

Population Growth:

In 2001, there were approximately 6.2 billion people on the planet. That's far more than twice as many as there were in 1950. Every day we add 250,000 more people to the planet - or more than 90 million each year. How many people is too many? A growing number of scientists and policymakers feel the planet already has more people than it can handle. And although many experts expect world population to stabilize sometime after 2100, they aren't sure at what level stabilization will occur. The low projection is a little more than 8 billion; but the high projection puts the human population total at more than 11 billion people.

The Human Impact:

Supporting such huge numbers of people is sure to put a lot of pressure on natural resources. All those people will need food, clothing, shelter, fuel for cooking, and other necessities. And in some areas, existing populations are already struggling to survive. For example, one-third of the people on Earth can't find enough fuelwood to meet their basic needs. As ecosystems are degraded, we lose the resources and services that they provide, such as water purification and flood control.

*****People in the United States make up 5% of Earth's population, but generate at least a third of the planet's pollution! Unreal!*****

Easing the Squeeze

Finding ways to reduce population growth is not easy. For example, studies have shown that providing educational opportunities for women can reduce birthrates. So can making health services, including family planning services, available to people. But biases and customs in many cultures around the world can make these steps difficult.