

Current World Issues



“The good news? Population growth is slowing, life expectancy is rising, and the hole in the ozone layer which shields us from ultraviolet rays is expected to shrink. But our climate and biodiversity are in peril, and food and water supplies will be tight.”

- Life expectancy is increasing except in Africa, where AIDS and other infectious diseases have taken a toll.
- Lower birth rates will start to level the global population by mid-century, however by 2025, the world’s population will have reached an estimated 9 billion people.
- One-fifth of the world’s people must survive on less than \$1 per day.
- About 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water.
- Two billion people lack access to commercial energy.
- The phaseout of chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) will help reduce the hole in the ozone layer.
- The continued burning of fossil fuels will lead to hotter times in the future. There has been a global reduction in the burning of fossil fuels by 5% since 1981.
- The U.S. produces more greenhouse gases than any other country – and by far the most per person.
- The melting of the arctic ice pack is a result of global warming, which could lead to rising sea levels and more severe storms and drought.
- As more of the limited amount of fresh water is used each year, unequal access to supplies could produce competition and conflicts among nations.
- Hunger continues to plague poorer countries, especially in Africa, as badly managed agriculture leads to soil salinization and degradation.
- Severe food shortages caused by years of drought may kill as many as 300 000 people in southern Africa in the next six months, according to the U.N. Countries hardest hit include Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Mozambique.
- Burning of forests to create cropland and unregulated timber harvesting have destroyed more than 15% of the Amazon in only 30 years.
- Destruction of forests has helped cause the worst spasm of extinctions since the dinosaurs were wiped out.
- In 1996, 25% of the world’s 4630 mammal species and 11% of its 9675 bird species were at significant risk of extinction.
- If India does not curtail its population growth, it will surpass China as the most populous nation by 2050, with a projected 1.5 billion people.
- As much as 86% of Indonesia’s coral reefs, home to thousands of marine species, are severely damaged by over-fishing, sedimentation, and pollution.