

Boris Johnson

ARTICLES

GLOBAL POPULATION CONTROL

OCTOBER 25, 2007 | BORIS OFFICE | 54 COMMENTS

Global over-population is the real issue

It is a tragic measure of how far the world has changed – and the infinite capacity of modern man for taking offence – that there are no two subjects that can get you more swiftly into political trouble than motherhood and apple pie.

The last time I tentatively suggested that there was something to be said in favour of apple pie, I caused a frenzy of hatred in the healthy-eating lobby. It reached such a pitch that journalists were actually pelting me with pies, and demanding a retraction, and an apology, and a formal denunciation of the role of apple pie in causing obesity.

As for motherhood – the fertility of the human race – we are getting to the point where you simply can't discuss it, and we are thereby refusing to say anything sensible about the biggest single challenge facing the Earth; and no, whatever it may now be conventional to say, that single biggest challenge is not global warming. That is a secondary challenge. The primary challenge facing our species is the reproduction of our species itself.

Depending on how fast you read, the population of the planet is growing with every word that skitters beneath your eyeball. There are more than 211,000 people being added every day, and a population the size of Germany every year.

As someone who has now been travelling around the world for decades, I see this change, and I feel it. You can smell it in the traffic jams of the Middle East. You can see it as you fly over Africa at night, and you see mile after mile of fires burning red in the dark, as the scrub is removed to make way for human beings.

You can see it in the satellite pictures of nocturnal Europe, with the whole place lit up like a fairground. You can see it in the crazy dentition of the Shanghai skyline, where new skyscrapers are going up round the clock.

You can see it as you fly over Mexico City, a vast checkerboard of smog-bound, low-rise dwellings stretching from one horizon to the other; and when you look down on what we are doing to the planet, you have a horrifying vision of habitations multiplying and replicating like bacilli in a Petri dish.

The world's population is now 6.7 billion, roughly double what it was when I was born. If I live to be in my mid-eighties, then it will have trebled in my lifetime.

The UN last year revised its forecasts upwards, predicting that there will be 9.2 billion people by 2050, and I simply cannot understand why no one discusses this impending calamity, and why no world statesmen have the guts to treat the issue with the seriousness it deserves.

How the hell can we witter on about tackling global warming, and reducing consumption, when we are continuing to add so relentlessly to the number of consumers? The answer is politics, and political cowardice.

There was a time, in the 1960s and 1970s, when people such as my father, Stanley, were becoming interested in demography, and the UN would hold giant conferences on the subject, and it was perfectly respectable to talk about saving the planet by reducing the growth in the number of human beings.

But over the years, the argument changed, and certain words became taboo, and certain concepts became forbidden, and we have reached the stage where the very discussion of overall human fertility – global motherhood – has become more or less banned.

We seem to have given up on population control, and all sorts of explanations are offered for the surrender. Some say Indira Gandhi gave it all a bad name, by her demented plan to sterilise Indian men with the lure of a transistor radio.

Some attribute our complacency to the Green Revolution, which seemed to prove Malthus wrong. It became the received wisdom that the world's population could rise to umpteen billions, as mankind learnt to make several ears of corn grow where one had grown before.

And then, in recent years, the idea of global population control has been more or less stifled by a pincer movement from the Right and the Left. American Right-wingers disapprove of anything that sounds like birth control, and so George W. Bush withholds the tiny contribution America makes to the UN Fund for Population Activities, regardless of the impact on the health of women in developing countries.

As for the Left, they dislike suggestions of population control because they seem to smack of colonialism and imperialism and telling the Third World what to do; and so we have reached the absurd position in which humanity bleats about the destruction of the environment, and yet there is

not a peep in any communiqué from any summit of the EU, G8 or UN about the population growth that is causing that destruction.

The debate is surely now unavoidable. Look at food prices, driven ever higher by population growth in India and China. Look at the insatiable Chinese desire for meat, which has pushed the cost of feed so high that Vladimir Putin has been obliged to institute price controls in the doomed fashion of Diocletian or Edward Heath.

Even in Britain, chicken farmers are finding that the cost of chickenfeed is no longer exactly chickenfeed, and, though the food crisis may once again be solved by the wit of man, the damage to the environment may be irreversible.

It is time we had a grown-up discussion about the optimum quantity of human beings in this country and on this planet. Do we want the south-east of Britain, already the most densely populated major country in Europe, to resemble a giant suburbia?

This is not, repeat not, an argument about immigration per se, since in a sense it does not matter where people come from, and with their skill and their industry, immigrants add hugely to the economy.

This is a straightforward question of population, and the eventual size of the human race.

All the evidence shows that we can help reduce population growth, and world poverty, by promoting literacy and female emancipation and access to birth control. Isn't it time politicians stopped being so timid, and started talking about the real number one issue?

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54 THOUGHTS ON "GLOBAL POPULATION CONTROL"



David Firth

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 10:30 AM

Boris Johnson has written his most important article ever.

I agree, there are just too many of us. No policy to tackle global warming or pollution will ever succeed if population expansion is ignored.

Unfortunately, reproduction is also a religious issue and talking about it will offend many people who are not thinking logically.

Thank you, Boris, for mentioning the unmentionable in your superb article.



raincoaster

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 10:42 AM

Will Boris begin the cull with his own children?



Robert Vestentoft

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 10:50 AM

You are absolutely right, and while tackling the problem on a world scale necessitates dealing with all manner of religious, cultural, traditional and educational issues, this does not apply, to the same extent to this country. I find it quite fantastically stupid that we should be trying to provide services, a decent standard of living and equality of opportunity while having absolutely zero control over the numbers of people for whom these things are intended. This is the most important issue of the day and dealing with it will, in itself, make a huge contribution to the climate change problem.

An agreed optimum level of population for this country, preferably not much more than the present level, should be a matter of long term national policy common to all parties. The argument that we have to grow the population to provide a young labour force, to look after all the old guys, is typically short term and misguided, as all these new young people will grow old and the problem simply gets bigger.

Well done for making the point. I hope others will pick it up as well.



anon

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 11:06 AM

"It is time we had a grown-up discussion about the optimum quantity of human beings in this country and on this planet"...its almost to late...short of Hitler-esque tactics, the population of this planet has risen out of control...global warming is unstoppable with such a population! Well done boris for havin the balls to come out with this article, somebody needed to...most of the worlds problems are because of overpopulation!! And, in terms of the UK....how can anybody expect out beautiful island to support 70million people..and remain, at all sustainable or beautiful...the countryside is already being ripped apart for housing and industrial development (one example being this absurd development proposal...<http://www.stopkig.org/>"...as Boris says.. Do we want the south-east of Britain, already the most densely populated major country in Europe, to resemble a giant suburbia?"

”

**Captain Badger**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 11:37 AM

Yup, the elephant in the room. You should expect to be called every name under the sun, as every weak minded lickspittle in Christendom tries to score easy points off you for this one.

**Pedro**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 11:50 AM

i have read a load of rubbish in my time, this however is one of the most insightful articals i have ever laid my eyes on.

Well done boris, well done

**Graham Linberry**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 11:51 AM

The creed of the Global Warming Phrophets is that humans are causing it. The logic suggests you try and reduce the number of humans. Why do those such as Al Gore, Tony Blair, Chris Huhne, Hilary Benn etc not suggest this. Perhaps as they have four or more children and could be accused of being two faced. At least Boris with his four children is willing to face this risk!

**George Hodges**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 12:28 PM

Dear Boris, I agree with the previous comment. There are too many of us, but how is it to be controlled. I think we have to follow the chinese example.

Regards

G M Hodges

**Chris Morriss**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 12:42 PM

At last, Boris comments upn the real reason for most of the long-term problems facing us on this planet. Global warming, world hunger et al are secondary issues, while the primary cause (the insane population growth that no-one seems to dare talk about) is ignored. Having more than two children is simply selfish. Full stop.

The spurious argument in the UK about needing an expanded population to pay the pensions of future generations is easily demolished. After all, how many people think it's sensible to borrow money to pay today's bills, without giving any thought to how the loan will be paid off? (Er...far too many I guess)

Continually increasing the population to provide a short-term economic fix is equivalent.

**Elizabeth Obisanya**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 1:01 PM

I think the command to go forth and multiply has more than been complied with/obeyed.

And the Promise to Father Abraham that His seed shall exceed the stars in the Heavens is also true.

[Genesis 22:15-18]

David got into trouble for counting the number of the Children of Israel [II Samuel 24], [I Chronicles 21.] as it took his focus and strength away from the Lord unto the numbers he had. (it is not by might nor by strength but by the Lord..)

Anyway the number of the global population has increased to seemingly uncomfortable proportions with the world (space not increasing).

I don't think that we can/should play God either in imposing birth control – controlling numbers or in “genetic engineering” (Hybridizing) – it brings images of Hitler and his drive to produce the perfect race...)

Even with the population increase x infinity it is good to know that the earth still has more than enough to go round... & [I don't remember reading anywhere in the Word of the world being destroyed by overpopulation..?!!]

**Sean Lee**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 1:24 PM

Time for a Brave New World.

**Tim Bull**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 1:45 PM

Boris does indeed have the balls to address this most contentious of issues in a very constructive way unfortunately he also has the balls to have fathered more than his fair share of progeny. Too late to see the error of his ways but hopefully repentant.

**Mc**

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 2:54 PM

David: Unfortunately, reproduction is also a religious issue and talking about it will offend many people who are not thinking logically.

I doubt that expanded population not being addressed as top priority is related to any cautious other than for economic growth – thgat is to say increasing consumption.



Michael Newport

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 8:24 PM

you have 4 kids, you ARE part of the problem !



Mrs M Bailey

OCTOBER 25, 2007 AT 9:11 PM

Dear Mr Johnson,

I support wholeheartedly your view that the issue of world population growth is at the heart of many of the most significant problems our species now faces.

Do you know how I can reach a charitable or other body whose purpose is to increase awareness worldwide of the benefits of family planning? I would be pleased to support such efforts.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Bailey (Mrs)



Richard Buxton

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 9:37 AM

Mr Johnson exposes the Elephant – well done him!

Poor people have large families and rich people small ones. It follows, therefore, that we should strive to make people richer to reduce family growth.

We should not, however, strive too hard to extend life expectancy. I am doing my bit by eating too much and smoking to excess. I have no desire to spend my last years in a nursing home in Weston Super Mare.



Neil Craig

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 12:41 PM

It ought to be a question of immigration. We can do little to stop the population of Yemen exceeding that of Russia by 2050 (assuming their respective growth & decline rates continue) but we can have absolute power to stop them coming here & that should be the default position of anybody having responsibility for the government of Britain.

In 2 ways it is worse than you think. It is quite likely that in the next few decades it will become possible to prevent or even reverse aging. The problems that will cause will be immense but if it is affordable faster population increase will be one of them. Secondly the difference in demographic growth – Albanian & Moslem populations growing faster than Serb & European ones, India faster than China, Palestinians than Jews & generally the populations of failed states & cultures growing much faster than successful ones is causing strife worldwide.

In another way it is better than you suggest. Population growth is at under 1% but economic growth worldwide averages 5% (I have no doubt we could more than match the average if the political will was there). This, rather than numbers, is why the Indians & Chinese are eating more food & particularly more meat. There is no reason whatsoever to think that, in a world where we could have unlimited food & power if we did not adopt a Luddite attitude to GM & nuclear power the problems of overpopulation are going to be economic rather than clutural & psychological. It may be that due to our attitude to technology Europe & America will find themselves economically outclassed by China, India & Russia & other successful countries but that is entirely due to their embracing of technology & nothing to do with population growth. Even Yemen has recently contracted for 5 nuclear power stations which is 5 more than we will have if the Luddites get their way.



Captain Badger

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 2:26 PM

You're beating the Nuke drum a bit hard Neil. Would you like to declare an interest?



Oxfordian

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 6:01 PM

In Iran governement funding of an extensive Awareness Raising Programme implemented by well trained female health workers (all state funded) in every village and city across the country brought down the the number of children from average 4 per household to 2 in no time. Education is everything, if you educate women they will want fewer children, will have healthier children, will provide for their children in poor households and will feed them better and will economize their resources, and most important in places such as India where girls as young as 12 or 13 start reproduction – they will fight their way with disadvantaged traditions. All of the above are best practices in poverty alleviation policies.

I ws curious to know if David Firth is prof of statistics at Oxford ???



haxley

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 7:57 PM

What gives Boris the right to talk about this subject, when he has selfishly and irresponsibly fathered 4 children?

**Captain Badger**

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 9:05 PM

About as much right as Broon would have cutting taxes – nice to see people come to their senses.

**B Shepherd**

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 9:08 PM

Boris has hit the nail bang on the head.All talk of ‘going green’ and reducing carbon emissions, etc,etc is pointless without population reduction...

**Airborn Robin**

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 9:15 PM

Excellent article. So true. Population growth is the motivator behind so many of our other problems, global warming, starvation, territorial wars, limited resources such as water and carbon fuels, racial tension.

It shouldn't be a party political issue but it does require courage from politicians who are willing to risk losing votes and challenge various religious beliefs.

Keep the message going Boris.

**Andrew**

OCTOBER 26, 2007 AT 11:09 PM

There are a number of excellent reasons to promote “literacy and female emancipation and access to birth control”, but the goal is not to reduce the population, but rather to empower women to have control over their lives – if this has the effect of reducing the population, well and good, but the US and France show that this is not always the case (fertility rate of 2.1 and 2 children per woman respectively, compared to 1.7 in the UK and 1.4 in Canada). Although obviously the dynamic is different in areas where the reproduction rate is several multiples of this.

While the Left and Right might have their reasons for opposing this, those of us firmly in the centre who oppose population control on the simple basis that the State has no place in the bedrooms of the nation. It's a sentiment I'm surprised to find Mr Johnson doesn't share.

**simon_jed**

OCTOBER 27, 2007 AT 10:41 AM

I agree with haxley: it's like reading Boris's commentaries on cycling, while knowing he also champions driving fast in high-performance cars.

don't get me wrong Captain Badger: I'm not saying there is no way back: Jesus made it clear there is, for everyone. But in many areas Boris is a hypocrite of unusual dimensions, and he'll need to work very hard.



Mc

OCTOBER 27, 2007 AT 11:57 AM

Andrew: While the Left and Right might have their reasons for opposing this, those of us firmly in the centre who oppose population control on the simple basis that the State has no place in the bedrooms of the nation.

I think you are missing the point – the argument is overpopulation – it is not about Europe that appears to be facing population extinction. It is about addressing problems in countries where girls have to marry when they are little children and have to give birth to children due to poverty – if they don't, there will be no where for them to live in their parents home. It is about human dignity and to create conditions that every child is afforded his/her basic human rights. Therefore in such countries governments ought to interfere in the ignorance of parents.



Neil Craig

OCTOBER 27, 2007 AT 4:14 PM

Captain B my point about nuclear power applies to high technology generally (I could have mentioned solar power satellites as a way of keeping the planet wealthy but the technology for that is purely drawing board). We can provide the entire world's population, or even more, with a high standard of living but it requires a willingness to embrace high technology – something which the Chinese & Indians are willing to do but Europe & the US increasingly oppose.

My interest is that I prefer wealth to poverty, for me & everybody else.



idlex

OCTOBER 27, 2007 AT 11:31 PM

You can see it in the satellite pictures of nocturnal Europe, with the whole place lit up like a fairground.

Those are street lights, not people. And they are the product of economic growth rather than population growth. Same for the Shanghai skyline.

Most of the world projected population growth is in Southeast Asia. But fertility is falling as economic growth raises standards of living and education. Depending on the assumptions that are made, world population is predicted either to peak around 2050 at around 10 billion and then start falling, or continue barreling on upwards to over 20 billion in 2100.

But predicting population is probably as difficult as predicting climate. There are so many factors to take into account. At the moment we just have educated guesses.

What matters more, I think, is whether there is reasoned debate about such issues, or whether worst case scenarios are used to panic people into responding to what may prove to be largely imaginary problems – as is now happening with global warming. It's about the quality of public debate. And unfortunately I think that this piece by Boris, with its anecdotal evidence of what he's seen out of an airline window, doesn't really help.

**Captain Badger**

OCTOBER 28, 2007 AT 7:52 PM

Neil Craig: "My interest is that I prefer wealth to poverty, for me & everybody else."

I have to agree. Wealth is as preferable to poverty as knowledge is to ignorance or sickness to health.

I disagree with your post on two specific points: Popular resistance to GM crops being one, and the unpopularity of nuclear power the other.

Whilst GM crops may well be bred to be resistant to known diseases, and able to thrive in challenging environments, to increase food availability, nature is constantly throwing us curve balls, and over-reliance on a breed of super rice, for example, would inevitably have catastrophic consequences when pests worked out parasitise them. Biodiversity is our insurance policy against epidemic.

Nuclear power is, like coal, oil, & gas, dependent on stuff dug out of the ground of which there is by necessity a finite amount. It's also hellish expensive, dirty & dangerous. That it's unpopular is unsurprising. What is surprising is that people find burning fossil fuels so palatable. Non are long term solutions.

You may notice I don't have any answers. I don't pretend to. What I do know, is that our civilisation runs on irreplaceable resources and it will take clever people to deal with the challenges we face. Hence, like many of the other posters here, I see the necessary response to global overpopulation as an increased focus on education. One thing I can say for sure is whatever powers society in the next century won't have been invented by an illiterate.

**Rory Holburn**

OCTOBER 29, 2007 AT 6:23 AM

Well done Boris – at last!

FYI – The Optimum Population Trust web site is a great source of data for anyone that needs it

<http://www.optimumpopulation.org/>

If we are to even start to make an effort we need to stop encouraging people to breed, and stop taxing the rest of us to cause this infestation of humanity.

- 1) Remove all child subsidies and make the breeders pay for thier own indulgences.
- 2) Tax rebates on retirement for thoes who have not added to the population and have no one to look after them in their old age – after all they’ve paid for the breeders to have thier kids!



Norman Riddle

OCTOBER 29, 2007 AT 9:40 AM

The world population is increasing rapidly, and something will stop it somehow. The only things that I can think of that will do so are global disasters of one sort or another; famine, plague, nuclear war, or some climate-change related event. One or more of these will happen, sooner or later, and there is nothing any of us can do about it. The four horsemen are saddling up even now.



Elizabeth Obisanya

OCTOBER 29, 2007 AT 11:47 AM

Whilst “religiously” we are told that the number of children a man has shows his prosperity, a man with 12 children is very prosperous!.

This was based on the derivative promise to Father Abraham whose wife Sarah was barren and the then inconceivable promise was made to them.

The non religious crowd walked in historically as the more children a couple had the more they could get to work the land and or set out to work.

Today some people falsely assume that people get pregnant to get council houses and or benefits.

The total amounts of benefits a person may have is still not sufficent to bring up the child that they had to go and get the benefit!

Fact is unplanned pregancies do happen, I am very much pro life and would not call for abortions to be carried out as it is murder.

What do populations controllers want to do with those?

Should people be sterilised (What bout those miracle babies conceived after sterilisations! no really!)

Man just cannot control the population.

**Charles Allum**

OCTOBER 29, 2007 AT 8:41 PM

Over population is indisputable, clearly way beyond sustainability. Man either can't or won't acknowledge it. Many, including the Pope, advocate producing more children or deny the morality of attempting to limit birth rates.

Many, especially in hotter countries, still pour scorn on those who, whether voluntarily or not, have only small families. It used to be that a man was successful if he fathered say thirty children, but then probably only three survived.

Now with "progress" only three may perish and that makes twenty-four more mouths!

Nature, call it what you will, can see it and sends pestilence, floods, droughts, famines to reduce the surplus. What do we do? Rush to the rescue with medicines, food packets and emergency supplies.

Otherwise it would be unthinkable, unacceptable and totally inhumane.

So the human race will perish the sooner. Should we not wake up as Boris Johnson advocates?

**Steven_L**

OCTOBER 29, 2007 AT 10:02 PM

Well I'm not so sure that population growth is as apocalyptic as everyone seems to think. Overall was China or Africa a better place for human beings to live 200 years ago? I sincerely doubt that it was. In my view many African nations suffer extreme poverty and other associated ills because they spend too much time partaking in the highly unproductive activity of civil war.

< "Today some people falsely assume that people get pregnant to get council houses and or benefits. (Elizabeth Obisanya)" <

How can I falsely assume this when throughout my youth I have heard numerous young girls advocate doing precisely what you say. I think maternal instinct has a lot to do with it, but many teenage girls and young women see starting a subsidised family of their own as a better alternative than working in a boring menial job and living in the (often unhappy) parental home.

**zoogon**

OCTOBER 29, 2007 AT 11:44 PM

It's too late to be writing this article. You've had 4 children. I expect they'll all be going to public school and treating themselves to life's little luxuries.

**raincoaster**

OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT 9:40 AM

Indeed, some people would say he already HAD begun the cull with his own.

 **Captain Badger**

OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT 1:24 PM

I have to know what you're talking about Raincoaster, do tell!

 **jaq**

OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT 2:16 PM

I've just read this article again and it's brilliant, spot on:

All the evidence shows that we can help reduce population growth, and world poverty, by promoting literacy and female emancipation and access to birth control. Isn't it time politicians stopped being so timid, and started talking about the real number one issue?

Yep!

 **Captain Badger**

OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT 5:00 PM

You suggest we should abandon the abiding mantra of moral relativism and accept that maybe our values, as well as being 'different' to some peoples' are also 'better' – and that education and the rule of law aren't just 'lifestyle choices' – every bit as valid as fecklessness and sloth, but are in fact preferable.

Good luck. The PC brigade will hang you out to dry.

 **Colin Jennings**

OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT 6:49 PM

Boris,

I certainly admire the courage you show given the current ludicrous adherence to PC. I live in Africa and I have to say that unfortunately the situation is reflected in the tenth comment on this subject. Logic and common sense are, these days bombarded with nineteenth century religious teachings and slogans which may have been fine for the time.

The world, nonetheless, is(not so) slowly expiring with the teachings of this era still being quoted. In the days of David Livingstone, Robert Moffat, et al, yes death was the great leveller. Today, with medical research saving many lives that would have been lost previously, more than 70% of the large family groups are surviving and both food and water are becoming increasingly scarce resources in this continent. As a result of this, movement to industrially capable regions such as Britain and Europe are the obvious goals for forward thinking people from the "New World", hence your current problems.

Unless, those in power make a stand and begin to face the facts it will simply become worse.

As a final observation I must note, that the issue of genetically modified food being condemned in third world countries amazes me, as would one rather die from starvation in three years time, than live to a reasonable old age with some form of comfort in thirty years time with perhaps a lower bone density than desirable. I suppose the question of choice lies with the leaders one elects!

**Neil Craig**

OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT 7:12 PM

Captain B you make a fair point about GM, though it is a point that, to a somewhat lesser extent, applies to all human bred or monoculture crops – if the Irish had not had a monoculture the Potato famine would have been no problem, but we have lived with this problem since inventing agriculture.

On availability of radioactives you are wrong. Uranium & Thorium are not that rare in the earth, certainly not in the quantities we could ever use.

Check <http://www-formal.stanford.edu/jmc/progress/cohen.html>

It has been calculated that uranium from seawater (not the optimum way to go but we can calculate the figure with certainty) could keep our current nuclear industry going till the Sun goes out. Digging for it should allow considerable expansion.

**Jaq**

OCTOBER 30, 2007 AT 11:57 PM

Hello Melissa – is everything in italics or should I take more water with it??

[Ed: Be careful of water near computers!]

[Ed: ps Steven had forgotton to shut off his italic function – all fine now!]

**Adrian Peirson**

OCTOBER 31, 2007 AT 1:14 AM

Certainly blows a hole in the global warming myth, it's a very interesting point, how can they possibly beat global warming without addressing this Massive Issue. Which indicates to me that even if Global warming is real (which I doubt) their effort to tax it out of existence is pointless. Actually we brits are doing our bit, currently we face being minorities within 50 yrs....in our own country,

with 500,000 arriving each year,
200,000 Brits Leaving each year and
200,000 abortions per year(an appalling statistic that shames women) we will be minority status in Britain within 50 yrs.

Currently we have 60 Million here, the Govt wants 80-100 Million. I reckon about 30 Million would be a good figure for this country so some of you are going to have to start drawing lots.

 Captain Badger

OCTOBER 31, 2007 AT 10:35 AM

Hi Neil, I was just looking at uranium we could currently get our hands on, but for sure, future technology will make more available. Right now, if asked, I wouldn't write a cheque for nuclear plant, but would for nuclear research, as it's likely we'll need to use nuclear power, & I'd like it to be a lot better an option than it is now.

On GM food, in the 60s we were told the green revolution would feed the world. All that happened was populations expanded to eat all the extra food, then continue to live in poverty & misery. Doubling food production would once again double the number of people living on the edge of starvation, whilst allowing us to clear let more wilderness of it's diverse species for agriculture. Our problems are fundamentally human, and have human solutions.

 crystal c

OCTOBER 31, 2007 AT 12:59 PM

I think I agree with Boris on this one. With more and more people, the levels of intolerance will also grow as everyone jostles for their own space.

 Rory Holburn

NOVEMBER 3, 2007 AT 7:59 AM

Elizabeth comments that she is pro life and would not advocate abortion – fine, her choice, but can we assume that she will also turn down any medical intervention in preventing death? If we wish to benefit from the advances in medical science we have to be prepared to do so in balance and accept its intervention both in the saving and the preventing of lives.

Personally I would like to see those who refuse to use abortion, for themselves or others, denied access to the other benefits of the medical service. I would like to put an end to their hypocritical abuse of the gifts that science, or God (your choice, has given us.

To pick and choose only those abilities that make us individually comfy, whilst taking no responsibility for a balanced impact, is a sure sign of a barbaric lack of civility.

 Neil Craig

NOVEMBER 3, 2007 AT 1:38 PM

Captain B I think you are wrong about the green revolution. While population has risen it has done so much less than predicted in the 60s (when they were expecting about 9 billion by now).

The mass starvation which we saw then has receded despite population increase. In general technological progress is solving such problems.

I do think differential population growth is a great problem since the growth is concentrated in failed states & cultures & thus likely to make them a growing problem.

To an increasing degree we humans, being able to solve the natural problems are then managing to produce man-made ones for ourselves (or sometimes create non-existent ones like global warming to worry over).



piersy

NOVEMBER 7, 2007 AT 9:38 AM

Religious issue? What are you on about? People in the third world have lots of kids because of a host of reasons. Lack of family planning, the lack of a state support and provisions for when they grow older, but mostly because their kids have a hideous mortality rate. (not to mention it's somethin og a biological imperative, but let's not get into that)

I don't think Abraham or the catholic church have anything to do with it at all.

If that was the case we wouldn't have falling birth rates in Israel and Italy ... oh wait!

Religion sticking it's unwelcome oar in places it shouldn't isn't my favourite thing either; but those that blame religion for this are entirely missing the point.

But population control ain't the answer, a fair and equitable world is, but that's not economically viable is it.

But if it is to be population control, I suppose we could try the russian method and encourage people to drink themselves to an early death in China, India and Mexico. Hell, there's not much regulation in those countries, lets choke them all to death with pollution and engineer the odd Bhopal every couple of weeks, that should do the trick.



Lori

NOVEMBER 7, 2007 AT 10:47 AM

I hate people who are big environmentalists. . . now that they have their own children. Al Gore is another with a litter who talks about the environment NOW. The "Population Connection" (formerly ZPG) people have been banging on about this since the sixties, and they are RIGHT. How can you have missed this until now?

I have put my money where my mouth is by not having any kids (and government taxes me to the hilt for it with few benefits). Hopefully that will give your FOUR a better shot in the crappy future we are inexorably headed for.

**Matthew Phillips**

NOVEMBER 7, 2007 AT 2:21 PM

Hear hear, Boris.

But with 4 kids aren't you now very, very ashamed?

**igor griffiths**

NOVEMBER 7, 2007 AT 8:31 PM

Hooray someone talking sense about global warming, with life expectancy having the potential through science to be stretched to ridiculous limits and the compound interest effect on childbirth (more babies = more potential parents). There now must be an acceptance that people all die at some time, nature knows best, this will dismay the professional campaigners and the scientists but that's life (or death) and we must let nature take its course where human life is not sustainable. However creating food mountains while people starve is not acceptable either.

**Steve**

NOVEMBER 8, 2007 AT 9:37 AM

I've come to the conclusion that this would be the result of all life on earth given a chance. Life expands to fill the possibilities available. (Even when the space isn't so accommodating). So it depends on whether we want quality or quantity of life, and whether we are prepared to accept human nature, or keep it under the thumb of social contract. What would mice do in this situation, I keep asking myself?

**peahen**

NOVEMBER 14, 2007 AT 4:55 PM

Well done for having the courage to say this, Boris. More power to you.

**Sophie Waterhouse**

NOVEMBER 18, 2007 AT 2:18 PM

Boris, reading this makes it a certainty I will be voting for you in the London mayoral election. There is no more important issue than population growth at this point – it is hard to think of a problem that it is not a key factor in from climate change to housing. The short term local consequences of population growth are dispiriting to say the least. Globally, England and Wales already rank in third place for highest population density; London is in fourth place – both well ahead of India and China. The longer term (25 years) consequences of population continuing to grow are terrifying. One thing seems certain: in the long term population will decrease whether we like it or not. The choice we have is between voluntarily stabilising and reducing it, or billions of people dying in famines and resource wars as the earth is devastated and ruined. And it is not just going to be distant lands that are affected. Britain is heavily dependent on imports and

cannot feed itself without them.

Most British politicians seem unable to let go of the fantasy that growth can be limitless. They equate more people with a bigger GDP but a bigger GDP does not automatically mean a better quality of life or even less poverty. They talk of the need for “infrastructure” to cope with the increasing population but this is pie in the sky. If you don’t have enough resources no amount of infrastructure will solve the problem.

The more people who are willing to have no more than two children, the better. Better still right now if a couple just wants to have one. And those who are happy enough not to have any should not be stigmatized. There is a pervasive attitude that if a woman does not want children she must be very selfish, rather than just being someone who wants to explore the other possibilities that changes in the status of women allow. Childfree women and men are not the enemies of parents and we need to work together to create a future for the next generation that might actually be bearable.

Thank you for an inspiring and brave article.

COMMENTS ARE CLOSED.