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## Mexico's Population Doubles In 25 Years

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According to recent figures published by Mexico's official statistics agency (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Geografía e Informática, INEGI), Mexico's population expanded to almost 91.2 million inhabitants as of 1995, roughly twice as high as the population registered in 1970. As of 1995, Mexico was ranked 11th in the world in total population. INEGI said Mexico's population grew by about 1.8% last year, which would bring the total to 93 million inhabitants by year-end 1996. The agency said the 1.8% rate compares favorably with the 1980s, when Mexico's population grew by an average 2.3% annually.

### *Rural to urban migration continues*

The report also confirmed recent trends showing that a large percentage of Mexicans continued to migrate from the countryside to the cities to escape massive poverty in rural areas. According to the INEGI statistics, roughly 46% of Mexico's total population resided in an urban area of 100,000 or more inhabitants as of 1995. In contrast, only 23% of Mexico's population lived in a city that size in 1970. The report showed that roughly one-fourth of all Mexicans live in the country's three largest cities: Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey. Similarly, INEGI reported that 41% of Mexico's total population resided in the Federal District (which includes Mexico City) and the states of Mexico, Puebla, Veracruz, and Jalisco.

As of year-end 1995, Mexico state was the country's most populous state, with 11.7 million inhabitants, or 13% of Mexico's total population. In contrast, the most sparsely populated states were Chiapas and Oaxaca, where 56% of all inhabitants resided in towns of less than 2,500 people. According to the INEGI report, Mexico's fastest growing state has been Quintana Roo, whose population has increased by 6.5% annually in recent years. The agency also reported annual population growth rates above 3% for the states of Baja California, Morelos, Campeche, Aguascalientes, Mexico, and Queretaro.

Meanwhile, the INEGI report said that the slowdown in the population growth rate in recent years has been accompanied by an increase in the average age of the country's population. For example, the proportion of Mexicans under age 15 declined to 35% in 1995, compared with 38% in 1990 and 46% in 1970. Illiteracy figures updated Among other statistics, INEGI said the states with the highest percentage of illiteracy were Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Hidalgo, which are also the country's poorest states.

The proportion of inhabitants who cannot read and write in these states ranged from 17% to 26%. In contrast, the Federal District and Nuevo Leon and Baja California states reported illiteracy rates of only 3% to 4%. Finally, INEGI reported that Mexico's economically active population (EAP) remained at 36 million persons, or 55% of the population, as of year-end 1995. The EAP has remained at about that same rate in recent years. (Spanish news service EFE, Reuter, El Universal, The News, Novedades, 12/16/96)

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