels and fertility decline among better-educated women. Although Syria cut itself off from world globalization - and especially population - flows and its government has long been pro-natalist, it was overtaken by the economic crisis of the Eighties, whose demographic effects began to bite in mid-decade when Syrian fertility fell into line with the standard determinants of transition: women's status, urbanization and especially women's rising educational levels. The very rapid progress achieved foreshadows further improvement for the next generation.

Female illiteracy, already residual at the youngest ages in 1995, will decrease further. Primary- and especially secondary-educated women will gradually become the norm. Up to the mid-80s, rising female education had no fertility impact. But a watershed had been reached, and education-specific changes in fertility behaviour began to be clearly seen in the latter half of the decade. The period fertility rate of 3.2 children per woman in 2000 is set to decline to 2.1 children by 2025. Syria's projected population size in 2025 will be 24.0 million. The Blue Plan 1992 revised projection of 26.4 million therefore over-estimated Syria's population growth potential.

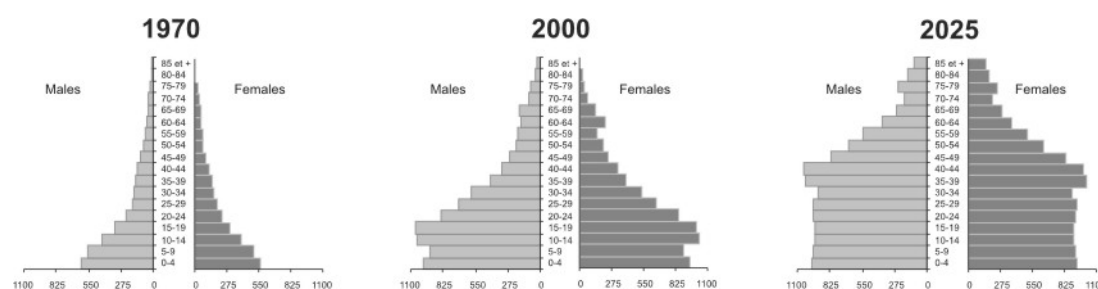
Syria's demographic transition will be favoured by vigorous urban growth, as the population of urban areas of over 10 000 people nearly doubles from 9.3 to 17.3 million between 2000 and 2025, i.e., 58.6% and 72% of the total population respectively. Urban growth will continue to outpace the all-country rate - 20.5 per thousand against 13.6 per thousand in 2020-2025.

Figure 65. Rural population and urban population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)



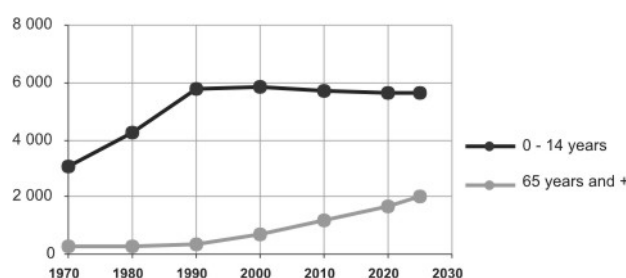
Even so, Syria retains a very high population growth potential - the population will increase by 8 million in 25 years, i.e., 50%. The rate of increase will exceed 20 per thousand until 2000-2005, and remain high until 2025 at 13.6 per thousand.

Figure 66. Population age structure (by 5-year age groups) 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)



This relatively high growth will stave off rapid ageing: only 8.5% of people will be aged 65 and over by 2025, while the proportion of young people will fall from 36.7% to 23.6% over the same period.

Figure 67. Populations aged 15-and-under and 65-and-over, 1970-2025 (in thousands)

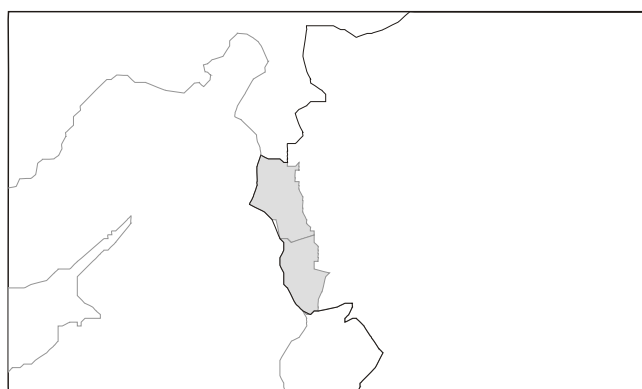


Annual labour force accretions – 341 000 at present - will keep rising to 413 000 in 2010, decreasing slightly thereafter until 2025. Syria's delayed demographic transition means that the sharp rise in labour force entries will be only partially offset by exits.

Mediterranean coastal regions

Syria is one of the region's least Mediterranean countries - under 10% of its population lives in its coastal regions. In fact, only 2 of its 14 mohafazats (provinces) are Mediterranean - Lattakieh and Tartus, accounting between them for 1.5 million of the country's 15.9 million people.

Between 1970 and 1995, population growth in these two Mediterranean

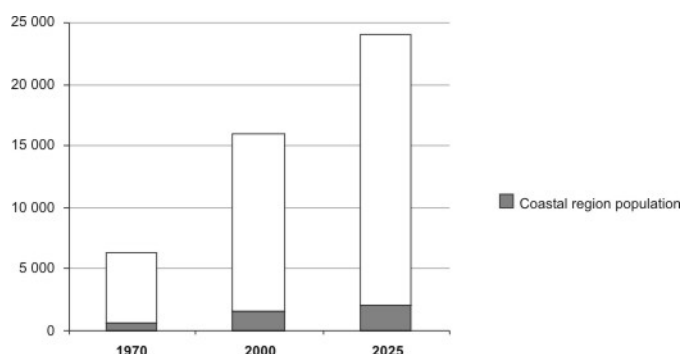


mohafazats kept close pace at 2.9% and 3.0% a year respectively. Surprisingly, however, despite rapid growth since 1970 (0.692 million in 1970 and 1.414 million in 1995, at a mean annual rate of 2.9% versus a rest-of-country 3.4%), their population share declined slightly from 11% to 9.9% of the total population. This is due to two factors: a lower birth rate in these regions than elsewhere, and net coastal-to-urban out-migration to one or other of the country's two main cities - Damas, the capital, or Alep - both non-Mediterranean.

Recent trends suggest that population growth in these two mohafazats will trail the rest of the country in the coming 25 years, rising from 1.5 to 2.0 million people at a mean annual rate of

growth of 1.15%. This marked tailing off will come from a combination of Syria's rapid fertility transition, especially in the coastal regions, and possible continuing net out-migration from the Mediterranean coast. The rest of the country will experience a markedly higher 1.7% mean annual rate of growth over the period.

Figure 68. Mediterranean coastal regions population as a share of total population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)



Historically, however, growth in Syria's Mediterranean urban segment - i.e., its urban areas of over 10 000 people - has broadly kept pace with the non-coastal regions, at the very high annual rates of 4.37% and 4.55%, keeping the Mediterranean regions' share of the total urban population stable since 1970 at around 7%.

Syria had only 5 Mediterranean urban areas of over 10 000 people in 1995. They include Tartus, whose very high annual growth rate of 6.3% has taken its population over the 100 000 mark (146 000 in 1995, compared to just 30 000 in 1970) and Lattakieh, whose less rapid population growth (mean annual rate 3.7%) has nevertheless taken it from 126 000 people in 1970 to 316 000 in 1995. The other three Mediterranean urban areas of over 10 000 people - Jabla (37 000 people in 1995), Baniyas (29 000) and Safita (14 000) - are comparatively smaller-sized with lower population growth rates - 3.2%, 3.0% and 2.2% respectively between 1970 and 1995.

Over the next 25 years, Syria's Mediterranean urban population will increase at the fairly rapid annual rate of 2.47%, to nearly double from 634 000 people in 2000 to 1.167 million in 2025. The coastal urbanization rate will increase significantly: 41% and 57% respectively at the same dates. As a result, this region will experience similar urban growth to the much more highly urbanized rest of the country.

Figure 69. Rural and urban population of the Mediterranean coastal regions 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)

