

# **The International Index of National Population Studies and Research**

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### **Internet connection of population research centres.**

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Most population study and research centres are now connected to the Internet. This rapid change is mainly due to the existence of many different national and international programmes with diverse objectives and approaches.

The data collected by CICRED<sup>4</sup> illustrate the speed with which this phenomenon has taken place between 1997 and 1999 (cf. Fig. 1 and Table). Three main services are available to users: electronic mail, consulting and accessing documents on the net (WWW, ftp, gopher...).

E-mail has become increasingly widespread and comparable to the telephone and the fax as a communication tool, because of its low cost, simple installation, ease of use, the fact that it is integrated in IT systems and because of its reliability compared with the telephone and postal services.

Fully 60% of the centres in the world now communicate via E-mail. The centres from industrialised countries are best equipped. 90% of them are able to send and receive messages. However, they are not able to communicate so well with developing-country centres, for example with centres in Africa, since only 30% of them are connected to the Internet. Even though these regional inequalities remain substantial they are rapidly diminishing.

This seems to indicate that a major problem for the international community of population research centres, that of the rapid communication of information among centres, may soon be solved by electronic mail; whilst saving the cost of investing in a secondary telephone system. The Internet may therefore be considered as contributing to national and international cooperation in population research.

However, the vast, rich well of information provided by the Internet through the access it provides to information servers still remains out of reach of a very large number of

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centres in developing countries, which require greater financial and technical means as well as improved IT skills.

Moreover, the number of centres from developing countries that have servers capable of providing access to the information they are gathering and to the analyses they are conducting remains small. In the beginning of 1999 only a minority of centres, 138 in all, had a web site and thus the means for effectively promoting their research and disseminating their research results (cf, Fig. 2 and table).

Progress definitely remains to be made and initiatives should be encouraged in this area, one that is essential for the production of as well as the access to information. Such an approach will have the advantage of giving centres from developing countries the opportunity to play an active role in the production of information rather than simply a passive role as consumers or even spectators. It will also contribute to the transfer of research on developing countries to centres from these countries.

The scientific community will benefit from such a policy since there is a great variety and abundance of information sources as demonstrated by the survey CICRED has been conducting since 1997 on the activities of centres.

The lesson is clear, the objectives or the evaluation of an Internet connection programme of population research centres must not only be measured in terms of the numbers of centres or of workstations connected, but also in terms of the proportion of centres that have become "visible" on the web; or better, in terms of an indicator of the volume of information made available.

**Table :** Demographic centers with access to the internet via an E-mail address or a website

Continent	Number of centers		Number of centers with E-mail		Number of centers with a website	Percentage of centers with E-mail		Percentage of centers with a website
	1997	1999	1997	1999		1997	1999	
<b>Africa</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24.81</b>	<b>31.43</b>	<b>3.57</b>
East Africa	33	36	11	15	2	33.33	41.67	5.56
Middle Africa	17	18	2	4	0	11.76	22.22	0.00
North Africa	27	31	5	8	2	18.52	25.81	6.45
Southern Africa	9	10	4	4	1	44.44	40.00	10.00
West Africa	43	45	7	13	0	16.28	28.89	0.00
<b>North America</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>84.29</b>	<b>90.14</b>	<b>53.52</b>
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>56.00</b>	<b>69.14</b>	<b>18.52</b>
Caribbean	9	9	2	3	0	22.22	33.33	0.00
Central America	19	20	10	12	3	52.63	60.00	15.00
South America	47	52	30	41	12	63.83	78.85	23.08
<b>Asia</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>33.78</b>	<b>46.75</b>	<b>9.09</b>
East Asia	44	42	8	15	3	18.18	35.71	7.14
South-central Asia	45	51	17	25	2	37.78	49.02	3.92
South-east Asia	40	41	14	17	6	35.00	41.46	14.63
West Asia	19	20	11	15	3	57.89	75.00	15.00
<b>Europe</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>52.76</b>	<b>72.86</b>	<b>27.62</b>
Eastern Europe	42	42	20	26	1	47.62	61.90	2.38
Northern Europe	43	46	31	39	19	72.09	84.78	41.30
Southern Europe	38	44	12	32	11	31.58	72.73	25.00
Western Europe	76	78	42	56	27	55.26	71.79	34.62
<b>Oceania</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>81.25</b>	<b>87.50</b>	<b>50.00</b>
Australia-New Zealand	13	13	12	12	7	92.31	92.31	53.85
Melanesia	3	3	1	2	1	33.33	66.67	33.33
Micronesia	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Polynesia	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>World-wide</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>47.25</b>	<b>59.97</b>	<b>20.53</b>

figure 1 : Proportion of centers with an E-mail address in 1997 and in 1999, per continent.

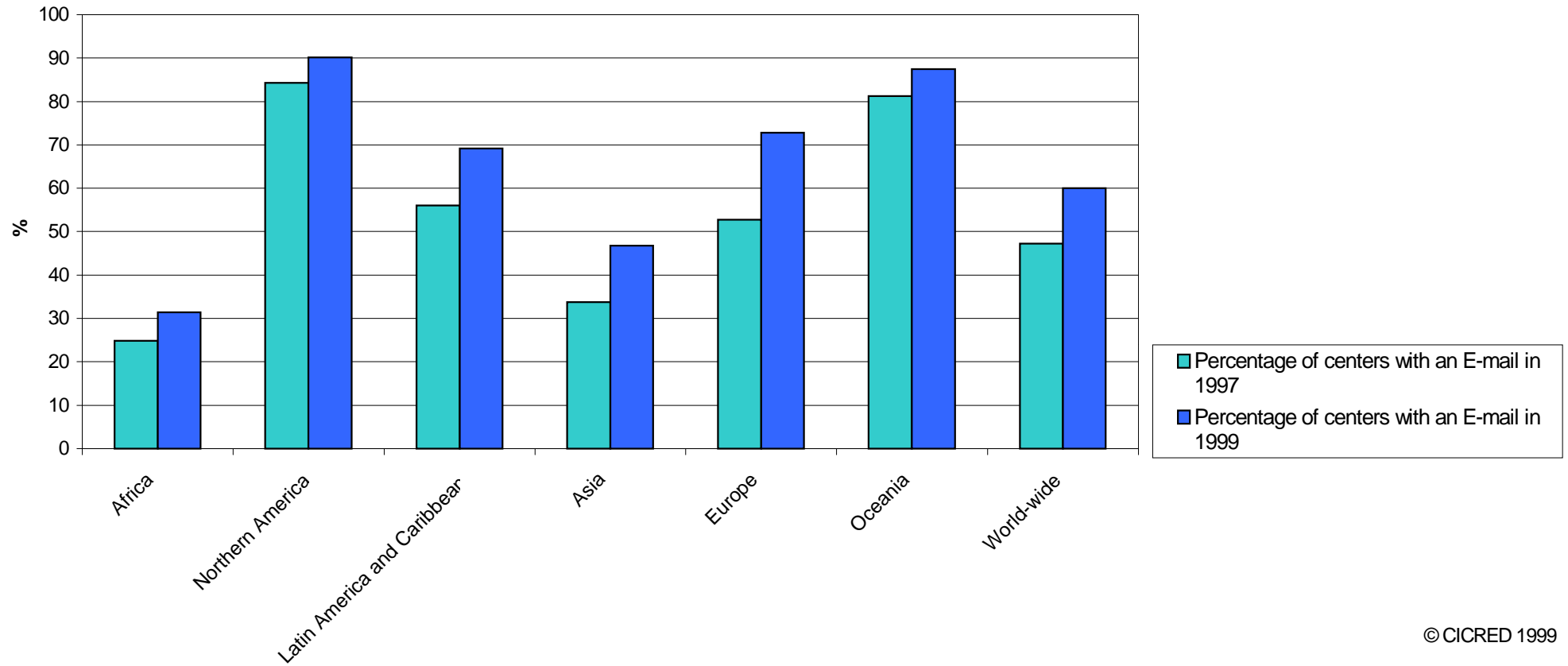


figure 2 : Proportion of centers with an E-mail address or a Website in 1999, per continent.

