



From the Report of the UN Secretary-General
"Integrating population issues into sustainable development,
including in the post-2015 development agenda"
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Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development: 10 Key Facts and Points for Action

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Understanding how demographic changes will unfold over the next 15 years is essential for the design and implementation of the new sustainable development agenda. The 2015 Report of the Secretary-General on population and sustainable development outlines 10 key facts and points for action on current population trends

Between 2015 and 2030:

1. **The world's economy will need to grow in order to support an additional 1.1 billion people**

The world's population surpassed 7.3 billion in 2015 and is projected to reach 8.4 billion in 2030. With the exception of Europe, where total population is projected to decrease slightly, all other major regions are projected to grow by at least 10 per cent over the next 15 years. Continued population growth partly reflects the progress that has been made in combating infectious and childhood diseases, and in reducing the burden of premature and avoidable deaths, especially in the poorest countries of the world.

2. **The fastest population growth will occur in low-income and lower-middle-income countries**

As a result of continued high levels of fertility, most low-income countries and many lower-middle-income countries will continue to experience substantial population growth over the next 15 years. This will make it harder for Governments to eradicate poverty and inequality, combat hunger and malnutrition, strengthen the coverage and quality of education and health systems, and improve access to basic services.

3. **Total population will decline in 29 countries or territories**

Below-replacement fertility, sometimes combined with out-migration, will result in reductions of the total population of 29 countries or territories, 21 of which are in Europe. These countries will also experience rapid growth in the proportion of their populations over age 60, raising concerns about the fiscal sustainability of existing social protection programmes.

4. **More than 2 billion babies are projected to be born worldwide**

Countries that currently have the highest rates of child mortality are projected to have the largest increase in total births over the next 15 years. Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean will experience fewer newborns, potentially enabling them to raise rates of health utilization or the quality of particular services.

- An increasing number of births poses particularly significant challenges for low-income countries striving to expand services for mothers and newborns, and greater efforts need to be undertaken to provide such services.

5. **Roughly 2 billion children will reach school age**

Africa can expect a 34 per cent increase in the number of 5-year olds, Oceania a 16 per cent increase, and Northern America a 10 per cent increase.

- Although substantial progress has been made towards universal primary education over the past 15 years, efforts must be scaled up just to maintain current levels of school enrolment.

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6. Roughly 1.9 billion young people will turn 15 years old

Levels of global youth unemployment remain very high, particularly in countries where young people make up a large proportion of the labour force, diminishing the possibility of countries achieving a time-bound demographic dividend.

- Young people represent a major promise for the future, provided that their rights are protected and they get the right start to life, which includes access to health care, education and decent work.

7. The number of women of reproductive age will decrease by 10 percent or more in a number of European countries but will increase in most areas of the world

Africa will experience the largest increases in the number of women of reproductive age over the next 15 years. This is also the region with the highest levels of maternal mortality and the greatest unmet need for family planning.

- In all regions, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women will require eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women, promoting female education, and ensuring women have access to safe and effective means of family planning, as well as ensuring women's equal access to the labour market, social security and the political process.

8. Older persons, aged 60 or over, are now the world's fastest growing age group

Older persons will make up a greater proportion of the global population, increasing from 12 per cent in 2015 to 16 per cent in 2030. While the proportion of older persons is advancing the fastest in Europe and Northern America, the number of older persons will increase in all areas.

- Countries need to anticipate and plan for population ageing and ensure the well-being of older persons with regard to the protection of their human rights, their economic security, access to appropriate health services, and formal and informal support networks.

9. All of the 1.1 billion increase in global population will take place in urban areas

The urban population is expected to grow from 3.9 billion in 2015 to 5 billion in 2030. Currently, cities are home to more than half of the world's population and this percentage is projected to increase to 60 per cent by 2030.

- Responding to rapid urban growth presents an important opportunity to implement an ambitious urban development agenda that will make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

10. The number of international migrants is expected to increase in the next 15 years

International migration can be a transformative force, lifting millions of people out of poverty and contributing to sustainable development.

- To ensure the well-being of migrants and to harness the full development potential of migration, sufficient legal channels for safe and orderly migration need to be created. In addition, the costs of migration have to be reduced, and migrant integration and re-integration need to be promoted.

While the relationship between population size, consumption, technology and the environment is far from simple, these demographic trends highlight the importance of integrating population dynamics into development planning while also promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

As the world embarks on the post-2015 development agenda, there is an urgent need to strengthen the evidence base in order to monitor progress, hold governments accountable and foster sustainable development.