



## Session 1: World Population hits **8 Billion**: What's next?

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## 8 billion lives



“ This is a **success story**, not a doomsday scenario. Our world, despite its challenges, is one where higher shares of people are **educated** and live **healthier** lives than at any previous point in history. ”

UNFPA Executive Director  
Dr. Natalia Kanem





# World Numbers

The world population passed **8 billion** in November 2022.

The pace of **population growth** is slowing down, but the world's population will continue to grow until 2100.

More newborns are surviving. More children are going to school and reaching adulthood.

Since 1990, **global lifespans have increased** by nearly a decade.

**Average fertility rates have fallen** from 5 children per woman in the 1950s to 2.3 today – a sign of the **control that individuals have gained** over their reproductive lives.



## Too many?

### Facts:

- $\frac{2}{3}$  of all people live in a place with sub-replacement fertility
- The global fertility rate will fall below 2.1 around 2050
- Much of current population growth is driven by rising lifespans
- For the next 25+ years,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of all population growth will be driven by past growth, i.e., unaffected by fertility changes







## Too few?

### Facts:

- Many countries have experienced below-2.1 fertility rates since the 1970s – but have still grown due to migration
- Population ageing is the natural result of growing longevity and declining fertility rates, a process taking place everywhere.
- It is a sign of the increasing control that individuals, especially women, are able to exercise over their reproductive lives

Too many?  
Too few?

What is the  
right number?

The world is  
asking the  
wrong  
questions.

No demographic  
trend is solely bad  
or good.

There is no perfect  
population size,  
nor any reliable way  
to achieve a specific  
population size.

People  
**cannot** have  
too many or  
too few  
children under  
any definition  
but their own.

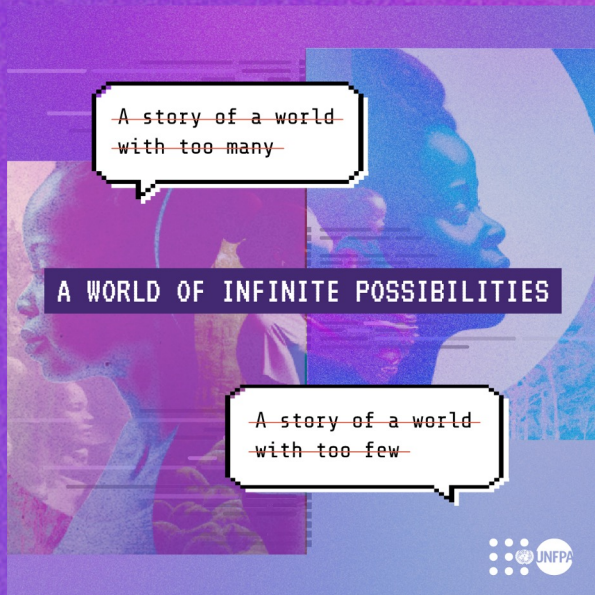
**It's not about the  
number; it's about  
the quality of life.**

Unrealized fertility goals  
of individuals are strongly  
related to economic  
barriers and inequitable  
gender systems.

Need to understand demographic  
changes to have **tools, public support,**  
**political will** and to mitigate negative  
effects and harness opportunities

*"Identifying population  
growth as the problem  
logically presents  
population control as the  
solution. This  
automatically transforms  
wombs into legitimate  
sites for climate policy."*  
- CNN Editor Eliza  
Anyangwe





**Dr. Natalia Kanem**  
UNFPA Executive Director





## Rights and choices are key

It is the **basic right** of every individual to **freely decide** the **number**, **spacing** and **timing** of their children.

We must guarantee the ability to make sexual and reproductive health **decisions free from discrimination**, coercion and violence.

The policies and services to help us reach these reproductive goals must be **affordable** and **accessible**, and meet **international standards of quality**.

**Reproductive health services** should include: contraception, comprehensive sexuality education, access to safe abortion where legal, and infertility care.

Instead of instituting policies to influence people's choices, governments must work to **empower** them to achieve **their individual reproductive goals**.

These are the goals we must work towards – not the goal of influencing fertility rates, whether high or low.



## The state of reproductive rights and choices

Are people, especially women, able to freely make their own reproductive choices?

The answer, too often, is **no**.

- An estimated 44% of partnered women are unable to make decisions over health care, contraception or sex
- Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended
- Half a million births every year are to very young adolescents – 10 to 14 years old
- As few as  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of women in low- and middle-income regions are meeting their fertility ideals – most women under- or over-achieve them
- Consequences of under- and over-achieved fertility are life-altering and can be devastating:
  - Stigma, abandonment, violence
  - Poverty, lost education, risk of maternal injury and death





### CHANGING THE NARRATIVE



~~Birth rates plummet, threat to national security~~



Young people want kids, but can't afford them. How can societies help?



### CHANGING THE NARRATIVE



~~Ageing societies: The world's next demographic time bomb~~



World rejoices as lifespans grow and seniors enjoy better health



### CHANGING THE NARRATIVE




~~Birth rates fall as women reject motherhood in record numbers~~



Women's desire for motherhood undermined by relentless gender discrimination







## Toolkit for Governments and Policy-makers to address demographic change

- Use **population data** to plan ahead
  - Understand ways **demographic change** will impact the **economy** and the need for **new social policies**
  - Interrogate the **human rights implications** of potential policy responses
  - Support the **fertility preferences** and aspirations of people
  - Assure universal access to **sexual and reproductive health and rights**
- Enable **young people** to build a future in a place of their choice
  - Establish **family policies** that help to build strong, diverse and resilient families
  - Relentlessly advance **gender equality**
  - Promote **more inclusive societies** enabling more people to actively contribute to the economy (young people, women, minorities, older persons and persons with disability)
  - Promote the **inclusion of migrants** in the world of work and society at large

In short, ensure the accelerated and full implementation of the [ICPD Programme of Action](#)

8 BILLION LIVES,  
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES  
The case for rights and choices





# Thank you!

Access the 2023 State of the World Population report:

