

# Population Trends Bangladesh

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Economics and Statistics Administration  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS  
Center for International Research

PPT/92-4  
Issued March 1993

Bangladesh is the tenth most populous country in the world. Its current estimated population of 119 million is almost one-half the population size of the United States. But its area of 51,703 square miles is only 1.5 percent as large as the area of the United States. Bangladesh has the highest population density (2,310 persons per square mile) among all countries in the world that are not small island nations or city states.

Fertility in Bangladesh has declined substantially in the past 15 years. The total fertility rate was slightly under 7 children per woman during the 70's. Now it is estimated at about 4.6 children per woman. As a result of fertility decline, the population growth rate that peaked around 3 percent per year during the mid-1970's also has declined. The current estimate of population growth rate is 2.4 percent per year.

In spite of the decline in fertility and growth rate, Bangladesh's population is young, with nearly 42 percent under 15 years of age (figure 1), and will continue to grow for many years. If the current rate of 2.4 percent continues, the population will double in 30 years. Even with further projected fertility decline, the Bangladesh population is expected to double its current size in 37 years. The overall level of mortality in Bangla-

desh has improved moderately over the last three decades. Life expectancy at birth has increased from about 48 years in the mid-1960's to about 54 years in 1992. Over the same period, the infant mortality rate declined from 147 to 112 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

### Contraceptive Prevalence

In 1991, the results from the Bangladesh Contraceptive Prevalence Survey (BCPS) show that 39.9 percent of married women under the age of 50 years were using contraception (Mitra and Associates, 1992). In 1975, only 7.7 percent were users. In recent years, contraceptive use has increased at a faster pace. Between 1981 and 1991, the prevalence rate increased by

more than 100 percent, from 18.6 percent to 39.9 percent, due to the increased use of modern methods (figure 2). In 1991, nearly 8 out of every 10 married women using contraception were users of modern methods. The pill was the most popular method—1 out of every 3 married women using contraception had chosen the pill. In recent years, as more and more younger women are accepting contraception, the increase in the use of reversible methods has been greater than the increase in the use of permanent methods (figure 3).

Between 1981 and 1991, the number of women using contraception almost tripled, from under 3 million to nearly 9 million (figure 4). The increase in contraceptive use by

Figure 1.  
Total Population of Bangladesh, by Age: 1992 and 2020

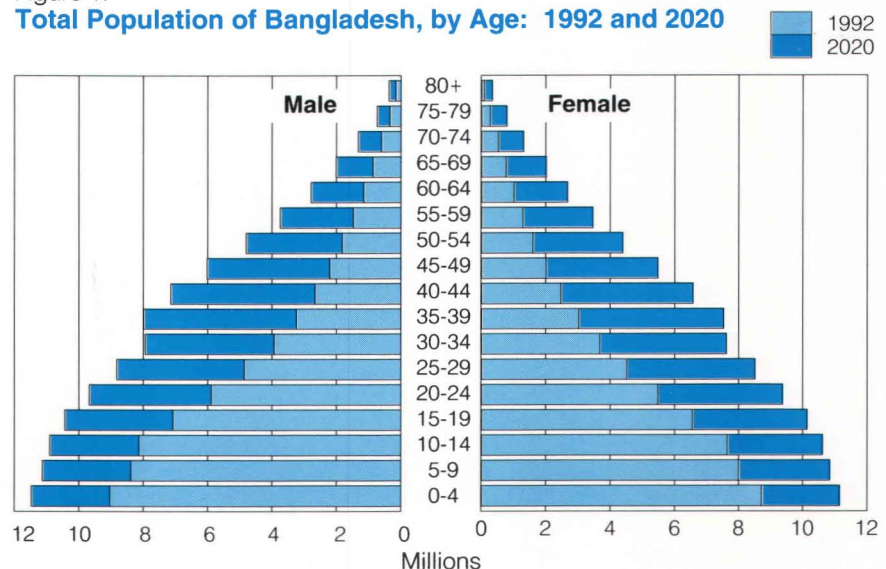
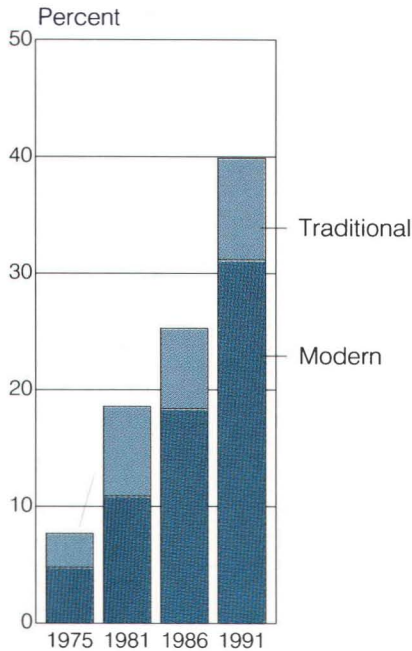


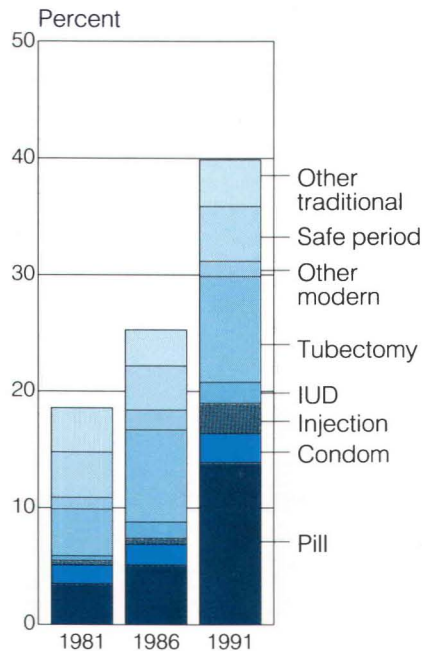
Figure 2.  
**Trends in Current Use of Contraception Among Currently Married Women of Reproductive Age, by Method: 1975–1991**



couples has been the major reason for fertility decline in Bangladesh. As a result of the increased use of contraception, it is estimated that as many as 14.4 million births were averted between 1974 and 1990 (Kantner and Noor, 1992).

In 1991, a greater proportion of urban women (48 percent) used contraception than rural women (39 percent). Contraceptive use increased with higher education of women. Only 37 percent of women who had never attended school were users, compared with 41 percent of those with at least some primary education. Contraceptive use was as high as 61 percent among women with secondary and above education (Mitra and Associates, 1992). Recent surveys in Bangladesh show that women desire smaller fami-

Figure 3.  
**Trends in Current Use of Contraception Among Currently Married Women Under 50 Years of Age, by Method: 1981, 1986, and 1991**



lies. In 1991, 57 percent of currently married women under age 50 did not want to have more children. Sixty-three percent of married women age 25 to 29 years

did not want additional children. Among women who wanted to have additional children, more than half (61 percent) wanted to delay their next birth for at least 2 years. Overall, 79 percent of Bangladeshi women wanted to terminate childbearing or space their next birth (figure 5; Mitra and Associates, 1993).

However, there was a significant gap between fertility preferences and use of contraception among married women in Bangladesh. In 1991, according to the Bangladesh Fertility Survey, almost one-third of all married women in Bangladesh (7 million) had an unmet need for family planning to control their fertility; i.e., although fecund, they were not using contraception and wished either to terminate childbearing or to space the next birth. Forty-one percent of this unmet need was for spacing births and 59 percent for limiting fertility. The unmet need varied with age. Women under age 30 had a greater unmet need for spacing purposes, but women over age 30 had a greater unmet need for limit-

Figure 4.  
**Trends in Estimated Number of Currently Married Women Using Contraception, by Method: 1981 to 1991**

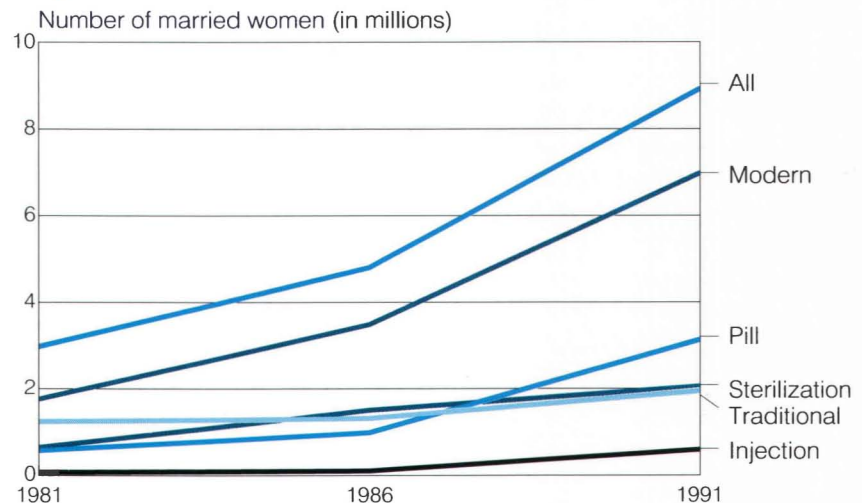
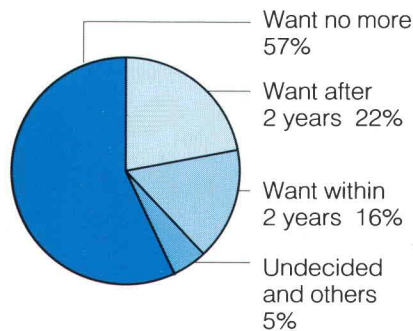




Figure 5.  
**Fertility Preferences of  
Currently Married Women  
Age 15 to 49: 1991**



ing fertility (figure 6; Mitra and Associates, 1993).

### Literacy

Level of literacy, especially among women, is one of the powerful indicators of fertility decline in developing populations. The 1991 preliminary census data show an overall improvement in literacy (data by age are not available), although the level is still low. In 1990, as assessed by the UNESCO (1991), 35 percent of the population age 15 years and over was literate, up from 29 percent in 1981 and 26 percent in 1974. The female literacy rate increased at a slightly faster pace than the male literacy rate, but the female/male ratio of the literacy rate continues to be below parity. In 1990, nearly 47 percent of adult males were literate compared with only 22 percent of adult females (figure 7).

### Urbanization

The Bangladesh urban population is growing at a faster rate than the rural population. In 1950, about 4 percent of the population lived in urban areas. Since then, urbanization has increased fourfold, to nearly 16 percent in 1990 (United Nations, 1991). During the same period, the number of persons liv-

ing in urban areas increased more than ninefold, from less than 2 million to more than 18 million. In 2020, more than 80 million people, equivalent to the entire 1977 Bangladesh population, are projected to be living in urban areas. Nearly one-half of all urban dwellers live in only two cities, Dhaka and Chittagong. Dhaka, the capital and the largest urban agglomeration, is home to nearly 1 out of every 3 persons in urban areas.

### Population Composition

Currently, Bangladesh's population is relatively young; 63 percent is under age 25 and 42 percent is under age 15. Although the proportion under age 15 will decline to 32 percent in 2020, the number of children under age 15 (currently just under 50 million) will be over 66 million. The population in working ages, 15 to 64 years, will grow faster than the total population and will more than double, from under 66 million in 1992 to 135 million in 2020. During the same period, the number of women in childbearing

ages will increase from under 28 million to over 55 million.

### References

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This report, written by Arjun Adlaha, was prepared with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development. More detailed information can be obtained from the Chief, Center for International Research, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC 20233-3700.

Figure 6.  
**Unmet Need for Family  
Planning Among  
Currently Married Women,  
by Age: 1991**

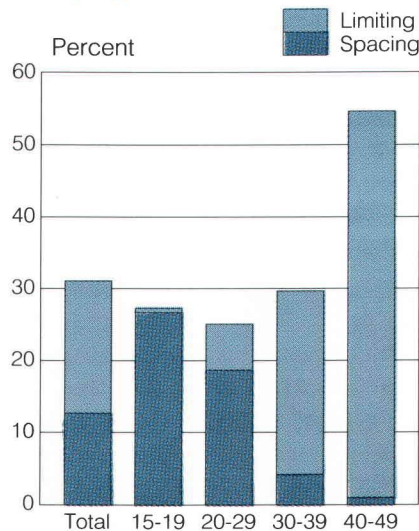


Figure 7.  
**Literacy Rate Among  
Persons Age 15 Years  
and Over, by Sex: 1974,  
1981, and 1990**

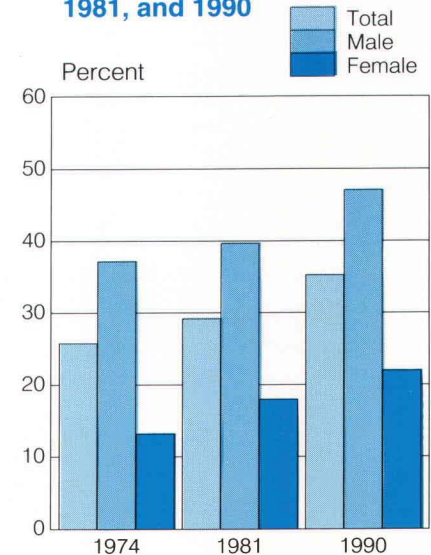


Table 1.  
**Population Indicators for Bangladesh:  
1981 to 2020**  
(Population in thousands)

Indicator	1981	1990	1992	2000	2020
<b>POPULATION</b>					
Total country . . .	90,666	114,023	119,412	143,548	210,248
Urban . . . . .	10,680	18,700	21,064	32,872	80,399
Rural . . . . .	79,986	95,323	98,348	110,676	129,849
<b>Male, total country</b>					
All ages . . . . .	47,108	59,111	61,858	74,120	107,495
0 to 14 . . . . .	21,466	25,082	25,579	27,711	33,575
6 to 12 . . . . .	9,136	11,625	11,781	12,301	15,499
13 to 18 . . . . .	6,113	8,389	8,863	9,933	12,750
15 to 44 . . . . .	18,858	25,837	27,683	35,640	52,079
15 to 49 . . . . .	20,493	27,922	29,891	38,509	58,108
15 to 64 . . . . .	23,944	32,138	34,334	44,091	69,463
65+ . . . . .	1,698	1,891	1,945	2,318	4,457
<b>Female, total country</b>					
All ages . . . . .	43,558	54,913	57,554	69,428	102,753
0 to 14 . . . . .	20,139	23,772	24,337	26,619	32,599
6 to 12 . . . . .	8,519	10,941	11,158	11,795	15,064
13 to 18 . . . . .	5,760	7,762	8,218	9,437	12,370
15 to 44 . . . . .	17,734	24,045	25,688	33,049	49,702
15 to 49 . . . . .	19,146	25,926	27,696	35,675	55,165
15 to 64 . . . . .	22,035	29,592	31,594	40,744	65,661
65+ . . . . .	1,384	1,548	1,622	2,064	4,493
<b>Married females</b>					
15 to 49 . . . . .	15,992	21,658	23,145	29,938	46,423
15 to 19 . . . . .	2,965	4,023	4,281	5,186	6,625
20 to 24 . . . . .	3,382	4,645	4,967	6,381	8,510
25 to 29 . . . . .	2,928	3,966	4,254	5,630	8,025
30 to 34 . . . . .	2,370	3,189	3,413	4,557	7,064
35 to 39 . . . . .	1,897	2,546	2,718	3,587	6,758
40 to 44 . . . . .	1,399	1,889	2,017	2,642	5,374
45 to 49 . . . . .	1,051	1,400	1,495	1,955	4,067
<b>DEPENDENCY RATIO</b>					
Both sexes . . . . .	97.2	84.7	81.1	69.2	55.6
<b>LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (years)</b>					
Both sexes . . . . .	51.0	53.4	54.3	57.5	65.1
Male . . . . .	52.0	54.0	54.7	57.4	63.7
Female . . . . .	50.0	52.8	54.0	57.6	66.7
<b>INFANT MORTALITY RATE (per 1,000 births)</b>					
Both sexes . . . . .	147.0	116.3	111.5	93.0	53.0
Male . . . . .	149.5	124.5	119.6	100.8	61.0
Female . . . . .	144.4	107.6	102.9	84.8	44.6
<b>TOTAL FERTILITY RATE</b>					
Fertility rate per woman	6.7	4.8	4.6	4.0	2.8

Note: Dependency ratio is the ratio of persons under age 15 and over age 65 to those age 15 to 64 years.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Center for International Research, International Data Base.

Table 2.  
**Contraceptive Prevalence Among Married  
Women 15 to 49 Years of Age, by Method:  
Selected Years**

Method	Percent current users			Percent distribution of users		
	1981	1986	1991	1981	1986	1991
All . . . . .	18.6	25.3	39.9	100	100	100
Pill . . . . .	3.5	5.1	13.9	19	20	35
Condom . . . . .	1.6	1.8	2.5	9	7	6
Injection . . . . .	0.4	0.5	2.6	2	2	7
IUD . . . . .	0.4	1.4	1.8	2	6	5
Female sterilization . . . . .	4.0	7.9	9.1	22	31	23
Other modern . . . . .	1.1	1.7	1.2	6	7	3
Periodic abstinence . . . . .	3.9	3.8	4.7	21	15	12
Other traditional . . . . .	3.7	3.1	4.0	20	12	10

CHILDLESS WOMEN: 1991  
Percent of ever-married women  
age 45 to 49 . . . . . 1.4

AVERAGE DURATION OF  
POSTPARTUM INFECUNDABILITY: 1991  
Number of months . . . . . 11.9

Source: Kantner and Noor, 1992, table 4 (forthcoming); and Mitra and Associates, 1993, unpublished tables.

Table 3.  
**Average Age of  
Users of Selected  
Methods: 1991**  
(Married women age  
15 to 49)

Method	Average age
All . . . . .	30.2
Pill . . . . .	27.6
Condom . . . . .	28.6
Injection . . . . .	28.7
IUD . . . . .	28.0
Female sterilization . . . . .	34.3
Safe period . . . . .	30.9
Other . . . . .	32.5

Source: Mitra and Associates, 1993, unpublished tables.

Table 4.  
**Fertility Rates**  
(Per 1,000 women)

Age	1981	1986	1991
15 to 19 . . . . .	247	192	148
20 to 24 . . . . .	350	263	242
25 to 29 . . . . .	310	222	223
30 to 34 . . . . .	224	167	165
35 to 39 . . . . .	135	109	104
40 to 44 . . . . .	61	52	45
45 to 49 . . . . .	7	22	16
Total fertility rate per woman	6.67	5.14	4.72

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Center for International Research, International Data Base.