

Demographic trends in Latin America and the Caribbean: Convergence or divergence in developing countries?

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(Triple Border Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay).

Demographic change in Latin America and the Caribbean has presented historical peculiarities in comparison to other developing regions. The demographic, epidemiological and urban transitions began in some LAC countries earlier than in Africa, Asia and other developing regions, and progressed quickly even during periods of economic and socio-political crises, although they were not immune to them.

The speed of these transitions has slowed and now appear less spectacular in view of the fact that other regions and developing countries, particularly in Asia, have experienced intense processes of demographic transition during the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Latin American and Caribbean patterns still stand out in the developing world. Here, fertility is lower, mortality and morbidity are higher, and levels of urbanization are generally much higher.

It is important to note that transition processes have not occurred in homogeneous fashion within the different regions. A diversity of situations coexist in all large regions. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, countries such as Cuba, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile had an advanced transition while other countries, including Guatemala, Haiti and Bolivia have experienced only a moderate transition to this point.

Over time, however, the transitions have tended to generalize to all developing regions, generating processes of convergence in demographic trends. However, previous history and certain specificities of Latin America and the Caribbean, such as its strong social, cultural, gender and ethnic inequalities, have generated transitions that display a distinctive shape, diverging from the traits of other regions in the developing world.

There are no fixed and precise counterpoints between the LAC region and other developing countries, since all regions are affected to a greater or lesser extent by inequalities and historical specificities. What is worth emphasizing, however, are the real differences in the transitions of developing regions, even though the magnitude and implications of these differences may not be immediately apparent.

The fact that there is an ongoing convergence of demographic processes among developing regions due to processes such as modernization, individualization and rationalization, while real divergences caused by historical, socioeconomic, cultural

and political specificities persists a broad window for comparison of demographic processes between developing regions. Not only does this encourage analysis of the depth and extent of convergences and divergences but it also motivates examination of the factors that determine them as well as their possible consequences.

This broad agenda of convergences and divergences will constitute the main objective of the VII Congress of the Latin American Population Association (ALAP) and the XX Congress of the Brazilian Population Association (ABEP). These meetings will serve to present and discuss recent advances in research on population processes in the region and, simultaneously, to stimulate comparative analysis with other regions and developing countries. The emphasis on the comparison of experiences and processes between countries will also help to strengthen ties and to stimulate academic South-South and South-North cooperation.

In this sense, we are extending an invitation to specialists from other regions, particularly from developing countries in Africa, Asia, in order to advance the field of comparative studies in population and development.

To this end, we call for proposals of topics for regular and plenary sessions as well as posters, in which research results can be presented on a wide array of subjects, including: historical demography, population dynamics, fertility, mortality, health and sexual and reproductive rights, marriage and families, gender, cities and urbanization, internal and international migration, poverty and inequality, population and development, indigenous peoples, ethnicity and race, screenings, childhood, youth and aging, population studies frontiers population and environment. Proposals with a national and regional approach, and especially comparisons between countries and between developing regions, are particularly encouraged.

The fact that the congress will be held in Foz de Iguazu is symbolic given that the location is a triple border city among Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. The site is also interesting given its proximity to Itaipu, the largest hydroelectric dam in South America, which is marked by a particular set of demographic and environmental dynamics involving border migration, rapid city growth, ecological degradation and exploitation of natural resources, all of which have an impact on the living situation of the population in this region. The proximity of Iguazu Falls also provides an occasion to come into contact with nature at one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

We will be waiting for you.

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