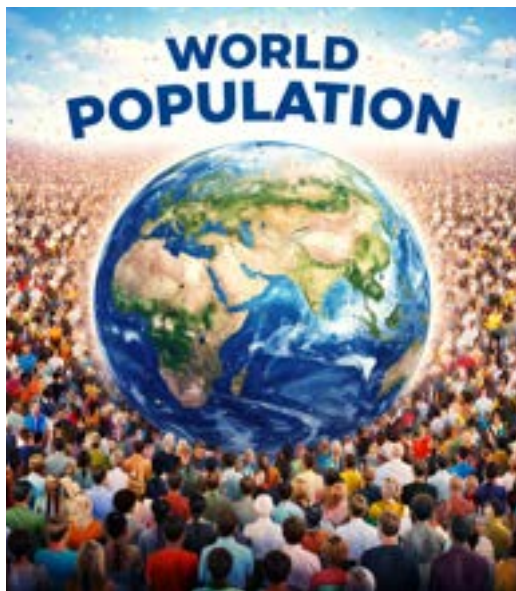# World Population:

Trends, Projections, and Global Impact

A World Shaped by Population Change

Global population dynamics are reshaping economies, societies, and development priorities. Understanding how population growth, aging, fertility decline, and migration interact is critical for planning a sustainable future. This report presents key insights into world population trends, future projections, and the role of international institutions.

Global Population Overview

The world's population is projected to continue growing for the next 50 to 60 years, reaching a peak of approximately **10.3 billion people by the mid-2080s**. After this point, global population levels are expected to gradually decline, reaching about **10.2 billion by the end of the century**.

At present, **one in four people lives in a country where population growth has already peaked**, highlighting a major demographic transition underway across many regions.

Key demographic trends include:

- Global fertility rates have declined significantly, with women having **one fewer child on average compared to 1990**
- The global fertility rate stands at **2.3 live births per woman in 2024**
  Life expectancy has rebounded after the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching **73.3 years in 2024**
- Average life expectancy is projected to rise to **77.4 years by 2054**

By 2080, the number of people aged 65 and older is expected to surpass the number of children under 18. By the mid-2030s, individuals aged 80 and above will outnumber infants.

Countries facing rapid population aging may increasingly rely on technology, productivity gains, lifelong learning, and extended working lives to sustain economic growth.

Day of Eight Billion

A Historic Demographic Milestone

On **15 November 2022**, the global population officially reached **8 billion people**, marking a significant milestone in human development.

Population growth is slowing:

- It took **12 years** for the world to grow from 7 to 8 billion
- It is expected to take **15 years**, until **2037**, to reach 9 billion

Despite the slowdown, fertility remains high in some regions. Countries with the highest fertility rates are often those with the **lowest income per capita**, resulting in population growth becoming increasingly concentrated in the world's poorest nations, particularly in **sub-Saharan Africa**.

The World in 2100

Long-Term Population Projections

Global demographic trends indicate a profound shift in population growth patterns over the coming decades. Current projections suggest an **80 percent probability that the world population will peak within the twenty-first century**, most likely between the **mid 2060s and 2100**. By the end of the century, the global population is expected to be **approximately 6 percent smaller**, or nearly **700 million people fewer**, than estimates published just ten years ago.

This adjustment reflects accelerating demographic transitions across both developed and developing regions, signaling a future defined less by rapid growth and more by population stabilization and decline.

Key Drivers Behind the Revised Projections

Several structural factors explain the downward revision in long term population estimates:

- **Sustained fertility declines** in large population centers, particularly China, where birth rates have fallen faster and remained lower than previously anticipated
- **Earlier and steeper fertility reductions** in parts of sub-Saharan Africa are challenging long-held assumptions of persistently high birth rates in the region
- **Delayed family formation and lower desired family size** are linked to urbanization, rising education levels, economic uncertainty, and changing social norms

Despite these trends, **India and China**, each with populations of around **1.4 billion**, are expected to remain the most populous countries globally for several decades, although their demographic trajectories are increasingly divergent.

Migration as a Central Growth Mechanism

As the natural population increase slows or turns negative in many regions, **international migration is becoming a decisive factor in national population growth**.

- Immigration is projected to be the primary driver of population growth in **52 countries by 2054**
- This number is expected to rise to **62 countries by 2100**

Countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States rely on sustained migration inflows to counterbalance low fertility rates, labor shortages, and population aging.

Migration increasingly functions as a stabilizing force for workforce size, economic productivity, and fiscal sustainability, particularly in high-income economies.

Regional Population Dynamics

Africa: The Fastest Growing Continent

Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to remain the **epicenter of global population growth** throughout the century.

- The population is expected to rise by **79 percent**, reaching **2.2 billion by 2054**
- By 2100, the population could reach **3.3 billion**, accounting for **more than one-fifth of global population growth**

Several countries, including Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Niger, are projected to **double their populations between 2024 and 2054**. This rapid growth will reshape global demographics, economic potential, and geopolitical influence.

As a result, population rankings will shift significantly. **Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo** are expected to surpass the United States in population size, while the **United Republic of Tanzania** may enter the top ten most populous countries by the end of the century.

Population Decline in Europe and China

Europe and East Asia face sustained population contraction driven by persistently low fertility and advanced population aging.

- All European countries currently record fertility rates below the **replacement level of 2.1 children per woman**
- Many have experienced sub-replacement fertility for multiple decades, leading to shrinking workforces and rising dependency ratios

China is projected to experience the **largest absolute population decline globally**:

- A loss of **204 million people between 2024 and 2054**
- A cumulative decline of **786 million people by 2100**

By the end of the century, China's population may return to levels last observed in the **late 1950s**, fundamentally altering economic growth potential, consumption patterns, and social support systems.

Japan and the Russian Federation are also expected to see notable long-term population losses.

Core Factors Influencing Population Growth

Fertility Rates

Fertility remains the most influential determinant of future population size. According to the **World Population Prospects 2024**:

- Global fertility averages **2.25 live births per woman**
- Rates are projected to decline further to **2.1 by the late 2040s**, approaching replacement level

In many countries, fertility has already fallen well below replacement, raising concerns about long-term demographic sustainability.

Increasing Longevity

Improvements in healthcare, nutrition, and living conditions continue to extend human lifespan.

- Global life expectancy is projected to rise from **72.8 years in 2019** to **77.2 years by 2050**
- Least developed countries remain approximately **seven years behind** the global average

By 2054, continued reductions in mortality could push average global life expectancy to **77.4 years**, intensifying population aging and increasing demand for healthcare, pensions, and elder support services.

International Migration

While migration has a limited effect on global population totals, its **national and regional impact is substantial**.

Migration plays a critical role in:

- Mitigating population decline in aging economies
- Supporting labor markets and economic resilience
- Balancing demographic disparities between regions

By 2054, immigration will drive population growth in countries such as Australia, Canada, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.

Conversely, sustained emigration may accelerate population decline in countries already experiencing ultra-low fertility.

The United Nations and Global Population Governance

UN Population Division

The **UN Population Division**, operating within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, serves as the authoritative global source for demographic data and analysis. Its work spans:

- World population projections
- International migration trends
- Urbanization patterns
- Fertility and marriage statistics

The division supports population policy development, assists national governments, and coordinates demographic data across the United Nations system.

Conclusion: Preparing for a Demographic Transition

The global population outlook points toward **slower growth, longer lifespans, and widening regional contrasts**. Aging societies, shifting labor markets, and migration-driven growth will define economic and social outcomes throughout the century.

Long-term planning, inclusive policies, and adaptive institutions will be essential to managing demographic change and ensuring sustainable development for future generations.