

POPULATION MATTERS

Issue 33 Autumn 2018

Leilani Münter

Never underestimate a
vegan hippie chick in
a race car

Time is Running Out

World Scientists'
Warning To
Humanity



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About Population Matters

Population Matters campaigns to achieve a sustainable human population, to protect the natural world and improve people's lives.

We promote positive, practical, ethical solutions – encouraging smaller families, inspiring people to reduce excessive consumption and helping us all to live within our planet's natural limits. We support human rights, women's empowerment and global justice.

Through our campaigning, advocacy and education work we are influencing policymakers, communities and individuals to make the changes needed for a healthy planet and a decent standard of living for all, now and in the future.

Magazine

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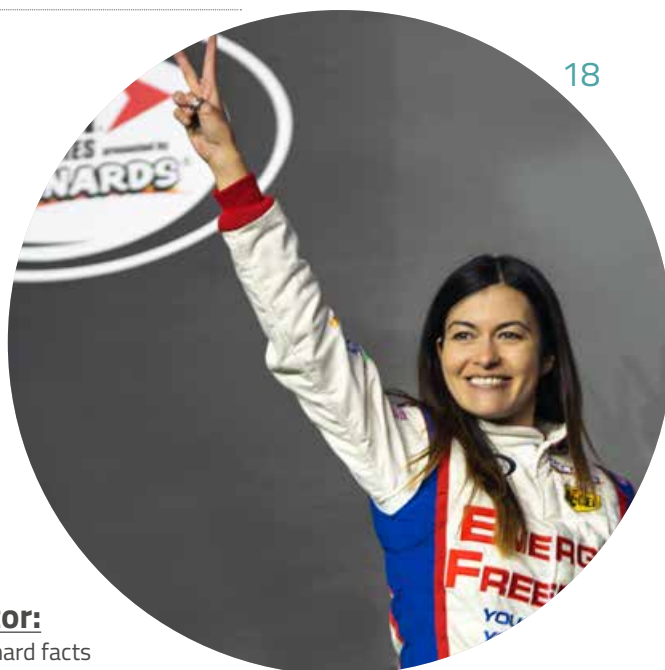
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Despite the hard facts, there is still room for optimism!

[\(Hang on, didn't the UN give a projection of 10.1 billion in 2010 and a billion fewer again in their 2004 projection?\)](#)

Demographic Transition Theory is not borne out universally or immune to political or social factors stalling or reversing its attractive, progressive pathway. [Whether in Europe or sub-Saharan Africa, girls aged fourteen and younger are giving birth, denied the opportunities for education and self-realisation that should be their right.](#) Regressive policies, in the form of the 'Global Gag Rule' reinstated by President Trump or President Magufuli of Tanzania dismissing birth control as a front for "foreigners with sinister motives", condemn tens of thousands of women to unsafe 'back-street' abortions.

These policies and pronouncements that could predispose you to 'population pessimism', but are running against the zeitgeist – as manifested by the recent surge of media interest in the population issue [\(p.16\)](#). A good deal of it stimulated by our articulate and impossible-to-pigeonhole new Patron, Leilani Münter [\(p.18\)](#). But also by the growing scientific evidence reinforcing our case, with an impressive body of scientists publicly demanding action through the World Scientists' Warning [\(p.12\)](#).



Professor Aubrey Manning
OBE, 24 April 1930 – 20 October 2018

As we were going to press Robin received the very sad news that our longstanding patron, Aubrey Manning died after a period of illness. We will

dedicate proper time and space in the next edition of the magazine for a fuller record of Aubrey's life and achievements. Especially his long commitment to Population Matters and his passionate, but always reasonable, pursuit of seeking to get fellow biologists, zoologists and nature conservationists to address the issue of human population. His death is all the more poignant for Robin, as just before Aubrey's health failed Robin was due to visit him in Scotland to talk through our plans to extend our 'Anthropocene' campaign with his support (he was hugely enthusiastic about getting 'Big Foot' exhibited publicly in Edinburgh). Population Matters expresses our deepest condolences to Aubrey's widow, Joan and family.

From the Director

Optimism, despite the hard facts

Campaigning on the issue of population with its magnitude, urgency and increasingly evident impacts on the environment, ecosystems, other species and the wellbeing of our own, can be challenging – especially when it comes to finding good news to celebrate. So we should welcome the latest data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) that both the UK's birth-rate and incidence of teenage pregnancies have declined. [\(p.10\)](#)

It is indeed good news that the UK no longer ranks number one for teenage pregnancy rates across Europe - compared to 2005, when the UK had the highest number of under-age girls giving birth (over 50,000 annually). Today that's been halved and credit must be given to the concerted official effort to achieve that. Yet the UK still ranks amongst the EU's 10 worst countries, marginally better than Latvia and Lithuania, but behind Poland, Malta and Croatia. Bulgaria and Romania top the list, each having 1,000 babies born annually to girls aged between 10 – 14. That can't be true of the UK? Eurostat, which compiled the report, provides the sobering reality, "[Hundreds of girls the same age gave birth in Germany, France and the UK also – although a smaller proportion of overall teenage births.](#)" But a reality being changed by projects such as **You Before Two** [\(p.7\)](#), supported through our **Empower to Plan** crowdfunding initiative.

The UK's average birth-rate is falling, yet our overall population continues to rise

- due to a combination of the [demographic momentum of people entering reproductive age and through immigration](#). Our population, as estimated by ONS, is set to increase by 3.6 million to around 69.2 million by mid-2026 and to top 70 million three years later. For the complete picture, a broader analysis is necessary, one which assesses the role and responsibility across society over the longer period.

"We know the UK has been in 'overshoot' for decades, consuming nearly three times its 'fair share' of the world's available resources." [From the Global Footprint Network's Analysis](#)

Our campaign for a UK Sustainable Population Policy [\(p.4\)](#) will be based on an honest, but complete, analysis of the drivers of population growth and unsustainable consumption, proposing positive action to tackle both.

'Population Sceptics' [\(p.14\)](#) who deny that human population is an issue requiring urgent action hold up Demographic Transition Theory as 'proving' that the issue will solve itself. Fertility rates are falling across the world they say, our global numbers will 'peak' at 11.2 billion by 2050 according to the UN.

Sustainable Population Policy: The People's Voice

An update from **Alistair Currie**,
Head of Campaigns & Communications

In 2017, to coincide with the snap general election, Population Matters launched its [Sustainable Population Policy for the UK](#). The policy is needed because wealthy countries like the UK have a disproportionately high impact on the global environment, for instance through our per capita CO₂ emissions and our consumption of imported resources and products. Secondly, within its own borders the UK is showing the strain of recent population growth, with public services under pressure, unaffordable housing, natural resources such as water under stress and an alarming decline in biodiversity (pg). Our ambitious goal is to see such a policy implemented in the UK: to achieve this requires political support. Over the last few months, we have been preparing the ground for the sustained campaigning and lobbying which will be essential in achieving that goal.

The government's blind spot

As we reported in the last edition of the magazine, the UK government's 25-year

plan for the environment, launched this January, simply didn't address population. Following PM's submission in response we were invited to meet a senior civil servant who was the main author of the report. He was fascinated by, and engaged with, our case but believed it was not an area in which the government could or should be involved. He highlighted the practical difficulties in gaining traction when the issue cuts across numerous ministerial departments and, most importantly, the almost certain resistance from the Treasury, which would see any limit on population growth as detrimental to the economy. The meeting confirmed for us the need to bring as much political leverage to bear as possible.

Three-quarters support a population strategy

In June, following the announcement by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) that the UK population has topped 66 million, we commissioned a nationwide YouGov poll to assess the level of concern about population, and the level of support for action to address it. The key finding of our poll was that 74% of people surveyed believe the government should have a national strategy for addressing population, with just 7% opposing the idea. 63% supported the setting of targets for population – a key plank of our strategy.

The reason for this level of support became clear when we sought people's views about current and future population growth. Exactly half believe the current population of the UK to be too high and 64% think the rate of future population growth projected by the ONS is too high. The ONS currently projects a population of just under 73 million in 2041. Only 2% thought either the current population or rate of future growth was too low. While public concern

about present and future population will not come as a surprise to most people, being able to prove and quantify the concern of the general public is of great value. The significant new finding of this poll is that there is strong support for solving the problem – a finding difficult for policymakers to ignore.

Agreement and disagreement

The headline figures masked some interesting differences in attitudes across ages and political affiliations, however. The poll revealed a significant gap between 'Leave' and 'Remain' voters on population – 84% of Leave voters believe projected growth is too high, whilst just 49% of Remain voters share that view. However, only 1% in both groups believe that the projected population growth is too low.

Similarly, 81% of those who voted Conservative in the last General Election believe future population growth to be too high, while only about half of Labour and Liberal Democrat voters agree. There is also a far higher number of "Don't Knows" in the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Remain camps – a useful target audience for Population Matters. In none of these groups is there a significant percentage who believe current population or projected growth to be about right or too low.

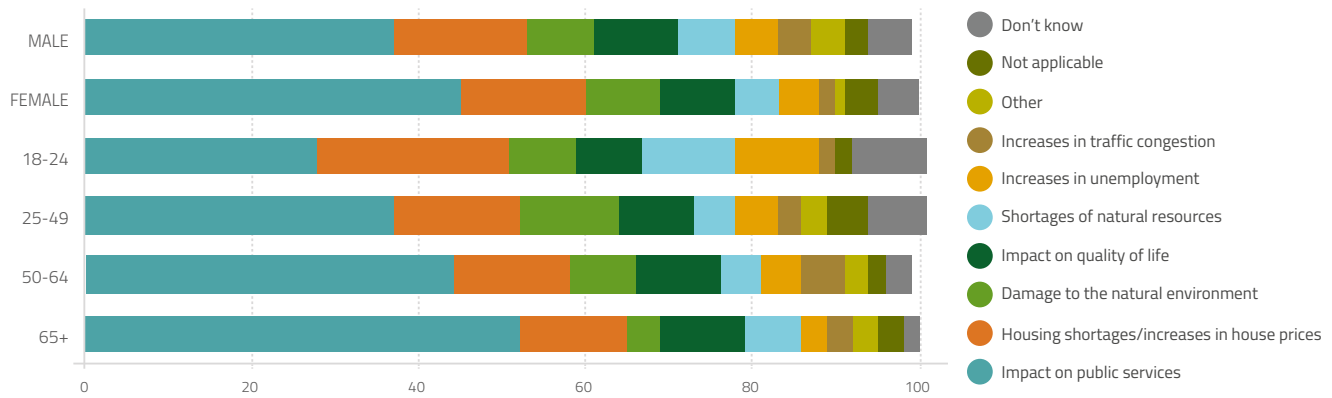
The poll also showed that people are more concerned about population and more in favour of a policy and targets as they get older, and that men tend to be more supportive of PM's position than women. There are more "Don't Knows" amongst women than men and amongst those in the younger two age brackets. Lastly, when asked to identify the single biggest negative effect of population growth, more young people than any other age group identified housing shortages and unemployment.

Principles of a Sustainable Population Policy:

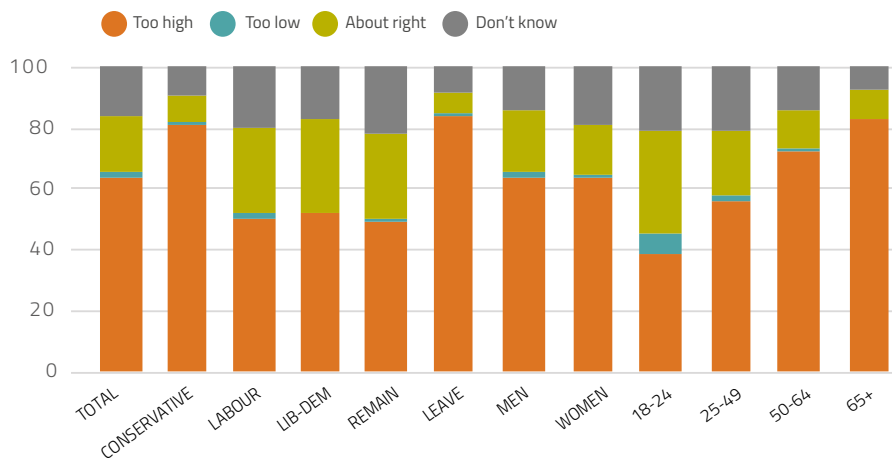
- Accurately determine future population growth and what factors and policies will affect it
- Assess the impact of population on other policy fields
- Develop a clear, evidence-based understanding of all the potential effects of specific measures required to end population growth
- Set realistic targets for ending population growth and bring population to a sustainable level
- Develop an integrated policy framework to meet these targets
- Ensure the UK takes positive, effective action in support of ending global population growth

For more information, see populationmatters.org/sustainablepopulation-policy or the Autumn 2017 Population Matters magazine.

Question: Which, if any, of the following do you think is the biggest negative effect of population growth in the UK?



Question: The Office for National Statistics projects that in 2041 the population will increase from 66 million now to 72.9 million. Generally speaking, do you think this rate of population growth is too high, too low or about right:



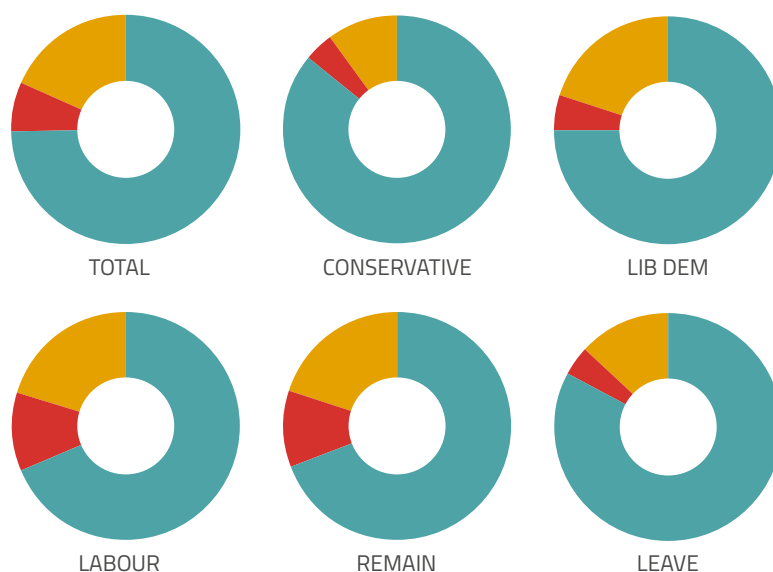
Moving forward

These results provide fascinating and valuable insight into the concerns and desires of a range of different audiences across Great Britain, allowing PM to tailor our communications effectively to build support for the Sustainable Population Policy. They also provide a clear mandate for political action, that PM will use to maximum effect in targeting policymakers and influencers in the coming months.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,693 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 28th – 29th June 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Question: Generally speaking, do you think the government should, or should not, have a strategy to address population in the UK?

Should have Shouldn't have Don't know



YOUR DONATIONS IN ACTION

Our poll was paid for by the donations received in response to our appeal in support of the Sustainable Population Policy in January. The appeal was one of the most successful PM has run so far, achieving more than double its target of £15,000. This substantial war chest will help PM to research and produce authoritative and professional advocacy materials, develop and distribute publicity materials for targeted audiences, and lobby influencers and policymakers through the most effective platforms and routes. If you have given in response to this appeal we're deeply grateful for your support – thank you.

Empower to Plan You Before Two GirlsTalk

An update from **Rachel Musk**,
Empower to Plan Coordinator

Although the number of teen pregnancies in the UK is dropping ([p10](#)), there are persistent ‘hotspots’ where teenage pregnancy rates are not decreasing significantly. There is a pressing need for more sex education to empower young women and girls. This has been heightened by recent cuts to contraceptive services in England – as a result the Advisory Group on Contraception (AGC) has raised strong concerns that unplanned pregnancies will increase in affected areas. Rebecca Foljambe, a GP specialising in family planning, has developed a program to target such areas in Nottinghamshire. You Before Two GirlsTalk works with partner schools with at-risk girls aged 12 -14. The eight week course equips the girls with essential information on contraception, sexual consent, healthy relationships and e-safety with the aim of empowering them to make informed choices.

“Our aim is to educate and empower young women growing up in deprived areas, to prioritise the enrichment of their minds and bodies, before considering having a baby. Our girls will be taught to look in the mirror and tell themselves it is ‘you,’ that matters. To find the best you, before making you two.” Dr Rebecca Foljambe

The purpose is to help the girls understand that they can have, and are entitled to, complete control of their own family planning. GirlsTalk also highlights how their family planning decisions impact on the wider world and the issue of unsustainable population growth. As with all the course content, this material is delivered with compassion and care, emphasising a woman’s right to freely choose the number and spacing of her children. This effective syllabus has already seen promising results.

“I really enjoyed today’s lesson, it made me realise how important we are as humans on the earth. I would like to stop people having more babies. If you’re going to have children make sure you’re in a good place before you do. TAKE CARE OF MOTHER EARTH!” A young participant



© Tee Mill



© You Before Two

TAKE ACTION!

Population Matters aims to raise £3,000 for You Before Two GirlsTalk. So far the £1,330 raised through Empower to Plan has enabled the following:

- Set-up a group of volunteers with a variety of skills.
- Establish You Before Two as a Community Interest Company, with eight Directors providing a wealth of professional skills, enthusiasm and experience. All giving their time and expertise free of charge.
- Finalise the workshop (which will be taken into schools in November).
- Run 4 pilots in schools (after Autumn half term 2018).
- Plan outreach to all local schools once the pilot workshops have been completed and the pilot schools have given their feedback.

We are hugely thankful to those of you who have donated money to this essential project; if you would like to help us reach our target please donate specifying You Before Two. Your gift will:

- Help girls at high risk of sexual exploitation and teenage pregnancy take control of their futures.
- Empower them with the facts on contraception, healthy relationships and planning a family.
- Equip young people with knowledge about the negative impacts of unsustainable population growth.

populationmatters.org/you-before-two **DONATE**

Population Matters News

Robin Maynard welcomes PM's new President Jonathon Porritt, who is taking on the baton from Roger Martin



Jonathon will be familiar to many of our supporters as a leading environmental campaigner, who headed up Friends of the Earth from 1984 -90 (where I cut my campaigning teeth), during some of its most effective campaigning around nuclear power, tropical deforestation, and food and farming issues. Prior to that

he was co-chair of the Green Party. In 1996, he established Forum for the Future, now the UK's leading sustainable development charity working to achieve practical solutions in partnership with proactive businesses, policy-makers and the voluntary sector. Jonathon chaired the UK Sustainable Development Commission between 2000 and 2009, and was incensed when this was closed down in 2011 by the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition. Throughout his career, he has championed the case for addressing human population as the ultimate, underpinning sustainability issue. In 2012, we worked together on an initiative to shift the environment movement's inertia on population – that effort continues today! As our new President, he adds considerable clout and credibility to our cause.

Roger Martin will also be well-known to supporters, having headed up Population Matters as Chair for many years, before taking up the role of our first President. Roger's training and skills as a former diplomat have served PM well – without Roger, the organisation would not have our stellar list of Patrons, who stand in the first rank of their fields internationally. As a young campaigner, I first met Roger, more prosaically, in a Somerset peat-bog. He was a rare species in having the honesty and courage to challenge the businesses bagging up wildlife habitat for profit, whilst living and working amidst them. That same honesty and courage has been evident throughout his time with PM – challenging the “mad taboo” (a phrase he coined) around population. Roger will continue to represent PM internationally, as well as retaining an advisory role.

Robin Maynard : Director

Julie Lewis : Head of Compliance and Supporter Services

Alistair Currie : Head of Campaigns & Communications

Olivia Nater : Digital and Communications Officer

Rachel Musk : Empower to Plan, Donor Development and Database Coordinator

Fond Farewell

Huge thanks to Tessa Dickinson and Mala Tu who have both been an integral part of the PM team over the last three years. Tessa worked with PM initially as an Intern Coordinator and then as Campaigns and Project Officer. Mala was our Empower to Plan Coordinator also providing administrative support to Julie in Supporter Services.

Introducing Olivia Nater



Before joining PM as Digital and Communications Officer, Olivia worked as online and events fundraiser at Friends of the Earth Scotland, where she developed its first online engagement strategy. Passionate about wildlife and environmental outreach, Olivia holds a MSc and a BSc in zoology.

She interned at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and after graduating, joined the communications team of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Programme in Switzerland. Olivia enjoys meeting the challenges of online and offline communications and particularly appreciates the unparalleled power of social media to inform, engage with, and positively influence millions of people.

“I was attracted to PM because it draws the crucial link between the two causes closest to my heart: environmental conservation and women's rights. I firmly believe that educating and empowering women is the very best thing we can do for both the planet and humanity. PM is the most holistic environmental organisation out there in terms of how it refuses to shy away from the facts and leverages social justice solutions to fight ecological degradation. I am really delighted to have the opportunity to help shape and expand PM's reach and influence.”

Introducing Rachel Musk



Rachel joined PM as a part-time Donor Development & Database Coordinator in May, over the last few months she has also taken on the responsibility of editing the PM magazine and coordinating Empower to Plan. Rachel previously worked as Communications Manager, for ten years, with a human rights NGO based

in the Middle East. She is passionate about the environment, sustainability and reducing consumption personally and in her community.

“It's an exciting time to be part of PM as more and more people are becoming aware of the plight of Earth and are seeking ways in which they can adapt their lifestyle to reduce pollution and unsustainable consumption. I was thrilled to find an environmental charity which acknowledges the essential need to promote human rights and education for children and women, in particular, whilst articulating how much population matters in reducing the negative human impact on the environment.”

The clock is ticking...

Population Matters hits the streets on World Population Day: Alistair Currie

How do you bring home to people the reality of global population growth? That's the question we asked ourselves when we started planning our actions for World Population Day this year. Large numbers are difficult to grasp and we are talking of course about very large numbers: more than 80 million more people a year, approximately 1.6 million per week and a quarter of a million every day. We know though, that what people do grasp is the pace of population growth, particularly when they see it happening before their eyes. [On 11 July, we took to the streets of London with an 11 square metre mobile digital display of the live global population counter.](#) The reactions we got confirmed what we've always known: people grasp the nature of our population crisis in an instant.

We began the day by taking our message to government, with a visit to the Home Office and Department for the Environment building in Westminster. Handing out leaflets to passers-by, we immediately got the reactions of amazement and concern we'd been expecting. The rate of population growth is so high – around two-and-a-half people per second – that the counter increases in increments of two or three numbers at a time, too fast to keep up with. There, and throughout the day, people asked us if the numbers were just births, and we informed them that, no, this was births minus deaths – the actual number of people being added to our population. Our van circulated past the Houses of Parliament and then Downing Street, before heading to Trafalgar Square. At the square, Population Matters' team joined the London PM Group, which was leafleting people, with the help of [Anthropocene campaign](#) mascot Big Foot, the star of last year's World Population Day. From there it

was a trip to the London School of Economics, where we talked to students and members of the public, and to Oxford Street, one of the busiest shopping streets in the world. As the van crawled along in traffic, shoppers had plenty of time to absorb its message. The last stop of the day was further afield – at the head office of Friends of the Earth UK in south London, to offer a friendly, slightly cheeky, reminder to one of the country's leading environmental organisations that you can't protect the planet and the natural world without addressing population.

[WORLD POPULATION DAY](#)

World Population Day was established by the United Nations in 1989 and falls on 11 July every year. It's intended to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues. Few people know of its existence but it is a golden opportunity for population activists to highlight our cause. Population Matters joined with other population groups worldwide on the day to call for action on our environmental crisis – but we also wanted to get on the streets and spread the word.

"My dad was joking that it was just someone typing – it couldn't really be a thing. It's scary to think that's the number of people inhabiting your planet at this time." Young passer-by



The People's Walk for Wildlife

as one-in-five UK mammals face extinction

[The Mammal Society](#) issued a study in June reporting that one-in-five wild mammals in the UK face extinction, with 165 species critically endangered. The study is the first comprehensive review of the population of British mammals in 20 years. It identified climate change, loss of habitat, use of pesticides and disease as main drivers – all of which can be tied to population growth. That's why Population Matters joined ten thousand people from across the UK on The People's [Walk for Wildlife](#) in London this September. Organised by Population Matters patron [Chris Packham](#), it was a ground-breaking event: the biggest march for wildlife the country has ever seen, a rallying cry to halt the precipitous decline in Britain's biodiversity.

Chris invited Population Matters to hold an information stall at the event and joined us for a photo opportunity with 'Bigfoot', highlighting the urgent need to address the effect of unsustainable human population growth on wildlife. Our staff and supporters engaged with a very receptive audience and our director Robin Maynard gave a short speech via the big screens. Another speaker

was Bella Lack, a 15-year-old environmentalist and social media influencer who stated,

"I've only ever seen hedgehogs through the rectangular screen of a phone. I've only heard the chatter of a hen harrier through a muffled video. If I squint, if I focus intently on the screen, I can imagine that I'm there and that things are not as bad as they seem. But the reality? It is bleak..."

"...It is terrifying. There's not one specific generation that can be blamed for our planet's destruction, but my generation have been handed a decimated world, that's being stripped of its magnificence, that's being stripped of its life." The march proceeded through the heart of London to the sound of downloaded birdsong playing on mobile phones, an eerie and powerful reminder of what we have lost. It culminated in Chris handing in his [People's Manifesto for Wildlife](#) to Number 10 Downing Street. A hopeful ending to an inspiring day.



© Florence Blondel

Big Foot shares his powerful message

Big Foot has been making his strong and silent presence felt

The striking sculpture transcends language barriers as his message is clear and powerful. One young child commented to the local PM group at a green fair:

"It's amazing how he can tell me so much without saying anything at all!"

Huge thanks to the many Local Groups who have chauffeured and facilitated Big Foot's popular appearances at key events like World Population Day, the Walk for Wildlife as well as University fresher fairs, local sustainability and green fairs and festivals.

Big Foot is by far the most attractive PM team member, drawing people like a magnet; creating the perfect catalyst for conversations with people of every age and nationality. The recurring theme at the events Big Foot has attended has been a recognition of the need to face the fact that [population matters tremendously to the future of our planet](#), the environment and the welfare of other species as well as our own. As Martin Earl, PM London Group Coordinator says:

"They declared that our stall, because of its crucial message, was the most important one of all! We felt the same!"



© Martin Earl

Births and teenage pregnancies fall in UK

In 2017 the number of live births in England and Wales fell from approximately 696,000 in 2016 to 679,000, according to the latest report from the [Office for National Statistics](#), ONS. The ONS figures show that the [total fertility rate](#) (a measure of how many children women can be expected to have) has fallen from 1.94 in 2012 to an average of 1.76 children per woman. Even though this is higher than Europe's average of 1.6, it remains below replacement level as the recent trend for [smaller families](#) appears to be continuing in the UK.

The most significant percentage decrease in fertility rates in 2017 was



© Adobe Stock/magspace

for women aged less than 20 years – declining by 7.3% in 2017. Around the same time as the release of the ONS report, another study found that teenage pregnancies are now at their lowest level – down a remarkable 50% since 2007. In the latest report released by the [British Pregnancy Advisory Service, BPAS](#), teenagers were found “to be more sensible, more focused on their

education and future careers and wanted to avoid pregnancy.” But as Robin explains in his introduction (p.3), we cannot rest on our laurels, and work like GirlsTalk (p.6) amongst teenagers in the UK remains vital. There has also been a substantial reduction in the number of women who give birth under 30 years of age, with the ONS ascribing the decline to factors such as

“...increased female participation in higher education and the labour force, the increasing importance of a career, the rising costs of childbearing, labour market uncertainty and housing factors being responsible.”

The only age group in which fertility rates are increasing is women aged 40 and above, contributing to the rise in the average age at which women have their first baby to 30.5, compared to 26.4 in 1975.

© Rachel Musk



Egypt seeks fewer babies

Leaders from the Global South continue to speak out regarding the implications of population growth

In September Egypt's government announced welcome plans to curb its rapid population growth as part of its 2018-2022 medium-term sustainable development plan. This move is the result of the Egyptian government's struggle to provide sufficient access to basic public services, including education, health care and housing, to its 99 million citizens. The [four year plan](#) aims to reduce the growth rate from its current 2.65% to 2.1% by 2022. Importantly, the plan also includes targets for alleviating poverty and decreasing illiteracy.

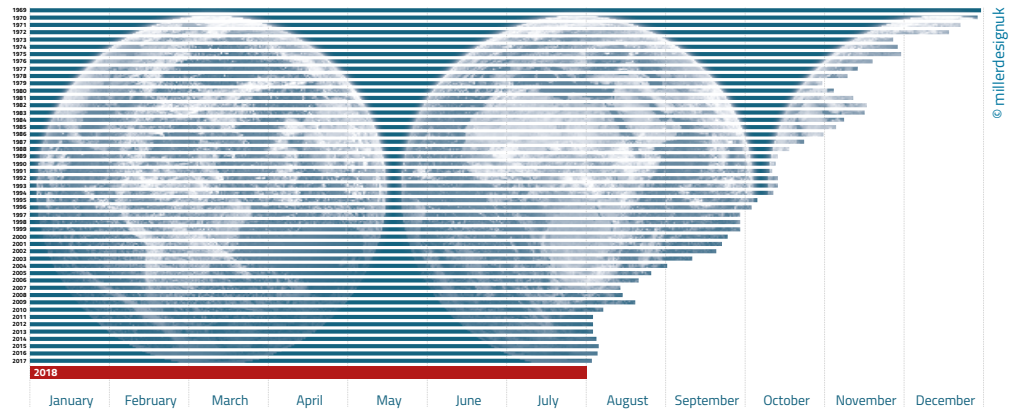
Currently, almost 30% of Egyptians live below the poverty line and the illiteracy rate is 20.1%. [Illiteracy is higher for women](#), in particular in rural areas where an estimated 32.9% of females cannot read or write, a trend which is strongly correlated with

high fertility rates. As well as gender inequality, the government recognises the challenge of overcoming religious and cultural resistance to birth control and is attempting to [leverage Islamic media and leaders](#) to raise awareness of the benefits of family planning. Egypt's large population is exacerbating environmental damage. Every year almost 60,000 acres of land are lost to soil erosion and housing construction while Egypt's share of vital water from the [over-exploited and climate-stressed Nile](#) has not increased since the 1950s. To avoid a looming catastrophe and improve the quality of life of its people, it is imperative that Egypt succeeds in its plans and raises its ambition. This [positive and empowering approach](#) is promising – however the Egyptian government's poor record on human rights means a cautious welcome to the plans is required.

Earth Overshoot Day 2018:

01/08/18

Just seven months into 2018, on the 1st August, we exceeded the Earth's capacity to sustain us



According to calculations by the [Global Footprint Network \(GFN\)](#), we had already used the natural resources that it takes the planet a year to renew. At our current level of consumption and impact, we need 1.7 planets to sustain us. Earth Overshoot Day (EOD) was created by the GFN, to provide a tangible illustration of the extent to which we are outrunning our planetary resources. The earlier in the year the date is, the more we are overshooting what the earth can provide. Each year

for more than 40 years, EOD has been earlier – a sign that our demands are growing greater.

Humans depend on the Earth to generate resources such as wood and fertile soil, and to absorb our waste – especially carbon dioxide. GFN calculates how much the Earth can produce, and how much we are using. Each year, we are demanding more. Because it cannot renew its resources at the same pace as we are using them,

each year the planet can provide less of them. Many factors influence when EOD falls. One of the most significant is population. GFN itself [identifies population](#) as one of the root causes of our overshoot – and addressing it as one of the solutions. One Earth will be enough if we can bring our consumption and numbers into line with what it can provide. We have no other choice.

Tanzanian president condemns birth control

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) of the 30 fastest-growing cities in the world, 21 are in Africa and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania is one of those. Whilst many leaders of the Global South express [concern over population growth](#), and are actively seeking ways to curb it and deal with its implications, Tanzanian President John Magufuli is not. He recently suggested that “[those going for family planning are lazy](#)” stating “[I see no reason to control births in Tanzania](#)”.

Tanzania has a total fertility rate of five children per woman and a population growth rate of 3.1%, making it one of the fastest growing nations in the world. Currently a third of women in Tanzania use family planning, according to UNFPA, with access most limited in rural areas. Following Magufuli's statement the Tanzanian government ordered a US health charity to withdraw

television advertisements promoting family planning. This worrying development could instigate a backtrack from commitments on family planning, which in turn will have a devastating impact on women's rights, population growth, sustainability and poverty.

Population Matters has responded by sending a [letter to the UK's Secretary of State for International Development](#) urging her to express the UK's strong concerns about these developments. President Magufuli's comments are out of step with the views of many other African politicians and leaders. Earlier this year Malawi's Minister of Finance Goodall Gondwe, said:

“[The high population is exerting a lot of pressure on our economy. As a country we have made tremendous gains over the years but the impact is not reflected on our economy because the gains have been dissipated by population growth](#)”

“We will end up with women having unplanned children, huge families and unable to sustain their lives.”

Judy Gitau, Equality Now regional coordinator for Africa



World Scientists' Warning to Humanity

Time is running out

Can 20,000 international scientists be wrong?

We reported in our last magazine that 15,000 scientists had signed up to a “Warning to Humanity”, which bluntly warned of environmental disaster unless the world took urgent action. Almost a year on, thousands more scientists have endorsed the call – and Population Matters has been at the forefront of promoting it. The Alliance of World Scientists was created when a team of authors from across the world received thousands of endorsements for an uncompromising article published in the journal [Bioscience in November 2017](#). World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice (WSW) was a follow up to the Warning to Humanity issued by thousands of scientists in 1992. It warned that humanity was demanding more of the Earth than it could manage and called urgently for a change in our stewardship of our planet. The 2017 paper reiterated that on almost every measure, the environment is now in worse condition. Identifying population growth as a “primary driver” behind many ecological threats, it concluded with the powerful statement on the [next page](#).

The warning was not simply a prediction of catastrophe but offered thirteen proposals for action that could avert it. Those included reducing fertility rates through education and family planning, and rallying leaders behind the goal of establishing a sustainable human population. The authors went further, calling on individuals to “limit their own reproduction” and “drastically diminish” their consumption.

International cooperation

The WSW received global media coverage the day after it was issued – but the news cycle moved on. Population Matters immediately identified the lasting importance of the document and both publicised it and used it as key evidence in supporting our position. In the run up to World Population Day ([p8](#)), two of our members, Bill Dowling and Brian McGavin, proposed that PM work with other population organisations internationally to help promote it. That chimed squarely with our desire to develop international relationships and to fully exploit independent, scientific evidence reinforcing the need to tackle population. PM worked together with Dave Gardner of US population

organisation, World Population Balance, to develop a statement of support for the WSW. Within weeks we had gained the signatures of the Population Media Centre and Population Institute in the US, Démographie Responsable in France, the Overpopulation Project (based in Sweden), Population Institute Canada and Sustainable Population Australia. Our statement reiterated the key points of the warning and in particular the population component. It added a call to action to governments, urging them to “detail what actions they intend to take regarding the 13 specific policy prescriptions it lays out, including promoting a sustainable population size.”

Deafening silence

We submitted the statement, along with a covering letter, to the Prime Minister, the Scottish and Welsh governments and the Leader of the Opposition. Despite follow ups to all, we received only one reply, from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. That reply affirmed what our meeting with a senior civil servant at the Department for the Environment ([p4](#)) had already indicated – that getting government’s attention is a significant challenge. The response, from junior minister Claire Perry, mainly congratulated the government itself for all the things it has done on climate change, conveying no sense of urgency or imperative to do better. It did not refer to the WSW or to population at all.

Spreading the word

In June PM contacted Prof Bill Ripple, one of the report’s main authors and coordinator of the Alliance of World Scientists to offer our help. He directed us to [scientistswarning.org](#), a website set up to help promote the warning, [generate more signatures](#) and mobilise action around it. PM is now helping [scientistswarning.org](#) with its social media, and contacts with our supporters have generated hundreds of signatures in support. The WSW is one of the most important documents of our time – a warning which must be heeded. In coming months, we aim to build on the work we have already done to ensure that its diagnosis and its prescriptions are brought to the people who need to hear them.

“To prevent widespread misery and catastrophic biodiversity loss, humanity must practice a more environmentally sustainable alternative to business as usual... Soon it will be too late to shift course away from our failing trajectory, and time is running out.” ^{WSW}

STOP PRESS! IPCC publishes crucial report

As this issue was going to press, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a [crucial report](#). It warns that holding global average temperature rise to below the critical threshold of 2°C above preindustrial levels and ideally to the lower figure of 1.5°C, “requires rapid and far-reaching” [economic transitions](#). The report did not recommend any specific action on population up-front, but PM dug out some key text buried deep within the report identifying high population growth as “[a key impediment](#)” to achieving that 1.5°C degree target.

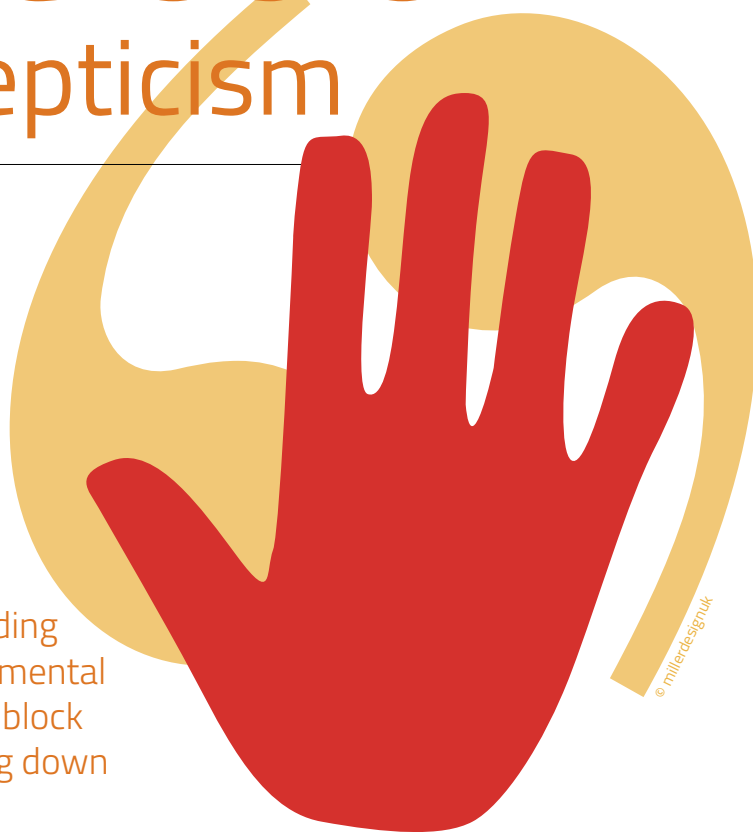
The panel noted that future population projections cover a very broad range of figures. It identified “future female educational attainment” as a critical element, recognising that greater access to educational opportunities for women leads “to lower fertility rates and therewith decreased population growth up to a level of 1 billion people by 2050”. As you’d expect our press release highlighted that “key impediment” of population growth, calling for urgent action to address this significant driver of climate change.



SHUTTING US UP: Population Scepticism

How the population discussion is closed down

Continuing in our series of articles considering and deconstructing the 'Six Silencing Discourses' as identified by Professor Diana Coole, University of London, Robin Maynard tackles population scepticism. Professor Coole has analysed the way many people, including otherwise smart and courageous environmental campaigners, receive and psychologically block the population issue – effectively shutting down reasonable and much needed debate.



THE SIX SILENCERS

Population Shaming Worrying about population growth or advocating for the stabilisation or reduction of population is evidence of, or motivated by, morally reprehensible characteristics.

Population Scepticism We don't have to worry about population anymore. Birth rates are levelling off and the global population will stabilise during this century.

Population Fatalism Population may be a problem but there is nothing we can do to fix it.

Population Declinism Fertility rates are below 'replacement level' in many countries and we must have higher birth rates to support pensions and health services for the elderly.

Population Growth Economies thrive with more people, increasing productivity and consumption, so we need more people not fewer.

Population Decomposing Technology will resolve environmental problems created by billions more people.

Understanding these 'silencing discourses' and how to counter their underlying rationale and appeal is critical if we are to persuade key audiences and organisations to address the issue of unsustainable human numbers.

Population Scepticism

This is the expression of doubt that human population growth and numbers are a problem at all. Population Scepticism is the core 'silencing discourse' that we must counter, as it offers policymakers and individuals the highly appealing proposition that there is no need to address human population. Thus, they can avoid the political minefield of government interfering with personal choice about family size, because a progressive and inevitable process is at work that will 'defuse the population bomb'. That process, Demographic Transition Theory (DTT), puts forward the attractive premise that every country progresses through a series of four transitional stages of development and demography and so will ultimately achieve a stable population with average fertility levels at or below replacement:

Stage 1: As experienced by all humanity, prior to the development of modern medicine and sanitation, the brutal balance between a high birth rate and a high death rate.

Stage 2: Access to healthcare, immunisation and control of disease leads to a rapid reduction in mortality rates (especially of children). But because there's a lag-time before any fall in fertility rates, the country's population undergoes rapid growth.

Stage 3: Both low mortality and low fertility are now in play; what exponents of DTT term 'the transition proper'. Nevertheless, the country continues to experience population growth due to having a large, proportion of their population made up of young people. Termed 'demographic momentum' or more bluntly 'Youth Bulge' that large cohort of young people continues to boost numbers as they enter reproductive age.

Stage 4: Demographic Transition is now complete, people are living longer but also having fewer children due to availability of healthcare, choice over

family size through family planning and greater access to education for women, leading them to have fewer children later on.

DTT offers a vision of a progressive future for all, one where the population issue resolves itself. Globally, fertility rates (number of children born per woman) have halved over the past half century with the average now standing at 2.5 children per woman, compared to the period before 1965 when it stood at over 5 children per woman. A [recent review](#) suggests that over 80% of the world's population now live in countries with a fertility rate of fewer than 3 children per woman.

So our job's done then, or will be, thanks to this inevitable process and progress? There's nothing for us to worry or campaign about? Not quite.

Demographic Transition Theory isn't inevitable or universal

It is a 'theory', what Coole terms a 'typically modern grand narrative', based on observations as to what has occurred in European and other developed countries, then extrapolated as universally applicable and occurring - as if it were an innate, determinist mechanism. Yet as our Advisory Council member, Dr Martha Campbell and Patron, Professor Malcom Potts set out in their paper, '[Do Economists have frequent sex?](#)', DTT is 'a flawed paradigm confusing coincidence with causation.' And they go on to state, 'There is no empirical evidence that all countries and regions will drift in some magic way to a two-child family and then will live happily ever after'. Whereas there is good evidence that fertility rates are falling more slowly and have stalled in some regions of the world.

In sub-Saharan Africa, women are still having more than five children on average - in four countries (Burundi, Chad, Mali and Niger) it is over six. Research cited by Professor Sarah Harper of Oxford University shows that, 'As many as two thirds of the countries in the region experienced no significant decline in the first decade of

the millennium, 4 have yet to start fertility decline, and 10 have fertility stalls. Even in those countries where fertility is declining, the rate of decline is in most cases relatively slow.' For Niger, a country where many millions of people go without adequate nutrition, women on average have seven children - not surprising, given 25% of girls are married by the age of 15, 60% by 19. Faced by rising temperatures and increasing drought linked to climate change, Niger is also fighting regressive fundamentalism under the banner of '[Boko Haram](#)' (popularly translated as, 'Western education is a sin').

There are very different cultural, political, religious and economic dynamics at work across Africa that do not easily accommodate a 'one size fits all' narrative like DTT. A narrative, which is also looking simplistic and out of date for some sectors of society in [European countries](#), Russia and the US where large families are being actively promoted for questionable [political reasons](#). The attractive vision of the progressive, liberal, democratic future for all, which population sceptic and DTT adherents cling to, looks increasingly shaky.

Population Scepticism segues into another of the silencing discourses, Population Fatalism

Whereas population sceptics dismiss concerns over population growth as unfounded, holding onto the reassuring narrative that fertility will continue to fall universally; similarly, population fatalists consider the UN's medium projection for a world population of around 11.2 billion by 2100 as being predetermined. Yet achieving that medium projection will only be possible through ongoing, concerted efforts to enable all women to have access to the family planning and education opportunities they want and deserve.

'Continued improvements' have been hampered considerably by President Trump's reinstatement and extension of Ronald Reagan's 'Mexico City Policy', also known as the '[Global Gag Rule](#)', which blocks US federal aid for non-governmental organisations that provide abortions or abortion-related services, including aid organisations which even mention abortion. This deeply regressive measure has forced the closure of family planning clinics

and driven up the number of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and avoidable maternal deaths - with African countries bearing the brunt. According to the respected Guttmacher Institute, more than 22,000 women die every year because of unsafe abortions, almost all of them in developing countries. [The Institute has calculated](#) that each decrease of \$10 million in US funding will result in:

- 416,000 fewer women and couples accessing family planning;
- 124,000 more unintended pregnancies, including 54,000 more unplanned births
- 53,000 more abortions taking place (35,000 provided in unsafe conditions)
- 240 more maternal deaths.

Not the [outcomes](#) that proponents of population scepticism and DTT's populist adherents, like the late Hans Rosling, would presumably applaud? Yet as Professor Coole shows in her analysis, population scepticism has also been used by free-market think-tanks to dismiss the 'limits-to-growth' arguments of environmentalists, and by the conservative, religious right to oppose a woman's choice and right to manage her own fertility. Hardly, a progressive or liberal narrative. We will explore 'Population Fatalism' further in the next issue. A detailed version of Prof Coole's analysis can be found at Diana Coole, '[Too many bodies? The return and disavowal of the population question](#)', Environmental Politics, vol 22.2 (2013) pp. 195-215.

"To achieve the substantial reductions in fertility projected in the medium variant, it will be essential to support continued improvements in access to reproductive health care services, including family planning, especially in the least developed countries, with a focus on enabling women and couples to achieve their desired family size."

UN 2017 World Population Prospects report

Breaking the Taboo

Mainstream media starts talking about family size

A recent headline in the [Washington Post](#) read “Talking about overpopulation is still taboo. That has to change.” The article was by Peter Singer, one of the world’s most influential philosophers, with co-authors from the US and Uganda. There are promising signs that change is afoot – in the past few months there has been an unprecedented level of attention on population and family size in the media. With articles in The Times, the Washington Post, the New York Times, The Guardian, the BBC and many other outlets, could it be that this long-neglected issue is finally getting the attention it deserves?

Population and the impact of family size on our environment has been a neglected area of debate in mainstream media for decades now. Indeed, it has been seen by many as a taboo, or an [opportunity to condemn](#) those who campaign on the issue. Over the last year, welcome signs of greater openness to mature discussion have been visible, and over the last few months, an [avalanche of media](#) has focused on choosing a smaller family.

The [announcement in May of our latest patron](#), racing driver and eco-activist Leilani Münter, was the trigger for many of these articles. You can read our [exclusive interview with Leilani](#) (p.18). What distinguished much of this coverage from some that has gone before was that it was [in-depth and respectful](#), giving an opportunity to interviewees to [explain their reasons in detail](#). Much of it also gave prominence to the [case for smaller families](#) and going childfree as a response to the [environmental challenges](#) we face.

TAKE ACTION

For a small organisation like Population Matters, social media is one of the most effective ways we can spread our message. Our Twitter page has seen more than 60% growth over the last two years, and our Facebook page reaches hundreds of thousands. Graphics and infographics are among our most widely shared posts by following us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) you can access and share our infographics, posts and articles.

THE INDEPENDENT

4 August 2018 [Why climate activists can't agree if we should be having fewer children](#)

BBC
RADIO



3 August 2018
[Jeremy Vine: Accidents and Procreation](#)

Enterprise Magazine

31 July 2018 [Having a smaller family is the most effective way to help the environment](#)

STYLIST MAGAZINE

27 July 2018 [“I’m worried about the environment – so I’ve decided not to have children”](#)

the guardian

20 June 2018 [Would you give up having children to save the planet? Meet the couples who have](#)

8 June 2018 [Respecting women’s rights and the planet key to family planning](#)

23 April 2018 [With 250 babies born each minute, how many can the Earth sustain?](#)

MailOnline

8 June 2018 [Women who refuse to have babies – to save the planet!](#)

GIZMODO

30 April 2018
[Is Thanos right?](#)

autoblog

16 May 2018 [Racer Leilani Münter takes a lead in race against population growth](#)

Stuff

30 May 2018 [Is there still stigma for being child-free by choice?](#)

TRTWORLD

10 May 2018 [Population overload: Are we in danger of outgrowing our planet?](#)

THE TIMES

20 May 2018 [Jeremy Clarkson: I’m sure you’ll be dying to hear about my plans for a population implosion](#)

JOIN THE POPULATION MATTERS MOVEMENT

Demonstrate that Population Matters

Join thousands of people around the world already taking positive action for change

With no global authority leading the way on sustainable population, the work of Population Matters is vital. We need your support to effect real change at a global scale and help avoid environmental disaster.

Become a member – The bigger our membership base the more weight our message carries. Our campaigning now gives a strong collective voice to many thousands of people who, like you, want to tackle unsustainable population.

Share your story – Have you chosen to have a smaller family or no children? Share your story with us and help influence others to make similar choices.

Join in online – Follow PM on social media and share our infographics, posts and articles to spread the word so that global population growth is no longer the elephant in the room.

[f PopulationMatters](#) [PopnMatters](#)
populationmatters.org

“There’s no point bleating about the future of pandas, polar bears and tigers when we’re not addressing the one single factor that’s putting more pressure on the ecosystem than any other – namely the ever-increasing size of the world’s population.”

Chris Packham, Population Matters Patron



© Ashley @ Global Warming Images

SPREAD THE WORD – PASS THE LINK TO THIS E-MAGAZINE TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NOT YET REALISED HOW MUCH POPULATION MATTERS

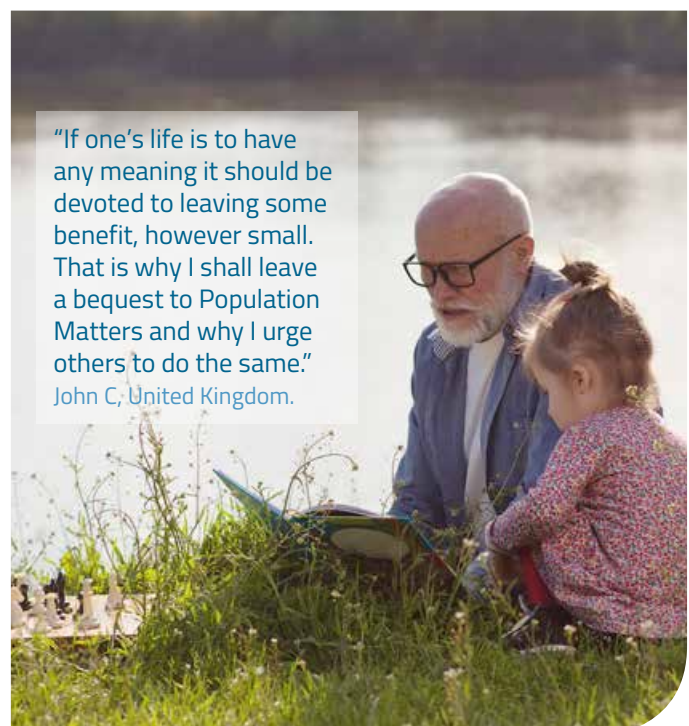
What sort of world do you want to hand on to the next generation?

A gift to Population Matters in your Will is the best way to ensure that your beliefs live on beyond your lifetime.

Legacies are becoming more and more important to the way we fund our work; playing a crucial role in reaching and influencing more families and policy makers. Whatever size gift you are able to leave will help our crucial work safeguarding the world’s natural environment for the benefit of future generations.

To find out how you can leave a pecuniary, residuary or specific gift in your Will, please visit populationmatters.org/donate-legacy where you will find sample wording or call us on +44 (0) 20 8123 9116

If you are planning to leave a gift in your Will to Population Matters please use the registered charity number 1114109 for Population Matters, the working name of Optimum Population Trust, and registered address 135 - 137 Station Road, London E4 6AG



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“If one’s life is to have any meaning it should be devoted to leaving some benefit, however small. That is why I shall leave a bequest to Population Matters and why I urge others to do the same.”
 John C; United Kingdom.

Alistair Currie interviews our
new patron Leilani Münter

Never underestimate a vegan hippie chick in a race car

US racing car driver Leilani Münter has become Population Matters' newest patron. Combining her career driving very fast cars with untiring environmental activism, Leilani is a passionate supporter of the population cause. Leilani has given us this exclusive interview, talking about her racing, her activism and her family. We're delighted to have her on board.

AC: Why do you think you care about the environment so much?

LM: I grew up with a love of nature and went on to earn a degree in biology specialising in ecology, behaviour and evolution. Our generation is facing the greatest problems our species has ever seen and the future of our planet, our species and all the species we share it with depends on us adapting and changing the way we live on this planet to a sustainable existence that does not destroy the world around us.

AC: What are the environmental problems we face that worry you the most?

LM: Human population worries me the most. Climate change, ocean acidification, species extinction, loss of biodiversity – all of these are due to human impact on the planet – overpopulation compounds every single one of them.

Technology can help us reduce our impact: electric cars, solar power, plant-based diets, green buildings, bring it all on! But if we do not address the main factor here – population – we are ignoring the root cause of all these other issues.

AC: How did you become a racing driver?

LM: While I was studying biology at the University of California in San Diego, I got into a race car and got hooked on the adrenaline. There's nothing quite like a pack of race cars going into a corner at 200 mph just inches from each other. The mental focus required is incredible.

AC: How do you combine activism with racing?

LM: I use my platform as a driver to encourage change as much as I can, I use my race cars as a 200mph billboard to promote shifts in our behaviour, to inspire race fans to rethink their day-to-day habits for our planet. I don't work with any companies that produce any sort of fossil fuels: no oil, no coal, no natural gas, no companies that produce any meat or dairy products, fur or leather, and no companies that test on animals.

My race cars have promoted a future with 100% renewable energy, solar power, wind power, recycled products, two award winning documentary films: The Cove and Blackfish, and last year and this year my race car is promoting the vegan lifestyle (a far more sustainable way to feed the planet) and we are giving away thousands of samples of vegan food to race fans.

I also have been adopting an acre of rainforest for every race I run in order to offset the carbon footprint of my race car. I do everything I can to reduce my footprint and lead by example: I drive my electric Tesla to all my races, my house and personal car are powered by the solar panels on the roof of my home, I am vegan, have a vegetable garden, a 550 gallon rainwater collection system, and most importantly, my husband and I are child-free.

AC: What triggered your interest in population?

LM: One day when I was studying at the University of California, my biochemistry professor told us to close our books and he showed our class a film about population. I remember being just devastated and walking across the



© Scott LePage

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college campus with him after class talking about it. That day I decided I was not having children and I have been quietly worried about human population ever since. Over the past few years I have become more and more vocal on population because I feel that it is one of the most important issues we face and it is not being talked about nearly enough. It's the big white elephant in the room and it's time to speak up and have those uncomfortable conversations.

AC: What do you think about having a family?

LM: I have chosen to not contribute to population growth and I am happily child-free. The only babies in our house have four legs. My husband and I had this discussion early on when we were dating. I wish more people would look at the bigger picture and make the same decision. It is simple math, it is not hard to understand: this is not sustainable. If we don't change our ways, humans are on a path to extinction.

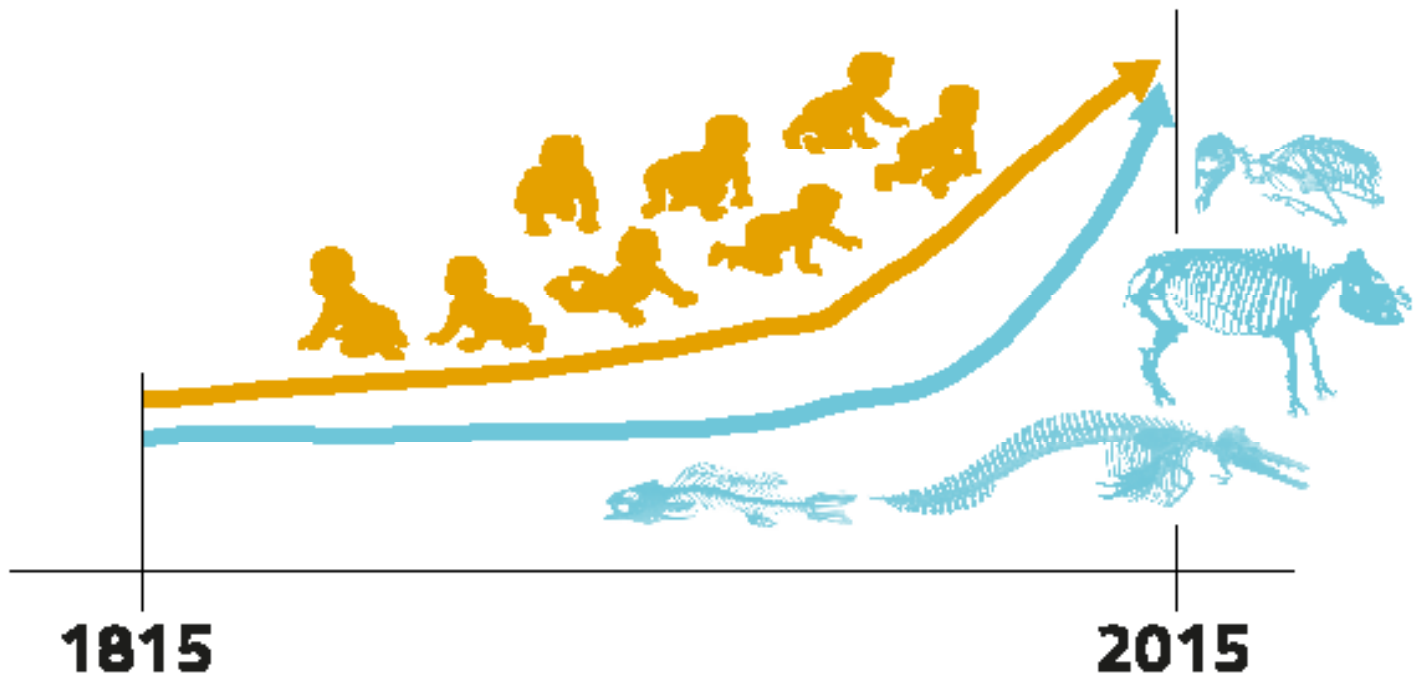
AC: Why have you become a patron of Population Matters?

LM: I am honoured to become a patron of Population Matters, they have been doing incredible work in this space since 1991. It is incredibly important to tell the population story and I look forward to working with the experts in this field to bring this story to the world. The ultimate intelligence of our species will be determined by whether we face our population issue and get it under control, or continue to sweep it under the rug because it's an uncomfortable conversation. The future of life on Earth depends on us doing the former.

AC: What did you think about the reaction to our announcement that you were becoming a patron?

LM: I was pleasantly surprised by the reaction to the press release. Media was genuinely interested in talking about the issue so I was very busy answering questions. I hope people were listening and I hope this critical discussion will continue.

You can find out more about [Leilani Münter](#) on her website and follow her on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)



**MORE THAN JUST
A COINCIDENCE?**

**SINCE 1800
THE RATE OF
SPECIES
EXTINCTIONS
HAS TRACKED
HUMAN
POPULATION
GROWTH**