

# Final Peace in the Middle East Hinges on Refugee Population

by *Farzaneh (Nazy) Roudi*

Immigration and fertility are crucial elements in what French demographer Philippe Fargues calls a “demographic contest” brought on by the protracted conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. Israel’s high level of immigration has added to its numbers, while the Palestinians’ high fertility has boosted their population. The burgeoning populations on both sides and the emphasis on numbers make the 3.7 million Palestinian refugees—the world’s largest refugee population—critically important in the Middle East peace process.

Table 1 (on page 2) details the numbers of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip who are registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Nearly one-third of all Palestinian refugees (1.2 million) live in camps administered by UNRWA.

These Palestinians became refugees when they or their parents or grandparents fled their homes during the 1948 war (when the state of Israel was established) or during the 1967 war (when Israel occupied the Sinai, the West Bank, Gaza, and the



*UNRWA emergency food distribution center in Beach refugee camp, Gaza Strip, 2001.*

Golan Heights). The right of the refugees to return to the homes that they or their ancestors fled, and the right to financial compensation for those who do not return, is one of the most difficult issues in the Middle East peace process.

Both sides of the conflict press their positions in negotiations based on demographic facts

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## Domestic Partner Benefits Won't Break the Bank

by *Gary J. Gates*

In June 2000, the Big Three U.S. automakers—General Motors, Ford, and DaimlerChrysler—announced they would offer domestic partner health care benefits to their more than 400,000 employees. Giving nonmarried partners access to the same benefits as spouses marks a growing trend across a wide variety of industries in both the public and private sectors in the United States. In the past year, according to the Human Rights Campaign, the number of Fortune 500 companies offering domestic partner benefits increased from 70 to 102.

While increasing numbers of employers are offering these benefits to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples, there is

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# Palestinians' Right of Return Pivotal *Continued from page 1*

on the ground. That is why the positions on the refugees are so far apart. On the Israeli side, the government strongly opposes allowing the 1948 refugees and their descendents to return to Israel proper. Arabs and other non-Jews already make up one-fifth of the population of 6.2 million, and their number has generated public debate about Israel's viability as a democratic Jewish state. Israelis contend that the Arab countries should host their Palestinian brothers and sisters, and help assimilate the Palestinian refugees in their societies. Israelis assert that integrating Palestinians should be easy because they speak the same language and share the same religion and culture.

However, except for Jordan—more than half of whose population is of Palestinian origin—the Arab countries' policies on the admission and integration of Palestinians have been less than welcoming. This is partly because of their national political and economic constraints, but largely because Arab governments believe that if they absorb Palestinian refugees, they will kill the Palestinians' chances of having a state of their own. Palestinians living in Kuwait, many of them for decades, were the first people expelled in the aftermath of the 1990 Iraqi invasion because Palestinian leaders sided with Iraq. Libya expelled 30,000 Palestinians in

1995 to express its opposition to the Middle East peace process. Since the oil boom of the 1970s, many Palestinians have found jobs in the oil-rich Gulf states, but regardless of their length of stay in these countries, their status—like that of other labor migrants—remains that of foreign workers. Iraq is the only Arab country that allows Arab

migrants from other countries to naturalize, but its law excludes Palestinians who wish to become citizens.

To discourage integration into Lebanese society, Palestinian refugees and other foreigners living in Lebanon are allowed to work only in a limited number of occupations. In 1990, the Lebanese constitution was amended to make resettlement

of Palestinian refugees illegal. The case of Lebanon is unique because the country has a large Christian population and a delicate power-sharing arrangement based on religion that reflects the demographics of the past. Hesitant to disturb the status quo, in which Christians hold the top job, Lebanon has not conducted a census for decades, because the result would show a large Muslim majority. The admission of the Palestinian refugees, who constitute approximately 10 percent of the population according to Lebanon's ambassador to the United States, would

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## Palestinian Refugees Registered With UNRWA as of June 2000

Country/Locale	Total Registered Refugees (thousands)	% Living in Camps
Jordan	1,570	18%
Lebanon	376	56%
Syria	383	29%
West Bank	583	27%
Gaza Strip	825	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,737</b>	<b>32%</b>

Source: UNRWA, "Refugees" ([www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/me.html](http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/me.html), accessed Jan. 17, 2001).

## Growth of the Palestinian Population

Today the number of Palestinians is estimated to be 8.6 million, a six-fold increase from their post-World War II population of 1.4 million. Only half of them live in historic Palestine (1 million in Israel); the rest are dispersed in other parts of the Middle East and around the world. The largest number of Palestinians outside the Middle East live in the United States. More than 2 million Palestinians live as refugees in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates that the number of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza is more than 3.1 million, with 1.2 million of them living in Gaza.

On average, Palestinian women living in Gaza give birth to 7.4 children each, and those living in the West Bank give birth to 5.4 children each. Such high fertility is remarkable given the high level of education of Palestinian women living in the West Bank and Gaza: The average Palestinian woman has 12 years of schooling. Countries with comparable fertility levels are those with some of the lowest female education and literacy, and some of the highest rates of infant and maternal mortality.

## Age Structure of the Palestinian Population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 1996



Source: UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Demographic and Related Socio-Economic Data Sheets for Countries of ESCWA, as assessed in 1996, No. 9 (1997).

# Changes in Child Care Could Reduce Job Options for Eastern German Mothers

by Karsten Hank

More than 10 years after unification, substantial social, economic, and cultural differences persist between eastern and western Germany. In public day care for children, though, there has been some convergence. Still, this coming together is not necessarily for the better, in terms of mothers' employment prospects.

In contrast to the United States, where day care for children is mostly subsidized through cash transfers, German day care is publicly provided. The day-care centers are run either by municipalities or by subsidized nonprofit organizations. The coverage levels, however, have differed widely between eastern Germany (the former German Democratic Republic) and the western states of the Federal Republic.

Throughout the history of the GDR, the East German government strongly supported the use of institutional day care for children of all ages. Apart from ideological purposes, the government's primary aim was to establish the compatibility of childrearing and the employment of mothers. In the 1980s, child-care slots for about 80 percent of infants and school-age children were available. The provision of slots in kinder-

garten was as high as 95 percent, and the cost of care to parents was negligible.

In contrast, the situation in West Germany was—and is—very different. Since childrearing is considered primarily the mother's responsibility, the provision of day care, especially for very

TABLE 1  
**Child-Care Provision Rates in Eastern and Western Germany, 1994**

Number of slots per 100 children of the respective age group

Age of child	Eastern Germany	Western Germany
0-3 (infants)	41	2
4-6 (kindergarteners)		
– at least part-time care	116	85
– care all day	97	17
7-10 (school-age children)	60	5

Source: German Youth Institute (DJI).

young children, has been limited, and all-day care has only rarely been available.

Data from the German Youth Institute show that the child-care provision rates in eastern

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## Demographic Struggle Continues *Continued from page 2*

have a critical impact on the balance between Christians and Muslims.

Can the Palestinian Authority, its economy and infrastructure ravaged, handle the return of refugees to the West Bank and Gaza? Even without the return of the Palestinian refugees from neighboring countries, the West Bank and Gaza face their own population explosion. If the current rate of natural increase (3.7 percent per year) continues, the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza will double in 20 years. Forty-six percent of the population is under the age of 15. Such a young population (see figure in box at left) means that population growth will continue even if fertility declines sharply.

Where virtually the oldest refugee population in the world will be settled remains crucial for both the Arab and Israeli sides, and it remains to be seen. ■

### For More Information:

Philippe Fargues, "Protracted National Conflict and Fertility Change Among Palestinians and Israelis," *Population and Development Review*, 26, no. 3 (September 2000).

Abdel R. Omran and Farzaneh Roudi, "The Middle East Population Puzzle," *Population Bulletin* 48, no. 1 (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 1993).

Howard Schneider, "For Palestinian Refugees, Rhetoric Confronts Reality," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 12, 2001.

Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics: [www.cbs.gov.il](http://www.cbs.gov.il).

Palestinian Bureau of Statistics: [www.pcbs.org](http://www.pcbs.org).

# Extending Benefits to Unmarried Partners *Continued from page 1*

limited information about the additional expenses incurred as a result. Clearly, one important factor in assessing this added expense is the extent to which employees will use the domestic partnership benefit, known as the “take-up” rate. On average, how many workers will request domestic partner benefits?

While statistics on heterosexual cohabitation rates are fairly widely available, little has been recorded about same-sex couples. For the first time in 1990, U.S. census data allowed for the

and women who had exclusively same-sex partners during the year before the census, that approximately 2.5 percent of the male population and 1.4 percent of the female population are gay men and lesbians, respectively. In addition, an estimated 29 percent of gay men and 44 percent of lesbians currently have partners. If we assume that a company has 10,000 employees, split evenly between men and women, approximately 36 men ( $5,000 \times 0.025 \times 0.29$ ) and 31 women ( $5,000 \times 0.014 \times 0.44$ ) would be in same-sex partnerships and potentially eligible for domestic partner benefits. However, the actual take-up rate would likely be much lower, since a large number of same-sex partners are employed full-time and have individual benefits from their employers. Census data (the percentage who reported working more than 35 hours in an average work week during the previous year) suggest that 85 percent of women in lesbian partnerships and 89 percent of men in gay partnerships are employed full-time. If we assume that 80 percent of those in full-time employment have individual benefits from their employers, then only 10 men ( $36 - [36 \times 0.89 \times 0.8]$ ) and 10 women ( $31 - [31 \times 0.85 \times 0.8]$ ) are likely to request same-sex benefits in our hypothetical company (0.2 percent of the work force). As for opposite-sex partnerships, census data show that 4 percent of the population are in heterosexual unmarried partnerships. Of this group, 91 percent of the men and 81 percent of the women are employed full-time. Using the assumptions made above, this suggests that 54 men and 70 women would request benefits. Combining our estimates of same-sex and opposite-

sex domestic partners, we would expect our hypothetical company to have a take-up rate of 1.4 percent (see figure).

Interestingly, this estimate is consistent with take-up rates for same-sex benefits reported last year by labor economist M.V. Lee Badgett. A survey of public employers found an average rate of 2.1 percent, while a survey of private employers found most reporting a 1 percent rate. Clearly, numerous factors could affect the actual take-up rate for any given organization. Using census data could allow for more precise estimates of take-up rates because respondents are asked about what industry they are employed in and provide their age, education level, and location.

These estimates of take-up rates suggest that a very small portion of employees would avail themselves of domestic partner benefits. While determining the total cost of these benefits includes other factors (like the health profiles of new participants), these data suggest that the costs associated with adding domestic partner benefits are most likely quite small. And the gains from fostering an inclusive, open environment could be great. ■

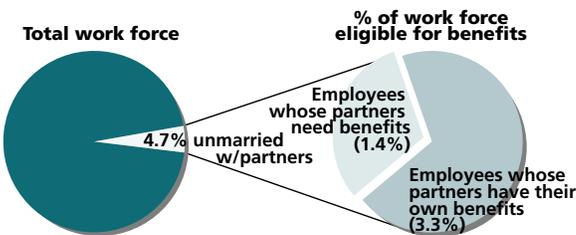
## For More Information:

Dan Black, Gary Gates, Seth Sanders, and Lowell Taylor, “Demographics of the Gay and Lesbian Population in the United States: Evidence from Available Systematic Data Sources,” *Demography* 37, no. 2:139-154 (2000).

Daryl Herrschaft and Kim I. Mills, *The State of the Workplace, 2000* (Washington, DC: Human Rights Campaign, 2000). Available online at: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org).

M.V. Lee Badgett, “Calculating Costs with Credibility: Health Care Benefits for Domestic Partners,” *Angles* 5(1):1-8 (Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, 2000). Available online at: [www.iglss.org](http://www.iglss.org).

## Projected Take-Up Rate for Domestic Partner Benefits in the United States



Sources: Author's calculations based on 1990 census data; and D. Black, G. Gates, S. Sanders, and L. Taylor, *Demography* 37, no. 2 (2000).

identification of both same-sex and opposite-sex couples as “unmarried partners”—different from “roommates” or “unrelated adults.” Researchers from Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Kentucky used the census, along with data from the General Social Survey and the National Health and Social Life Survey, to provide a detailed demographic portrait of the gay and lesbian population. Building on that work, along with other calculations from the census data, we can estimate an average take-up rate for domestic partner benefits in the United States.

The researchers estimated, based on the percentage of men

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## Shortage of Women in China Tied to Trafficking

The Chinese cultural preference for male children and China's one-child policy have led to an overabundance of men, making the country a prime market for trafficking in women, according to the *Los Angeles Times* (Feb. 14, 2001). An article in the *Times* reported that never-married men ages 20 to 44 outnumbered their female counterparts by nearly 2 to 1, and that for those ages 25 to 39, the ratio was 4 to 1. That skewness will likely worsen because of the steep drop in the proportion of daughters born after the one-child policy took effect in 1979; the reporter cites a prediction that, by 2020, 1 million "excess" Chinese males will enter the marriage market every year. Relatives of young men who are looking for wives have taken to buying them from "fixers," who lure unsuspecting girls from rural areas to cities with the promise of providing employment. The article indicates that, in 1999, 6,800 women were reported abducted or missing and not recovered, and 7,660 additional women were rescued from marriages into which they had been sold.

## Shrinking Russia Pins Hopes on Return Migration

Russia's government has stated that the country's declining population now threatens national security, according to Agence France Presse and the *Moscow Times*. In a study published in February, the government warned that the Russian population (145 million) could decrease by nearly 3 million people over the next three years and by 22 million over the next 15 years if current trends continue. (The UN projects that Russia's population in 50 years will sink to 104 million.) While the decrease in population has been known for some time, the study shows that the government is now addressing the problem. It intends to rewrite migration policy, encouraging immigration of ethnic Russians from the New

Independent States by increasing funding for displaced persons. Yet the government's strategy is unlikely to work, according to demographers quoted in the *Moscow Times* article, because the government lacks funds to implement the policy and the economy is too weak to absorb large numbers of incoming workers.

## Morning-After Pill May Become Available Over the Counter in the U.S.

Women's Capital Corporation, the maker of the emergency contraceptive pills packaged under the name Plan B, is pushing for over-the-counter status for the pills. Representatives of the company are scheduled to meet with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to discuss changing the status of the pills, now available only by prescription or through family planning clinics. Women's Capital Corporation plans to commission two safety studies of the pills and submit results to the FDA in early 2002. The FDA could then approve over-the-counter availability by mid- to late 2002. Emergency contraceptive pills can be taken up to 72 hours after unprotected sex to prevent a pregnancy from occurring. (For more on emergency contraceptive pills, see the November 1999 issue of *Population Today*.) Information about Plan B is available on the product's website: [www.go2planb.com/](http://www.go2planb.com/).

## Europeans Pledge to Fill 'Decency Gap'

The decision by U.S. President George W. Bush to reimpose the "Mexico City Policy" provoked strong reaction in Europe. The policy, begun under President Reagan and often referred to as the "global gag rule," cuts off all federal funding to overseas family planning organizations that provide or fund abortion services, counsel women on the option of legal abortion, or lobby for changes in abortion policies. The European Commission announced plans to compensate

agencies that will be hurt by the measure. Eveline Herfkens, the Dutch minister for development cooperation, said she was "absolutely appalled" by the U.S. action. The European commissioner for development, Poul Nielson, said: "Millions and millions of poor, marginalized women in this world need our support. ... If it is necessary for others to fill the decency gap in view of recent decisions, we will do it."

## Mass Weddings in Iran

For most people, getting married is a private affair. But for more than 15,000 Iranian young people who married during the third week of February, it was a televised national event. According to *The Independent of London* (Feb. 19), a representative of Iranian president Ayatollah Ali Khamenei organized mass wedding ceremonies throughout the country to encourage marriage among young people and to promote modest celebrations.

Besides the festivities held in their honor, those taking part in the government-sponsored ceremonies received gifts including copies of the Koran and licenses for telephone lines, which can take more than two years to get if applied for through normal channels.

Unemployment among young people is said by unofficial sources to be above 30 percent, forcing many young people to delay marriage. Agence France Presse reports that there is "brutal competition" among youth for what jobs there are, with more than 60 percent of Iran's 67 million people under 30 years old.

The average age of marriage in Iran has risen from 24 for men and 20 for women in 1976 to 26 for men and 22 for women in 1996. Although the government is trying to make it easier for people to marry, the government encourages small families (one or two children) and requires couples to attend family planning classes before marriage. ■

# Demand for Day Care Down *Continued from page 3*

Germany did not drop dramatically after unification. This finding is somewhat surprising, given that many day-care facilities closed at that time because subsidies from the central government were discontinued. The explanation is that birth

years after unification. In 1990 and 1992, about 60 percent of all children under the age of 3 attended a day-care center for at least half the day. After 1993, however, this share declined to about half of the former GDR level, leveling off at about 30 percent in the late 1990s. Enrollment of children in kindergarten declined modestly from 1990 to 1999, and no substantial drop occurred in the share of school-age children (those ages 7 to 11) using public day care in eastern Germany.

In western Germany, on the other hand, there have not been substantial changes in the day-care situation. Even care for half the day is still common only for children ages 4 to 6 who attend kindergarten.

What are the consequences of the changing day-care situation after unification for the opportunities of women, particularly mothers, to participate in the labor force? Parents in eastern Germany demand fewer child-care slots for their children than are potentially available. One explanation for this is the high unemployment rate among eastern German women, which has led to a shift from institutional day care to maternal care. Consequently, it is likely that the number of child-care slots will be further reduced. In times of better labor market prospects, eastern German mothers would then no longer be in a better position than their western counterparts to pursue childrearing and gainful employment. ■

### For More Information:

This article is based on Working Paper 2001-003, "Außerhäusliche Kinderbetreuung in Ostdeutschland vor und nach der Wiedervereinigung," by Karsten Hank, Katja Tillmann, and Gert G. Wagner. It is available (in German only) on the website of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research at: [www.demogr.mpg.de/papers/paperspres.htm#work](http://www.demogr.mpg.de/papers/paperspres.htm#work).

TABLE 2

## Day-Care Use in Eastern and Western Germany, 1990-1999

Percent of children in the respective age group

Age of child	1990		1995		1999	
	Eastern	Western	Eastern	Western	Eastern	Western
0-3 (infants)	62	6	21	6	34	7
4-6 (kindergarteners)						
– at least part-time care	98	82	92	80	89	85
– care all day	80	21	60	15	56	20
7-11 (school-age children)	35	2	27	3	24	5

Source: German Socio-Economic Panel, Wave 6-16.

rates decreased by about half in the first years after unification. (In fact, the total fertility rate for eastern German states was 0.8 in the mid-1990s.) Accordingly, child-care provision rates in eastern Germany still exceed western German levels many times over (see Table 1, page 3).

Yet changes in use of day care in eastern Germany are perceptible with data for 1990 to 1999 from the German Socio-Economic Panel. The survey in 1990 took place before unification, permitting a direct comparison between the pre- and post-unification period (see Table 2).

In eastern Germany, use of public day care for infants held fairly steady for the first few

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## Webwise

[www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org) • [www.ameristat.org](http://www.ameristat.org) • [www.popnet.org](http://www.popnet.org) • [www.measurecommunication.org](http://www.measurecommunication.org)

The following were posted recently on the PRB network of websites:

### Conveying Concerns: Women Report on Families in Transition

Single parents, families on the move, and AIDS orphans are among the topics covered in the latest issue of *Conveying Concerns*, compiled through the Women's Edition project of PRB. The issue highlights changes in family life from the perspective of women journalists from around the world. Women's Edition is funded through the MEASURE Communication project. ([www.measurecommunication.org](http://www.measurecommunication.org))

### The Career Quandary

The quandary that confronts employees, corporations, governments,

and communities today is the mismatch between career norms, expectations, policies, and practices on the one hand, and the realities of a changing work force and changing economy on the other. The latest issue of *PRB Reports on America*, "The Career Quandary" by Phyllis Moen, calls on employers and governments to develop a new, more flexible employment policy. ([www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org))

### UN Raises Projections of World Population

This Web-only article reports that the Population Division of the UN now projects a global population of 9.3 billion by 2050. This (medium variant) projection is higher than what the division projected two years ago: 8.9

billion by 2050. To find out what accounts for the increase, read this article posted under the "World Population" topic on PRB's home page. ([www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org))

### Africa's Struggle With Desertification

Desertification is an advanced stage of land degradation that results when extended periods of drought sap the land's productivity. Desertification is most severe in Africa, where three-quarters of the continent's drylands that are used for agriculture have already begun to lose productivity. For this and other articles about desertification, click on "Africa" or "Environment" under "Topics" on the PRB home page. ([www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org))

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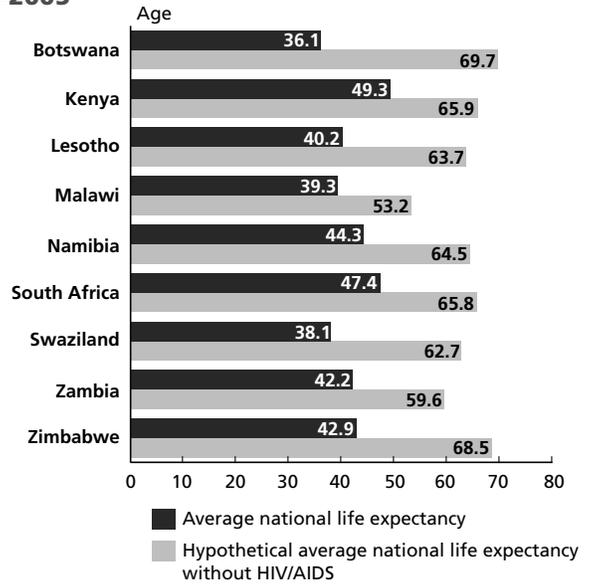
# Numbers You Can Use

Latest data and estimates

## Speaking Graphically

### New Estimates of HIV/AIDS' Impact on Life Expectancy in Nine African Countries, 2000-2005

The 2000 Revision of the UN's *World Population Prospects* again makes plain the devastating toll of AIDS in increased death and population loss. During the next five years, the number of excess deaths because of AIDS among the 45 most affected countries (up from the 34 considered in the 1998 Revision) is projected to be 15.5 million. And in the nine African countries that have the highest HIV prevalence (14 percent or higher), the impact of HIV/AIDS is expected to intensify (see figure). For 2000-2005, UN demographers project that average life expectancy at birth in Botswana, for example, will decrease to 36 years instead of rising to 70 years as projected without the disease.



Source: UN Population Division, *World Population Prospects, The 2000 Revision: Highlights* (February 2001).

## World Population

As of April 2001 6,130,000,000  
Annual growth 82,000,000

Source: Extrapolated from the mid-2000 population on PRB's *2000 World Population Data Sheet*.

## Population of the United States

As of April 1, 2000 281,421,906

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, total resident population, Census 2000.

## U.S. Vital Stats

	January-December		Rate	
	1999	1998	1999	1998
Live births . . . . .	3,965,000	3,943,000	14.5	14.6
Fertility rate . . . . .	—	—	65.9	66.0
Deaths . . . . .	2,396,000	2,331,000	8.8	8.6
Infant deaths . . . . .	28,100	27,600	7.1	7.0
Natural increase . . . . .	1,569,000	1,612,000	5.7	6.0
Marriages . . . . .	2,358,000	2,256,000	8.6	8.4
Divorces . . . . .	—	—	4.1	4.2

Note: Fertility rate is given per 1,000 women ages 15-44; infant deaths per 1,000 live births; other rates per 1,000 population. Number of divorces not available.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports* 48, no. 19 ([www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvs48\\_19.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvs48_19.pdf), accessed March 5, 2001).

## Spotlight Statistic

### Median Net Worth of U.S. Households, by Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity of Householder	Median Net Worth, 1995	Increase in Median Net Worth, 1993-1995
White	\$49,030	2%
Black	\$7,073	52%
Hispanic	\$7,255	48%

Note: Household net worth is the sum of the value of assets minus debts. Half of all households had net worth above the median figure, and half were below. The value of holdings in stocks and mutual funds and in vehicles rose between 1991 and 1995 for all groups but especially for blacks and Hispanics. Home equity constituted the largest share of household net worth in 1995.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Household Net Worth and Asset Ownership: 1995" ([www.census.gov/hhes/www/wealth/1995/wealth95.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/wealth/1995/wealth95.html), accessed March 1, 2001).

# WebSittings

## Your Guide to Virtual Resources

### Uganda Bureau of Statistics

[www.ubos.org/](http://www.ubos.org/)

As the principal agency responsible for coordinating and supervising the National Statistical System, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics collects, processes, analyzes, and disseminates data for decision-makers, development partners, and researchers. The bureau's website features socioeconomic statistics, publications, news, information about current activities and plans, and links to related sites.

### ID21

[www.id21.org/](http://www.id21.org/)

ID21 is a fast-track research reporting service backed by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and aimed at policymakers and development managers. The site provides searchable digests of social and economic research from several university departments, think tanks, and individuals. Materials include conference papers, newsletters, and prepublication works prepared within the last two years. Categories now include society and economy, health, education, and Web links;

soon the site will expand to three sites, one devoted to health, one to education, and one to society and economy.

### Social Watch

[www.socialwatch.org/](http://www.socialwatch.org/)

Social Watch is an international network of citizens organizations committed to social, economic, and gender justice. Its website provides news on poverty and related development topics, country and thematic reports, social development indicators for countries, publications, links to resources, and a glossary of social development indicators. The site is currently available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Visitors may register to receive news updates by e-mail.

### Arab Women Connect

[www.arabwomenconnect.org/](http://www.arabwomenconnect.org/)

UNIFEM Western Asia established this Internet networking/training project to explore the applications of new information and communication technologies for Arab women's empowerment, and to inform policymakers, researchers, donors, UN agencies, and Arab

women's organizations about the status of Arab women. The website provides reports, a database of experts, and a database of women's organizations. Also available are links to weekly news and resources provided by other organizations. The site is available in English and Arabic.

### UNEP.Net Environment Network

[www.unep.net/](http://www.unep.net/)

This site, recently opened by the UN, features national and regional environmental profiles and an atlas of protected areas. Software applications are available that allow visitors to map vulnerability to flooding in parts of southern Africa, locate indigenous populations and ecosystem boundaries, and view coral reefs and nuclear power sites around the globe. Also on the site are wildfire status reports, links to organizations working on risk assessment and early warning systems, and news briefs. ■

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