



Talking Points on Population

The Numbers:

Approximately 350,000 people are born each day and 150,000 die each day, resulting in about 200,000 additional humans on the planet each day.

There are currently more than 6.7 billion people on earth, but the United Nations projects that world population will exceed 9.2 billion by 2050. The agency points out that the increase alone is equivalent to the total size of the world population in 1950.

In the U.S., population stands at more than 305 million and is climbing fast. According to the Pew Research Center, if current trends continue the population of the U.S. will rise to 438 million in 2050. The U.S. is the only major industrial nation that is experiencing steeply escalating population numbers.

By the year 2020, the combined populations of Asia and Africa are projected to be 6 to 8 billion—equal to or greater than the number that now lives on the entire planet.

Every hour, California adds 60 people. Between 1990 and 2000, California grew from 29.8 to 34 million people, a 4 million increase that was greater than the increase in all the northeastern states from Maine to Virginia in the same period.

The projected 4 billion people living in cities by 2030 will be more than those who lived on the entire planet in 1975.

One-half of the world's population is currently under age 24. To put that in perspective, there are more young people in the world today, than all people living in 1960.

Population's Impact on the Planet:

In 1900, there were 25.6 Americans per square mile in the U.S.; now it is 83 per square mile, more than tripling population density.

Since 1980, the U.S. has converted more than 10 million acres of forest to suburb—an area twice as large as Yosemite, Yellowstone, the Everglades, and Shenandoah National Parks combined.

The rate of species extinction today is from 100 to 1,000 times the “background rate” that would prevail in the absence of human intervention, the highest rate since the Cretaceous Era 60 million years ago when the dinosaurs became extinct.

Every single minute of every day, the U.S. loses two acres of farmland, which equates to over one million acres lost per year due to industrial expansion, multiplying transportation networks and urbanization.

In 1900, there were 21 acres of land per person in the world (including tundra, desert, etc.). In the year 2000 there were 5. That amount is shrinking every year as population grows.

To house our growing numbers we pave over an area the size of Delaware every year, says Population-Environmental Balance. Our population growth is a big factor in the endangered or threatened status of as many as 700 species of plants and animals.

Another 9,000 species are at risk. And every day we remove 3.2 billion gallons of water from aquifers that are not replenished by natural processes.

Energy Use/Climate Change/Transportation:

According to Population-Environment Balance, 93% of U.S. increases in energy use since 1970 can be attributed to population growth.

Population growth explains our increases in energy consumption, says Numbers USA. In 1970, with U.S. population of just 200 million, a U.S. awash in cheap electricity and driving huge gas-guzzling, inefficient vehicles used 67 quadrillion BTUs (quads) of energy and 14.7 million barrels of oil a day. In 2006, with 300 million people and after many energy-efficiency improvements, we used 100 quads of energy and 20 million barrels of oil a day. And the increase in greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., which rose 13% between 1990 and 2000, closely mirrors the just-over-13-percent population increase.

Average commute times for Americans grew to 25.5 minutes by the year 2000. This is part of a two-decade trend in commuting time growth suggesting that the highway transportation capacity built in earlier decades is being “used up.”

The U.S.—just to maintain its current level of traffic congestion—has to add over 16,000 miles of highways and major streets each year.

From 1970 to 2004, the U.S. population grew by 43%, and carbon dioxide emissions also increased by 43%. U.S. per capita emissions leveled out around 1970 at about 5.5 metric tons per person. Population growth also explains 100% of the increase in United States carbon emissions from 1990 to 2000.

In the 20th century, the near quadrupling of human population and more than tripling of per capita carbon dioxide emissions created a situation in which the human species now has a significant impact on the earth’s climate.

Emissions of carbon dioxide at the global scale have remained about 1.2 metric ton per person since 1970. Meanwhile, global population continues to grow at 1.2% annually, as do total carbon dioxide emissions.

The 20% of the world's population living in countries with the highest per capita emissions in 1995 contributed 63% of the world's fossil-fuel emissions.

China is the largest single producer of greenhouse gases, but the average American is responsible for about five times as much carbon dioxide as the average Chinese citizen.

Impacts on Food and Water:

China, its population expanding at about 7 million people per year as of 2006, appears to be advancing economically along the same path as did Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. If it does this to the point of achieving the same level of fish consumption as these nations, the entire sustainable wild fish production of all the world's oceans would be required just to supply China's fish needs.

Over the next two decades, between 2.75 billion and 3.25 billion people will live in countries that face water shortages.

Every day on average, 5,000 children die from diseases related to unsafe water and lack of sanitation. Billions of dollars have been spent to improve water treatment and delivery infrastructure, but the spending has never been sufficient to keep ahead of global population growth.

In the politically unstable and conflicted countries shown in the table below, not a single country is at replacement-level fertility, meaning that parents simply replace themselves. Instead, the region is growing rapidly.

Nation	Total Fertility Rate	Doubling Time
Afghanistan	6.8	26 years
Iraq	5.1	25 years
Saudi Arabia	4.5	27 years

Fertility and Birth Control:

Of the estimated annual 200 million pregnancies on Earth, about 40% or 80 million of them are unwanted or mistimed.

The U.S. had 4.3 million births in 2006, the highest in a single year since 1961 at the tail end of the baby boom, the Associated Press reports. The U.S. now has a higher fertility rate than all of continental Europe, and higher than Australia, Canada, and Japan.

Every minute 380 women become pregnant—half of them do not plan or wish the pregnancy.

Over 100 million women in developing countries would prefer to avoid pregnancy but are not using any form of family planning or birth control.

Worldwide, over 350 million couples lack access to a full range of modern family-planning information and services.

More than 24 developing nations still have fertility rates, or average number of children per woman, of 6 or higher. Another 24 have fertility rates of 5 to 5.9.

Wherever high-quality contraceptive services have been made available with supporting information, the birth rate has fallen, even among low-income populations.

Immigration:

More than a million immigrants achieve permanent resident status every year (twice the number of estimated undocumented arrivals). Half a million receive work visas, while 700,000 people a year become U.S. citizens. But for most of our nation's more than 200 years, fewer than 500,000 immigrants were admitted annually and usually less than 300,000.

A 2008 Pew Research Center report projects that 82% of U.S. population growth between now and 2050 will be the result of immigration, noting that the foreign-born population will pass its historic 19th century peak of 15% within two decades.

According to the Center for Immigration Studies, if we legally admitted just 300,000 people a year, by 2060 the population would be 80 million less than it's likely to be on our current course.

The 2005 estimates put the undocumented population in California at 2,778,000, which ranks first in the U.S. This number is 25% above the official U.S. government estimate of 2,209,000 in California in 2000, and 88% above the 1990 estimate of 1,476,000.

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