

DEMOGRAPHICS

At the time of the 1990 census, the population of Mexico was 81 million, and it is now estimated over 90 million. In 1994, it was estimated that 36 percent of the population was under the age of 15 years. Sixty percent was between 15 and 64 years of age and only 2.4 percent was 64 years of age or older. Life expectancy increased from 56 years in 1960 to 70 years in 1990.

In the future, more care will necessarily be directed to diseases which characterize an aging population. According to World Bank estimates, the proportion of Mexico's population under the age of 15 will decline from 36 percent in 1994 to 23 percent by 2025. At the same time, the proportion 65 years of age or older will rise from 2.4 percent to 8.4 percent.

Child mortality rates have decreased dramatically from 148 per 1,000 live births in 1960 to 26 deaths per 1,000 live births by 1994. This factor, combined with longer life expectancy and a fertility rate of 3.3 children per woman, has led the country to the point where half the population is under 30 years of age.

Mexico's population is increasingly concentrated in urban centres, and this affects the location of new health care facilities. According to World Bank statistics, between 1970 and 1990, the urban population rose from 59 to 73 percent of all Mexicans. In 1990, Mexico City alone was home to one-quarter of the population and about one third of the population lived in cities of one million people or more.

PREVENTATIVE CARE

There is increasing emphasis on preventative care through the primary care clinic networks and on developing a health care culture in Mexico. These two elements are the basis of many health education campaigns. A number of programs focus on basic personal care, birth control, nutrition and on drug and alcohol problems. Many of them are directed to rural areas or to large urban centres both of which have large groups of disadvantaged people.

The federal government has also acted to improve health care services for mothers and newborn children. A number of programs emphasize community-based health education and greater access to primary care through an expanded clinic system. Mobile health units have been used increasingly for the delivery of primary care.

DISEASE-RELATED CARE

The National Health Care System has invested significant resources in the fight against communicable diseases, including polio, tetanus, tuberculosis, brucellosis, rubella and diphtheria. The government is committed to the continued expansion of vaccination programs for all children under the age of five years. Programs such as the *Semana Nacional de Salud*, National Health Week (every four months), and *Días Nacionales de Vacunación*, National Vaccination Days (February and April), are promoted through the primary care clinics across the country.

