

# Are there too many people?

What you should know about the claim that the world is over-populated.



Baby 7 Billion arrived in October 2011 to a world with unprecedented agricultural production, improved quality of life and increasing prosperity. **Overall, the world's biggest demographic problems stem not from too many people but from too few.**

# An Unfortunate Series of Myths

## Myth

### There are too many people on earth

**FACT** According to the Central Intelligence Agency, the world's population as of July 2013 is 7,095,217,980.<sup>1</sup> The landmass of New South Wales is 800,642 sq km.<sup>2</sup> So, divide 7,095,217,980 people by 800,642 sq km, and you get about 8,765 people per sq km. Given an average four person family, each family could have a plot of land that is 456 sq metres, which would comfortably provide a single family home and yard - and all of them fit on a landmass the size of New South Wales, Australia!

**FACT** Most of the earth is still empty. It is estimated that the area occupied by human beings is no more than 1-3% of the earth's land surface.<sup>3</sup>

## Myth

### There isn't enough food to feed everyone

**FACT** The world currently produces enough food to feed 10 billion people, and there are only 7 billion of us.<sup>4</sup>

**FACT** By 2030, with population growth continuing to decline and agricultural output predicted to rise, the UN forecasts that enough food will be grown worldwide, despite a global estimated population of 8.3 billion, to give everyone 3,050 kilocalories per day.<sup>5</sup>

**FACT** At the beginning of the food crisis in 2007, the world's farmers produced 1,945 billion kilograms of grain, which included record or near-record levels of rice, wheat, and corn – despite droughts in Australia and poor crops in the European Union.<sup>6</sup> The Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) June 2009 report stated that “even larger crops than originally forecast” were harvested, making 2008 the highest production year on record. So, even after a food crisis, crop production records were reached!

*Myth*

## Overpopulation is the cause of world hunger

**FACT** The World Food Programme (WFO) – the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide does not list overpopulation as a cause of hunger.

*Myth*

## Overpopulation leads to environmental ruin which threatens the very survival of the planet

**FACT** During the ice ages, the population was significantly less than it is today. Overpopulation was not the cause of the ice ages.

**FACT** Human behaviour is responsible for environmental degradation not overpopulation.

**FACT** People are our greatest resource. It is humans who have designed increasingly sophisticated technological strategies and innovations to protect the environment, for example:

- Pulp and paper productivity has improved in the modern age.
- Wood is a renewable natural resource and is completely recyclable.
- Hydrogen fuel cells, solar, hydroelectric, tidal and wave power, are all pollution-free alternatives to fossil fuels.
- Roof gardens are lessening the "heat island" effect that occurs in urban centres.

## Scarcity ≠ Overpopulation



### Key Causes of Hunger

- ☒ Poverty
- ☒ Conflict (War)
- ☒ Natural Disasters
- ☒ Over-Exploitation of the Environment
- ☒ Poor Agricultural Infrastructure



↖ No Overpopulation

# Myth

## Overpopulation leads to climate change

**FACT** The science on climate change is not settled and is definitely in a state of influx, so, how can “overpopulation” be a reasonable cause of something not proven? In fact, in 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>7</sup> together with Al Gore in his Nobel Peace Prize speech, warned policymakers of a real global warming disaster with disastrous consequences, including an “ice-free” Arctic by 2013!

Yet, in an assessment released in September 2013<sup>8</sup> the IPCC reported that the reverse had occurred: the polar icecap is at its highest level since 2006. Moreover, the Antarctic sea ice extent has grown to what its average was in 1979!<sup>9</sup> Even so, IPCC in its 2013 assessment states, without evidence, that it is ‘extremely likely’ – 95% certain – that human influence caused more than half the temperature rises from 1951 to 2010. This is despite the lack of global warming over the past 17 years.<sup>10</sup>

Humans are able to use their ingenuity to transform the world in order to sustain growing populations.



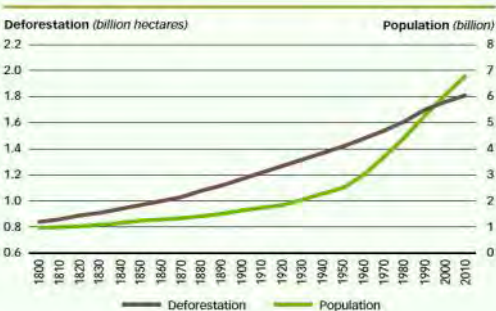
# Myth

## Overpopulation leads to “deforestation”

**FACT** The world is not running out of wood or trees. By and large, forests are being managed and conserved. According to the FAO, the world’s forests cover about four billion hectares (30% of the land surface of the earth). Few people realise this is the same figure as in the 1950s. As the graph below shows, deforestation outstripped population growth rates and is currently decreasing with population increasing. Humans are able to use their ingenuity to transform the world in order to sustain growing populations.

Timber companies maximise their profits not by cutting trees as quickly as possible, but by keeping in mind that each year’s growth adds to the value of the tree. It is also profitable for them to replant in places where they cut, which they do.

World population and Cumulative Deforestation 1800 to 2010



Source: Williams, 2002; FAO, 2010b; UN, 1999.



# History of the Overpopulation Myth

The history of overpopulation scare-mongering can be traced back to a number of key thinkers and activists starting with Thomas Malthus in the eighteenth century. A look at the background behind these key players helps reveal a hidden agenda.

## Some of the Players: Eugenicists and Doomsayers

**Rev. Thomas Malthus** (1766-1834), the British clergyman who published the *Essay on the Principle of Population in England* in 1798, argued that unchecked population growth is exponential: 2,4,8,16,32,64 where as growth in food production can only be arithmetic: 10,20,30,40,50,60. Eventually, exponential always catches up and overtakes the arithmetic progress. Sooner or later, he said we won't be able to feed everyone and the result would be mass starvation. Malthus supplied no supporting data for his claim. Happily for humanity, agricultural productivity dramatically surged ahead of population.



In addition to cutting the birth rate, Malthus argued that any person, who was 'defective' in any way or form, including the poor, was to be identified and eliminated from society.

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*If you want a terrific little summary of why Malthusianism is bunk, visit [www.pop.org](http://www.pop.org)*

**Marie Stopes** (1880-1958), was a eugenicist and campaigner for birth control. She edited the *Birth Control News* and established her first birth control clinic in London in 1921.

Later that same year she founded the “Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress” as a support organisation for the clinic. The clinic’s purpose was to prevent the birth of those she described as “the inferior, the depraved, and the feeble-minded”. This is why her clinics were founded in poor areas.



“**Birth Control**” includes any device or practice that prevents birth, including elective abortion.

In 1935, she attended the International Congress for Population Science in Berlin, held under the Nazi regime.

Marie Stopes International (MSI) was established in the United Kingdom in 1976 and began its overseas programmes in New Delhi.

MSI now operates in 41 countries and has over 600 centres worldwide receiving millions of dollars from government and aid agencies to fund abortion campaigns and lobby for the legalisation of abortion in developing countries.



**Margaret Sanger** (1883-1966), was a racist and eugenicist who devoted her life to the international birth control movement. Editor of the *Birth Control Review* from 1917 to 1938, she published articles written by members of the Nazi party and other racist groups. She asserted that “The campaign for birth control is not merely of eugenic value, but is practically identical with the final aims of eugenics.”<sup>11</sup>



**eugenics**, which means well born, was coined in 1883 by Sir Francis Galton. The ideology advocates the creation of a master race by controlling who can or cannot have children.

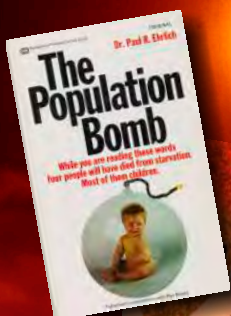
She argued that the genetic makeup of the poor and of minorities was inferior.<sup>12</sup> She was intent on building a ‘race of thoroughbreds’<sup>13</sup> and often opined that “the most merciful thing that the large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it,”<sup>14</sup> and that “all our problems are the result of overbreeding among the working class.”<sup>15</sup>

She established her first birth control clinic in a poor area of New York in 1916. In 1939, she and Clarence Gamble made an infamous proposal called “Birth Control and the Negro,” which aimed to exterminate the black American population. In 1942, she founded the American Birth Control League, which grew into the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), of which she was honorary president.

Today, IPPF is the largest provider and promoter of abortion worldwide, under the banner of ‘sexual and reproductive health’. IPPF and its affiliates continue to attract government funding and donations from wealthy foundations and individuals.

Clarence Gamble was heir of the Procter & Gamble soap company fortune. He was an advocate of birth control and eugenics, and founded Pathfinder International<sup>16</sup>.





**Paul Ehrlich**, a Stanford University biologist whose speciality was butterflies, advocates for zero-population-growth. He wrote the best-selling book, *The Population Bomb* in 1968 warning the world that:



- *Global famines would begin by the 70's.*  
The famines that occurred were in the first place localised and second not caused by a collapse of the food supply, but by political instability.<sup>17</sup>
- *The global death rate would skyrocket.*  
The global death rate has actually fallen.
- *India would never feed 200 million people.*  
India now feeds over a billion
- *Population would explode.*  
Today, we have a population implosion

His book *Population Explosion* in 1990 purported to show “why overpopulation is the #1 environmental problem.” Like the *Bomb*, it too, contained gross overstatements and factual errors.



# The Demographic Winter

## Plummeting birth rates to unprecedented lows

All regions of the world are experiencing a decline in total fertility rates.<sup>18</sup> TFR is the number of children a woman can expect to have during her lifetime. **The birth rate that keeps the population stable is two.**

A UN report titled *World Population to 2300* paints a picture of Europe's future if **European** fertility rates don't rise above current levels: "The European Union, which has recently expanded to encompass 452-455 million people (according to 2000-2005 figures) would fall by 2300 to only 59 million. About half the countries of Europe would lose 95% or more of their population, and such countries as the Russian Federation and Italy would have only 1% of their population left." If current demography fertility trends continue, the Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, and Poles will virtually cease to exist.

**Tiger Nations**<sup>19</sup> now suffer fertility rates roughly half the 2.1 children per household needed to replace the current population. By 2030 these countries could have fewer people under 15 than over 60.

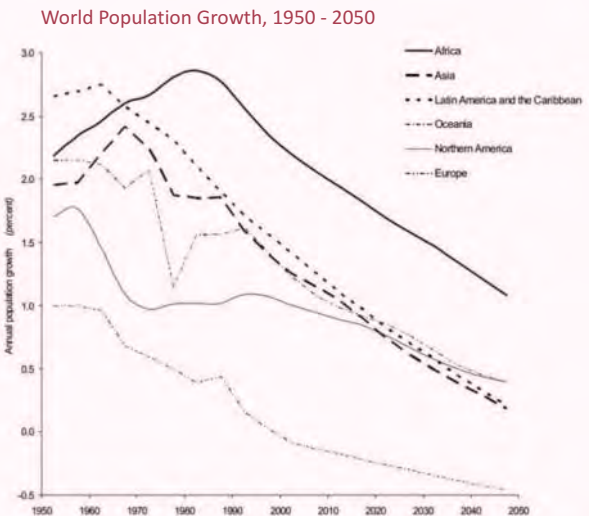
**Japan's** total fertility rate, at 1.4 children<sup>20</sup> per woman has never been lower, and it is still falling from year to year. Japan already has the oldest population in the world; and by 2050, according to UN estimates, Japan will have 3.7 times as many people 65 and older as 15 and under.

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**China** today has one of the most skewed sex ratios in the world, with 119 male babies born for every 100 females. The problem gets even worse from there. In the years after birth, malnourished and neglected baby girls die in larger numbers than their cherished brothers. As a result, there are 124 boys for every 100 girls under the age of 5 in China.<sup>21</sup>

According to the UN medium variant population projection, China's population will dip to below 1.3 billion in 2050 (assuming that its very low fertility rate starts to recover). However, if its fertility rate remains at about 1.5-1.6 children per women, then China will have less than 1 billion people in 2060. In other words, China's workforce will shrink and its remaining population will be increasingly made up of the elderly.<sup>22</sup>

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as of 2011, the TFR is 1.88. **Australia** is included in the list of the 21 lowest-fertility countries with Japan and Italy.<sup>23</sup>



Source: World Population to 2300, The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (2004)

# The world's increasing ageing population

Due to advances in medicine, life expectancy is increasing, at the same time that global birth rates are declining, causing the populations around the world to age rapidly.

In the report on *Ageing in the 21st century*, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) warns that “the number of people who turn 60 each year worldwide is nearly 58 million, equivalent to almost two persons every second. In 2012, people aged 60 or over represent almost 11.5 per cent of our total global population of 7 billion. By 2050, the proportion is projected to nearly double to 22 per cent. By 2050, for the first time there will be more older people than children under 15.”<sup>24</sup> This historic demographic transformation “will have its most serious impact in developing countries without safety nets or adequate legal protection in place for older people.” In advanced economies, the crisis will come from an overwhelming number of older citizens requiring more health care and social services without the necessary numbers of working youth population to sustain them.

Clearly, more workers paying into safety net programs and more family members to care for the elderly are needed. However, there is no mention of ensuring sustained population growth in the report’s “10 priority actions to maximise the opportunity of ageing populations.” The question must be asked “Why?”



# UNFPA



**The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** is a strong supporter of China's coercive one-child policy since 1979. In 1983, the UNFPA gave China's family-planning minister, Qian Xinzhong, the first U.N. population award, despite the strong evidence on violence against women (including forced abortion and sterilisation).

The Reagan and the two Bush administrations denied U.S. funding to the UNFPA because of its support for China's coercive program. The Clinton administration restored funding in 1993, as did the Obama administration in 2009.

It should be noted that UNPFA supported sexual and reproductive health services and family planning are easily co-opted into population control activities.

UNFPA also served as the Technical Secretary of Peru's forced sterilisation campaign under President Alberto Fujimori. The UN agency's involvement in this genocidal campaign was condemned by the Peruvian Congress in its 2002 investigative report.<sup>25</sup>

Under the auspice of reducing maternal death in developing countries, UNFPA has assisted 54 countries integrate sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, into national health policies and plans in 2012.<sup>26</sup>



# The Population Bomb that Fizzled



Interestingly, even the UN's own population and fertility estimates show that **overpopulation is not the real problem**. The UN projects that the world population will be 9 billion by 2050 and will level off after that point.

The replacement fertility rate that would be required to maintain the population at current levels is projected to be 2.1 in developed countries and as high as 3.4 in developing countries due to higher child mortality rates.

The global fertility rate (children per couple) was 4.95 in 1950-1955. It was 2.79 in 2000-2005. It is expected to be 1.63 in 2095-2100 – well below the replacement level!

With a global fertility rate of 1.63 by the end of the century, the human race will be 'breeding' itself out of existence.

## More Resources

To learn more about the real population problem, Population Control and related issues, check out these valuable resources:

Kasun, Jacqueline R. *The War Against Population*. USA: Ignatius Press, 1999.

Mosher, Steven W. *Population Control: Real Costs, Illusory Benefits*, USA: Transaction Publishers, 2009

Yoshihara, S & Sylvia D.A. *Population Decline & the Remaking of Great Power Politics*. USA: Potomac Books Inc, 2012.

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

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4. Holt-Giménez, Eric, et al. "We Already Grow Enough Food for 10 Billion People... and Still Can't End Hunger." *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture* 36.6 (2012): 595-598.
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8. IPCC Fifth Assessment Report 27 Sept 2013.
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10. Barbara Hollingsworth, "Climate Scientist: 73 UN Climate Models Wrong, No Global Warming in 17 years." CNSnews.com retrieved 20 Oct 2013. <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/barbara-hollingsworth/climate-scientist-73-un-climate-models-wrong-no-global-warming-17>
11. *Birth Control Review*, Oct 1921, p. 5
12. M Sanger 1922, *Pivot of Civilization*, p. 80
13. *Birth Control Review*, Nov. 1921, p. 2
14. M Sanger 1920, *Woman of the New Race*, Ch 5, "The Wickedness of Creating Large Families."
15. *Birth Control Review*, Feb-Mar 1918, pp 11, 14
16. Pathfinder International's mission is to ensure that people everywhere have the right and opportunity to live a healthy, sexual and reproductive life. <http://www.pathfinder.org/about-us/mission>  
In other words, the right and opportunity to contraception, sterilisation and abortion.
17. Researchers specifically noted that "Armed conflicts coincided with drought conditions in Chad, Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Mozambique during the famines...[and] the worst hit regions of Ethiopia [were the ones that] had been at war...for 22 and nine years respectively. See Mellor & Gavien, "Famine: Causes, Prevention, and Relief". *Science*, 235 (30 Jan 1987): 541.
18. CIA, "The World Fact Book." Retrieved 3 Oct 2013, (2013 est.) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>
19. Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan.
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22. "China's Achilles Heel." *Demography. The Economist*. (21 Apr 2012). Retrieved 3 Oct 2013, <http://www.economist.com/node/21553056>
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