

Population Growth, the Economy, and the Environment

Rapid population growth rates can make it difficult for countries to raise standards of living and protect the environment because the more people there are, the greater the need for food, health care, education, houses, land, jobs, and energy. Adding more be distributed among more people, causing [GNP per capita](#) to decrease at least in the short term.

Responding to the needs of a rapidly growing population can challenge

basis. For example, people may not be able to get [access to safe water](#) because more and more households, farms and factories are using increasing amounts of water. [Deforestation](#) may occur as trees are cut to provide fuel for cooking, building materials, or land for grazing and agriculture. [Desertification](#) may occur as land that has been intensively farmed becomes depleted of its nutrients or eroded when trees whose roots systems once anchored the soil are gone. The air may become polluted as people crowd into cities, the number of cars increases, people use more and more energy, and economies continue to industrialize.



Strategies for change: Affecting population growth rates

Parents tend to have larger families when they fear that many of their babies may die, when they need laborers to work on the family farm or business, when they want to ensure that they themselves will be cared for in their old age, and when they lack access to education and to family planning if they want it.

Experience shows that three of the most successful strategies to reduce fertility rates are to ensure that people 1) have greater access to primary health care and family planning services, 2) receive a basic education, especially girls and women, and 3) have government services that help protect them when they are sick, old or unemployed.

Population Growth Rate Highlights

- Population growth rates are much higher in most [low-](#) and [middle-income countries](#) than in most [high-income countries](#).
- Population growth rates have declined in low- and middle-income countries over the past few decades but remain high because [birth rates](#) have not fallen as rapidly as [death rates](#).
- There will be more than 1 billion more people in the world in 2015 than there were in 2000 (as population grows from 6 billion to 7.1 billion), and six out of seven of these people will live in low- and middle-income countries.
- Although the population growth *rate* for developing countries has been *decreasing* for several decades, the *number* of people added to the population each year has been *increasing* because the population base has become larger.
- Countries that have a large proportion of their population in their childbearing years often experience [population momentum](#). Even if couples have only enough children to replace themselves when they die, the population will continue to grow and will not stabilize until the younger group ages beyond their childbearing years.
- Birth rates tend to fall when parents have access to family planning, health care, education and jobs.
- Population growth can make it more difficult to raise standards of living in some countries and can put pressure on the environment.
- Two of the most successful strategies for reducing [fertility rates](#) are providing greater access to primary health care and promoting education for girls and women.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Instructions: Read the paragraphs on the previous page in order to answer the following questions. Be sure to use complete sentences.

1. What effect does increasing population have on the GNP per capita?

2. How might a growing population limit access to safe water?

3. What connection might there be between population growth and deforestation?

4. What other harmful effects might increasing population have on the environment?

5. What social strategies might help countries limit population growth?