



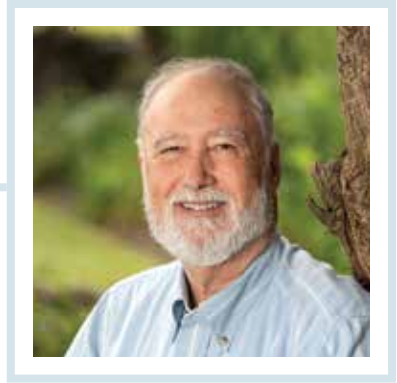
# POPULATION CONNECTION

Volume 55, Issue 4  
December 2023

**ARE MAINSTREAM WORLD  
POPULATION PROJECTIONS TOO  
OPTIMISTIC? ONE EXPERT SAYS *YES*.**

# President's Note

John Seager  
john@popconnect.org



Projections of slower U.S. population growth and an aging society provoke needless dire warnings. A recent *New York Times* article, “America’s Semiconductor Boom Faces a Challenge: Not Enough Workers,” cited a looming shortfall of nearly 400,000 engineers and skilled technicians.

One side effect of recent worker shortages has been higher wages in certain skill areas. To


There is still the question of where the U.S. is going to find skilled workers needed in tomorrow’s world. The answer: right here at home. We have 11 million children trapped in poverty, giving us the highest rate of child poverty of any developed nation—more than twice that of Canada.

Child poverty costs our economy more than \$1 trillion annually. According to the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis, that’s far more than the combined value of data processing, internet publishing, and the manufacturing of computers and electronics.

Children lifted out of poverty tend to gain the education that enables them to have decent economic lives. As adults, they themselves postpone childbearing and have far fewer children.

**A Legacy of Kindness:** My good friend and our former Board Chair John Lazarus always thought about the needs of others. The sadness of his death at 77 is leavened by memories of countless good deeds. John was truly generous with his time and resources from ZPG’s earliest days to the present, and did much to advance the cause of higher education and public libraries. His unfailingly good-natured devotion to family, friends, good causes, and his Australian Shepherds exemplified a life well lived.

my mind, this can be a good thing—though not everyone agrees. *The Wall Street Journal* recently quoted a leading construction executive bemoaning higher wages for carpenters. Near as I can tell, it isn’t carpenters who are landing their helicopters on megayachts. We’re not going to fall off some economic cliff by paying people an honest day’s wage for an honest day’s work.

A vicious cycle can be transformed into a virtuous cycle in our overcrowded world. We know what to do, so let’s stop gnashing our teeth. Instead, the U.S. can lead the way to a better, safer, less-crowded future for all Earth’s inhabitants. 

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## Feature

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### Demographic Delusions: Interview with Dr. Jane Nancy O'Sullivan

By Marian Starkey



**Cover image:** Nepalese customers visit the market in Kathmandu on October 14, 2023, to select gifts for family members for the upcoming Dashain festival. (Photo by Sanjit Pariyar/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

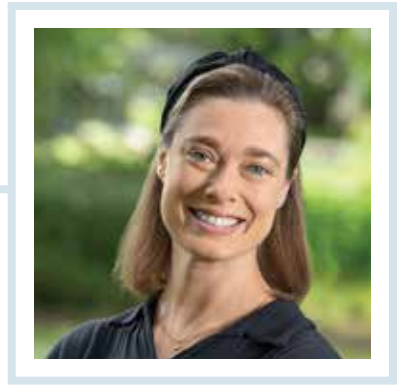
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# Editor's Note

Marian Starkey  
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Population projections and the assumptions demographers make in order to formulate them take center stage in this issue. Dr. Jane O'Sullivan, a researcher at the University of Queensland in Australia, generously participated in a lengthy interview with me about a paper she wrote critiquing the population projections the leading demography agencies calculate. She argues that the UN Population Division and other major demographic institutions far underestimate future family sizes in high-fertility countries and that the result is a consistent and predictable overshoot of each iteration of population projections. Her larger issue is with demographers' stubbornness in sticking with their assumptions about rapid fertility decline in the face of repeated rounds of evidence that it's not happening as quickly as they keep predicting that it will.

By coincidence, in October, the European Union published the results of a survey of demographers from around the world on the determinants and assumptions of population projections and on their levels of agreement with various policy statements related to fertility, mortality, migration, and population. We are sharing select data from the results of that survey in our Pop Facts infographic on page 6. (The full report is available for download at [popconnect.org/global-demography-expert-survey](https://popconnect.org/global-demography-expert-survey).)

The survey of 237 demographers found that there are two basic schools of thought around population policy. According to the authors of the study:

1. *Interventionists* believe that population policies centered around human-rights-based family planning programs should be more prominent and that population growth has serious and direct consequences for climate change and environmental sustainability.
2. *Abstentionists* are confident that economic development and rising education levels will autonomously lead to lower fertility rates. In her aforementioned paper, Dr. O'Sullivan makes a compelling case regarding the limitations of development and education in reducing birth rates, in the absence of robust family planning programs.

There is unequivocally no excuse for coercive, draconian, authoritarian population policies. We agree with Dr. O'Sullivan, however, that strong, well-funded voluntary family planning programs that focus on individual needs and preferences are critical to achieving population stabilization. 

If you'd prefer to read this magazine online, please visit our website at [popconnect.org/magazine](https://popconnect.org/magazine) to see archives from the past few years. The digital version contains links to sources and offers suggestions for further reading.

## Letters to the Editor

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I just got my fall issue of *Population Connection* magazine. On the cover, I'm offered the news that an aging population is a challenge, not a disaster after all, and I'm presented with the image of some bright, happy, aging people moving through a lush green landscape. We all want to read good, happy news, especially if it's about us.

This may be the gateway issue for those who are not already in stark overpopulation denial but simply have not been exposed to the facts. I bought 10 copies and am sending them to co-conspirators to enjoy and pass on. I'm encouraging these magazines to end their lives in public waiting rooms and laundry rooms, bus stations, libraries ... anywhere that idle eyes may be looking for distraction. Everything that needs to be said is presented within these pages.

I may have neglected to tell you before that I very much appreciate what you do.

Peter Wyble

Re: Your September Editor's Note, I not only want to raise my hand to register my sickness at reading "news" articles that claim economic devastation that the aging populations of high-income countries will inevitably bring, I am also taking you up on your offer to write a letter to the editor.

The people who make this bogus claim tend to be the same people who warn that the growth in robotics is going to limit the number of jobs for people. Yet somehow, they can't add two plus two to realize that as robotics grows and becomes more sophisticated, there will be increased help for the aging population. They also tend to be the same people who support the Global Gag Rule, reducing access to contraception in low-income countries, while at the same time screaming about the wave of "illegal" immigrants.

And thus, in 2023, we see the same corporate entities trying once again to raise the specter of fear of what will happen if we reduce population, when the real fear should be what will happen if we don't: depletion of natural resources, air and water pollution, super diseases, rising poverty, mass starvation, increased warfare. They should be learning as we have seen worldwide wildfires and super storms that there is no protection for them, not even in their gated mountain-top communities.

It may sound to some, reading this letter, that I am pessimistic. On the contrary, I am optimistic because it's the only way to be that carries any hope for positive change, and because when we look globally at how much positive change there has been worldwide despite all the corporate and autocratic opposition, it tells us we are capable of so much more if we just keep up the good fight.

Michael A. Kalm, MD

---

I read the September *Population Connection* magazine today and thought it was excellent. You and your team produce great material on population issues. From your opening President's Note to the article by Dean Baker to "In the News" to Brian Dixon's coverage of Capitol Hill, the magazine deserves a population Pulitzer.

Bill Ryerson, President and Founder of Population Media Center

I received so many emails about Dean Baker’s feature article, **“Aging Populations and Great Power Politics: The Problem Is for the Elites, Not the Masses,”** in the September issue of this magazine, that I decided to expand the Letters to the Editor section in this edition by two additional pages!

–Marian

I completely agree that overpopulation is a much larger problem than managing the economic transition necessitated by an aging population, but the latter transition poses difficult challenges for everyone, not just ‘elites.’

As countries age, either the elderly must live with less financial support, the subsidy from workers to retired people must increase, the retirement age must increase, retiree funding systems must incur debt, or some combination of these must occur. Thus, younger people must sacrifice by working longer, transferring more income to the elderly, or paying down previous generations’ debts.

Baker argues that productivity growth can solve these problems, but that is politically naïve and ignores the history of people expecting more goods and services as productivity increases.

Though these problems are not as existential as the consequences of exceeding the planet’s carrying capacity, they are near-term, tangible, serious problems whose solutions are politically challenging because they require sacrifices from voters. To imply they are just a problem for ‘elites’ is misleading and therefore unhelpful.

Peter Schulze

Dean Baker’s article in the September issue was a compelling rebuttal of those who argue that declining populations will result in fewer workers to support growing numbers of retirees. In particular, he emphasized that higher productivity resulting from technological advances would make for greater economic efficiencies, thus compensating for the reduced number of workers. But nowhere did he acknowledge the effects of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on future productivity, which will result not from workers, but from their displacement by AI’s technological advances. In short, AI, which is still in its infancy, must now be taken into account when calculating the effects of future demographic changes.

Howard Bluth

Thank you for exposing the old fallacy of “too few workers supporting the aging population.” Higher living standards and longer, healthier lives experienced in all other peer nations (including many with larger elderly-to-working-age populations than in the U.S.), are rarely, if ever, reported.

All nations providing basic health care, housing, transportation, and education not only avoid far higher public costs from unmet needs, they increase the broader population’s purchasing power, in turn, increasing demand for production and employment that reduces inflation—a prerequisite for prosperity.

George Clark

I agree strongly with the principal points in the article. I also believe that far from being a problem, a declining human population (negative population growth) is greatly to be desired. Although I believe this to be true, I realize that this is very unpopular. Difficult to go beyond what you stated in the article.

Dr. Robert Roynsford, Chief Economist, U.S. Dept of the Army (ret.)

The article “Aging Populations and Great Power Politics,” in the September issue, was great. One subject not included was the push by media, big business, and governments to increase the population because they feel they need more readers/watchers, consumers, and tax payers.

The Reagan philosophy of *more people, more money* is still alive and well in America and consequently in the world, with terrible, destructive consequences now being felt everywhere on our planet.

It’s really simple: more people + more waste + more pollution = extreme climate catastrophes.

Population, as Population Connection has tried its best to show, is obviously the elephant in the room, but no one wants to look at it, while it craps all over the place!

John Willett

Starting to read my print copy of your magazine, I was encouraged by your first few stories. But Dean Baker strikes me as another Gen X economist who seems to have missed the boat on Barry Commoner’s resource economics. Covid should have taught us that we can’t count on continuously increasing productivity. We’d do well to admit that Japan and other aging populations have complex economic burdens related to their demographics but are still far better off than if their populations had kept growing in an island nation and in a world of limited resources. If we are going to convince population stabilization skeptics, we should focus not on Baker’s questionable arguments but on living/reproducing in harmony with a finite Mother Earth.

Kim McCoy

I believe there is only one problem facing life on Earth today, and that is why I support you. It’s hard to see a light at the end of the tunnel sometimes, but it behooves us to keep on trying.

Gary Blidook

There are too many people on the planet!

We must have population reduction and then maintenance of a static population level from that point on—forever and beyond! While in the process of making that happen, we must protect and enhance the natural areas of our planet—on land and at sea. Once that’s in place, we can live in harmony with our natural environment while we continue to protect it as we enjoy it.

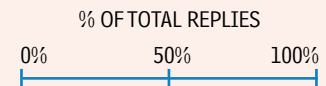
Bill Shiels

# RESULTS FROM A SURVEY OF GLOBAL DEMOGRAPHY EXPERTS

**EXCERPT OF PUBLICATION ABSTRACT:** Most national statistical offices regularly develop population projections. Additionally, some organizations implement population projections at the global level, employing a wide range of methods. In one way or another, these projections rely on expert opinions to come up with assumptions concerning future fertility, mortality, and migration, following various scenarios. These projections are used by different stakeholders, but it is often unclear what assumptions were made and how they were constructed. That is why IIASA and the United Nations Population Division, two of the world’s leading producers of population projections, have joined forces with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission to conduct a study on what experts think about the determinants and drivers of future population growth, by creating a survey addressed to them. In this report, we document the results of the online survey that was conducted in 2023. A total of 237 respondents, primarily members of the main demographic associations, shared their opinions on 240 arguments/statements related to future trends and drivers of fertility, mortality, immigration, and emigration, as well as on the policy consequences of key demographic megatrends.



## DEGREE OF AGREEMENT WITH POLICY STATEMENTS



\* International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994

Note: The text of the statements on these pages is taken from the survey verbatim. We didn't correct grammar because it is important to share the statements exactly as they were presented to the 237 demographers who took the survey.

Source: European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Icardi, R., Gailey, N., Goujon, A. (2023). Global demography expert survey on the drivers and consequences of demographic change, Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/139588>



**MESSAGE FROM JOHN SEAGER:** Population Connection relies on sound demography. So, we were very interested in an exhaustive survey of international demographers conducted earlier this year.

A substantial majority of respondents agreed on what is, for us, a self-evident proposition, namely that “Population growth is a problem for the environment.” There was also wide agreement on increased foreign aid for family planning. And it was heartening to see strong interest in revisiting the “Cairo consensus” asserted in the aftermath of a major 1994 conference that effectively banished concerns about population growth from international family planning program, policy, and funding conversations.

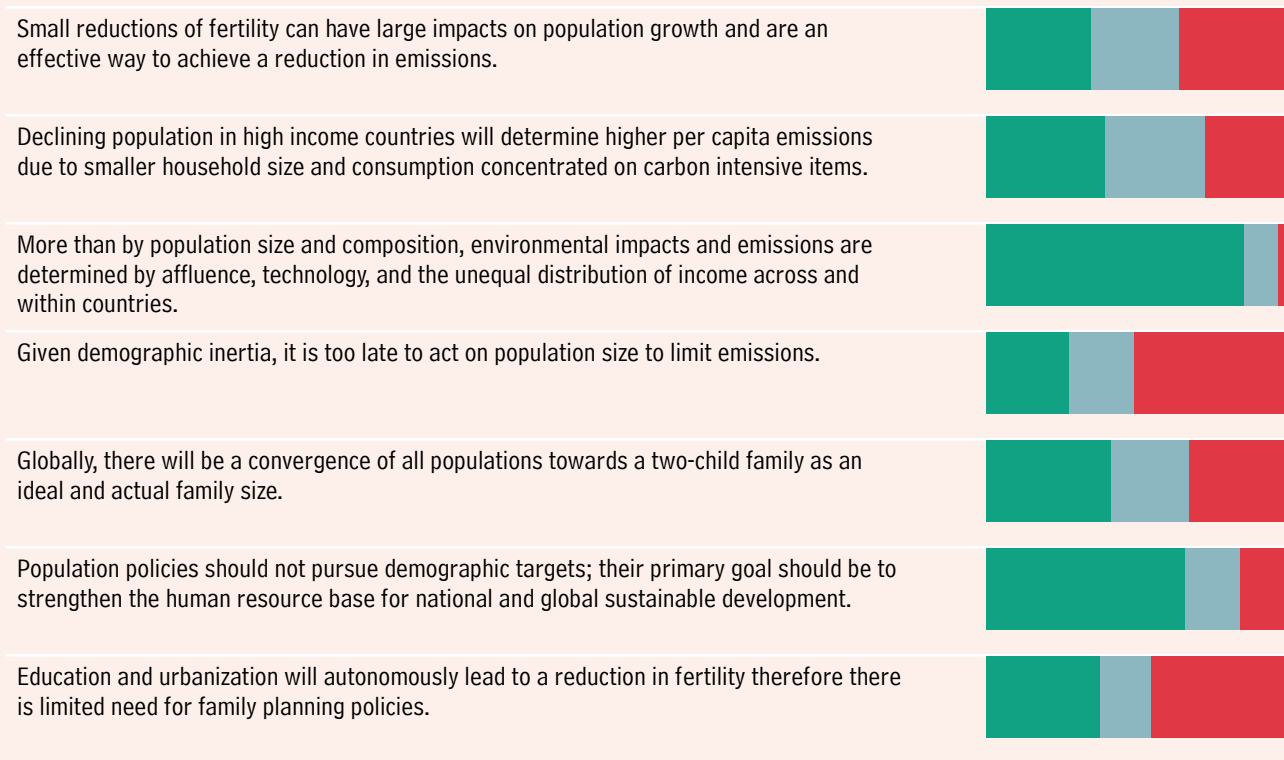
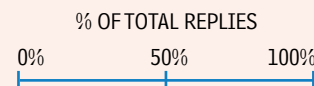
Mixed results on other questions may reflect the fact that they violated a basic rule of survey research. The Harvard Business School warns:

**WHEN A RESEARCHER OVERCOMPLICATES A QUESTION, IT CAN BECOME WHAT’S KNOWN AS A DOUBLE-BARRELED QUESTION, OR ONE THAT ASKS ABOUT MORE THAN ONE SUBJECT BUT REQUIRES A SINGLE ANSWER. SUCH QUESTIONS CAN CONFUSE THE READER AND GREATLY DIMINISH THE QUALITY OF THE DATA COLLECTED.**

We felt we’d be remiss not to share these survey results with our members. We recommend reviewing them with scrutiny—something the researchers could benefit from the next time they disseminate a survey.



### DEGREE OF AGREEMENT WITH POLICY STATEMENTS



Design by Mali Welch



# IN THE NEWS

By Olivia Nater, Communications Manager

## Breaking planetary boundaries

Two recent studies provide renewed warnings that the risk of triggering catastrophic tipping points is rapidly increasing due to humanity's failure to shrink our collective environmental footprint. The first paper, published in the journal *Science Advances*, is an update of the planetary boundaries framework developed in 2009 by scientists at the Stockholm Resilience Centre to quantify a "safe operating space" for humanity and provide a holistic picture of our impact on the environment. The new analysis revealed we've exceeded the safety threshold for six out of the nine planetary boundaries, including for climate change, biodiversity loss, and freshwater use.

The other study, published in *BioScience*, is an update of the 2019 "World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency," which called for urgent climate action and was endorsed by thousands of scientists. The 2023 report warns that we are now in "uncharted territory" because

world leaders have failed to take the required action, leading to new record extremes for the majority of "planetary vital signs," including human population size, greenhouse gas emissions, and sea level rise. The authors point out that global heating is "just one aspect of the escalating and interconnected environmental crisis" and call for "policies that target the underlying issues of ecological overshoot," including stabilizing and gradually decreasing population by removing barriers to voluntary family planning and girls' and women's education and rights.

## Elon Musk is funding 'population collapse' research

Elon Musk is known for frequently expressing his concern over the trend toward smaller families. An investigation by *Bloomberg* found that Musk donated \$10 million to the University of Texas at Austin for the development of the Population Wellbeing Initiative (PWI), which conducts research on future population scenarios. The head of PWI recently wrote an

op-ed for *The New York Times* that made it look like a drastic population decline due to low birth rates is imminent (it isn't). The article laments the "tens of billions of lives not lived over the next few centuries—many lives that could have been wonderful." Misleading stories on fertility and demographic trends are fueling harmful views and attitudes—far-right influencers and self-described eugenicists who want to increase birth rates are gathering in Austin this December for a "Natal Conference."

## U.S. abortions increased in the year post-Dobbs

A report by #WeCount, an initiative by the Society of Family Planning, found that the average number of monthly abortions rose in the year after the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, 2022. The ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* led to more than a dozen states banning the procedure in almost all circumstances. In the two months before Dobbs, the average monthly number of

abortions was 82,115, while in the 12 months after Dobbs, the average monthly number of abortions was 82,298. While the number of abortions in states with bans plummeted, this was more than made up for by the increase in states in which the procedure remains legal. The greatest increase was seen in states adjacent to those with bans, such as Illinois and Florida, due to patients traveling to their nearest legal options. The report also notes that increasing availability of telehealth services as well as abortion funds set up in response to the Roe reversal likely helped more women access the care they need. The data do not account for self-managed abortions outside the formal health care system.

### **Population growth to drive U.S. cities' future energy use**


Residential and commercial buildings are responsible for 39% of national energy consumption and 28% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Hotter days and larger populations are leading to increasing demand for air conditioning—a new study published in *Nature Communications* found that for each degree Celsius of climate warming, the total energy used

per square foot of building will increase on average by 14% for cooling, and decrease by 10% for heating. When averaged over all 277 urban areas considered in the study, climate change and power sector decarbonization are expected to lead to average net decreases in buildings' energy use, while projected population growth will lead to increases between 7% and 52%, depending on the warming scenario.

### **Most populous countries have worst air pollution**

A report by the University of Chicago found that particulate pollution (PM2.5) is shortening people's lives by an average of 2.3 years globally. India alone—now the world's most populous country—is responsible for around 59% of the global increase in air pollution since 2013. The six worst affected countries account for as much as three-quarters of the global health burden in terms of total life years lost. In descending order of pollution level, these are Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China, Nigeria, and Indonesia, which are all among the world's eight most populous nations. In Bangladesh, citizens are losing on average 6.8 years of life due to unhealthy air.

### **21 endangered U.S. species declared extinct**

In October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed 21 species previously found in the U.S. and its territories from the Endangered Species Act, after finding the available data indicate they are most likely extinct. The newly extinct species include a Guam bat, 10 birds (including eight from Hawaii), two fish (from Texas and Ohio), as well as nine southeastern mussels. The causes of these extinctions include habitat loss, overexploitation, invasive species, and pollution. Altogether, an estimated 650 U.S. species are thought to have been lost so far. 

Visit our blog to read more about some of these news items: [popconnect.org/blog](https://popconnect.org/blog)

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 Douglas Young  
 Robert Yount  
 Cheryl Zabinski  
 Marguerite Zabriskie  
 Lawrence Zimmer & Thaddeus Perzanowski  
 Lynn Zoch

## What Will Your Legacy Be?

If you aren't yet a member of the ZPG Society, have you considered becoming one? The simplest way for you to ensure that your dedication to Population Connection's mission continues well into the future is through a gift in your will. You can add just one sentence to make your wishes known!

### Sample Gift Language:

After fulfilling all other provisions, I give, devise, and bequeath \_\_\_% of the remainder of my estate [or \$\_\_\_ if a specific amount] to Population Connection (Tax ID #94-1703155), a charitable corporation currently located at 2120 L Street NW, Suite 500 Washington, DC 20037.

**For more information, contact Victoria Wright at [legacy@popconnect.org](mailto:legacy@popconnect.org) or (202) 974-7756.**

Everyone needs a will! We've partnered with FreeWill so that you can draft your will online at no cost, in just 20 minutes. Visit [freewill.com/populationconnection](http://freewill.com/populationconnection) today!



# ZPG SOCIETY MEMBER

## Dorothy Bradley

The ZPG Society is our recognition group for members who have made a gift in their will or trust, established a charitable gift annuity, or designated Population Connection as a beneficiary of their retirement fund or other financial account. Membership Relations Coordinator Stephanie Wolfe spoke with ZPG Society member Dorothy Bradley about her commitment to zero population growth. Lee S. Polansky, Senior Director of Executive Initiatives and Special Projects, edited the interview for publication. We are grateful to Dorothy and all our generous legacy donors!



Dorothy Bradley has been a role model for Montanans, and beyond, for most of her adult life. After growing up in Bozeman, she received a BA from Colorado College and a JD from American University. At the young age of 23, she campaigned as a Democrat for the Montana House of Representatives. She won the seat and served eight terms, from 1971–1979 and from 1985–1993. She was the lone woman serving in Montana's House of Representatives when she began her first term in 1971.



In 1992, Dorothy ran a competitive (and memorable) campaign for Governor, riding her horse across Montana. She narrowly lost and then briefly taught in a small school in

the Northern Cheyenne community of Ashland; worked in administrative positions dealing with water and criminal justice; and directed the University System Water Center at Montana State University for seven years.

Dorothy tells us how she first learned about population growth and its harmful effects:


When I was about 20, an article and a book landed in my lap that abruptly set me on a new life path. First, I read a 1959 article in *Science* magazine by my father, who was a scientist and who had calculated the global use of water and the world's population increase. He concluded that water scarcity would be the first and worst of this planet's natural resource shortages.

Paul and Anne Ehrlich's 1968 book *The Population Bomb* cemented her concerns. Dorothy was the organizer of Montana's very first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, and she has yet to stop her quest to save the environment. She recently edited a special issue of *Public Lands & Resources Law Review*, the University of Montana Law School



**“When I was about 20,  
an article and a book  
landed in my lap that  
abruptly set me on a  
new life path.”**

journal. The issue commemorates the 1960s and '70s, when Montanans, as one writer puts it, “came together to pass some of the strongest environmental and human rights laws in the nation.” Dorothy concurs, saying that the time was “an astonishing decade in Montana law-making” known as “the Glory Days, Golden Years, and the Earth Decade.” She remembers that era with pride, describing it as “the most visionary and policy-productive years of our lives. And we believed we would keep building upward.” She calls herself a warrior for the environment and says she was “on fire in those days.”

We’re awed by Dorothy’s life work and grateful for her generous support, as well as for including Population Connection in her will. In this way, she’s continuing her “devotion to public service and desire to leave the world a better place.” 



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Dorothy’s commitment to service inspires us here at Population Connection. We are grateful for her investment in our work over the long term by including a gift to Population Connection in her will. We’re proud to work together to foster the world of opportunity Dorothy envisions. If you’re interested in learning how you can include Population Connection in your estate plans, please contact us at [legacy@popconnect.org](mailto:legacy@popconnect.org). You may also go online to create your will for free, at [freewill.com/populationconnection](https://freewill.com/populationconnection).

# DEMOGRAPHIC DELUSIONS

## Interview with Dr. Jane Nancy O’Sullivan

By Marian Starkey, Vice President for Communications

“Population Change and Its Impact on the Environment, Society, and Economy” is the title of a recent special issue of the academic journal *World*, edited by Drs. Jane O’Sullivan and Céline Delacroix. The articles, by researchers from Australia, Canada, Europe, South Africa, and the United States, are open access, so anyone can read them without having a subscription to *World*. Population Connection members with an interest in demography and a curiosity about how population is discussed in scholarly settings can take a look at the special issue here: [popconnect.org/world-special-issue](http://popconnect.org/world-special-issue).

Dr. O’Sullivan co-wrote one of the papers, “Advancing the Welfare of People and the Planet with a Common Agenda for Reproductive Justice, Population, and the Environment,” with a former Chair of our Board of Directors, Dr. J. Joseph Speidel. She authored another paper on her own, “Demographic Delusions: World Population Growth Is Exceeding Most Projections and Jeopardizing Scenarios for Sustainable Futures,” questioning the assumptions the major demographic agencies and institutions make in their population projections. That paper is the subject of the following interview.

In her paper, Dr. O’Sullivan argues that the future fertility assumptions demographers have made in each new revision of the UN’s population projections over the past two decades have been unrealistically optimistic given recent trends in high-fertility countries. Demographers model future population growth assuming birth rates will decline in the remaining high-fertility countries the same way they did in countries that were early adopters of family planning decades ago. But with each new revision, the data show that this is not happening. And yet, UN demographers continue to make projections using the same optimistic assumptions. Dr. O’Sullivan rhetorically asks: “Is it reasonable to project the future to diverge so dramatically from the recent past?”



Dr. Jane O’Sullivan

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She argues that “model-forcing” has led demographers to underestimate future population size time and again, which Dr. O’Sullivan partially blames for the “population complacency” that prevents those in a position to effect change from making policy decisions that would voluntarily lower birth rates and thus slow population growth, speed economic development, and arrest environmental damage. She writes, “[Family planning] is no panacea for the environmental crises our crowded world now suffers, but it is an indispensable ingredient in any sustainable future.”

Please enjoy the interview, and visit [popconnect.org/article/demographic-delusions-jane-osullivan](https://popconnect.org/article/demographic-delusions-jane-osullivan) to see the digital version, which contains links to sources and suggested further reading. The endnotes on page 25 are mine, added for reader clarity. –Marian

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**You wrote about the difference between the UN Population Division’s 2000 population projection for 2022 and its 2022 population estimate in 2022. Relatively speaking, is an “excess population” of 253 million over 22 years so far off the original projection?**

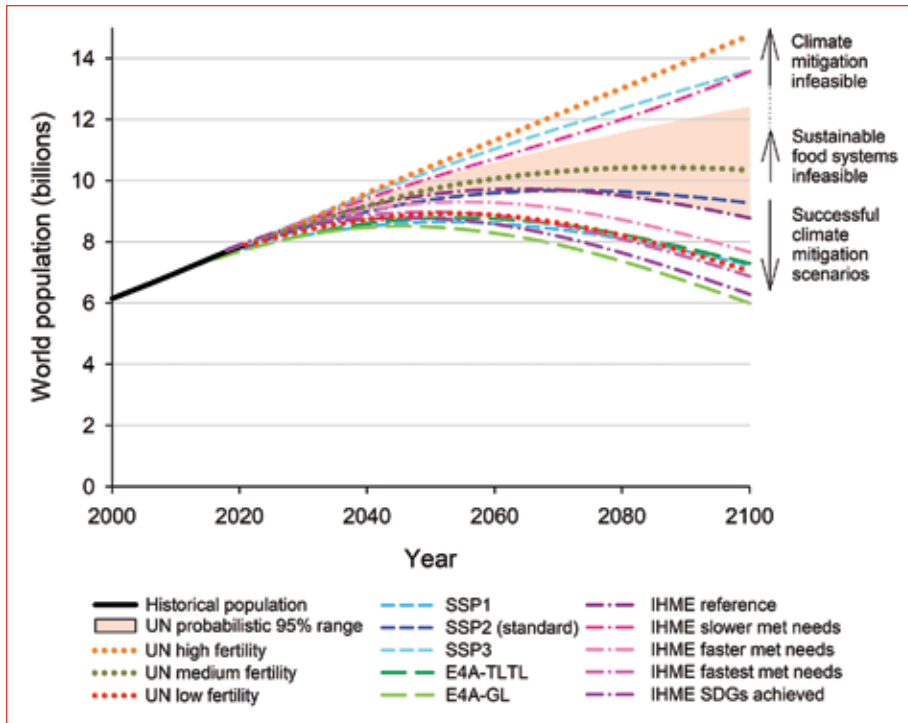
It’s about two-thirds of the difference between the 2000 Revision’s medium and high projections<sup>1</sup>. They didn’t publish probabilistic projections then, but it would be well above the range within the 95% confidence interval. It’s only 15% more than the total growth anticipated over those 22 years, but the projections diverge over time, so it represents a difference of several billion by the end of the century. So, yes, it is a considerable failure.

The bigger problem is that their consistent error has not led to a revision of the model calibration and has not led to any circumspection about how “successful” the post-Cairo<sup>2</sup> policy settings have been.

**Do you think the UN Population Division has an agenda it’s trying to support with its projections, or do you think demographers there truly believe that with each data revision we’re on the cusp of rapid fertility decline?**

I think the UN demographers are doing their best to produce accurate projections. I think they would see it as beyond their remit to explore what changes different interventions might cause, but the consequence is that they present projections as if they are purely a matter of chance and there is nothing we can do about it. I think the probabilistic projections probably further suppressed ideas about how future population could be influenced: The focus on chance to some extent displaced the focus on choices.

I can see how the rapid fertility transitions experienced by some countries in the 1970s and ’80s influenced the expected transitions in the remaining high-fertility countries. But it concerns



Projections of world population by the UN Population Division, the Wittgenstein Centre (SSP), the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), and Earth4All (E4A). See Dr. O’Sullivan’s paper for a description of the various projections in this figure.

me that they are not adjusting the model to reflect the much slower transitions that have been the norm over the post-Cairo period.

**Is it unreasonable to assume that high-fertility countries would experience rapid fertility decline if those countries and the donor community committed the amount of funding necessary to address all unmet need for family planning? In other words, if they experienced the “active family planning programs” that many countries in the 1970s to 1990s experienced? Or is lingering high fertility due to large family size preferences?**

The family planning programs in the 1970s did more than address access to contraception—they actively sought to reduce people’s family size preferences. They engaged in a wide range of messaging, from posters and radio announcements to in-home advice from health workers. It is politically correct these days to regard all such efforts to influence reproductive

choices as coercive, lumped together with forced sterilizations and abortions. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been guilty of gratuitously linking population concern with forced sterilizations. There is no other instance where giving people truthful advice about the impacts of their choices is regarded as unacceptable. Is it coercive to promote immunization programs, or to tell people that smoking can harm their health? There has always been a role for persuasion in public health campaigns, and persuasion is not coercion.

The reason small family promotion is necessary is that cultural norms are very sticky. It is true that most African women express a preference for large families, but within their culture, this is more about expectation and conformity than a considered choice. People need to be given license to question cultural norms, and moral support to resist them. Voluntary family planning programs have been very effective in shifting these norms. They might enlist religious leaders to endorse contraception, or radio dramas to show people



how characters just like themselves explore the issues and are empowered to change. When relieved of cultural pressures to marry early and produce children, and when permitted to pursue education and economic opportunities, most women do choose small families. But just providing access to contraception will not get them there.

**“People need to be given license to question cultural norms, and moral support to resist them. Voluntary family planning programs have been very effective in shifting these norms.”**

Some commentary suggests that Africa is unique in its resistance to fertility decline, but I am unconvinced that African countries wouldn't respond to proactive family planning efforts as well as other regions. There is certainly nothing to lose by trying. There are examples in Africa of rapid fertility changes, at the national or project level, in response to family planning interventions, but these efforts have not had the scale or duration to bring fertility down very far. Funding should not be a barrier—several studies have shown that family planning efforts save more money than they cost in unneeded health services for mothers and infants. It is a matter of political will.

**Like you, we have been frustrated by UNFPA's dismissal of population concerns and its celebration of the world reaching the 8 billion milestone, especially since supporting UNFPA is one of our legislative priorities. Do you know how much the UN agencies “talk” to each other? It seems odd that just about every UN agency besides the one founded to address population challenges regularly discusses how population growth drives or exacerbates various health, development, and environmental challenges.**

I really don't have much knowledge of the inner workings of the UN, beyond the accounts others have written. I know the Vatican has invested a lot of effort into countering the idea that population growth is bad for development, because this inconvenient fact places their ban on contraception in moral conflict. UNFPA is an obvious focus for them. The international women's health movement was very influential at ICPD in 1994, and has maintained its influence with the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action within the UN and family planning agencies. The origin of its bizarre conviction that all efforts to reduce birth rates were anti-women is a mystery to me, but smells like a well-seeded mythology. Institutional culture can be shifted over time by subtle influences over acceptable language and staff appointments.

## Demographic Delusions

**Are there other explanations for the values shift that occurred at ICPD, which led to today's "population complacency," besides China's one-child policy and India's sterilization campaigns of the 1970s? It doesn't make sense that warranted condemnation of these two coercive programs would be enough to dismiss an entire field of study and reject an entire suite of policy options when voluntary, rights-based programs were having such positive outcomes elsewhere.**

The only way it makes sense to me is as a deliberate campaign of misinformation. I'm not suggesting that everyone involved is insincere, but the whole discourse has been carefully groomed to undermine the support that was once so widespread for population stabilization. The incidents of human rights abuses in China and India have been used to tar the whole family planning movement with the same brush.

A number of groups with different agendas have contributed to it. Anti-Malthusianism<sup>3</sup> has always been a strong tenet for some leftists influenced by Karl Marx and Henry George<sup>4</sup>, but it equally suits global corporate elites who want ever more production and consumption to grow their enterprises, and ever more cheap labor to keep profit margins high. The leftists don't seem to have cottoned on to their strange bedfellows, and how they themselves contribute to inequality and corporate globalization by stifling discussion of population growth and its negative impacts.

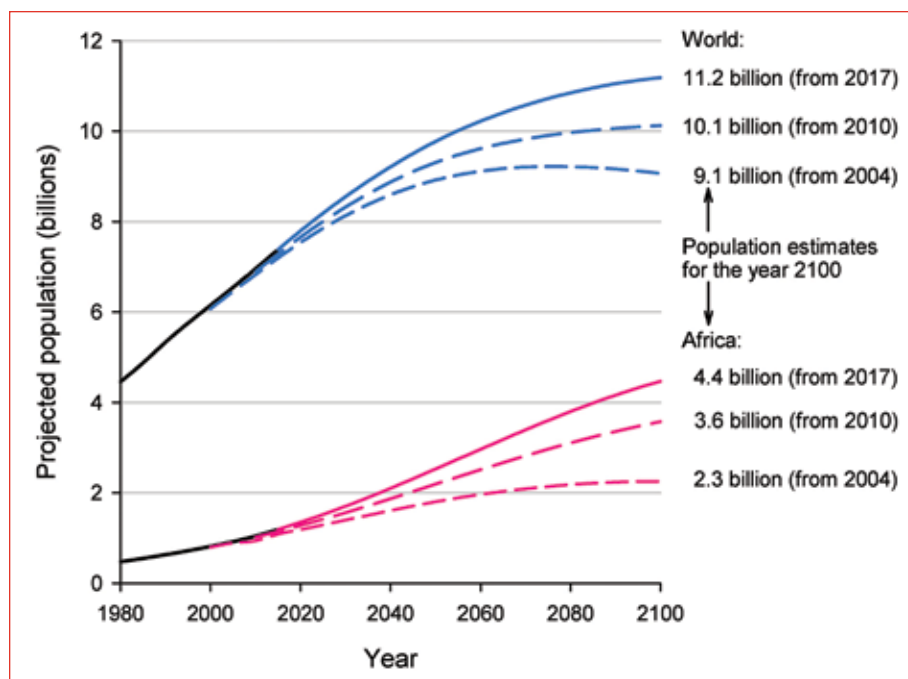
Developing country governments were initially skeptical also. There is always a tendency for political leaders to feel that their power is proportional to their country's population. When the UN started to engage with population

**"...the whole discourse has been carefully groomed to undermine the support that was once so widespread for population stabilization."**

stabilization back in the 1960s and early '70s, there was resistance from countries that suspected it was a Western agenda to prevent other races overpowering them. But this skepticism seemed to dissipate in the 1970s as countries started to realize that they really couldn't make economic headway against such high rates of population growth, and as the successes of voluntary family planning were becoming evident especially in East- and Southeast Asia.

That's when the misinformation started to emerge as a major influence. Through the Global Gag Rule, family planning was linked to abortion, despite contraception being the biggest preventer of abortions. UNFPA was accused of aiding and abetting China's human rights abuses, when all the evidence showed it was a moderating influence. The economic revisionism, which claimed population growth could be a boon for development, was led by Julian Simon<sup>5</sup>, who evidently received backing and promotion from the Catholic Church. And myths that family planning programs had had no influence on fertility, that population concern was "politically motivated" and proven wrong by the Green Revolution<sup>6</sup>, and that its proponents were linked to racism and eugenics<sup>7</sup>, all coalesced into a rewriting of history.

Population projections from the UN 2004, 2010, and 2017 Revisions, showing that the dramatic rise in expected world population since 2004 (blue lines) is mainly due to revised estimates for Africa (pink lines).

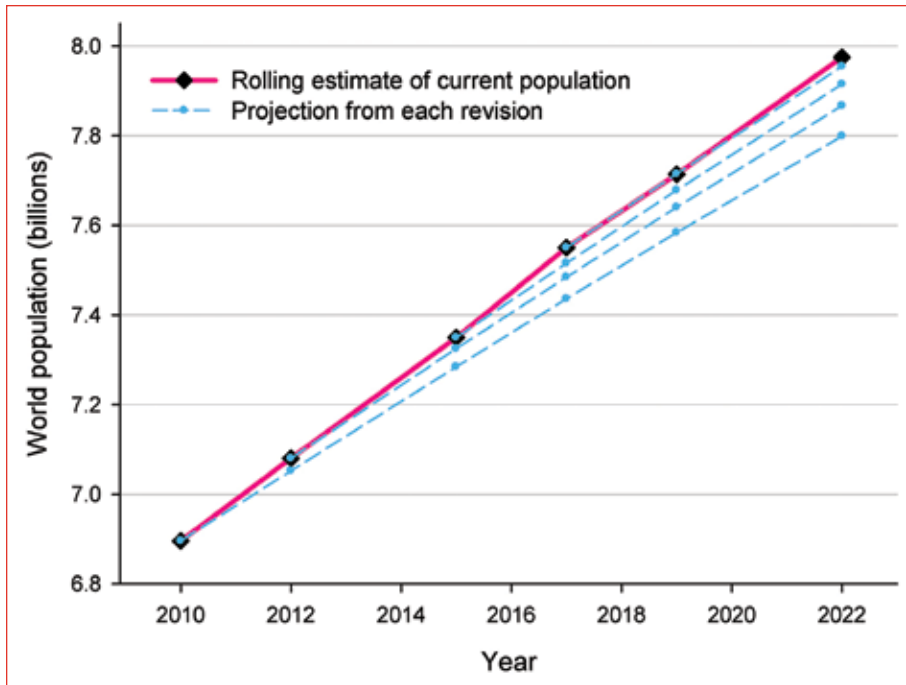


**In your research, have you encountered others who believe that ICPD had the inadvertent effect of diminishing the urgency around family planning programs and enthusiasm for financially supporting them? Has anyone in a position to affect funding levels been receptive to this consideration?**

It's an unfortunate fact that "women's reproductive health" does not attract the same level of political commitment as "rapid population growth will scupper economic development." There are plenty of people who commented at the time of ICPD that reducing the focus on population growth would reduce political commitment and funding for the services delivering women's reproductive health and rights. Stanley Johnson anticipated this in his 1995 book *The Politics of Population: Cairo 1994*. Steven Sinding<sup>8</sup> documented the decline in funding, as did the impressive inquiry report by the UK All-Parliamentary Committee on Population and Development in 2009. These

**"The leftists don't seem to have cottoned on to their strange bedfellows, and how they themselves contribute to inequality and corporate globalization by stifling discussion of population growth and its negative impacts."**

voices contributed to motivating the 2012 London Family Planning Summit, which was a very welcome and somewhat successful attempt to renew the funding. However, its implementation body, Family Planning 2020 (FP2020), only achieved half its goal by 2020, which, given population growth in the meantime, was not enough to diminish the number of women with unmet needs at all. FP2030 is continuing



The world population as it was estimated in each revision of the UN’s *World Population Prospects* from 2010 to 2022. The pink line connects each revision’s estimate of the current population. Blue dashed lines are the projected growths anticipated in each of those revisions, according to the medium fertility model.

the cause, but without recognizing the pivotal importance of fertility decline for development and security, it is just one of many pressing agendas in health portfolios. As Malcolm Potts<sup>9</sup> has commented, “The ultimate tragedy is that the idealism at Cairo has actually left women worse off.”

**One sentence in your paper really surprised me: “Little if any effect of education has been observed on desired family size.” Why do you suppose so much emphasis has been placed on female education as a way to reduce fertility if the evidence doesn’t show that it works (in the absence of strong family planning programs)?**

The relationship between education and fertility is complex. There seems to be wide consensus that more educated women are better able to avoid unwanted pregnancies, so they have fewer unwanted and mistimed children. There might

also be an effect of the job opportunities available to more educated women causing them to delay childbearing. But education *per se* doesn’t seem to change their desired family size, unless it includes learning about the benefits of smaller families and dispels negative misconceptions about modern contraception. The main point is that the difference between countries where fertility has declined rapidly and those where fertility declined slowly can’t be attributed to levels of education or efforts to improve education for girls. Those differences are overwhelmingly attributable to family planning program efforts.

I think the emphasis on girls’ education has been encouraged as a dismissal of the need for family planning promotion. It is part of building the myth that voluntary family planning programs didn’t work. That feeds into the myth that all the people who promoted such programs in the past had other, racist, or misanthropic motives—in UNFPA’s words, that they “prioritized population control without heed to people’s reproductive

aspirations, their health, or the health of their children”—and that they achieved nothing apart from human rights abuses. To quote UNFPA again, “[E]ngineering population numbers has not proven successful in the past. Rather, it only serves to undermine human rights, including reproductive rights...” These are gross misrepresentations, for which UNFPA has not been called to account because it controls the discourse. By holding this line, it has actually become a barrier to effective assistance for poor countries.

Of course, most of the people who believe, and repeat, that girls’ education is the key to population stabilization, don’t understand that they are harming people in high-fertility countries by undermining effective approaches to fertility reduction.

### **What does influence women’s desired family sizes? The presence of strong family planning programs alone?**

Culture is the biggest influence on desired family size. There doesn’t seem to be an innate instinct driving women or men to have many children, but they are strongly influenced by cultural norms. With the fall in infant mortality, those norms became maladaptive. Family planning promotion has been vital for overcoming cultural resistance and allowing people to embrace fertility choices as an empowering freedom.

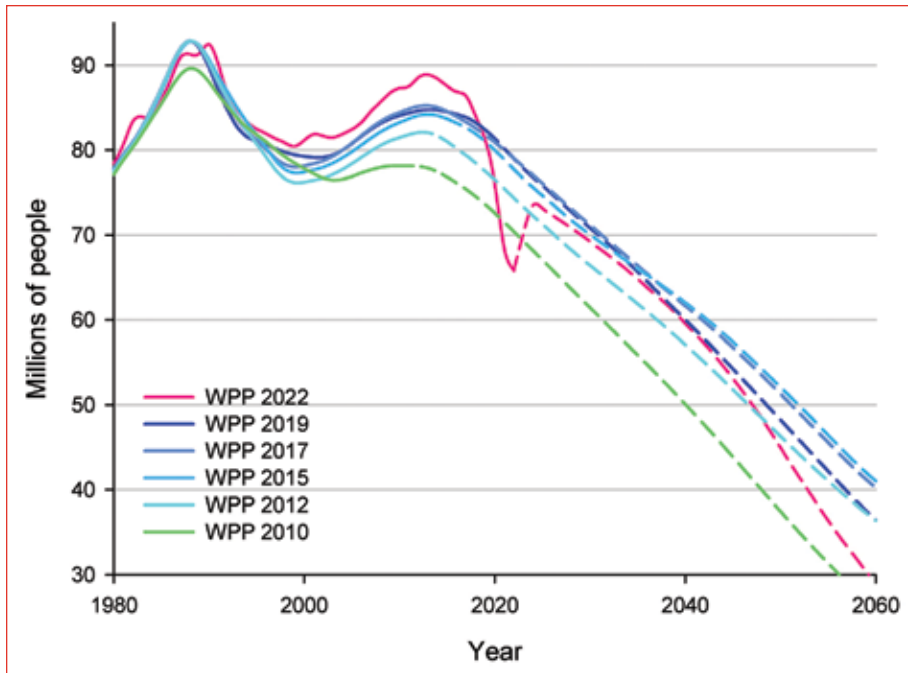
### **We were perplexed, as you were, by the Earth4All<sup>10</sup> projections, especially the researchers’ declaration that the planet could support billions more people if we all lived just above the poverty line. Why would that be anyone’s vision for the future?**

There are a lot of people motivated to play down the role of population growth in our global predicament, because they think it is a deliberate plot to blame the poor for the excesses of the rich. I suspect the Earth4All team is of this ilk. Their statements about population being unimportant and Earth being able to support billions more people don’t tally with their own results that show planetary boundaries for environmental impacts being exceeded even under their most optimistic scenarios.

### **Is there a similar Reproductive Justice movement in Australia to the one we have in the United States? If so, does it also denounce population concerns? (We are in complete support of the RJ agenda and work in coalition with many RJ groups. The one qualm we have with the movement is its patent dismissal of, and even hostility toward, any discussion around population challenges.)**

Australia does not have the same controversy over abortion as in the U.S. In the last few years, there has been a flurry of state law reforms to decriminalize abortion and make it more accessible. Members of Sustainable Population Australia campaigned alongside reproductive rights organizations like Children by Choice to get these laws passed, and we were welcomed in those campaigns. We do face hostility from many people in environment and social justice movements who think population stabilization is all about racism, xenophobia, and eugenics. For many of them, justice must be about bringing down the oppressors, so anyone who suggests that poverty and deprivation can be endogenously generated by population growth is a blasphemous apologist for corporate elites and neocolonialism.





The annual increment of growth in world population, estimated (solid lines) and projected (dashed lines) by each edition of UN *World Population Prospects* from 2010 to 2022.


I find it exasperating that they are unwittingly serving those corporate elites through this stance.

**Can you explain why there is such strong support for the narrative that slower population growth will damage economies when there's plenty of evidence to suggest that there are effective mitigating options and opportunities (working longer, automation and AI, eager would-be immigrants, etc.)?**

Follow the money. Big business makes a lot of money from population growth, even as it impoverishes the general public. A stable or shrinking population would have many economic advantages, with a tighter labor market starting to narrow the gap between rich and poor, infrastructure improving rather than struggling to keep up with growth, and good housing becoming more affordable. But it doesn't make big profits for capital. Demand for investment capital is lower, rents aren't constantly inflating, and fewer people are in debt and paying interest to the banks.

To my mind, the focus on age structure and dependency ratios has been a huge red herring. It emerged as a side effect of the 'demographic dividend' theory, that high-fertility countries were not held back by population growth *per se* but by low proportions of "working age" people. The popularity of that theory seems to stem from its ability to at least partially explain the conspicuous economic success of every developing country that reduced fertility, in stark contrast to the stagnation in those that didn't, without conceding that the "revisionists" were wrong and population growth impedes development after all. There is no real evidence that labor supply was or is an economic constraint in any high-fertility country. There is no evidence to date that labor supply is a constraint in any aging, low-fertility country. The constant cries of "labor shortages" have much more to do with profit margins getting tighter as energy prices climb, and cheaper labor being the obvious way out. But the countries that do have declining populations have seen greater workforce participation, lower unemployment, less income inequality, and greater productivity gains than similarly rich countries

with rapid population growth due to immigration. As countries age, the pension bill is likely to be a bigger part of national spending, but that will be offset by lower costs for infrastructure, education, law and order, unemployment benefits, and environmental remediation.

Perhaps we need another decade to see how countries with shrinking populations perform. Hopefully that will dispel the fears and highlight the many advantages. However, it is difficult to feel confident that we have another decade of otherwise normal economic circumstances, given the rapid escalation of environmental disasters and geopolitical frictions. I hope we haven't left our run too late. 

Dr. Jane O'Sullivan is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, an Executive Member of Sustainable Population Australia, and a Co-convenor of The Overpopulation Project. Trained as an agricultural scientist, she has led international research on tropical root crops in subsistence and semi-subsistence farming systems in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, before shifting her focus to the threats posed by population growth to food security, economic development, and ecological sustainability, and the effectiveness of measures available to limit population growth.

### Notes

1. The UN Population Division's medium population projection is the median of several thousand projections made using various fertility and mortality assumptions. The high projection assumes that the total fertility rate is 0.5 births higher than in the medium projection in each country throughout the projection period. For more details, see [population.un.org/wpp/DefinitionOfProjectionScenarios](https://population.un.org/wpp/DefinitionOfProjectionScenarios).
2. Cairo is shorthand for the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994. This conference was a watershed moment in the population movement; it's when the international agenda shifted from population stabilization via family planning programs to reproductive health, rights, and justice to the exclusion of population concerns. Although the Programme of Action that came out of the conference didn't explicitly condemn population efforts, UNFPA's subsequent interpretation of the conference's mandate has ensured that population has been a third rail topic ever since.
3. Thomas Robert Malthus wrote *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798, about his concern that population growth would outstrip growth in agricultural yields, leading to famine and mass starvation.
4. Henry George is the author of *Progress and Poverty*, published in 1879; he argued that people should only be taxed once, on the land they own.
5. Julian Simon was a business professor who disputed the unsustainability of population growth and won a wager against Paul Ehrlich about whether the price of certain goods would rise or fall between 1980 and 1990.
6. The Green Revolution saw the introduction of high-performing wheat, maize, and rice varieties in the 1960s and '70s, together with fertilizers and other technologies, which dramatically increased food security in developing countries.
7. Eugenics is the despicable, debunked theory that "desirable" human traits should be passed down through higher fertility of certain people and that less desirable traits should be stamped out by reducing/eliminating fertility of other people.
8. Steven Sinding is a former Director-General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation who has had a decades-long career in population programming, funding, advising, and university education.
9. Malcolm Potts is a human reproductive scientist and a professor of public health at the University of California, Berkeley.
10. Earth4All is a collaborative initiative by the Club of Rome, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, the Stockholm Resilience Centre, and the Norwegian Business School.

# WASHINGTON VIEW

## Culture Wars, Crises, and Chaos: The U.S. House Melts Down

By Brian Dixon, Senior Vice President for Governmental and Political Affairs

House Republicans have been using the Appropriations process—the annual moving of bills to fund all government programs and agencies—to promote their extreme ideological agenda. For example, on September 28, the House passed the 2024 State Department and Foreign Operations spending bill by a vote of 216–212. Not a single Democrat voted for the bill—a rare occurrence.

The reason is not hard to grasp. The bill slashes funding for international family planning programs by \$150 million, or 25%. It includes provisions to bar any support to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its work to expand access to contraceptives, family planning services, maternal health, and emergency care in 150 countries. It will—if signed into law—reimpose the Global Gag Rule. It also includes a host of other provisions attacking LGBTQ rights and racial and gender equity. The other spending

bills that came to the House floor are much the same.

None have any chance of becoming law because they can't pass the Senate and wouldn't get President Biden's signature. That's why it seemed that the federal government was sure to shut down on September 30. It didn't, only because on the day before time ran out, Congress passed a short-term bill to keep programs funded until November 17. The bill was brought up by then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA-20) with no aid for Ukraine—another demand by the far right wing of the Republican caucus in the House—and no time to read it or offer amendments.

Despite the opposition of the House Freedom Caucus—ironically named, given their opposition to reproductive freedom—the short-term bill passed. More Democrats voted for it than Republicans. Days later, several members of the Freedom Caucus introduced a resolution to “vacate the chair”

to remove the Speaker of the House from his position. The small group called for his removal because they claimed he worked with Democrats to pass the funding bill against their wishes. Democrats, on the other hand, were convinced that McCarthy was using the short-term bill to deflect blame for shutdown onto them. By eliminating funding for Ukraine, they believe, the bill was designed to cause them to vote against it en masse. When McCarthy went on TV the day after the vote and said Democrats were hoping for a shutdown, they saw their suspicions confirmed. The host of the show, though, called McCarthy out for this claim, pointing out that the Democrats were responsible for passing the bill to keep the government open.

In the end, McCarthy was dumped. That set off a three-week period when the House had no Speaker and no ability to legislate. First, the second ranking Republican,


Steve Scalise (R-LA-1), was nominated as the next Speaker. Scalise once compared himself favorably to David Duke, former Grand Wizard of the KKK. But he failed to gain the majority needed to be elected and withdrew. Then it was Jim Jordan (R-OH-4), the current chair of the House Judiciary Committee, who has been credibly accused of ignoring the sexual assault of student athletes while he was a wrestling coach at Ohio State University. He failed in three floor votes, losing by more each time.

After Jordan was removed as the party's nominee, they voted to support Tom Emmer (R-MN-6), who ranks third in House leadership. He withdrew only hours after his "victory," when it became clear that he too would fail to garner the needed 217 votes to be elected. After that, Republicans decided on someone nobody had ever heard of: Mike Johnson (R-LA-4). After 22 days, Johnson was elected with

the unanimous support of Republicans in the House.

The new Speaker is only in his fourth term in the House, and already his record is one of solid support for the most extreme positions. He once derided the *Roe v. Wade* decision, saying that federal entitlement programs were at risk because Americans hadn't churned out enough "able-bodied workers." He suggested, after the fall of Roe, that doctors who provide abortions should face at least 10 years of hard labor. He was

an architect of the strategy to block the certification of the Electoral College vote on January 6, and has promoted a white nationalist and evangelical agenda throughout his time in Washington.

Fully half the time available to pass long-term funding bills was spent by Republicans unable to even choose a Speaker of the House. That chaos threatens to create additional crises for the people who rely on family planning aid across the United States and around the world. 

***“Roe v. Wade gave constitutional cover to the elective killing of unborn children in America ... You think about the implications of that on the economy. We’re all struggling here to cover the bases of Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid and all the rest. If we had all those able-bodied workers in the economy, we wouldn’t be going upside-down and toppling over like this. ... Roe was a terrible corruption of America’s constitutional jurisprudence.”***

–House Speaker Mike Johnson

# FIELD + OUTREACH

## The #Fight4HER Is Back in Action!

By YoVanna Solomon, Senior Fellow

Right wing extremists continue to do their best to ensure that people in this country, and around the world, are denied access to reproductive health care. In 2022, the Supreme Court stripped Americans of their constitutional right to legal and safe abortion, when it overturned *Roe v. Wade*. This past summer, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill to cut investment in international family planning programs by \$150 million, ban aid to UNFPA, and reinstate the Global Gag Rule.

Although not in effect since President Biden lifted it at the beginning of his term, the threat of the Gag Rule's return looms over any foreign clinic that receives U.S. family planning assistance.

It's against this backdrop that we are reactivating our #Fight4HER campaign. To get things started, we hosted a virtual kickoff rally in October, where we were honored to be joined by several advocates from East Africa. The speakers

highlighted the real-life impacts of reproductive health and rights programs for people in their countries, and the pressing need for greater investment in them.

Leshan Kereto, Founder of Tareto Africa, a community-based organization that works with Maasai people in Kenya, highlighted choice as a fundamental component of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

William Johnson, Director of Awakening Horn for Inclusive Development in Tanzania, spoke about the need for consistent and reliable investment in international family planning. He said that the introduction of regressive U.S. policies has immediate effects on programming and services offered throughout the world, leaving girls and women without the support, information, and resources needed to ensure their reproductive health and rights. William says, "Giving women and girls a space to access sexual and reproductive health

services without coercion is a cornerstone in building stable, successful, and happy families and nations."

Esther Morris, Founder of Naweza Tena in Tanzania, stressed the dire effects of the Global Gag Rule for vulnerable populations with unique needs, such as sex workers and people struggling with drug addiction. When funding is withheld from the local organizations that serve these individuals, they are denied lifesaving resources like safe abortion, STI prevention, and overdose intervention. Esther says:

Every person, regardless of their circumstances, has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This includes the right to make decisions about their own bodies and reproductive health without discrimination. Protecting the sexual and reproductive health of drug addicts and sex workers upholds their human rights and dignity.



Doreen Nakibuule, Project Officer at Tunaweza Foundation in Uganda, shed light on how restrictive U.S. policies like the Global Gag Rule enable leaders in countries such as Uganda to more easily pass their own restrictive laws that reinforce stigma and discrimination around reproductive health services. Persons with disabilities are among those most directly impacted, as they often rely heavily on non-governmental organizations for information and resources to make informed choices about their bodies, families, and relationships.


Melvine Ouyo, Founder and Executive Director of Hope for Kenya Slum Adolescents Initiative and a Population Connection Board Member, emphasized the need for Congress to pass the Global HER Act to permanently repeal the Global Gag Rule, which would prevent teen pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal deaths.

Kyoma Macklean, Executive Director at The Alliance of Women Advocating for Change, discussed the vital importance of sexual and reproductive rights for female sex workers in Uganda. The ability to obtain comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care—including STI and HIV prevention, testing, and treatment; contraception and family planning services; and safe abortion—allows them to make their own best choices and maintain bodily autonomy and dignity. She says, “I call upon national and international development partners, including country governments, to increase funding for community-led health interventions.”

Our speakers’ passion and dedication lit up the Zoom room and allowed our audience to deeply understand what’s at stake for reproductive health and rights around the world. We are so grateful to each of them for their

**“Reproductive rights are human rights. Lack of access to reproductive rights is unjust, specifically to vulnerable women, girls, and other marginalized groups. Bodily autonomy equals empowerment.”**

—Melvine Ouyo

inspiring, invaluable work and for taking part in the rally. We look forward to collaborating with all of them throughout the next phase of our exciting #Fight4HER campaign! 

# POPULATION EDUCATION

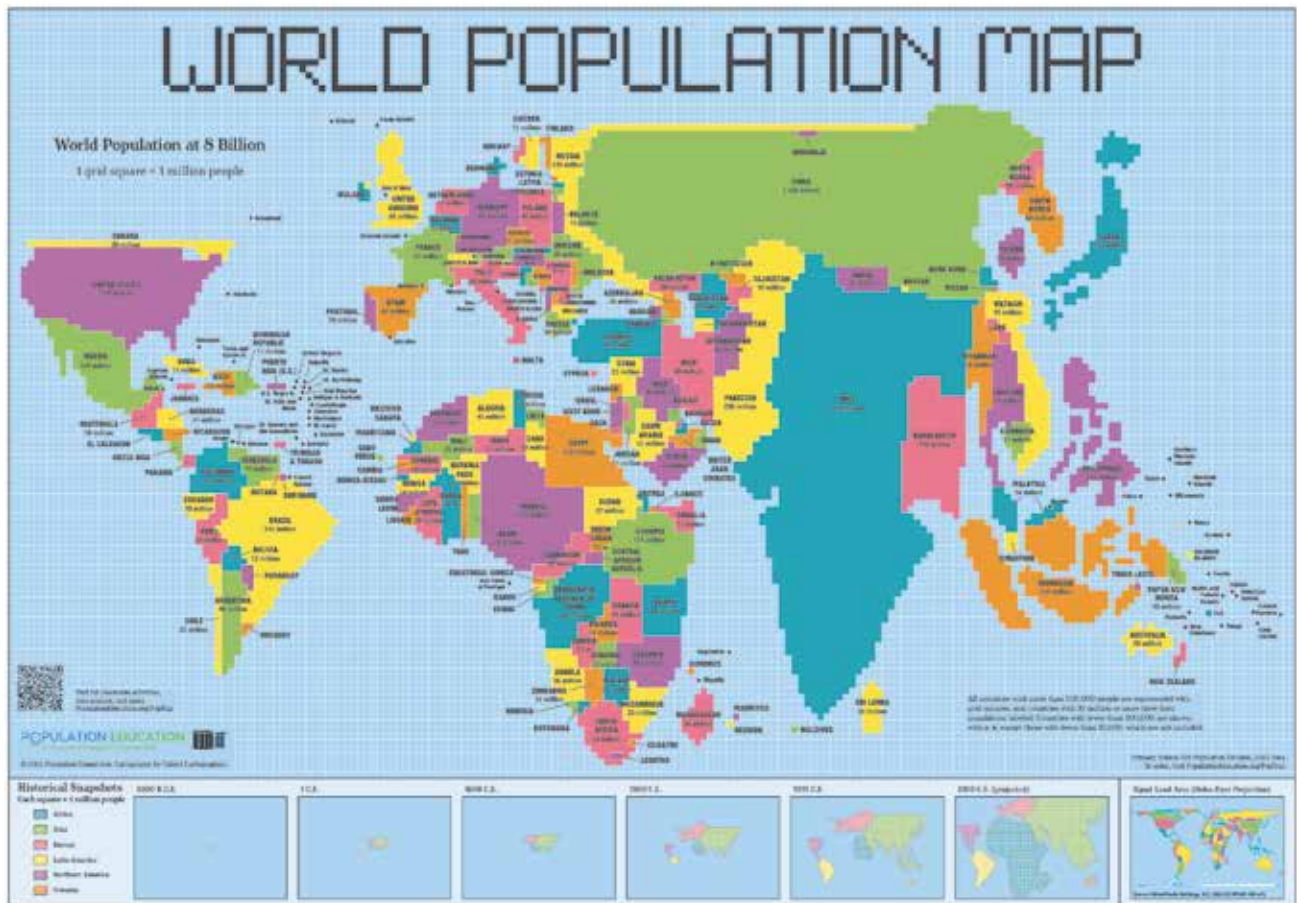
## New Interactive Poster Kits Just Released

By Pamela Wasserman, Senior Vice President for Education

This fall, PopEd published two new resources to grace classroom walls. Our updated **World Population Map** depicts countries by their population size, rather than by their land area. This new cartogram (below) represents the global population at 8 billion, using the latest data from the UN Population Division, with each colored square on the map grid representing one million people.

Classroom activities and an introductory reading help students understand this type of map and how it can be useful in interpreting population trends.

Also hot off the press is our double-sided poster, **A Quick Trip to 8 Billion**. One side (opposite page) is a timeline of milestones (events, movements, and inventions) that have influenced





global population trends over the past two centuries. These milestones are divided into five topic categories: people and society, food and agriculture, health and wellness, science and technology, and the environment. These are the same categories featured on the interactive timeline at [WorldPopulationHistory.org](https://www.worldpopulationhistory.org), where teachers can find a PDF of the poster and accompanying teaching resources.

The other side of the poster (inset above) has 20+ infographics showing recent trends in population, urbanization, migration, deforestation, biodiversity, carbon emissions, child and maternal mortality, and more. Some of these graphics are a snapshot in time, like how many people live in water-stressed conditions today. Others compare

trends when we were at 4 billion people (in 1974) to today's 8 billion people. While these graphics indicate much progress has been made in human well-being over the past half-century, they also illustrate newer challenges that threaten our health and environment.

There are new activities to help students explore all of the information on this poster, in addition to QR codes that take them to a page on our website describing ways to make a difference on many of the challenges that the poster highlights. Folded versions of both posters are distributed free in many of our teacher workshops. They are also available in different formats through our PopEd store ([populationeducation.org/store](https://populationeducation.org/store)).



# VIRTUAL EVENTS

## A Year of Global Partners

By Natalie Widel, Director of Digital Marketing

Population Connection is proud to partner with a growing number of small, community-based organizations working to increase access to public health and family planning services, remove barriers to girls' education, and conserve wildlife and its habitats.

These small nonprofits offer programs and services to their local communities, contributing to our mission of stabilizing global population. Last year, we ramped up this program, investing in 19 organizations in developing countries ranging from Nepal to Venezuela. Our partnerships with them allow us to raise their profiles, share their stories, and give you on-the-ground insights into challenges related to population growth around the world.

Throughout the year, we celebrated our Global Partners through well-attended virtual events. We featured nine partners this year, culminating with a presentation from Guatemala-based Seeds for a Future.




A family works together to start their nutrition garden. (Photo courtesy of Seeds for a Future)

In her presentation, Director of Operations Daillen Culver highlighted the significance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life and how Seeds for a Future is helping families optimize nutrition and become more food secure during this critical period. Since Seeds for a Future was founded in 2007, it has served over 2,100 families!

Find a recording of this and other virtual events at [popconnect.org/virtual-events/global-partners-series](https://popconnect.org/virtual-events/global-partners-series).

### **\$250,000 Match for Global Partners**

If you'd like to contribute toward our Global Partners

program, your gift will be **DOUBLED** by a generous fellow supporter, now through December 31! This campaign will match up to \$250,000 in gifts, allowing Population Connection to grant a transformative level of support to Global Partners working to provide reproductive health care, primary and secondary education, and wildlife protection. Contributions to this special campaign have a direct impact on local communities, truly representing the "final step" in our shared work to make the world a more just and sustainable place. 

We are honored to include Joyanne Bloom in our ZPG Society. In addition to her yearly support, she established a charitable gift annuity with Population Connection.

**“It’s a win-win. I can feel good about donating, and I’m also receiving quarterly checks, which is nice.”**

Joyanne will continue to receive payments for life.



## HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?

**You can make a difference with a legacy gift to Population Connection. By including a gift in your will or estate plans, you can help achieve global population stabilization—and leave a lasting testament that honors your commitment to a sustainable future for our entire planet.**

**You may wish to consider a gift to Population Connection through your:**

Will or living trust

Life insurance or retirement plans

Bank or investment accounts

**Contact us today** for more information about creating your legacy with Population Connection through a gift in your will or other estate plan. You can help sustain our education and advocacy efforts for years to come.

Victoria Wright  
Director of Planned Giving  
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# GLOBAL PARTNERS

## Nasaruni Academy for Maasai Girls

By Lee S. Polansky, Senior Director of Executive Initiatives and Special Projects

Population Connection supports Nasaruni Academy in Kenya, helping to provide educational scholarships for students and job training for local women. We know that having an education helps girls and women live empowered lives, which enables them to have smaller families and better provide for each of their children.

Nasaruni Academy for Maasai Girls is located in Narok County, Kenya. Founded in 2013 by Maasai educator **Alice Sayo** and her husband, Moses, the boarding school is popular, with girls clamoring for an education there.

What makes Nasaruni so special? We decided to find out by going to the source, the students themselves. The three students profiled below are all from Kajiado County, which borders Narok County to the east. By way of background, according to Kenya's Centre for the Study of Adolescence, 7 in 10 primary school-aged children in Kajiado County are enrolled in primary school, while only a quarter

of adolescents are enrolled in secondary school. Narok and Kajiado Counties have two of the highest percentages in the country of teens who have ever been pregnant, at 28% and 22%, respectively.

*Note: Some of the girls' quotes have been lightly edited for clarity, and their names have been changed to protect their privacy.*

Let's first hear from **Karen**, who is 16 and describes her home village as "the remotest part of Kajiado." According to Karen, the inhabitants are "typical Maasai" and "mostly traditional." Karen's mother had nine children; including those of her father's other

wives, there were 18 children in all. Karen explains that her mother's firstborn was a girl, who never attended school, married "so very young," and had four children. Several of Karen's other siblings have been afforded an education, however, and two of them are even in college.


Karen tells us, "I am in my first year at Nasaruni. I love classes and learn many things at this school." Karen's favorite subject is biology; after college, she'd like to be a doctor or a biology teacher.

Next up is **Grace**, also 16, who is one of eight children. Grace says she loves the classes, the church fellowship, and the clubs at Nasaruni. She especially enjoys geography, "because I want to know more about the Earth." Grace hopes to attend college, adding, "When I grow up, I would like to be a geography teacher."

**Namnyak** is 15 and has two brothers and seven sisters. While her brothers were educated, she says, "my father

didn't want to educate his girl children," so three of Namnyak's older sisters "got married earlier." Namnyak learned about Nasaruni from her friend, who is a student there and told her that it is "the best school." Later in life, Namnyak's father softened his views and agreed that she and some of her younger sisters could attend school.

Namnyak is painfully honest about her family's status, saying, "I come from a very humble background. My father has two wives. We live a very low living standard. There is not even enough food. We are known in the village as a poorer family." Namnyak explains that her father used to have 10 sheep and two cows and that he sold all of them in order to send her to secondary school.

Namnyak clearly loves school, telling us, "I like being at Nasaruni because of the good teachers and good environment. At Nasaruni, there are the best teachers, who are caring and loving. They also teach well and provide quality education." Namnyak's favorite classes are math, history, and computer, because they are her best subjects. "I usually score good grades." 

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Learn more about Nasaruni Academy at [popconnect.org/learn/international-partnerships/nasaruni-academy](https://popconnect.org/learn/international-partnerships/nasaruni-academy).



Above: Nasaruni Academy students with Founder Alice Sayo  
Below: High school students dressed for a dance performance  
(Photos courtesy of Nasaruni Academy)



## EDITORIAL EXCERPTS

### Los Angeles Times

The Mexican Supreme Court of Justice decision decriminalizing abortion last week is a landmark ruling in a country that has historically outlawed the procedure with harsh penalties for the women who sought it and the health care professionals who provided it. ...

Yet, as Mexico and other Latin American countries demonstrate remarkable progress toward protecting the right to bodily autonomy, the U.S. is going backward. Our Supreme Court undid protections for abortion last year when it overturned *Roe v. Wade*. And now a growing number of states are working to erode protections of individual rights as their legislators search for more harrowing and surreal ways to criminalize abortions. So much for the USA being a beacon of freedom. In Texas, where abortion is illegal unless the pregnant person's life is in danger, a number of cities are considering "trafficking" laws to make it a crime to help a pregnant person travel on roads in that city to get an abortion in another state (like neighboring New Mexico, where abortion is still allowed). Just as the infamous Texas Senate Bill 8 allowed a private citizen to sue someone suspected of having helped a person get an abortion past about six weeks of pregnancy (before *Roe v. Wade* was overturned), a private citizen would have the right to sue someone they suspected of helping a person travel on Texas roads and highways out of town for an abortion. ...

It's heartening to witness the progress Mexico has made in restoring rights—and it's maddening to see the destruction of those rights continue in the U.S.

—September 10, 2023

### SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

A near-total ban on abortion evidently is not enough for some Texans obsessed with halting all such procedures anywhere, for nearly any reason.

Now, the zealots are attempting to limit the freedom of women to leave the state and travel elsewhere to seek an abortion.

This attack on freedom of movement is in its early stages, focusing on prohibiting individuals from driving on local roads in search of an abortion. As the only state bordering Texas where abortion is legal, travel to New Mexico is a clear focus of such ordinances, with routes that lead to New Mexico targeted. ...

Freedom of movement is a fundamental American value. It is protected by the U.S. Constitution. Curtailing interstate travel is so contrary to our history that even conservative pro-life officials are hesitating. ...

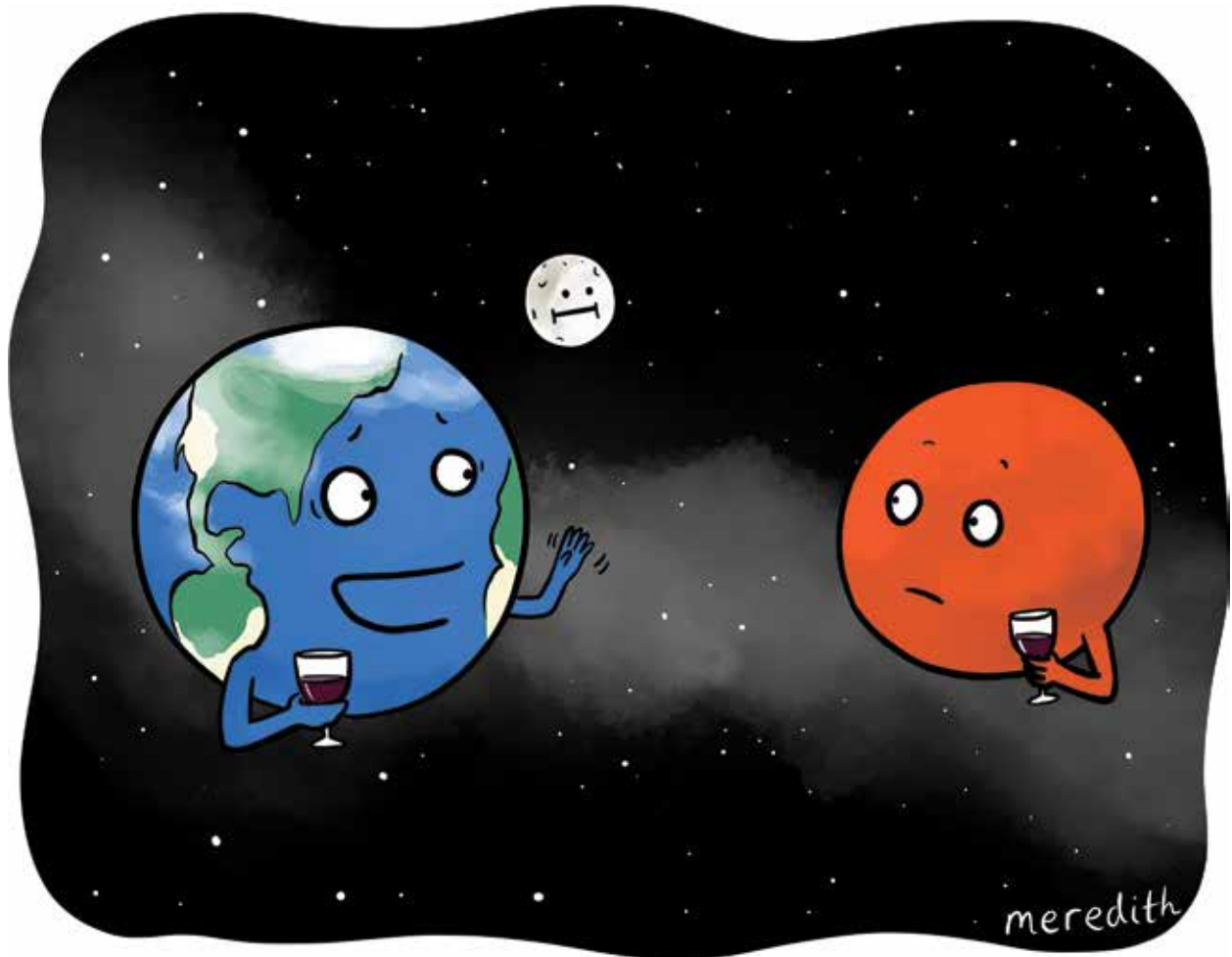
Already having lost the freedom to make choices about whether to give birth, the women of Texas now face losing the freedom to move about without being questioned.

Stay alert....

The anti-abortion movement is advancing. Oh, for pro-life activists who would turn from a focus on outlawing abortion to helping women prevent unwanted pregnancies. In this better world, they would work with abortion rights supporters to make reality what should be a common goal—ensuring that every baby is loved, wanted, and welcome.

—September 5, 2023

## CARTOON



*“Nice to meet you! Hey, you wouldn’t happen to have room for about eight billion largish, talking mammals, would you?”*

Cartoon by Meredith Southard, Courtesy of CartoonStock.com





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- Designate Population Connection as the beneficiary of your retirement plan.
- Establish a charitable gift annuity to receive payments for life that will never change, no matter how long you live or whether the stock market fluctuates.



Our invaluable members enable Population Connection to provide life-changing support to our Global Partners. This photo shows some of the women who benefit from Women for Conservation, our Global Partner in rural Colombia.

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