Purpose: Estimate continental African populations by region and by decade, 1650-1950, using a combination of empirical, statistical, and simulation techniques.

Background: African continental population rose from 300 million in 1950 to 1.0 billion in 2010. Commonly cited estimates suggest that African population was 100 million in 1900 and 60 million in 1650. This implied steady population growth is overestimated for three reasons: 1900-50 growth rates were lower; negative effect of export slave trade 1650 – 1900; negative effect of additional enslavement within Africa 1780-1900.

1900 – 1950 population: identify appropriate crude growth rates. Using growth rates based on those documented for tropical India, revised estimates show an African continental population of 140 million in 1900.

1650 – 1790 population: simulate impact of export slave trade. (1) Known Atlantic slave trade volumes (Eltis); statistical modeling of missing data (Sharpnack); (2) estimated slave trade volumes across Indian Ocean and Sahara (Manning); (3)deterministic modeling of continental population as influenced by export of captives (Nickleach and Manning).

1790 – 1900 population: simulate impact of export + continental slave trade. Same techniques as for 1650-1790 plus estimates of additional levels of continental enslavement and mortality (Nickleach and Manning).