

The Caribbean

Population density is high in most of the Caribbean areas and resources are limited. For some 30 years the Caribbean countries² have eased social pressures by both tacitly and openly encouraging emigration. As some of the traditional destinations, such as the United Kingdom, have restricted immigration, Caribbean emigrants—mostly illegals—have headed toward the United States. This outflow may increase in coming years as nationals already in the United States become increasingly sophisticated in assisting their countrymen. The Dominican Republic and Haiti are the most likely sources of these illegals. Most of the Caribbean's population growth will occur in these countries; their family planning efforts are negligible, and unemployment and underemployment—already substantial in their capital cities—will worsen. The continuation of such population pressures means that

² In descending order by size, the nations covered in this section are Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Barbados, Netherlands Antilles, Bahamas, St. Lucia, US Virgin Islands, Grenada, St. Vincent, Dominica, St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and Monserrat. This grouping corresponds with that used in UN demographic studies.

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the number of illegal immigrants coming to the United States will not decline substantially and that the region will experience social and political unrest exploitable by extremist groups, possibly the Cubans.

Population Growth. The UN projects that the population growth rate of the Caribbean countries will remain nearly constant at 2.1 percent per year through the year 2000. The stability in the regional growth rate results from the fact that very rapid increases (2.7 percent) in Haiti and the Dominican Republic are offset by the much slower growth (1.1 percent) elsewhere. Since Haiti and the Dominican Republic account for 70 percent of the Caribbean population, their population growth will dominate the regional picture, supplying 7.5 million of the 8.8 million people added between 1980 and 2000. By then, the present Caribbean population of approximately 17.5 million may reach 26.3 million.

The high growth rate projections for the Dominican Republic and Haiti reflect the ineffectiveness of family planning programs in the face of reduced mortality rates. High fertility is also associated with the practice of subsistence agriculture and the grinding poverty prevalent in Haiti. On the other hand, in the more developed countries of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, government-backed birth control programs, along with heavy emigration, have lowered the average population growth to less than 1.5 percent annually.

Migration Abroad. Because of heavy emigration, the region's population growth is considerably less than that of Latin America as a whole. Population growth in the Caribbean averaged 1.9 percent annually between 1960 and 1970, compared to 2.8 percent for Latin America. During this period the outflow of legal and illegal migrants offset about 30 percent of the natural increase in the region's total population. Without migration the population growth rate of the Caribbean region would have been about 2.6 percent.

Legal emigration to the United Kingdom accounted for most of the outflow during the 1950s and early 1960s, but it slowed considerably in the mid-1960s when the British restricted immigration. The largely

English-speaking migrants then began to move to the United States and Canada. As a result, in 1977 the United States received 65 percent of the legal migrants from the Caribbean, up from 8 percent in 1960.

Until recently, most of these migrants to the United States were predominantly skilled or professional urbanites seeking better job opportunities. Migration to the United States from the poorest Caribbean nations was negligible because of the high cost of transport, language barriers, and the necessity to obtain documents and proof of financial assets. The recent Haitian exodus indicates a change. Hurricane Allen's destruction and the demonstrative effect of the Cuban "boat lift" spurred between 15,000 and 20,000 poor Haitians to enter the United States illegally in 1980.

In coming years population pressures and worsening economic problems in some islands will result in increased attempts by illegal migrants to enter the United States. Paradoxically, in others, such as Haiti, the improvement of economic conditions—if realized—will encourage migration by giving more persons the financial wherewithal to leave. Illegal migration to the United States gradually will become easier as the illegals already here provide contacts and funds for their compatriots.

Recently tightened barriers to migration within the Caribbean will encourage the flow toward the United States. Substantial interisland migration has been a standard practice, primarily among islands with a common language. Besides the traditional seasonal migration of farm labor under "guest worker" arrangements, particularly from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, many urban workers have moved from the poorer islands to the richer English-speaking islands, such as the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago. Now, however, the Bahamian Government has announced that it will deport all illegals, including an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 Haitians. The Dominican Republic reportedly has stepped up border security to slow illegal migration. Seventy-five percent of the 80,000 Haitians who work seasonally in the Dominican Republic arrive illegally.

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Rural-to-Urban Migration. During the next 20 years, urban population, particularly in the region's two largest nations, will grow rapidly because of migration from rural areas and natural increase. The UN projects that annual urban growth will be 3.9 percent in Haiti and 4.9 percent in the Dominican Republic. By the year 2000 their combined urban population will be 9.8 million, more than double the present size.



Density is high in the Caribbean islands, ranging from 104 persons per square kilometer in the Dominican Republic to 195 persons per square kilometer in Haiti. If arable land were the only measure, the density per square kilometer would exceed 750 in Jamaica and Haiti, compared with 104 in the United States.

Land tenure laws in many of the islands compound rural population pressures. Adherence to the requirement that holdings be divided equally among heirs has resulted in the typical family plot measuring roughly 2 hectares in the Dominican Republic and only 1.2 hectares in Haiti. Although the family farm in other Caribbean countries is usually somewhat larger, it affords little more than a subsistence living, and many farmers are forced to move to the cities to improve their situations. Despite high levels of unemployment, wages are much higher, services are better, and health care and education are more accessible in the city than in the countryside. In Haiti, because most of the manufacturing jobs are in the capital, Port-au-Prince is strained by the increasing influx of rural workers, growing unemployment, and mounting pressures on public services.

In most Caribbean nations, the ethnic homogeneity of urban populations has reduced the potential for conflict. In Jamaica, however, intense political rivalry has contributed to an increase in violent crimes and has threatened the island's political stability. One of Prime Minister Seaga's first tasks will be to curb the violence, a difficult job in view of Jamaica's high rate of unemployment and general economic disarray.

Employment and the Labor Force. The UN projects that the region's labor force will grow at an annual rate of 2.3 percent in the 1980s, slowing to 2.1 percent during the 1990s. Again, the large populations in the Dominican Republic and Haiti will contribute nearly all of this growth.

During the last two decades jobs have not been created fast enough to keep pace with the increase in the labor force, and this trend is likely to continue during the rest of the century. In the Dominican Republic the nonagricultural labor force grew at 4.9 percent from 1960 to 1975, while the annual growth of nonagricultural jobs was just 4 percent. In Jamaica only about 58,000 new jobs were created in the nonagricultural sectors between 1960 and 1975—a gain of 18 percent; the nonagricultural work force increased 30 percent. In many of the countries, employment in the industrial sectors has shown little or no growth in the past decade.

Estimated regional unemployment last year was 25 percent, more than double the rate in 1960. Urban unemployment is concentrated among the youth, who have the greatest difficulty finding jobs. Moreover, high rates of female participation add to the labor problem. In Jamaica women hold almost half of the nonagricultural jobs, a fairly typical share for the English-speaking Caribbean, where the traditional matriarchal family pattern has encouraged female independence.

In Haiti, female and child labor on family subsistence farms frees male family members to obtain seasonal work on coffee plantations. The Haitian assembly industry also employs large numbers of women, and working-age women have spurred the rural migration to Port-au-Prince and other urban areas. In contrast in the Dominican Republic the traditional bias against female employment keeps female participation in the labor force low.

Government Population Measures. Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago have long been sensitive to the problems of population growth and have supported family planning programs for many

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years. The Jamaican National Family Planning Program was established in 1966; distribution of contraceptives began in 1968. The Barbados family planning program, among the world's first in 1955, was largely responsible for a 22-percent decline in birth rates during the 1960s. On the other hand, in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where traditional attitudes favoring large families are deeply rooted, official support for family planning programs is very recent and has come largely as a result of pressure from aid donors. []

Outlook. With sharply higher oil costs, declining commodity prices, and stagnating foreign investment, the Caribbean's economic growth prospects are poor and per capita incomes will fall. Migration will remain the principal safety valve to relieve population pressures. Rising migration will primarily include small numbers of urban, middle class, legal emigrants, who leave in response to economic or political crises, and much larger numbers of poor, illegal migrants, who can leave only when they obtain the necessary resources. The former has a negligible impact on the United States but represents a major loss for the Caribbean; the latter will be of much greater concern to the United States. Larger numbers of illegal migrants, already unwelcome in the more prosperous islands like Barbados and the Bahamas, will set the stage for recurrent incidents. []

Although the authoritarian politics in Haiti may give the appearance of domestic quiescence, it is there, and in the Dominican Republic, that population pressures will be greatest. The United States, long a magnet for the better educated Caribbean migrants, will receive increasing numbers of rural poor from these two countries. Despite the greater likelihood of overt dissension in the more open political systems of the other islands, population pressures in those islands will continue to lessen and migration to the United States will be far less dramatic than that from the poor countries (figure 8). []

Central America

Accelerating population growth in Central America¹ contributed to a serious conflict between El Salvador and Honduras and a substantial and increasing flow

¹ Central America includes Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. []

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of illegal aliens to the United States. Although it is difficult to prove a direct linkage, population growth and pressure on the land also have played some role in the revolutionary violence now sweeping the area. The problems associated with rapid population growth are likely to get worse—perhaps much worse—before they get better. Because of the age structure, the labor force will grow more rapidly than the population as a whole in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua in the 1980s, and in all five countries during the 1990s. Thus, the population growth rate may well understate the magnitude of the unemployment, land, urbanization, and migration pressures that the area will face. As has already been the case in Nicaragua and El Salvador, these problems play into the hands of extremist groups, which often have the support of elements hostile to the United States. []

The Dynamics of Population Growth. The five-nation region—roughly the size of the combined areas of the states of Oregon and Washington—has a population of 20 million, more than three times that of the same two states. We expect that by the end of this decade the population of Central America will be about 35 percent higher than it is today. []

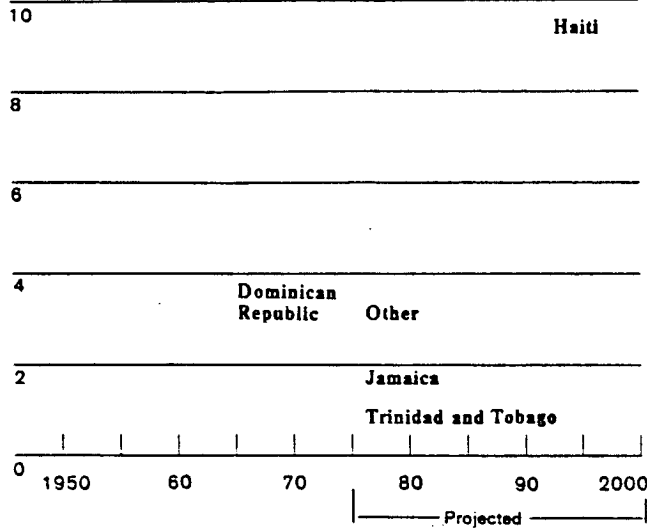
On the basis of estimates of the US Bureau of the Census and data from a 1977 Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) study, we expect a regional average annual rate of population increase of 2.9 percent in the next two decades, ranging from 3.4 percent in Honduras to 2.4 percent in Costa Rica. The regional average annual population growth rate rose from 2.0 percent in the period 1920-50 to 3.1 percent in the period 1950-80. []

Central American birth rates, among the highest in Latin America, began to decline in the 1960s, particularly in Costa Rica, where socioeconomic conditions were improving rapidly. Death rates, on the other hand, had already fallen in all countries by the 1940s; the lowest rates were in Costa Rica and the highest in Honduras. A continuing decline in both birth and death rates is expected in all countries of the region, but because about 45 percent of the population is under 15 years of age, population will continue to show a rapid increase in each country during the next two decades. []

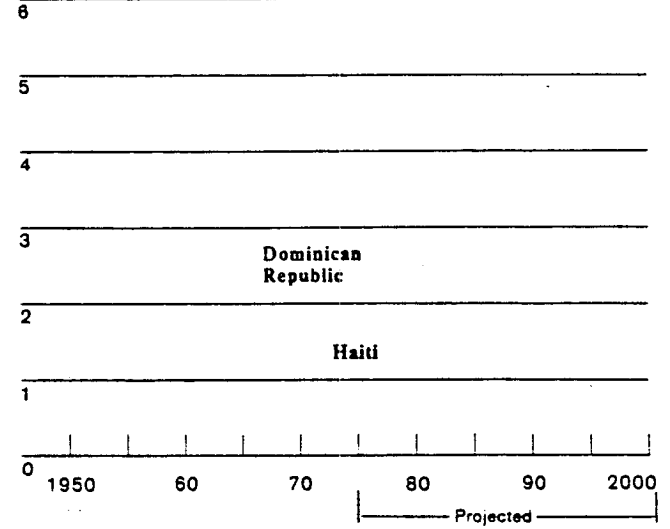
Figure 8

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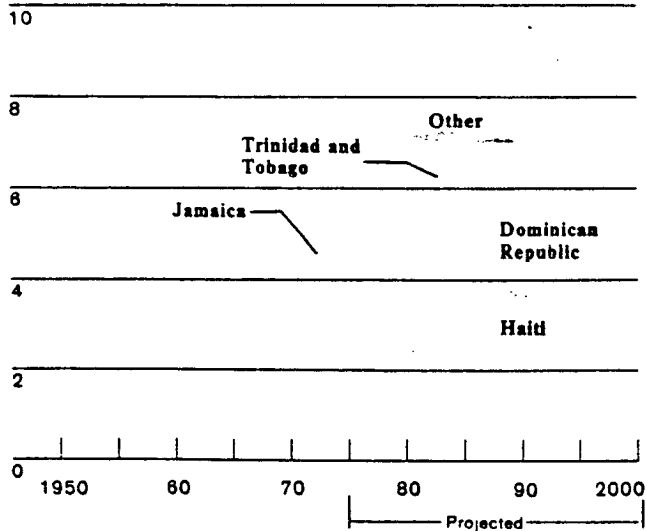
Population
Millions



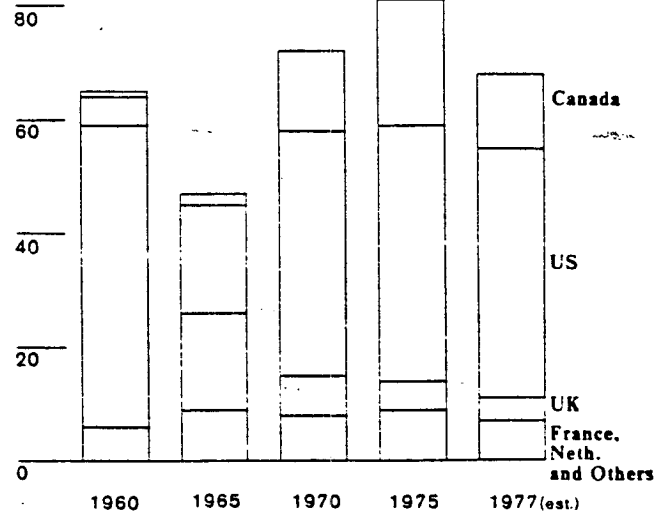
Urban Population^a
Millions



Labor Force
Millions



Major Destinations of Legal Migrants
Thousands



^aOther nations excluded because of different definitions of urban areas.

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Pressure on the Land. El Salvador, with 227 persons per square kilometer (compared with 48 for the region as a whole), is the most densely populated noninsular nation in the Western Hemisphere, comparable to such Asian nations as India and Sri Lanka. Areas within other Central American nations are little El Salvadors, with many of that nation's demographic problems.

While population growth has soared, Food and Agriculture Organization data show that arable land has expanded at less than 1 percent annually in each country except Guatemala, where the increase has been 1.6 percent a year. A factor in the expansion of arable land is the amount of land suitable for intensive agricultural use without large investments. Of total land in Costa Rica, about 23 percent is in this category; in Nicaragua, only 6 percent qualifies. On this basis, Costa Rica has the lowest density, but even there the rural population is becoming increasingly concentrated. In each country the rural population will grow in absolute terms, even though it is declining as a proportion of the total.

By the end of the century, between one-third and one-half of the Central American population will be urban. Although urbanization has been slower than elsewhere in Latin America, migration, spurred by conditions in the countryside, has burdened urban systems already struggling to accommodate natural increases in urban population. According to an IDB study, over the past 30 years the population in cities of 10,000 or more grew by annual rates of 4 percent or more, well above the rates of general population growth. Honduras, with a rate of 5.8 percent had the highest rate of urban growth, although only a quarter of its population lives in cities of this size. In Nicaragua, the most urbanized country, the share is 40 percent. The fastest urban growth in this decade, about 4.5 percent a year, will be in Honduras and Guatemala.

Labor Force and Employment. In the 1980s growth of the labor force will accelerate in every Central American country except Costa Rica, whose average annual rate rose from 2.6 percent in the 1950s to 4.4 percent in the 1970s. El Salvador (3.6 percent) and Honduras (3.4 percent) will have the highest average annual labor force growth rates in this decade; rates in the

other countries will be about 3 percent. In the 1990s labor force growth will continue to accelerate in Nicaragua and will remain at high levels in the other countries.

We expect rapid expansion in the labor force even though the percentage of the economically active is likely to remain low, compared to that of developed countries. The International Labor Organization estimates 37 percent of the population of Costa Rica will be in the labor force by the year 2000, while in the other countries the share probably will be less than 33 percent. These shares reflect continued high—though declining—percentages of the population under 15. At present, the share of the population in the labor force ranges from almost 34 percent in Costa Rica to about 30 percent in the other countries. If participation increases faster than expected, labor force growth is likely to be even greater than we project.

Unemployment data for these countries are not a measure of the problem, because a substantial part of the labor force, both rural and urban, is underemployed. Most heads of households find some work, even if it is of extremely low productivity. One study shows that levels of equivalent unemployment (the difference between available man-years and the estimated requirement to produce the sectoral product) in agriculture in 1970 exceeded 50 percent in El Salvador and Guatemala, 40 percent in Honduras, 20 percent in Nicaragua, and 15 percent in Costa Rica, the country with the highest per capita income.

Social and Political Impact. Increasing pressure on the land—exacerbated in some cases by a shift from tenant farming to less labor-intensive plantation agriculture—is making rural life relatively less attractive throughout Central America. If we use child malnutrition as a measure of the rural living standard, we see that the standard has declined sharply in four out of the five Central American countries since the mid-1960s. Only Costa Rica, with relatively high per capita incomes and extensive social services, has been able to reduce malnutrition. Nicaragua, by far the most urbanized of the five nations, had the lowest malnutrition rate in the mid-1960s but has since seen this rate worsen, in part, because of natural disasters and political violence.

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Central American farmers have only a limited number of responses to their worsened situation. Most tighten their belts and continue to eke out a living in the countryside. (In this respect, small landowners may feel they have fewer options than do landless peasants who have nothing to lose by moving to the city.) Others may be moved to seize unoccupied land elsewhere. Population pressures that led some 300,000 Salvadorans to emigrate to sparsely populated neighboring Honduras between World War II and the late 1960s also contributed to the 1969 "Soccer War" between the two countries. Desire for land may also be a factor influencing the so far relatively small number of peasants who support revolutionary movements. []

Many peasants leave the land entirely and flock to the cities and towns where, in the process of bettering themselves, they lower real wage rates for other urbanites. This, in turn, encourages illegal migration to the United States. (Lack of economic opportunity because of the area's relatively rigid social structure and, more recently, fear of political violence are other factors.) In 1978, an estimated 25,000 Salvadoran illegals successfully migrated to the United States; 15,000 came from Guatemala; and 10,000 came from other Central American countries. Given the marked increase of violence in the area, illegal migration has probably risen sharply since this estimate was made. []

Government Measures. Government economic policies, including land reform and resettlement efforts, have done little to reduce the problem of unemployment-underemployment in the region. There has been little expansion in the percentage of the labor force employed in industry, and much of the migration from rural areas has tended to swell the urban service sector, which suffers from low productivity and income. Furthermore, the present violence in some countries and the threat of conflict in others deter the investment and economic growth needed to provide jobs. For example, in Guatemala 13 multinational corporations have recently closed down operations. []

Most of the Central American governments have paid little more than lipservice to the need to reduce population growth rates, and their willingness to address this problem is not likely to increase in the

next few years. In the 1960s all countries in the region implemented family planning programs for health reasons. By the mid-1970s El Salvador and Guatemala acknowledged that these programs also should be used to reduce population growth. The present Guatemalan Government, however, has no official population policy and is tackling the problem by sponsoring migration to sparsely settled areas. The present Nicaraguan Government makes family planning services available but does not actively promote them. [] 25X1

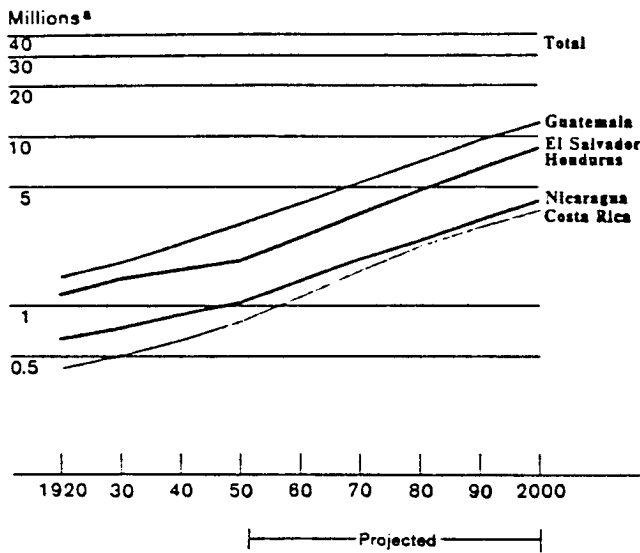
Outlook and Implications. The Central American countries have had a poor record in dealing with their population growth, and we do not expect the record to improve significantly in the next few years. Most of the countries will be unable to provide adequate employment opportunities for the growing numbers entering the labor force, particularly in rural areas, where pressures on the land will intensify. Many of these workers, particularly from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, will view migration to the United States, though illegal, as their only option. These three countries already provide roughly half of the illegal immigrants coming to the United States from Central and South America. [] 25X1

Demographic pressures will add to political pressures both within and between nations. The Nicaraguan revolution has increased pressures for social change throughout Central America, but particularly in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, where government policies have done little to improve socioeconomic conditions for much of the population. The Costa Rican Government, in contrast, has made a sustained effort to improve health and education levels, and this investment in human resources has contributed to a sharp drop in fertility and to relative social calm. El Salvador has partially implemented agrarian reforms, but it is still too early to judge the results. Similarly, the final outcome of ongoing social and economic changes in Nicaragua is uncertain. Even Costa Rica is vulnerable to domestic strains if economic conditions deteriorate. Continued high growth in population and the labor force portends social tensions in these countries for many years ahead (figure 9). [] 25X1 25X1

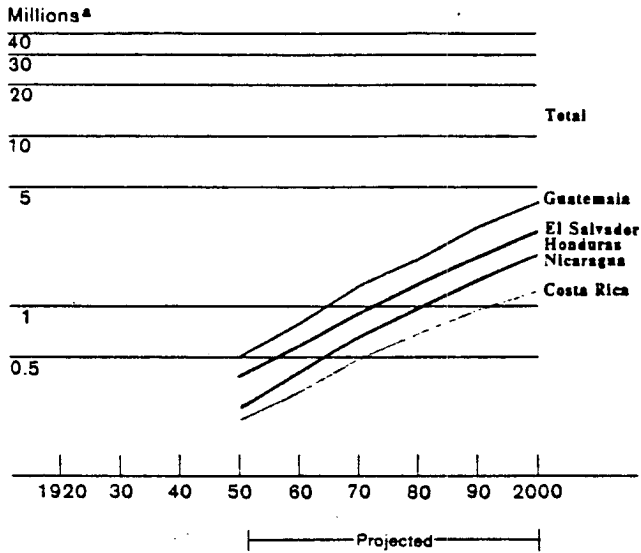
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Figure 9
Central America

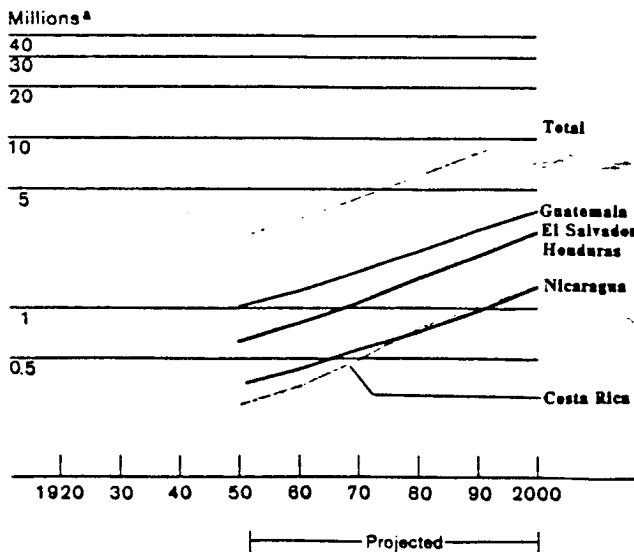
Population



Urban Population

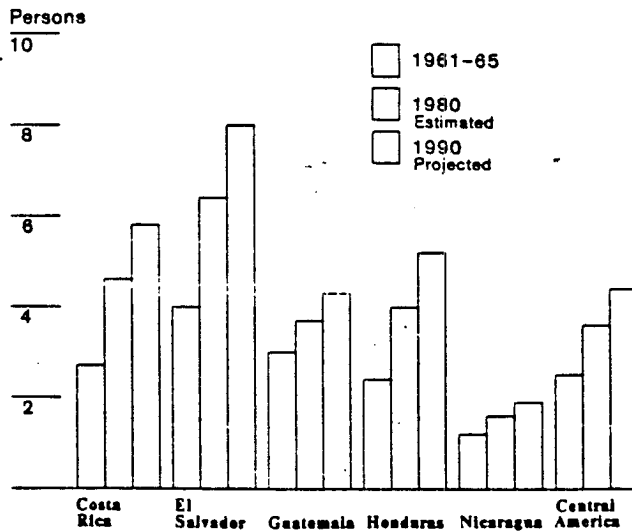


Labor Force



^aNote logarithmic scale.

Population per Hectare of Arable Land



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