

Overpopulation

Overpopulation is an undesirable condition where the number of existing human population exceeds the carrying capacity of [Earth](#). Overpopulation is caused by a number of factors: reduced mortality rate, better medical facilities, depletion of precious resources are just a few of the causes which results in overpopulation. It is possible for a sparsely populated area to become densely populated if it is not able to sustain life.

Growing advances in technology with each coming year has affected humanity in many ways. One of these has been the ability to save lives and create better medical treatment for all. A direct result of this has been increased lifespan and the growth of the population. In the past fifty or so years, the growth of population has boomed and has turned into overpopulation. In the history of our species, the birth and death rate have always been able to balance and maintain a population growth rate that is sustainable.

Since the time of the Bubonic Plague in the 1400's, the growth of population has been on a constant increase. Between the time of the plague and the 21st century, there has been hundreds and thousands of wars, natural calamities and man-made hazards. However, none of these have made a dent on the population. Developing nations face the problem of overpopulation more than developed countries, but it affects most of the Earth as of now. When we are talking about overpopulation, we should first understand the causes of it.

Causes of Overpopulation

Decline in the Death Rate: At the root of overpopulation is the difference between the overall birth rate and death rate in populations. If the number of children born each year equals the number of adults that die, then the population will stabilize. Talking about overpopulation shows that while there are many factors that can increase the death rate for short periods of time, the ones that increase the birth rate do so over a long period of time. The discovery of agriculture by our ancestors was one factor that provided them with the ability to sustain their nutrition without hunting. This created the first imbalance between the two rates.

Better Medical Facilities: Following this came the industrial revolution. Technological advancement was perhaps the biggest reason why the balance has been permanently disturbed. Science was able to produce better means of producing food, which allowed families to feed more mouths. Medical science made many discoveries thanks to which they were able to defeat a whole range of diseases. Illnesses that had claimed thousands of lives till now were cured because of the invention of vaccines. Combining the increase in food supply with fewer means of mortality tipped the balance and became the starting point of overpopulation.

More Hands to Overcome Poverty: However, when talking about overpopulation we should understand that there is a psychological component as well. For thousands of years, a very small part of the population had enough money to live in comfort. The rest faced poverty and would give birth to large families to make up for the high infant mortality rate. Families that have been through poverty, natural disasters or are simply in need of more hands to work are a major factor for overpopulation. As compared to earlier times, most of these extra children survive and consume resources that are not sufficient in nature.

Technological Advancement in Fertility Treatment: With latest technological advancement and more discoveries in medical science, it has become possible for couple who are unable to conceive to undergo fertility treatment methods and have their own babies. Today there are effective medicines which can increase the chance of conception and lead to rise in birth rate. Moreover, due to modern techniques pregnancies today are far safer.

Immigration: Many people prefer to move to developed countries like US, UK, Canada and Australia where best facilities are available in terms of medical, education, security and employment. The end result is that those people settle over there and those places become overcrowded. Difference between the number of people who are leaving the country and the number of people who enter narrows down which leads to more demand for food, clothes, energy and homes. This gives rise to shortage of resources. Though the overall population remains the same, it just affects the density of population making that place simply overcrowded.

Lack of Family Planning: Most developing nations have large numbers of people who are illiterate, live below the poverty line and have little or no knowledge about family planning. Getting their children married at an early age increase the chances of producing more kids. Those people are unable to understand the harmful effects of overpopulation and lack of ignorance prompts them to avoid family planning measures.

Effects of Overpopulation

Depletion of Natural Resources: The effects of overpopulation are quite severe. The first of these is the depletion of resources. The Earth can only produce a limited amount of water and food, which is falling short of the current needs. Most of the environmental damage being seen in the last fifty odd years is because of the growing number of people on the planet. They are [cutting down forests](#), hunting wildlife in a reckless manner, causing [pollution](#) and creating a host of problems. Those engaged in talking about overpopulation have noticed that acts of violence and aggression outside of a war zone have increased tremendously while competing for resources.

Degradation of Environment: With the overuse of coal, oil and natural gas, it has started producing some serious [effects on our environment](#). Rise in the number of vehicles and industries have badly affected the quality of air. Rise in amount of CO2 emissions leads to [global warming](#). Melting of polar ice caps, [changing climate patterns](#), rise in sea level are few of the consequences that we might have to face due to [environment pollution](#).

Conflicts and Wars: Overpopulation in developing countries puts a major strain on the resources it should be utilizing for development. Conflicts over water are becoming a source of tension between countries, which could result in wars. It causes more diseases to spread and makes them harder to control. Starvation is a huge issue facing the world and the mortality rate for children is being fuelled by it. Poverty is the biggest hallmark we see when talking about overpopulation. All of this will only become worse if solutions are not sought out for the factors affecting our population. We can no longer prevent it, but there are ways to control it.

Rise in Unemployment: When a country becomes overpopulated, it gives rise to unemployment as there is fewer jobs to support a large number of people. Rise in unemployment gives rise to crime as people will steal various items to feed their family and provide them basic amenities of life.

High Cost of Living: As difference between demand and supply continues to expand due to overpopulation, it raises the prices of various commodities including food, shelter and healthcare. This means that people have to pay more to survive and feed their families.

Solutions to Overpopulation

Better Education: One of the first measures is to implement policies reflecting social change. Educating the masses helps to understand the need to have one or two children at the most. Similarly, education plays a vital role in understanding latest technologies. Families that are facing a hard life and choose to have four or five children should be discouraged. Family planning and efficient birth control can help in women making their own reproductive choices. Open dialogue on abortion and voluntary sterilization should be seen when talking about overpopulation.

Making People Aware of Family Planning: As population of this world is growing at a rapid pace, raising awareness among people regarding family planning and letting them know about serious after effects of overpopulation can help curb population growth. One of the best way is to let them know about various safe sex techniques and contraceptives methods available to avoid any unwanted pregnancy.

Tax Benefits or Concessions: Government of various countries might have to come with various policies related to tax exemptions to curb overpopulation. One of them might be to waive of certain part of income tax or lowering rates of income tax for those married couples who have single or two children. As we humans are more inclined towards money, this may produce some positive results.

Knowledge of Sex Education: Imparting sex education to young kids at elementary level should be must. Most parents feel shy in discussing such things with their kids which result in their children going out and look out for such information on internet or discuss it with their peers. Mostly, the information is incomplete which results in sexually active teenagers unaware of contraceptives and embarrassed to seek information about same. It is therefore important for parents and teachers to shed their old inhibitions and make their kids or students aware of solid sex education.

Questions:

1. List the 6 factors that are believed to cause overpopulation?
2. Create the chart below looking at the effects of overpopulation and what the environmental, social and economic impacts are of each.

| Effects of Overpopulation | Environmental impacts | Social Impacts | Economic impacts |
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3. List 4 possible solutions to the overpopulation issue, and briefly state why each is considered a solution.