

UN revises population projections downward



[Lloyd Alter lloydalter](#) June 24, 2019



Screen capture The dangers of overconsumption, population growth and a toxic environment Star Trek Captain Kirk and the Tribbles

Annual growth will soon be negative everywhere except Africa.

For almost every issue we talk about on TreeHugger, there are always comments that the biggest cause of all our problems is population, that there are just too many people. But as we have noted before, population growth is slowing

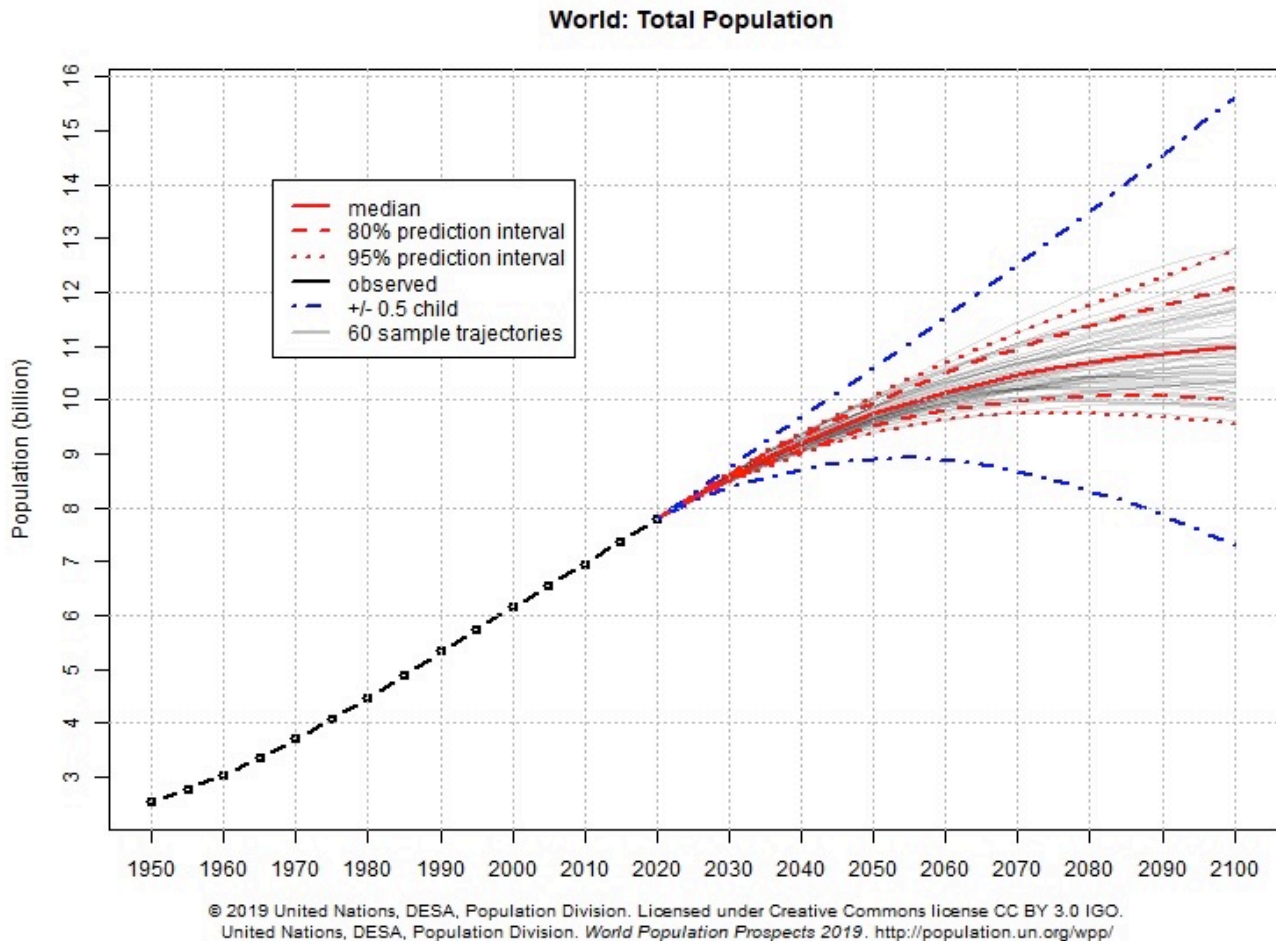
and [we really have a consumption crisis, not a population crisis.](#)

Now, the [United Nations Population Division](#) has revised their population projections down again, as growth is declining more quickly than expected, populations are shrinking everywhere

except Africa, and even it is slowing down. [According to the Economist.](#)

Birth rates are falling faster than expected in some developing countries. In the late 1980s Kenya had a fertility rate of 6.5, implying a

woman could expect to have that many children. Two years ago the UN reckoned Kenya's fertility rate would drop to 2.1 (the point at which the population sustains itself naturally) only in the late 2070s. Because of new data, it now thinks Kenya will reach that point a decade earlier.

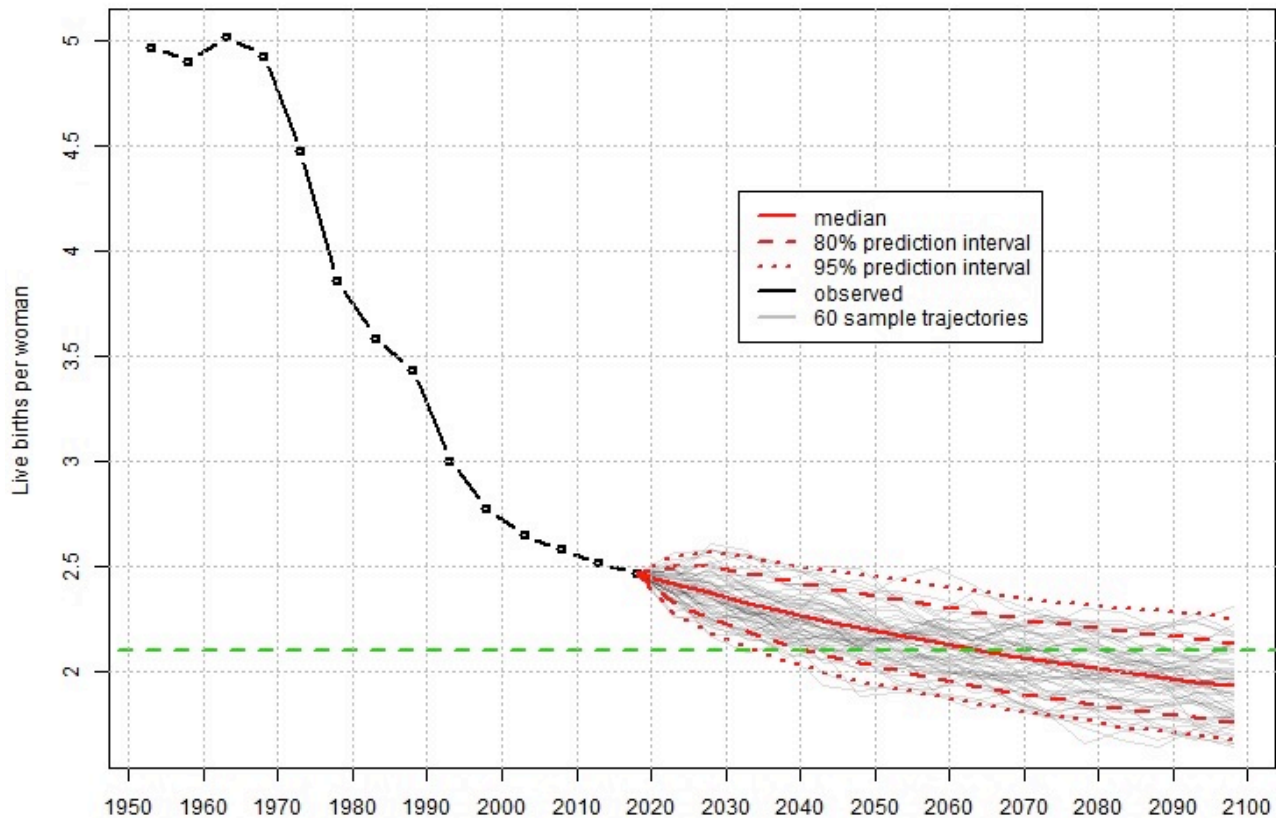


Population growth rate is declining..../ United Nations Population Division/[CC BY-NC 3.0](#)

People are also living longer, particularly in Africa thanks to improved HIV treatments. “In America, however, the opioid epidemic has pushed up the death rate, especially for men. The

chance of a 15-year-old boy dying by the age of 50 is now higher in America than in Bangladesh.”

World



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 United Nations, DESA, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2019*. <http://population.un.org/wpp/>

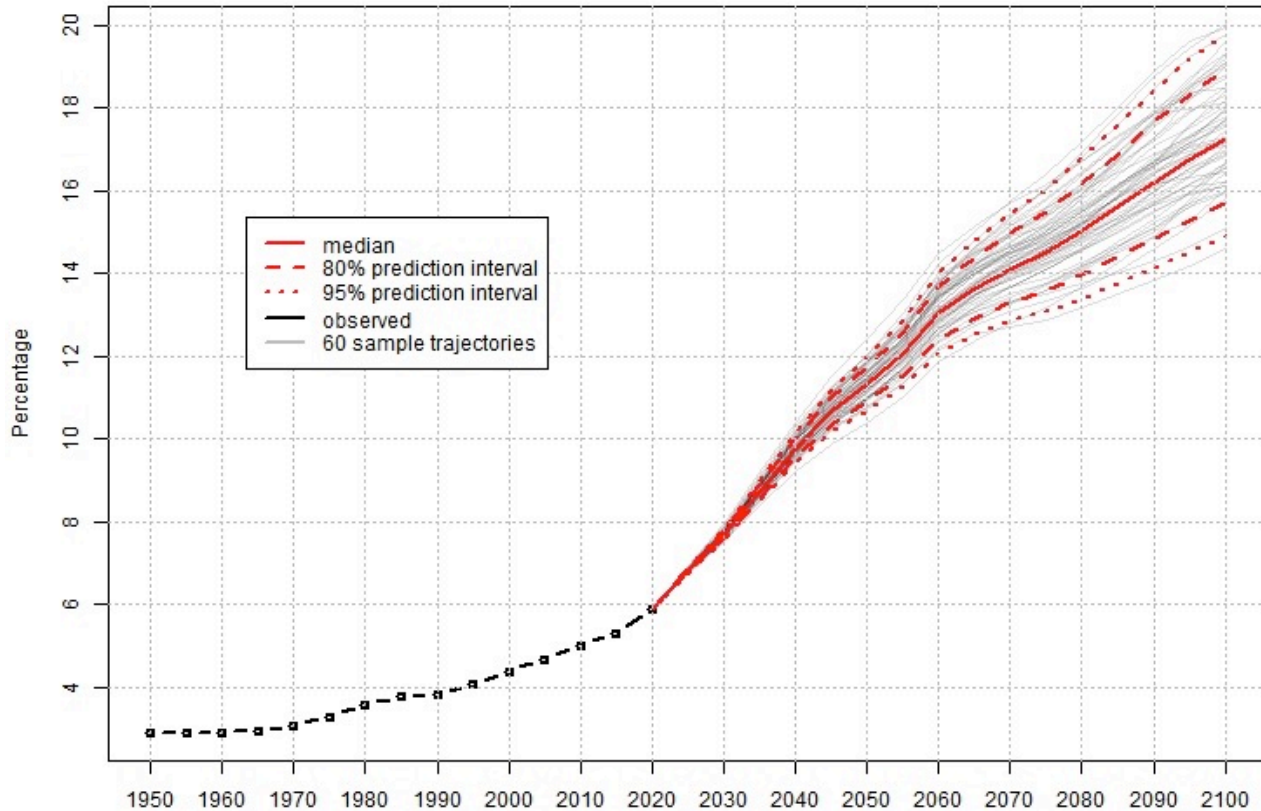
worldwide, the fertility rate is crashing / United Nations Population Division/[CC BY 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)

The fact that people are having fewer kids and living longer means that the world's population is skewing ever older. This is creating problems in developed countries like Japan, where the government is offering incentives to encourage more babies. But when one politician suggested

that young families should aim for three kids, there was a backlash, [according to Japan Today](#):

“My spouse and I both already work to earn money to care for our aging parents whom we love, so even just being asked to have at least three kids too is exhausting.”

World: Percentage of population aged 70 years or over



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United Nations, DESA, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2019*. <http://population.un.org/wpp/>

Meanwhile, the percentage of population over 70 goes up fast. /United Nations Population Division/CC BY 3.0

So we will have ever more old people being taken care of by fewer young people.

Some are positive about this change; John Ibbitson and Darrell Bricker, authors of the recent book [Empty Planet](#), envision good things all round. [The CBC reviewer notes](#): “Fewer workers will command higher wages; the environment will improve; the risk of famine will wane; and falling birthrates in the developing world will bring greater affluence and autonomy for women.” The CBC quotes the book:

The great defining event of the twenty-first century — one of the great defining events in

human history — will occur in three decades, give or take, when the global population starts to decline. Once that decline begins, it will never end. We do not face the challenge of a population bomb but of a population bust — a relentless, generation-after-generation culling of the human herd. Nothing like this has ever happened before.

Three decades. Really, between the climate crisis and the population bust, our millennials and Generation Z are in for interesting times.