

Basic Guide to the World Largest 30 Countries, 1950 and 2015

The largest 30 countries in the world account for about 80% of the world population. The largest three countries (China, India and the USA) account for a little over 40%. Both of those percents declined slightly between 1950 and 2015 (Table 1).

However, the main change was the composition of the largest 30 (Table 2). In 1950, 9 of the 30 were in Europe, and by 2015, only 6 were. In addition, in 1950, 4 European countries were in the largest 10 (Russian Federation, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy), but in 2015, only the Russian Federation was (data not shown).

On the other hand, in 1950, 3 of the largest 30 were in Africa, and by 2015, 7 were. About 12-13 were in Asia and 3 were in Latin America in both time periods.

The reason for the change in composition was the difference in growth rates (Table 3). The highest growth rates were in African countries, for example, Tanzania and Kenya, both over 500% growth during this time period, Ethiopia and the Congo, both over 400%. Population growth in Asia and Latin America was also high, but not quite so high. Most countries increased their population by more than 200% (except Japan, growing only by 54%). On the other hand, European countries grew by 50% or less. The USA grew only by 100%.

The very high population growth in African countries means that they became a much larger proportion of world population. The much lower population growth in European countries means that they became a much smaller proportion of world population.

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Data Source: World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision | United Nations Population Division
<http://data.un.org>
Compiled data set also available here: <http://gsociology.icaap.org/dataupload.html>

Tables

Table 1
Percent of World Population

| | 1950 | 2015 |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| World | 2,525,778,669 | 7,324,782,225 |
| Largest 3 | | |
| China | 22% | 19% |
| India | 15% | 18% |
| USA | 6% | 4% |
| | 43% | 41% |
| Largest 30 | 2,056,170,835 | 5,694,056,540 |
| | 81% | 78% |

Table 2
Number of Countries Among the Largest 30

| | 1950 | 2015 |
|------------------|------|------|
| Africa | 3 | 7 |
| Asia | 12 | 13 |
| Europe | 9 | 6 |
| Latin America | 3 | 3 |
| Northern America | 2 | 1 |

Table 3
Population Growth, 1950 to 2015

| Asia | |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| China | 158% |
| India | 241% |
| Indonesia | 252% |
| Pakistan | 401% |
| Bangladesh | 323% |
| Japan | 54% |
| Latin America | |
| Brazil | 277% |
| Mexico | 343% |
| Columbia | 313% |
| Africa | |
| Nigeria | 385% |
| Ethiopia | 446% |
| Egypt | 294% |
| DR Congo | 485% |
| South Africa | 291% |
| Tanzania | 584% |
| Kenya | 669% |
| North America, Europe, Japan | |
| USA | 106% |
| Russian Federation | 38% |
| Germany | 18% |
| France | 55% |
| United Kingdom | 26% |
| Italy | 32% |