

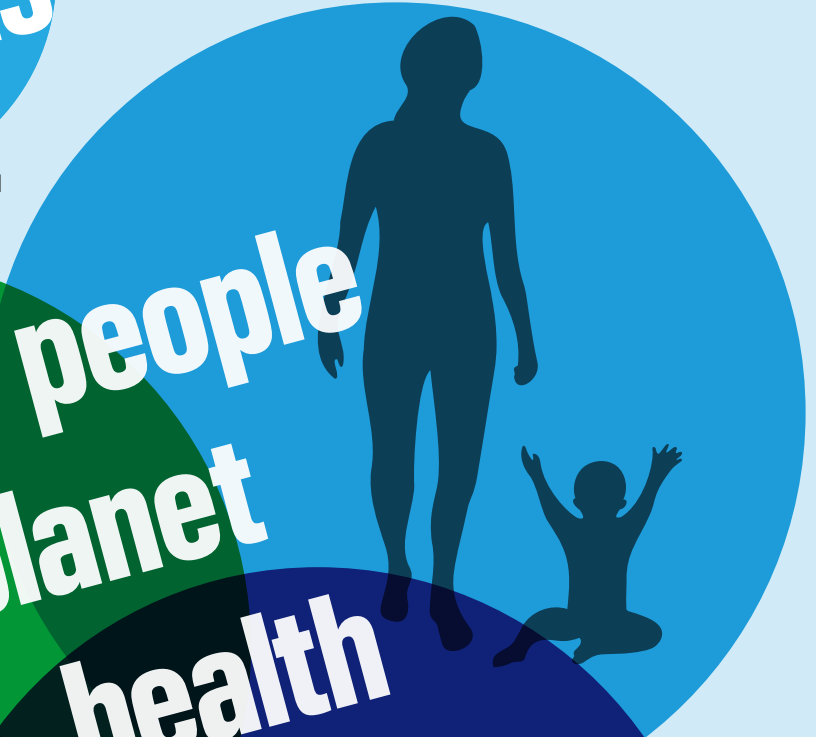
**POPULATION
MATTERS**

TM

people
planet

health

wellbeing



STRATEGIC PLAN | 2021-24



WHY WE ARE HERE

It is increasingly recognised that the way we live and run our societies and economies is undermining the natural systems on which all life depends.

Scientists term the era we are living in ‘The Anthropocene’, comparing the impact we are having on our planet as equivalent to that of a devastating asteroid strike or a major ice age.

Our impact as a species – in terms of our overall numbers, consumption and pollution – is driving us towards a self-generated existential crisis.

Hundreds of millions of people globally are already suffering adverse effects – with one in ten in extreme poverty. The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), targets set for ensuring good lives for all on a healthy planet by 2030, are increasingly unlikely to be met.

A 2021 [paper](#) authored by 17 leading scientists, which reviewed more than 150 major studies on the state of our planet, concluded that without urgent action the world faces a “ghastly future” of catastrophic extinctions, climate disruption, and human suffering:

“The problems, all tied to human consumption and population growth, will almost certainly worsen over coming decades. The damage will be felt for centuries and threatens the survival of all species, including our own.”






That is the trajectory we are on, with around 8 billion people on our planet today, and according to 2019 UN projections set to increase by a further 2 billion by 2050, reaching between 11 to 13 billion by the end of the century.

That trajectory can be changed.

A better future is possible.

That is what Population Matters is working to secure.

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Our vision is of a future in which humanity co-exists in harmony with nature, recognises and respects ecological boundaries, and prospers on a healthy planet.

A FAIRER FUTURE in which a greater proportion of people enjoy greater **wellbeing** (the quality of their lives, not just how much they consume).

A HEALTHIER FUTURE where humanity's wisdom enables access to and use of life-enhancing technology (healthcare and contraception), so that everyone everywhere has the right and freedom to choose their family size.

“Why wouldn't we want to do these things? Giving people a greater opportunity of life is what we want to do anyway. The trick is to raise the standard of living around the world without increasing our impact on that world.”

Population Matters Patron,
Sir David Attenborough

A SAFER FUTURE in which our overall human population stabilises and ultimately reduces.

Where there are greater opportunities and wider horizons for people, which open up more space for nature – a stabilising, smaller human population means less conversion of wildlife habitat for human purposes such as agriculture, mining and house building.

Where future generations of children grow up in a regenerating, wildlife-rich world, sustained by resilient, thriving ecosystems.

That's our vision, mission and the change we are working to make possible.

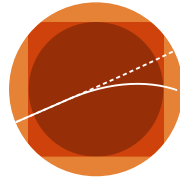


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OUR FIVE POINT STRATEGY

1

'BEND DOWN' THE GLOBAL POPULATION CURVE SO THAT OUR OVERALL HUMAN NUMBERS PEAK AT OR BELOW THE UN'S LOW PROJECTION OF 7.3 BILLION BY 2100



Achievable, if people everywhere are enabled to choose smaller families and recognise the benefits for people and planet.

2

ENSURE THAT IT'S CULTURALLY NORMAL, PRACTICALLY POSSIBLE, AND PERSONALLY DESIRABLE FOR PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO CHOOSE SMALLER FAMILIES



Ending the unmet need of 270 million women worldwide for safe, modern family planning is essential. Removing the barriers to that choice and right opens up greater opportunities for people everywhere to fulfil their potential, their dreams, and to have a voice and influence in their communities.

3

GET 'THE POPULATION FACTOR' AND ITS POSITIVE SOLUTIONS ACCEPTED AS KEY FOR EASING THE CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY EMERGENCIES, AND BOOSTING HUMAN WELLBEING



The pioneering 2020 analysis of climate change solutions by Project Drawdown ranks 'education of girls and family planning' second in its table of [Top 10 workable solutions](#) to combat climate change – cutting more CO2 emissions than from all onshore and offshore wind power combined. As our report 'Hitting the Targets' showed, continued population growth means that the UN's 17 SDGs are unlikely to be met.

4

TACKLE OVERCONSUMPTION AND CHALLENGE THE UNSUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH PARADIGM



Especially in rich, high-consuming countries. Population Matters is promoting new economic models that measure wellbeing, not just crude GDP.

5

HAVE A GLOBAL IMPACT



Population is a global issue, with different challenges and solutions appropriate for different parts of the world, individual countries, cultures and societies. That's why we prioritise working with partner organisations, grassroots community groups, and individuals across the world.

COSTA RICA: PROVING WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Just 60 years ago, Costa Rica fulfilled all the negative criteria of a poor country

- GDP per capita stood at a mere \$380, average life expectancy was 60.
- Its healthcare and education systems could not keep pace with an annual population growth rate of 3.8%.
- Unsustainable logging had slashed forest cover from 75% to 17%.

Today, Costa Rica is transformed

GDP per capita has risen to over \$12,000, life expectancy to around 80 (comparable to much wealthier countries), and the average birth rate is under two children per family.

Both people and nature are flourishing

- Costa Rica has Latin America's highest rate of contraception usage at 80%, and one of the region's lowest birth rates.
- Ranked the 'happiest' country in the Global South*, Costa Rica was also the first tropical country to reverse deforestation – with more than 50% of its land now restored to rainforest.



Photo by Birger Strahl/Unsplash

How did Costa Rica achieve such dramatic changes in just a couple of generations?

A range of progressive government policies on biodiversity protection and higher education spending played a role. **But a key factor was its non-coercive family planning programme**, which actively promoted smaller families – simultaneously lifting families out of poverty and relieving pressure on natural resources.

* <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/sun-sea-and-stable-democracy-what-s-the-secret-to-costa-rica-s-success/>

LEARNING FROM COSTA RICA

Costa Rica shows the benefits a choice-based family planning programme can bring to people and their environment. There are other examples of progressive, non-coercive family planning programmes across the world from



Bangladesh, to South Korea, the Maldives, and Vietnam. Bangladesh saw the number of children per woman fall from an average of seven thirty years ago to just over two today. Helping it become the only 'impoverished country' to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. When women have access to safe, modern family planning they choose to have smaller families – whether in poorer or richer countries.

But that choice is still not freely available to hundreds of millions of women worldwide. And that's what Population Matters is helping to change.

WE ARE INFORMED BY EXPERTS

Population Matters' strategy is informed by input from our Expert Advisory Group, Patrons and other key stakeholders and partners. We also draw on research and like-minded allies through the [Journal of Population and Sustainability](#), the editorially independent, interdisciplinary academic journal, which explores all aspects of the relationship between human population and environmental sustainability.

Our patrons include internationally recognised conservationists like Sir David Attenborough and Dame Jane Goodall, along with leading economist Sir Partha Dasgupta, who was recently commissioned by the UK Treasury to review the '[Economics of Biodiversity](#)'. The 'Dasgupta Review', as it is known, states: "Growing human populations have significant implications for our demands on nature, including for future patterns of sustainability."

We can call on independent experts across the world and from a wide range of disciplines, including:

- Wendo Aszed, founder and Executive Director of [Dandelion Africa](#), which focuses on women's health and economic empowerment at the grassroots level in Kenya.
- Dr Edu Effiom, head of the Nigerian Cross River Forestry Commission's [REDD](#) project unit.
- Laurel Hanscom, CEO of the US-based Global Footprint Network, which highlights [Earth Overshoot Day](#) annually.



WE ARE GROUNDED IN SCIENCE

A growing body of scientists, institutionally and as individuals, affirm and endorse our analysis. This is exemplified by the recent ‘World Scientists’ Warning’ signed by 15,000 scientists from 184 countries, and which highlighted the need to address human population growth alongside excessive consumption.



Our work shows that it is people in the poorest countries who are on the front line of negative impacts from climate change and ecosystem collapse, and who will benefit most from having the right and means to choose smaller families. Headlined ‘Population Futures’, we have commissioned primary research from leading paediatrician Professor Peter Le Souef, and global-change ecologist Professor Corey Bradshaw to authoritatively underpin our case that slowing population growth and achieving a stable, smaller population is key to ensuring a better, safer, more resilient future for children – especially those in the poorest, most vulnerable countries.

“We are jeopardizing our future by not reining in our intense but geographically and demographically uneven material consumption and by not perceiving continued rapid population growth as a primary driver behind many ecological and even societal threats.”

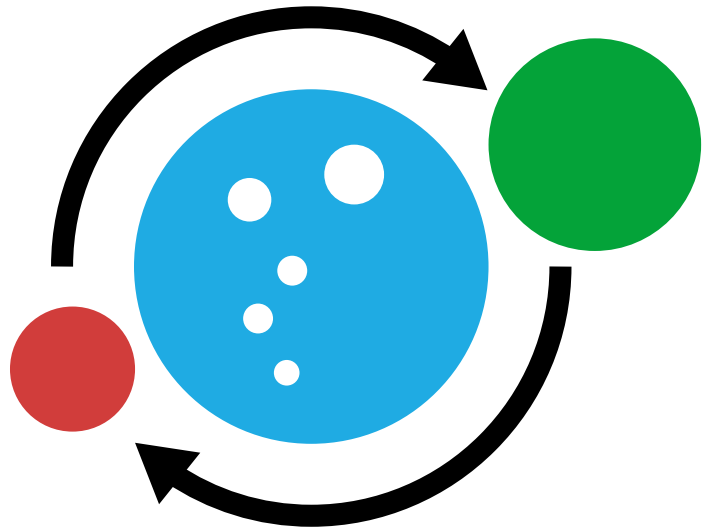
World Scientists’ Warning, 2017*, 2019†

* <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/67/12/1026/4605229>

† <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806>

WE ARE A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Population Matters' purpose is to catalyse positive change, translating the science and research into persuasive communications, to offer a vision and narrative that people can aspire to, identify with, and believe is achievable. We're seeing positive shifts in awareness and attitudes globally.



We recently co-hosted a 'Population Conversation' symposium in Kenya with local public health consultancy WellSense, bringing together diverse stakeholders to discuss the wide-ranging impacts of rapid population growth and identify the actions needed to mainstream the critical 'Population Conversation' in Kenya and across Africa more widely. Over 30 delegates from a wide range of disciplines, from soil scientists and water engineers to wildlife conflict managers and family planning and maternal healthcare providers, added to the conversation and signed up to a unifying, concluding statement: *"We believe that the issue of human population is a critical factor which influences, impacts upon and is relevant to all our concerns as individuals and organisations."* It is the intention of the organisers and a core group of participants to extend this 'Population Conversation' across Kenya, Africa, and beyond to catalyse the conversation and crucially, action.

WE ARE CONNECTING THE ISSUES

We include and consider ALL the factors contributing to our environmental and social crises. By addressing human population and advocating for women's rights, we can help reduce overconsumption, increase the life opportunities of some of the poorest people globally, and reduce the pressure on wildlife and natural habitats.

Along with our growing numbers, it is the populations of 'stuff' and resources we consume individually and collectively that are negatively affecting our planet. The resulting waste and pollution our lifestyles produce – especially in rich, high-consuming countries – is a major concern, especially with the population of **hyper-consumers** growing too: from an estimated 3.5 billion today to over 5 billion by 2030.

And of course, the populations of other species matter, both intrinsically and for their role in adding to the resilience and capacity of the ecosystems that support all life on Earth. WWF's latest **Living Planet Report** estimates

that we have lost 68% of all vertebrate wildlife populations since 1970. During that same period, our human population has more than doubled, increasing from 3.7 billion to around 8 billion today.

Beyond issues of consumption, our ground-breaking, myth-busting reports also combine evidence and analysis that connect numerous issues that support our campaigns. **Welcome to Gilead** is an original report that identifies a toxic mix of nationalism, economic anxiety, sexism, racism and contempt for human rights that combine to drive abortion bans, restrictions on contraception access and political pressure on women to have more children. Almost a third of countries globally now have some form of pronatalist policy – up from 10 percent in the 1970s.

Silver Linings, Not Silver Burdens was published to coincide with our conference on population and economics, and identifies common-sense policies to meet the challenges of a society in which more people are older. With a foreword by economist and former chair of the UK's Climate Change Committee, Lord Adair Turner, the report is an important antidote to sensationalist headlines about **"jaw-dropping crashes"** in the birth rate. The report details how falling birth rates offer multiple advantages, and that the increasing number of old people is neither an imminent crisis nor an insoluble problem.



WE BUILD

PRACTICAL INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

A vital first step is to enable hundreds of millions of girls and women worldwide to have access to quality education and to meet their need for safe, modern family planning - so they can choose when to have children, how many, or whether to have any. That is a basic human right, bringing better life chances, health and wellbeing for those women and the children they choose to have. It is also critical for bringing countries out of poverty.

Empower to Plan is our pioneering initiative for boosting the work of grassroots organisations and community activists around the world, which deliver vital on-the-ground family planning services, alongside practical environmental solutions. Our partners are based in diverse locations from Guatemala, to India and Kenya, as well as Scotland and the English Midlands.

With three projects 'live' at any one time and promoting and raising funds for between six and nine projects each year, Empower to Plan enables us to shine a light on real stories and amplify the voices of those who are most affected by population growth.

Family Medical Point based in Uganda and **You Before Two** in the English Midlands have both received support for their work. Family



Photo by Doug Linstedt/Unsplash

Medical Point reach out to marginalised fishing communities along the shores of Lake Victoria, enhance their access to sexual and reproductive health services and combat gender-based violence. The outcomes are impressive: more than 2,000 community members and young people engaged with information on women's health, family economics and wider community benefits and there was a 20-30% increase in the number of women seeking family planning services at the medical centre.

You Before Two's eight-week relationship and sex education programme for boys and girls in Nottinghamshire (one of the most deprived parts of the UK, where teenage pregnancy rates are still high) focuses on providing essential information on contraception and healthy relationships but also includes a session on the issue of unsustainable population growth in higher-income countries like the UK.

Our ambition is to extend Empower to Plan's influence and impact, with projects reaching even further across the globe, for example in Afghanistan and Poland.

YOU CAN HELP US DELIVER OUR VISION...

Our campaigns are funded solely by donations and charitable grants and we seek collaborative partnerships to help accelerate progress that will benefit everyone, everywhere.

As the urgency to implement solutions to our social and environmental crises accelerates, we need the support of policymakers, individuals and funders – from members of the public to charitable foundations and visionary major donors – to assist us in the essential pursuit of a better life and safer, more resilient world for future generations.

If population is supported as a critical issue of our time, and the positive win-win solutions to improve peoples' lives on our one habitable planet are implemented, in years to come we hope that more people, funding bodies, and organisations beyond our own will be able to say:

“I saw the benefit of addressing population, acted positively for people and planet, and helped make this better future possible.”



Trainers and participants in a **You Before Two** relationships and sex education programme.

To be part of that better future, please contact us:

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**When it comes
to our human
population on this
one, habitable planet**



LESS IS MORE

**More space for nature,
for other species, for
life-supporting ecosystems.**

**More opportunity,
increased wellbeing
and fairer shares for
people everywhere**



DISCOVER MORE AT [POPULATIONMATTERS.ORG](https://www.populationmatters.org)

Population Matters campaigns to achieve a sustainable human population, to protect the natural world and improve people's lives. We support human rights, women's empowerment and global justice. We believe that to be able to live within our planet's limits, everyone should be able to choose a smaller family.

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Every choice counts