

Between 2001 and 2002, births exceeded deaths by 74 million, pushing world population over 6.2 billion.¹ (See Figure 1.) Last year's growth of 1.18 percent was the lowest since rates peaked above 2 percent in the mid-1960s.² With a larger population growing at a slower rate, the number of people added to the planet annually has in fact remained about the same, and the human family has more than doubled since 1960.³

Although deaths from AIDS and lower than expected fertility prompted the United Nations

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to reduce its global population projections—to 8.9 billion people by 2050, not 9.3 billion—the 49 poorest

countries in the world still have populations that are increasing at 2.4 percent per year, nearly 10 times the 0.25 percent annual growth in industrial nations.⁴ All the countries with the highest birth rates are among the world's poorest. (See Figure 2.)

Population growth is slowest in nations that moved from Communist rule in the 1990s, as higher mortality and higher emigration followed the collapse of economies. A growing gap in life expectancy divides Western Europe, where only 10 percent live below the poverty line, from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where the share of the people living on less than \$4 a day skyrocketed from 3.3 percent in 1988 to 46 percent—nearly half the populace—by the end of the 1990s.⁵

Sharp declines in birth rates in a few populous nations are largely responsible for the slower growth of world numbers since the late 1960s. In Indonesia, the average number of children born to each woman in 1950–55 was 5.5; by 1995–2000, the figure had fallen to 2.6.⁶ Over the same period, fertility fell in Brazil from 6.2 to 2.3 children.⁷ By 2000, fertility had dropped below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman in 17 nations in the developing world, including China.⁸

Lower fertility and slower population growth have been linked, since 1970, with economic development in Brazil, Mexico, and several East Asian nations.⁹ With better health care, death rates declined. And with better access to contraceptives, people had fewer chil-

dren and more women could work outside the home. A demographic window of opportunity for development opened, with a large group of working-age people supporting relatively fewer dependents—both older and younger.¹⁰

The labor force in Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand grew more rapidly than total population by about 25 percent a year between 1960 and 1990—a demographic bonus that boosted per capita income by 0.8 percent a year.¹¹ Similarly, declining fertility in Brazil increased per capita income by 0.7 percent annually.¹² With a smaller share of the population in school, countries could raise spending per child. Analysts credit the East Asian “economic miracle” to public investments made in education, health care, and opportunities for women.¹³

Population growth is increasingly concentrated in cities. As the pace of growth in cities has outstripped that of rural areas for more than a century, the share of the world living in urban areas has grown steadily—from 10 percent in 1900 to 30 percent in 1950 to nearly 48 percent in 2001.¹⁴ The United Nations estimates that some 2 billion people will be added to world population between 2000 and 2030—nearly all of them in urban areas of the developing world.¹⁵ In this “medium-growth” scenario, the urban share of world population will pass 50 percent in 2007 and top 60 percent by 2030.¹⁶ (See Figure 3.)

As population swells in urban centers of poor nations and wanes in some richer nations, more people are likely to migrate. The United States is the only industrial nation with a fertility rate still above replacement level, partly due to immigrants.¹⁷ In Japan, whose population is aging faster than any other nation's, the average age is expected to rise from 41 to 53 between 2000 and 2050 as the population contracts by 14 percent.¹⁸ Populations are also expected to age and shrink throughout Europe, where concern about the strain on pension and health care systems is mounting at the same time that rising numbers of migrants face an anti-immigrant backlash.¹⁹

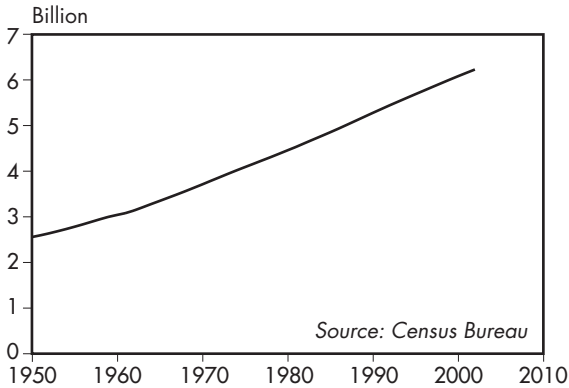


Figure 1: World Population, 1950–2002

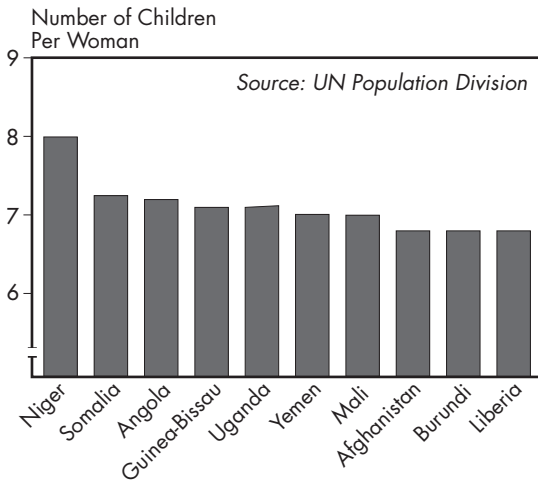


Figure 2: Countries with the Highest Fertility Levels, 2000–05

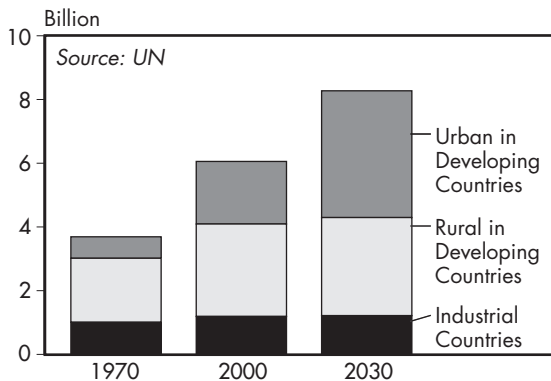


Figure 3: Urban and Rural Population, 1970 and 2000, with Projections for 2030

World Population, Total and Annual Addition, 1950–2002

Year	Total ¹ (billion)	Annual Addition (million)
1950	2.555	38
1955	2.780	53
1960	3.040	41
1965	3.346	70
1970	3.708	78
1971	3.786	77
1972	3.862	76
1973	3.939	76
1974	4.014	73
1975	4.087	72
1976	4.159	72
1977	4.232	72
1978	4.304	75
1979	4.379	76
1980	4.455	76
1981	4.530	80
1982	4.611	80
1983	4.691	79
1984	4.770	80
1985	4.850	82
1986	4.932	85
1987	5.017	86
1988	5.103	86
1989	5.189	87
1990	5.275	84
1991	5.359	84
1992	5.443	81
1993	5.524	80
1994	5.605	81
1995	5.685	79
1996	5.764	80
1997	5.844	79
1998	5.923	78
1999	6.002	77
2000	6.079	75
2001	6.154	74
2002 (prel)	6.228	74

¹Total at mid-year.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

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8. Ibid., p. 22.
9. U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), *State of the World Population 2002* (New York: 2002), pp. 20–24.
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18. Ibid., p. 70.
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