



Global Demography and the Population Race

The world's population will reach 9.2 billion by 2050.

This is a surge of 2.7 billion people, or nearly 9 times the current population of the United States.

Even more startling still is that these projections are thought by the Center for Strategic and International Studies to be conservative, based on the notion that official projections have underestimated fertility rates and advances in medicine that make longer life expectancies a tangible reality.

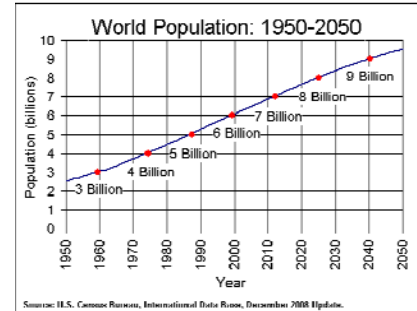
And the Earth isn't getting any bigger; in fact, by most scientific accounts, global warming and the melting of the polar ice caps is causing our coastal areas to become increasingly consumed by the surrounding oceans. By 2050, we will have less inhabitable land and more inhabitants.

Where will we house our future generations? How will we feed them, educate them, move them from one place to another? Where will we find the resources to sustain them?

To say that the global landscape is changing is a seismic understatement. Developed countries including the United States, Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand will add less than 3 percent to the total world population by 2025, while India, China, and Sub-Saharan Africa will collectively add 690 million people, or nearly 60 percent, in the same timeframe.

The countries that comprise **Sub-Saharan Africa** will add the most people – 350 million – by 2025, and this population surge is not without consequence. Access to clean water and reliable food supplies will be primary sources of conflict in a region already afflicted by economic and political strife, ethnic tensions, civil warfare, and widespread disease.

“In 2025, Sub-Saharan Africa will remain the most vulnerable region on Earth in terms of economic challenges, population stresses, civil conflict, and political instability ... Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to be a major supplier of oil, gas, and metals to world markets and increasingly will attract the attention of Asian states seeking access to commodities, including China and India” (Global Trends 2025 p.56).



From Census.gov: “The world population increased from **3 billion** in 1959 to **6 billion** by 1999, a doubling that occurred over 40 years. The Census Bureau’s latest projections imply that population growth will continue into the 21st century, although more slowly. The world population is projected to grow from 6 billion in 1999 to **9 billion** by 2043, an increase of 50 percent is expected to require 44 years.”

FACT: In the **five minutes** it takes to read this:

- **67 babies** were born in the **US**
- **274 babies** were born in **China**
- **395 babies** were born in **India**



FACT: There are over **200 million** registered users on



If MySpace were a country, it would be the **5th largest in the world** (between **Indonesia** and **Brazil**).



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The unfortunate reality of today is that the word “Africa” has become synonymous with the **AIDS pandemic**. There are an estimated 33 million HIV-positive Africans, 22 million in Sub-Saharan Africa alone. And while current prevention efforts have been somewhat effective, it is estimated that the number of HIV-positive persons will increase to 50 million across the continent. Even if an HIV vaccine or a self-administered microbicide were to be developed and tested in the next 15 years, the likelihood of their widespread disseminations is next to zero. Experts estimate that 25 to 30 million people would need some form of anti-retroviral treatment to survive during 2025.

Not to be outdone in terms of growth, **India** will see the largest population increase in a single country over the next 15 years, adding 240 million more people to its current population, which will reach 1.45 billion by 2025. Today, India occupies less than 3 percent of the world’s total land area, yet supports nearly 20 percent of the total world population. India is the second country, after China, to hit the one billion people mark, which it reached officially with the 2001 census.

More than 60 percent of India’s population is between the ages of 15 and 64, making the majority of people essentially employable. India has been harnessing this population of knowledge workers to make New Delhi a hub of information technology service activity.

But what will happen 40 years from now as India’s employable population, like its global counterparts, grow older? We will see the percentage of elderly people (defined as 65 and older) **triple** worldwide, from 6 percent of the population in 2006 to nearly 17 percent in 2050. In the US and other developed countries, this proportion is much higher. In 2000, the US Census Bureau’s International Database estimated that one-fifth of the developed world’s population was comprised of people age 60 and over. By 2050, the elderly will grow to represent one-third of all people living in developed countries.

“Global demand for products and services aimed at the elderly will grow quickly in the immediate future, but this trend may pass as geriatric medicine improves the health of the elderly” (Cetron and Davies p.3).



The African **AIDS** Crisis

From **Time.com**: “Despite years of evidence of AIDS’ genocidal toll on poor countries, no one has brought these drugs within reach of ordinary Africans. In fact, the people who make the drugs - American- and European-owned multinational pharmaceutical corporations - and their home governments, notably Washington, have worked hard to keep prices up by limiting exports to the Third World and vigorously enforcing patent rights. They argue that drug firms legitimately need the profits to finance research on new wonder drugs. They say it’s not wise to offer cheap AIDS drugs without a proper medical infrastructure - that deadly, drug-resistant strains would emerge. But at what point does the human benefit to desperate, destitute countries outweigh strict adherence to patents and profits?”

FACT: In **India**, 25 percent of the population with the highest IQs totals more than the entire population of the United States.

In other words, there are **more honors kids in India than the total number of kids in the US.**



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In terms of total global impact, **China** is undeniably the one to watch. The first country to put the one billion people notch in its population belt, China will see 100 million more by 2025, pushing the total to 1.4 billion.

“China is poised to have more impact on the world over the next 20 years than any other country. If current trends persist, by 2025 China will have the world’s second largest economy and will be a leading military power. It also could be the largest importer of natural resources and the biggest polluter” (Global Trends 2025 p.vi).

The continued growth and subsequent industrialization of China has a number of implications on both the food supply and demand:

- Looking at the population growth, 100 million more Chinese would have a direct impact on the country’s food supply. Experts estimate that to accommodate the increase, **grain production** would have to rise by at least **20 to 25 percent above current levels**.
- But this figure is deceiving: it assumes that the 2025 generation maintains its **current per capita calorie consumption** and the **same dietary preferences** of today.
- Fueled by the rapid industrialization of the country and opportunities in urban centers, it is more likely that the diet of the typical Chinese citizen will change over time, tending toward **“westernized”** dietary preferences of **more meat, less grains, and larger portions**.
- China currently has enough arable land to support its 2025 population (water supply is the real hindrance), but that doesn’t mean it will utilize the land to feed its people. Land is a premium in China, and they may find it cheaper to import food, which could have far-reaching consequences for the global food supply.

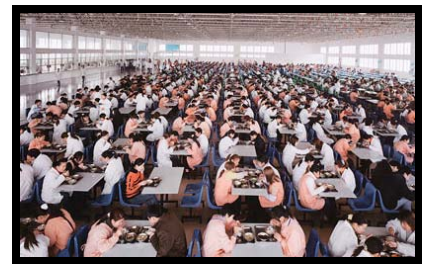
With urban metropolitans continuing to converge around industrial centers in China and other parts of the Asian world, the socio-economic climate of Asian societies has transitioned away from outlying agricultural communities to bustling centers of westernized commerce.

China’s Industrialization

Photographs by [Edward Burtynsky](#)



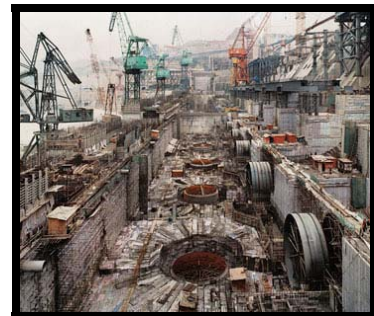
Deda Chicken Processing Plant,
Dehui City, Jilin Province, 2005



Youngor Textiles, Ningbo,
Zhejiang Province, 2005



Factory Worker Dormitory, Dongguan,
Guangdong Province, 2005



Three Gorges Dam Project,
Yangtze River, 2005



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“The entire region – from the reunited Koreas to Indonesia to the subcontinent – is booming. In just 20 years, 2 billion people have made the transition into what can be considered a middle-class lifestyle. In the space of one full 80-year life span, Asia has gone from almost uninterrupted poverty to widespread wealth” (Schwartz and Leyden).

But economic gain in Asia might be the exception: around the world, higher birth rates are bringing more people into poverty than to the middle class. **Latin America** is a prime example, where it is believed that while the growth may be relatively moderate when compared to population powerhouses like India and Africa, poverty-stricken rural communities and indigenous populations will experience a faster rate of growth compared to its urban counterparts.

This isn't a new trend by any means; demographers see the correlation between increased socio-economic standing and lower birth rates in virtually every global community.

Could curbing a population crisis be achieved by modernizing the globe? What are the environmental implications to rapid industrialization of developing countries? Should more countries simply enforce a limit on the number of children born to a single family? What are the ethical and social implications of mandating family planning at the federal level?

The real question is this: **how do we bring meaning to these numbers?**

What can we do to make this more real, more critical, more comparable to our daily lives?

How do we convince ourselves that it is important for us to do something now before we find ourselves gasping for air and searching for resources among our newly created 2.7 billion brethren?

Is it our responsibility to search for answers, or should China, India, and the countries of Africa figure it out for themselves?

WATCH: Forces of the Future (a Flash Animation)



(click on the above image to watch)

From **GBN.com**: “A Flash animation narrated by GBN CEO Eamonn Kelly, exploring 10 trends – demography, city planet, the millennials, the shift to a multipolar world, BANG technologies, human enhancement, Africa, energy, climate change, and social change – that are creating, even transforming, our future.”

FOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN: Suggested Reading



From **Amazon.com**: “Presenting a revolutionary approach to developing strategic vision in business and in life, a guide for managers, entrepreneurs, and investors explains how to apply creative and intuitive skills to corporate practices.”



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Peter Schwartz, author of “The Art of the Long View,” said this in an article he penned for Wired Magazine in 1997:

“That’s where Americans have one final contribution to make: optimism, that maddening can-do attitude that often drives foreigners insane. Americans don’t understand limits. They have boundless confidence in their ability to solve problems. And they have an amazing capacity to think they really can change the world. A global transformation over the next quarter century inevitably will bring a tremendous amount of trauma. The world will run into a daunting number of problems as we transition to a networked economy and a global society. Apparent progress will be followed by setbacks. And all along the way the chorus of naysayers will insist it simply can’t be done. We’ll need some hefty doses of indefatigable optimism. We’ll need an optimistic vision of what the future can be” (Schwartz and Leyden).

In reading this and future installments of “**Navigating the 21st Century: A Futurity Series,**” we ask you to consciously reflect on these global trends that will drive our planet over the next 50 years and decide how the you as an individual and as a member of our global community will plan for the future of the Third Planet.

Sources:

Cetron, Marvin J., and Owen Davies. 55 Trends Shaping Tomorrow's World. Rep. 2008. World Future Society. 9 Jan. 2009
<<http://www.wfs.org/specialreports.htm>>.

Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World. Publication no. NIC 2008-003. Nov. 2008. National Intelligence Council. 9 Jan. 2009
<http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_2025_project.html>.

Schwartz, Peter, and Peter Leyden. "The Long Boom: A History of the Future, 1980 - 2020." Wired July 1997. 9 Jan. 2009
<<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/5.07/longboom.html>>.

FOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN: Suggested Reading



From **Amazon.com**: “Creativity is crucial to business success. But too often, even the most innovative organization quickly becomes a “giant hairball” – a tangled, impenetrable mass of rules, traditions, and systems, all based on what worked in the past – that exercises an inexorable pull into mediocrity. Gordon McKenzie worked at Hallmark Cards for thirty years, many of which he spent inspiring his colleagues to slip the bonds of Corporate Normalcy and rise to orbit – to a mode of dreaming, daring and doing above and beyond the rubber-stamp confines of the administrative mid-set. In his deeply funny book, exuberantly illustrated in full color, he shares the story of his own professional evolution, together with lessons on awakening and fostering creative genius.”

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