



## Abstract

### The Great multiplier

Although affluence and consumption may have a greater impact on the climate than population growth, there is no affluence and consumption without people. Population growth leads to increased economic activity, and as more and more people escape from poverty, they will consume more.

A simple calculation shows that consumption and population numbers are no separated issues. Both have impact on the earth's resources. Consuming less in rich countries isn't much effective on a world scale. A fairer distribution would lead to 70% increase of consumption – and pollution - in an already overburdened world.

But is it our number or our behaviour that causes this overshoot? Should we reduce our population size or diminish our consumption? Or both? New research has given an answer to this question. Given the universal right of a person to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, such a standard must be set. Tamburino and Bravo took a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.7 as a minimum level of welfare. Near this cut-off score we find countries such as Egypt, Indonesia and Vietnam. An HDI of 0.7 can be seen as quite a modest standard of living, at least in Western eyes.

In order to make this HDI possible for everybody, the average person must be allowed a specific ecological footprint. The correlated footprint is 2.14 global hectare per person. However, the bad news is that even in a world where it is possible for everybody to have an adequate standard of living, the actual population would still exceed the carrying capacity of the planet. There is a category of countries not able to restore their 'ecobalance'. Even if they would adjust to an HDI of 0.7 and the associated footprint, they still would exceed their ecological boundaries with their present population. Examples are: most countries in Africa, the entire Middle-East, Pakistan, India, China and the Caribbean. But also the UK, Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Italy and Greece. They would still accommodate too many people to achieve that goal. Eventually there are two complementary possibilities to create ecological balance: either a strong reduction of production, consumption and pollution or a substantial population decline. Three possibilities to restore a country's ecobalance are introduced: full national responsibility supported by the UN, no (labour) migration and economic degrowth.

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Organisations in several European countries [listed below] concerned about the impact humans have on environment, biodiversity and nature founded the [European Alliance for a Sustainable Population](#) (eurASP). This new alliance has the intention to make European policy makers, the scientific community and the general public aware of the problems caused by population pressure on the basis of scientific evidence.

Members of [eurASP](#) are:

[MinderMensen](#), Belgium

[Démographie Responsable](#), France

[Prosperity through Sustainable Population - deutsch](#), Germany

[BOCS](#), Hungary

[OverBevolking](#), The Netherlands

[Nätverket Population Matters Sweden](#), Sweden

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