



GAPMINDER ANSWER 1

— How Did the World Population Change Historically?

Short answer — First slowly. Then fast.

www.gapminder.org/answers

World population in year -8000

By the time agriculture was invented the total number of people on earth was just like one of the big cities today: Bangkok, London or Rio de Janeiro.



10 million



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year

0

World population
increased slowly.
By the year 0 it was
like Indonesia
today.



250 million



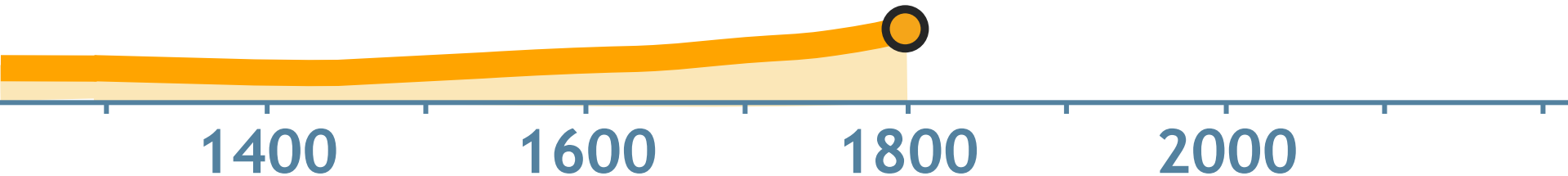
Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year 1800

It took about 7 million years for the human population to reach 1 billion. Then something happened.



1 billion



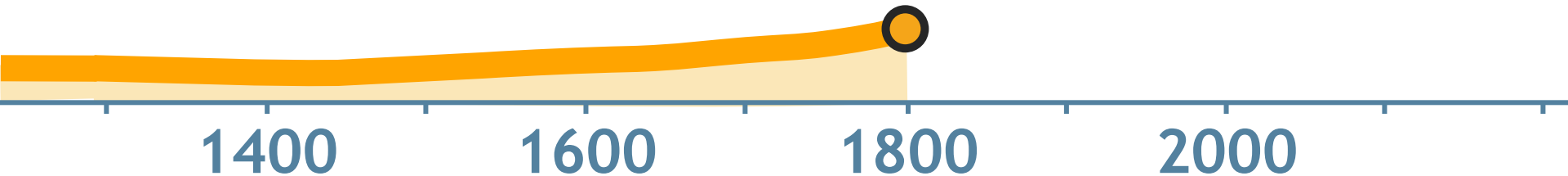
Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year 1800

The industrial revolution changed the world. More and more children started surviving to become parents.

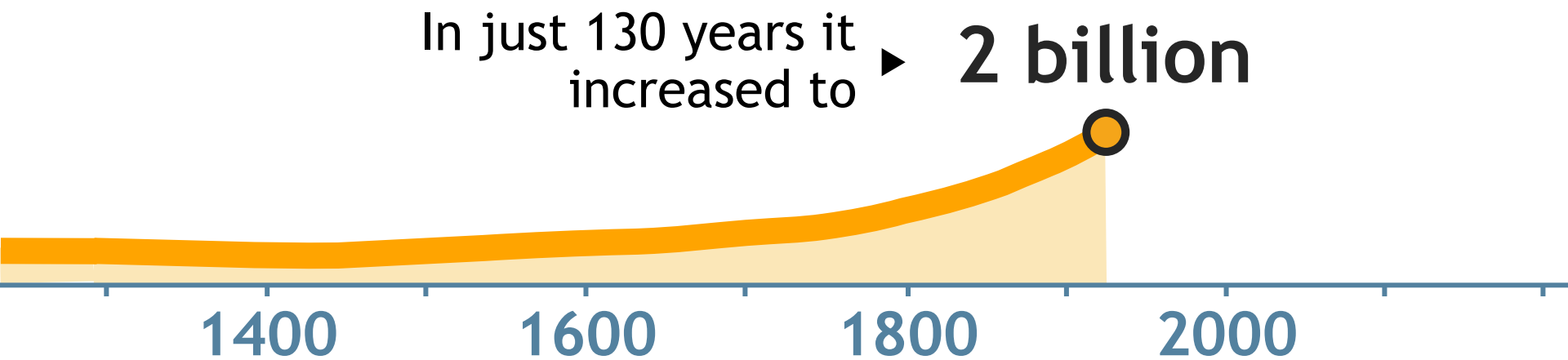


1 billion



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

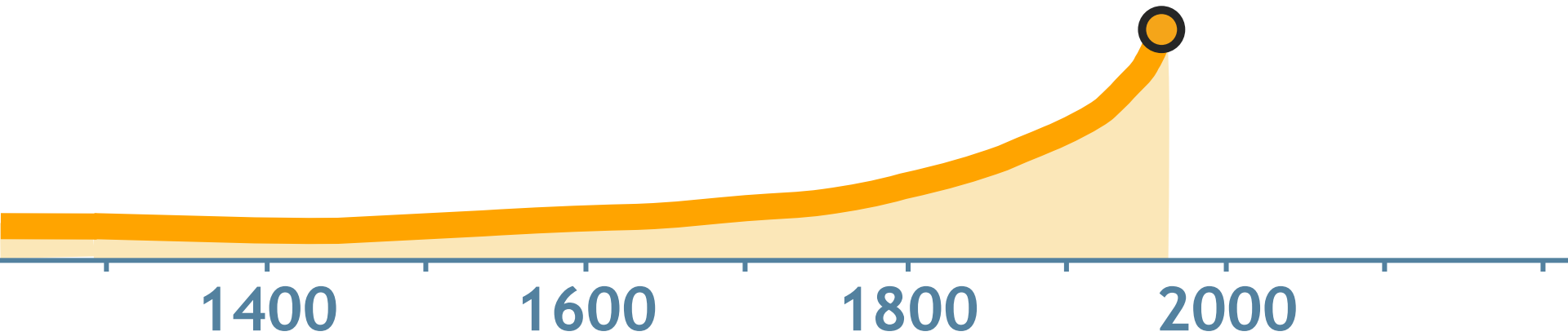
World population in year 1930



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year 1960

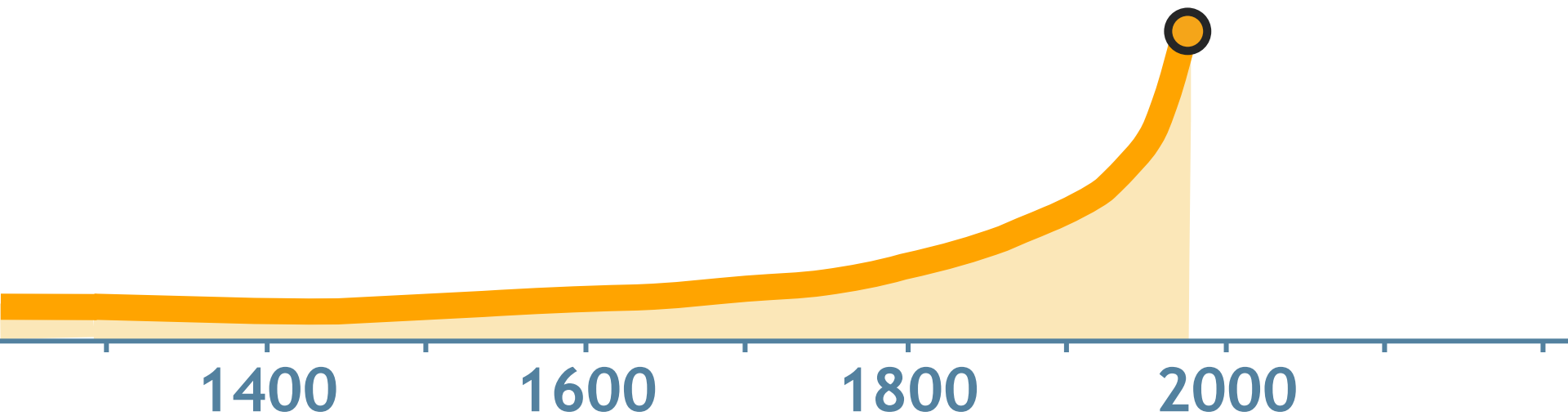
30 years later ▶ **3 billion**



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year 1974

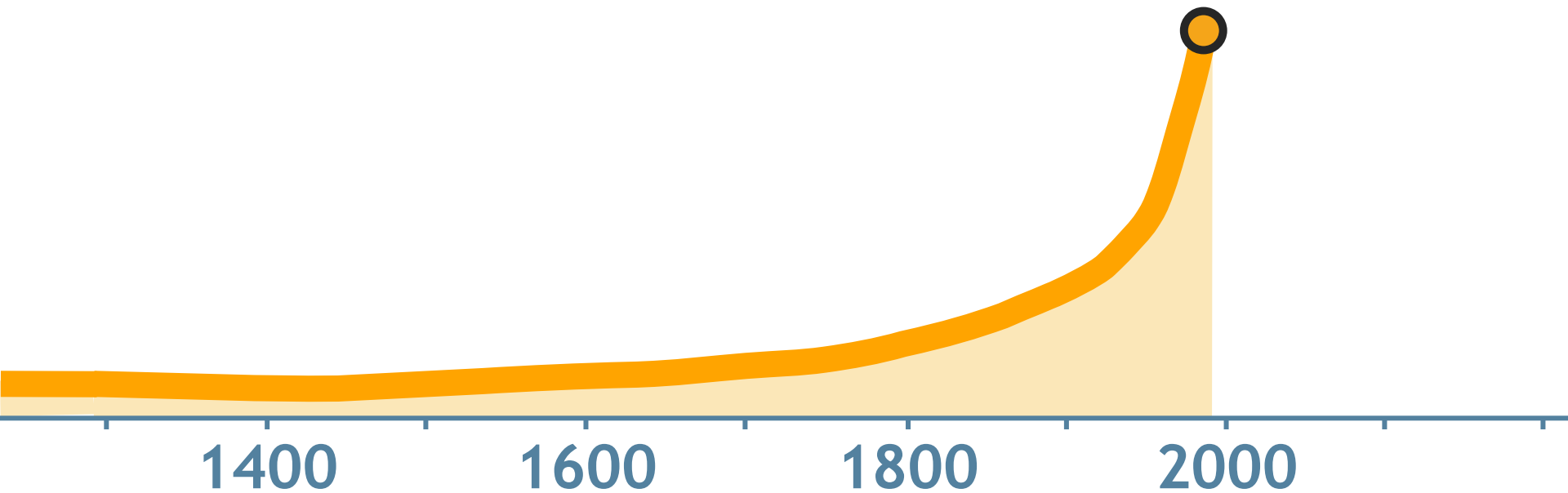
14 years later ▶ **4 billion**



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year 1987

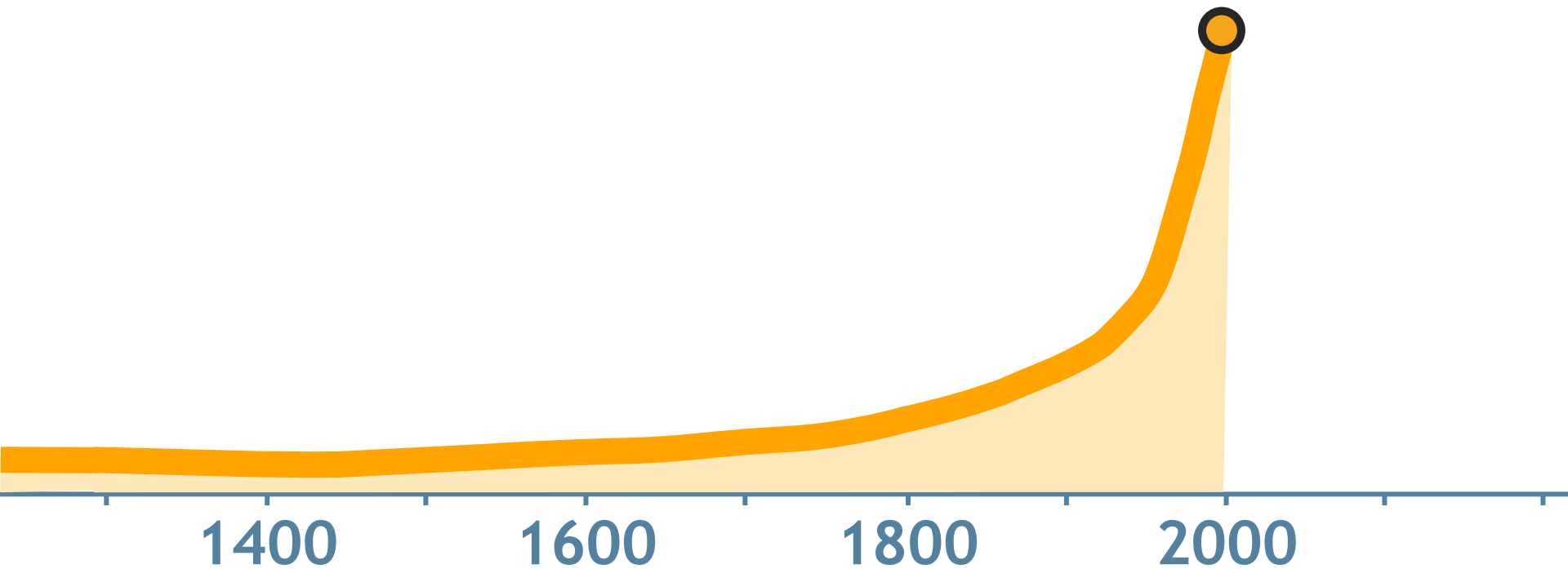
13 years later ▶ **5 billion**



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year 1999

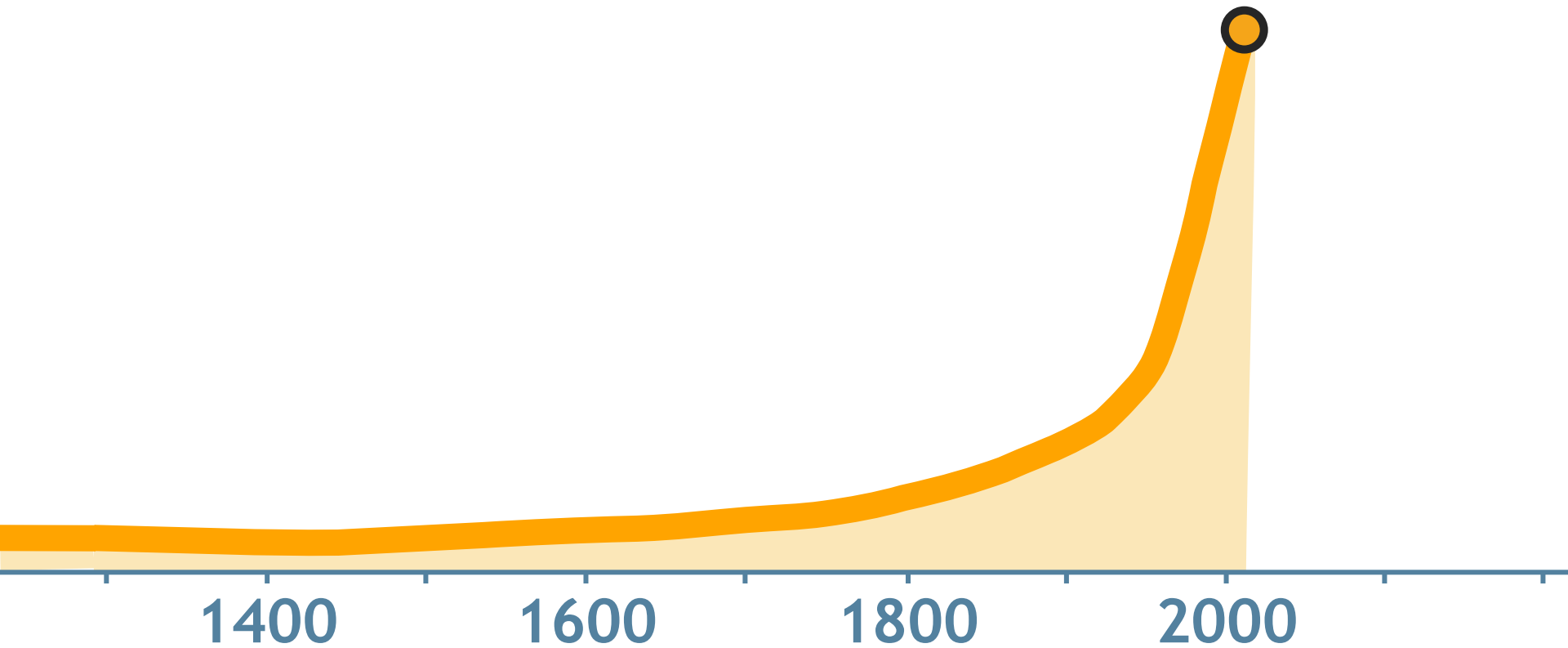
12 years later ▶ **6 billion**



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population in year 2011

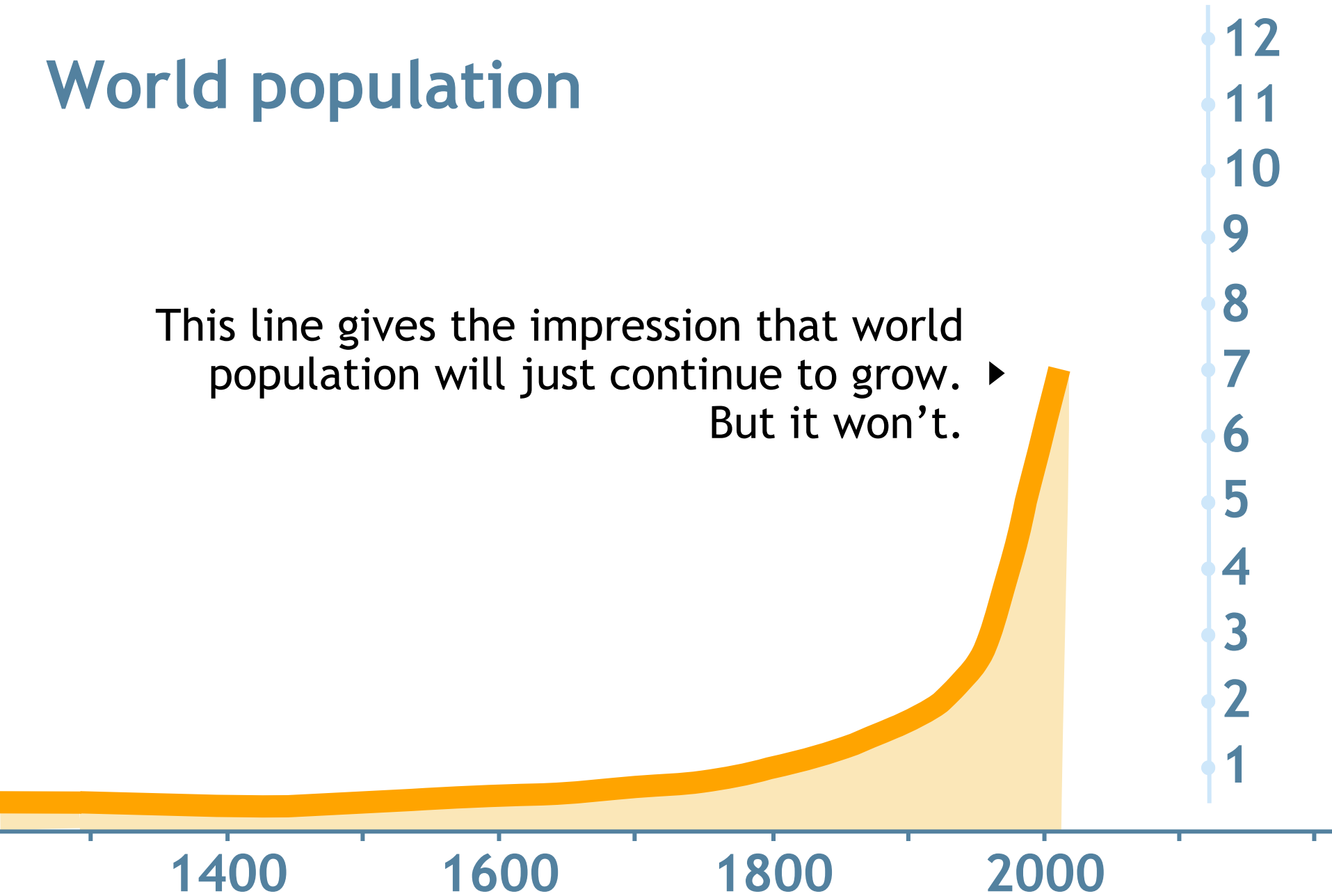
12 years later ▶ **7 billion**



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population

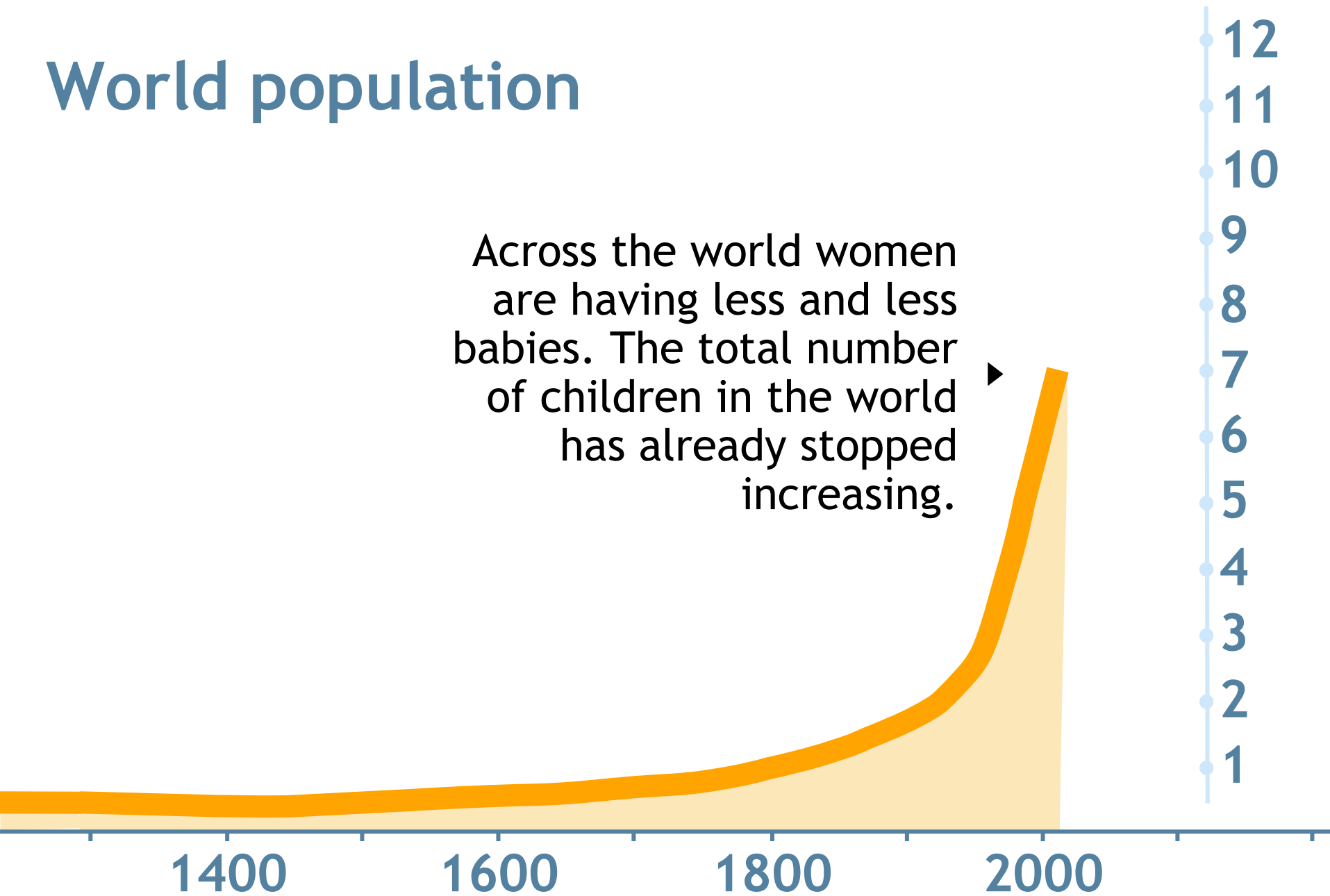
This line gives the impression that world population will just continue to grow. ▶
But it won't.



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

World population

Across the world women are having less and less babies. The total number of children in the world has already stopped increasing.

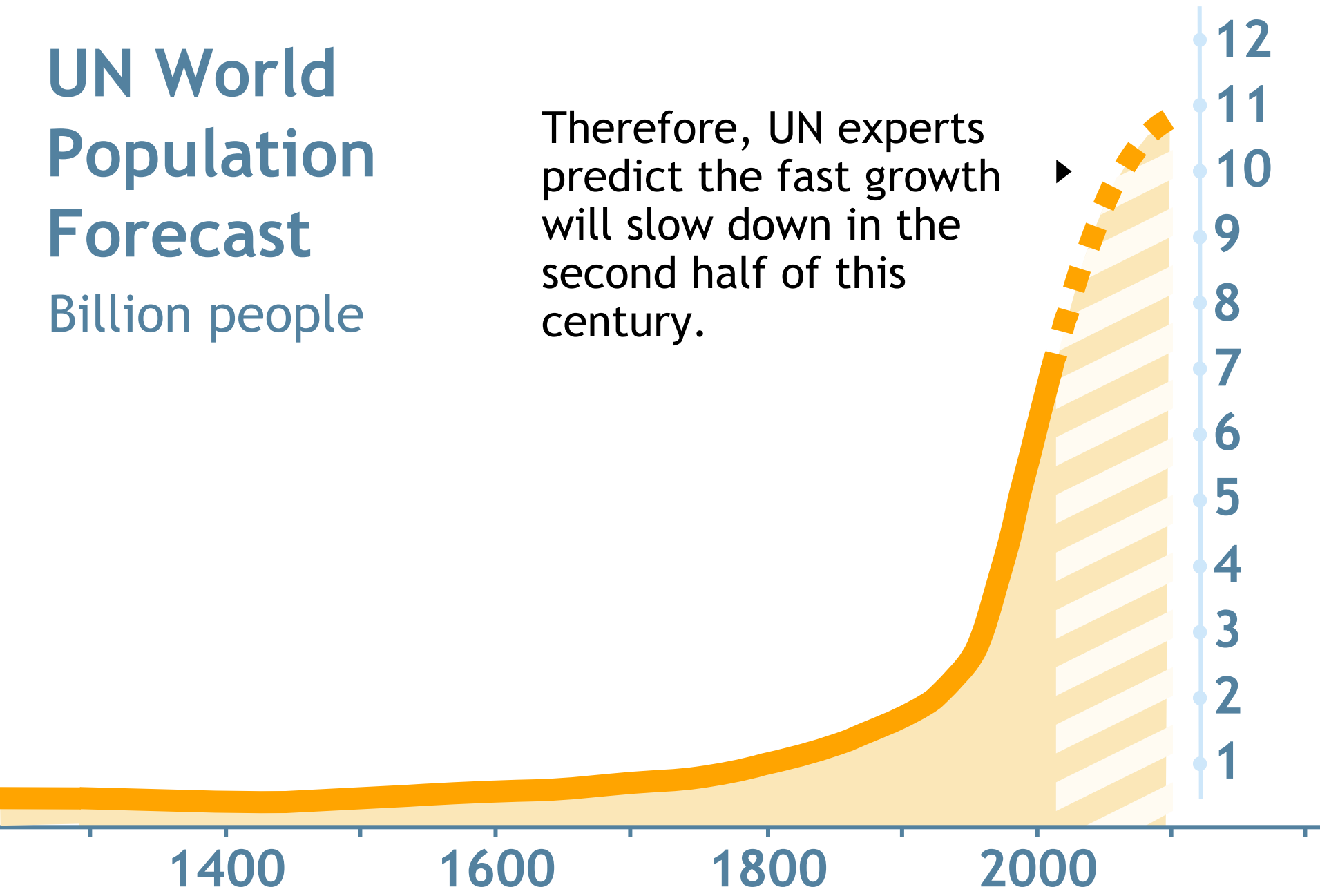


Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

UN World Population Forecast

Billions of people

Therefore, UN experts predict the fast growth will slow down in the second half of this century.

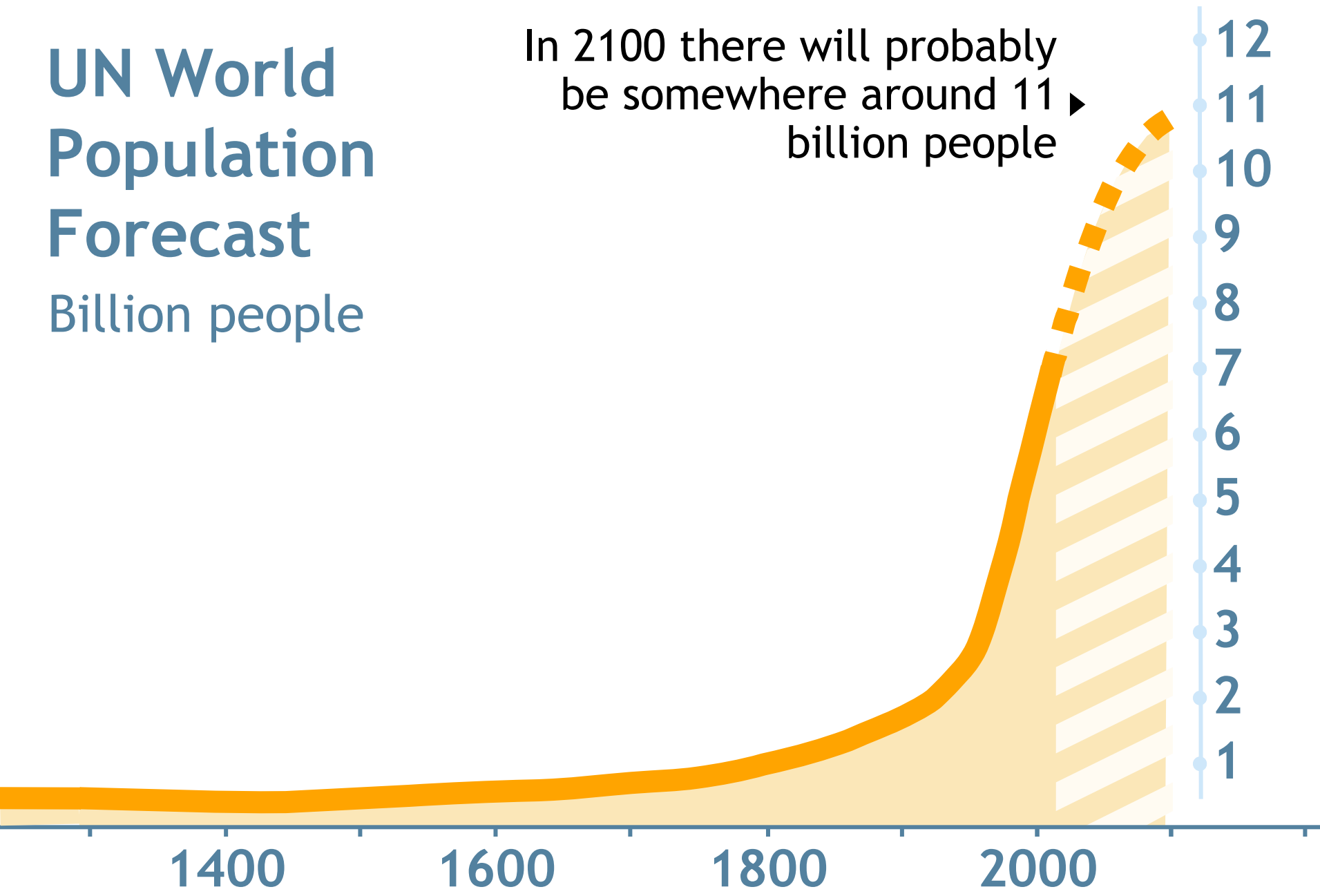


Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

UN World Population Forecast

Billions of people

In 2100 there will probably be somewhere around 11 billion people



Sources: Biraben 1980; McEvedy & Jones 1978; UN World Pop. Prosp. 2012; combined by Gapminder.

RELATED QUESTIONS



Why will the world population continue to grow fast?

Short answer – More adults

The future fast growth is not due to the same reasons as the fast growth historically. In the future, people will indeed survive longer, but life expectancy is only going to increase a little bit. And the number of children in the world is expected to remain stable. The main reason for the future fast growth is the highly predictable fill-up of adults, as larger young generations grow older as explained in another slideshow.



How did babies per woman change historically?

Short answer – It dropped

Throughout history, women on average have given birth to more than 5 babies. But in the 1960's the number suddenly started dropping. Today it's down to less than three. Most likely it will continue to drop down to two or even below.



How reliable is the world population forecast?

Short answer – Very reliable

Already back in the 1950's the UN Population experts were able to predict very precisely the population growth for the next 50 years. The forecasts made today predict that by the end of the century, there will be around 11 billion people in the world. The track record of the UN statisticians shows that their global forecasts have been very accurate historically.

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