



The Next 8 Billion

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Empowering Futures

Long-term Governance, Democracy and Futures Research

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The 8 Billionth Baby

*“Our understanding of **We the Peoples** in the Charter of the United Nations needs to be expanded to protect the interests of **all the people of the 21st century** and to bequeath a liveable world to those who will follow ”*

The UN Secretary-General - *Our Common Agenda*



In November 2022, the world's **8 billionth baby** was born in the Dominican Republic.

The UN described it as a **milestone in human history** - the culmination of an era where dramatic health improvements have driven an acceleration in the global population.

It took the human race hundreds of thousands of years to reach its first billion people - but someone born in the 1970s has lived to see the world's population **double in size**.

This population explosion is now in its final stages. The 8 billionth baby has a good chance of seeing the **global population peak**.



The demographic transition is not automatic. It's driven by **profound behavioral changes** - and a transformation in the way that people - and societies - see the future.

As health improves, more babies survive their early years and **families become much larger**.

But soon parents decide to invest more **time and resources** in fewer children. Family size shrinks and a country's population growth slows.

Fastest population growth: 1960

2.3% annually (today: 0.8%)

Peak fertility: 1963

5.3 births per woman (today 2.3)

Youngest world: 1970

Median age of 20 years (today: 30 years)

Peak births: 2017

Total births will fall 5% in the next decade

Peak population: ????

Population is falling in 40 countries where 2.1bn people live, with the global peak likely towards the end of the century

With fertility peaking in the 1960s and now close to **replacement rate**, population growth has been slowing since it passed 4 billion.

Today's growth is driven primarily by the **number of young parents** at a time when nearly half of people are under the age of thirty.

But with the world aging rapidly and fertility falling further, **peak population is inevitable.**

The only question is when.

Demographers believe around **117 billion people** have ever lived. As one of today's 8 billion, we are part of the **largest living generation in history** – more 1 in 15 members of the human race are currently alive.

But - unless humanity is destined for rapid extinction - the **people of the future outnumber those alive today**. And that's true even if we limit our time horizon to 2100.

That is why the Secretary-General has called for us to enlarge our perspective to consider **all citizens of the 21st century** – and then to think about **the inheritance** our century will leave to those that follow.

It's time to look beyond today's 8 billion to the Next 8 Billion people to be born.

An Accurate Human Accounting

*“Every branch of the [United Nations] requires prompt and reliable information on **the number and characteristics of people** in different parts of the world...*

*We need accurate human accounting... [and] knowledge of **the factors underlying population change**, of its social and economic consequences.”*

Trygve Lie, the UN's first SG in 1947

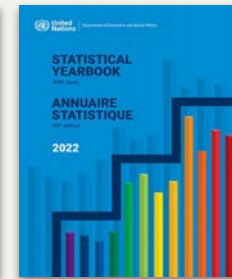
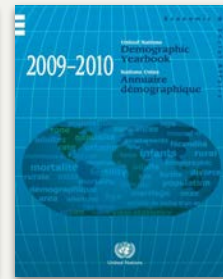
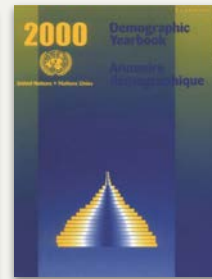
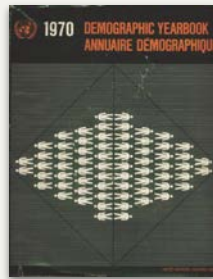
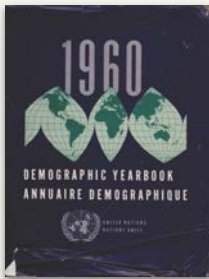
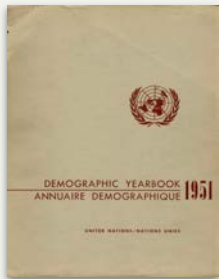


The end of WWII created space for visionaries to develop what the UN Charter called the **international machinery** for “the economic and social advancement of all peoples.”

An indispensable part of that machinery was **an accurate human accounting** of the world’s people.

The UN’s first Secretary-General asked the pioneering demographer, Frank W. Notestein, to **count** the global population and **project** how that population would grow.

As a result, we have 70 years of rigorous **demographic analysis** on which to build our understanding of the Next 8 Billion.



1949: first UN estimate of current and historical population

1951: first UN estimate of future population trends

2022: The World Population Prospects reach their 27th edition

- Covers the entire population of the world 1950-2100, with data for every year
- Drawn from censuses, civil registration and vital statistics systems, demographic surveys, and administrative records
- Data quality has improved but remains patchy
- 14% of countries lack recent fertility data, nearly half do not have recent censuses, data on migration flows is weak



Births

fertility by age of mother

Deaths

mortality by age and sex

Population movements

net international migration

Drivers



UN Medium

- **Shift towards** small families in high fertility countries
- **Modest rebound** in fertility in countries where women currently have fewer than two children
- **Continued improvements** in mortality
- **Shocks** only have short-term impacts on mortality

Scenarios

Alternative scenarios include:

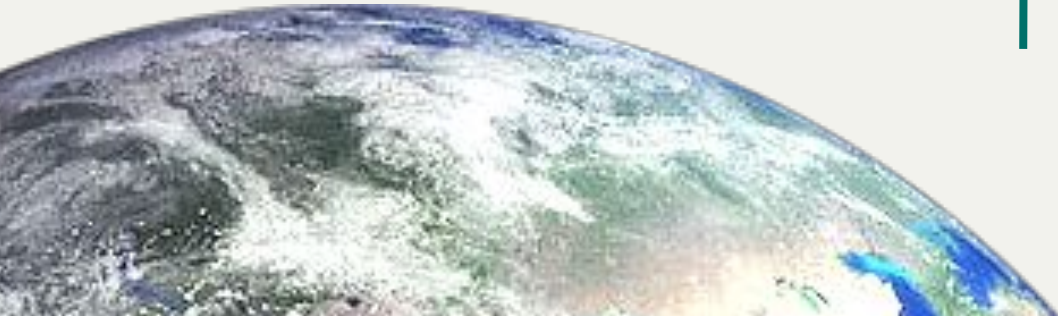
- **High and low fertility** (± 0.5 births)
- **No Change** in fertility, mortality, migration, **Constant Mortality** and **Zero Migration**

The UN projections have a better track record than most forecasts.

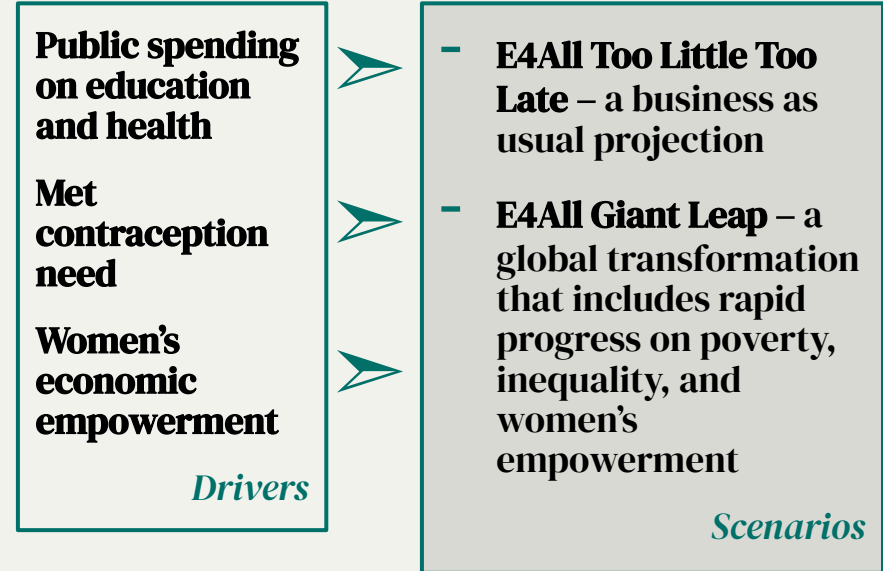
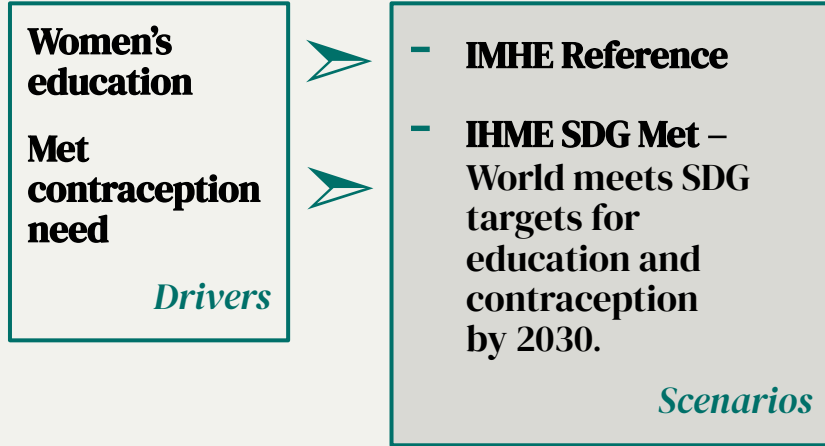
Over time, the World Population Prospects have become steadily more accurate.

The 1984 projection was within a few months of predicting when the global population would reach 8 billion.

- Uncertainty increases over longer time horizons – especially beyond 2050
- Births are harder to predict than deaths – uncertainties are greatest for high fertility countries
- The UN's models do not consider significantly increased migration – driven by climate change, for example
- Nor do they consider shocks that lead to a substantial and sudden loss of population



Alternative demographic models aim for a more **dynamic understanding** of the drivers of falling fertility



Over seven decades, the UN's population projections have become the **gold standard** for anyone thinking about the future.

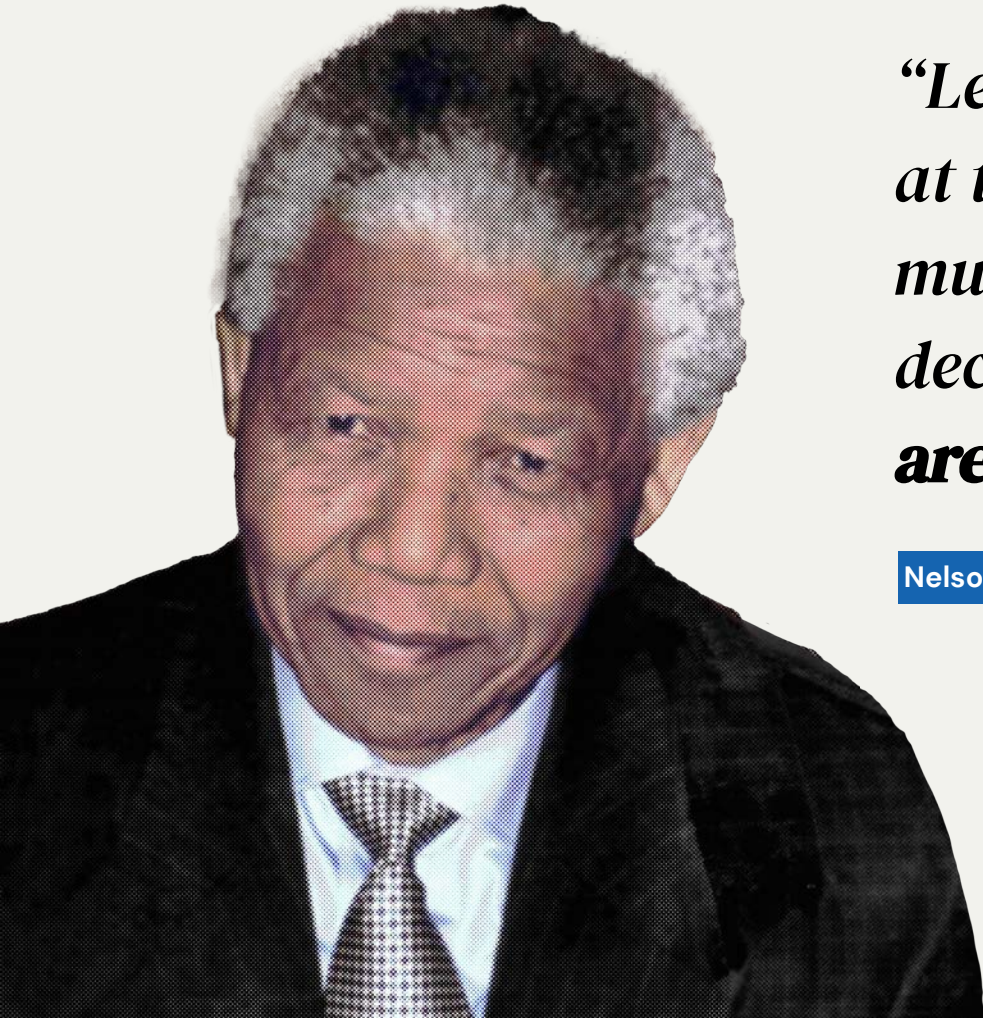
Our analysis of the Next 8 Billion relies primarily on **UN Medium** - the reference scenario from the World Population Prospects.

But UN projections are based on the assumption that our future will resemble **our demographic past**.

IHME and E4All scenarios allow us to explore the **more rapid falls in fertility** that are likely if women are empowered in countries yet to complete their demographic transition.

Demography is not destiny. It's driven by the choices of families, communities, countries, and the world.

**When will the
Next 8 Billion be
Born?**



*“Let us all resolve to put children at the centre of all we do. They must be the motivation for every decision we make. **Because they are our future.**”*

Nelson Mandela

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his year, enough children will be born to fill one of the **ten largest countries** on earth.

But today's young people lack **political representation** in their own societies and their interests are often been poorly served by global cooperation.

This problem is even more pronounced for people who will be born **years, decades**, or even **centuries** into the future.

Future generations do not need our abstract concern but an **evidence-based understanding** of their likely demography, distribution, and needs.

8 Billion



Population

Now

Based on the UN Medium scenario, the Next 8 Billion babies will be **born by 2083**.

That puts living and future generations **in balance** over a period of just 60 years.

1 Billion



2030

2 Billion



2037

3 Billion



2044

4 Billion



2052

5 Billion



2059

6 Billion



2067

7 Billion



2075

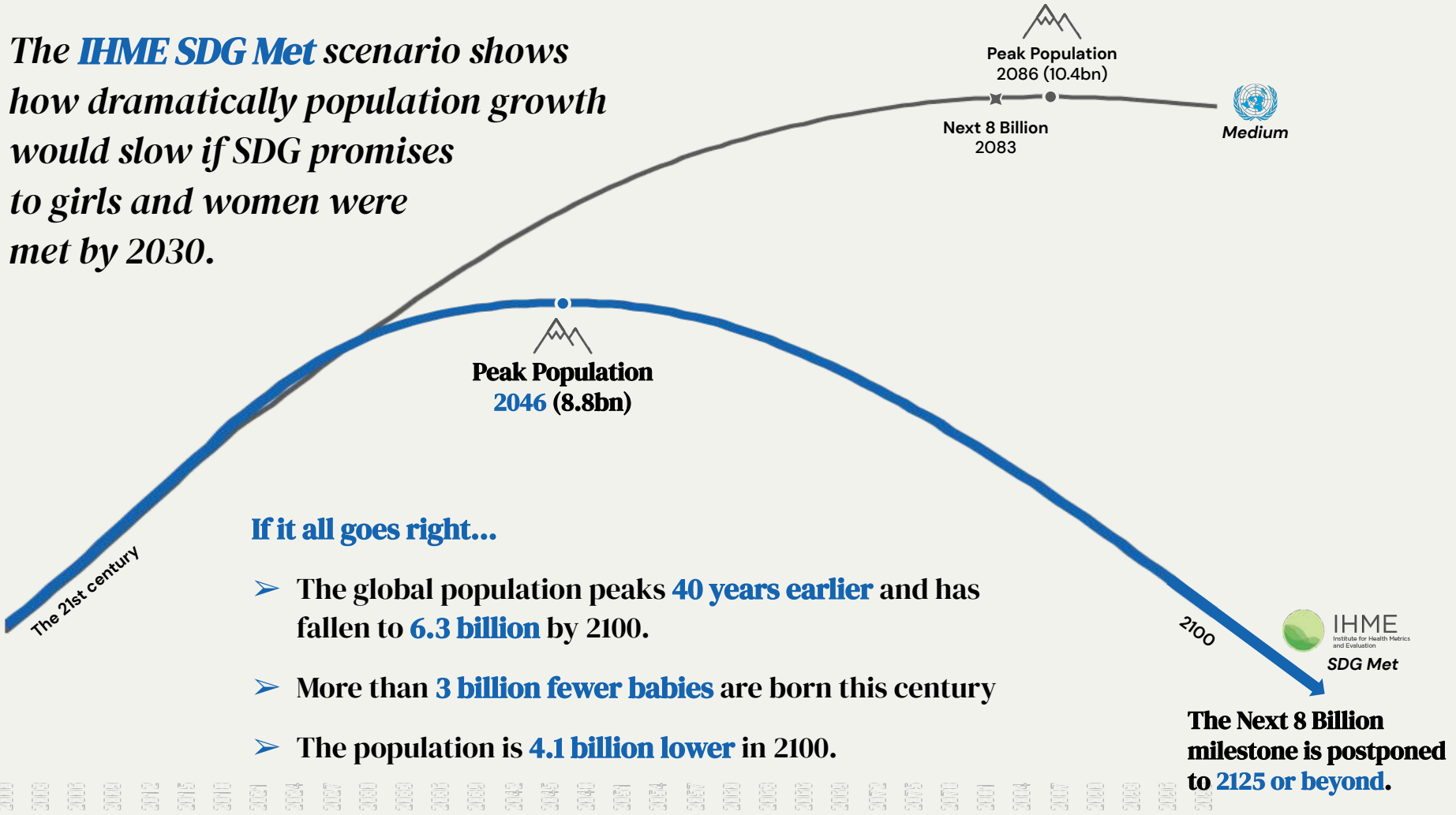
8 Billion



2083

Births

The **IHME SDG Met** scenario shows how dramatically population growth would slow if SDG promises to girls and women were met by 2030.



If it all goes right...

- The global population peaks **40 years earlier** and has fallen to **6.3 billion** by 2100.
- More than **3 billion fewer babies** are born this century
- The population is **4.1 billion lower** in 2100.

The Next 8 Billion milestone is postponed to 2125 or beyond.

Recent shocks have had little demographic impact, but a **10% or greater population loss** is not unprecedented in human history.

WMDs or emerging technological threats could lead to **massive population loss**.

And **environmental damage** could cross as a threshold, where the 'niche' in which humanity shrinks irreversibly.



Progressive Failure

Incremental damage from existing threats to people and planet

The world could reach the Next 8 Billion in the 2060s and see 50% more births by the end of the century.



Accelerating Threats

Accelerating threats to the systems needed to support 8+ billion

Unpredictable impacts on mortality, fertility, and migration make population trends increasingly unpredictable.



Catastrophic Collapse

A single or series of natural or manmade disasters

A shock or shocks on the scale of the Black Death leads to a loss of 10% or more of the global population



Existential Threat

Extinction or drastic/irreversible loss of humanity's potential

The population falls to zero or close to zero – most likely over an extended period of time

*Greater education and empowerment of women could lead to **3 billion fewer people** being born in the rest of the century - a trend that would be reinforced by more peaceful, inclusive, and equitable societies.*

*But a worsening of current policy failures would lead to **larger future generation** - more people born more quickly into a world with greater risks and fewer opportunities.*

*At some point, this logic breaks down. The worst shocks could kill so many people that the global population **declines abruptly** rather than naturally.*

The paradox of future generations - smaller is better (until it isn't).

Where will the Future Live?



*“Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and **have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations,** even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground.”*

Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy

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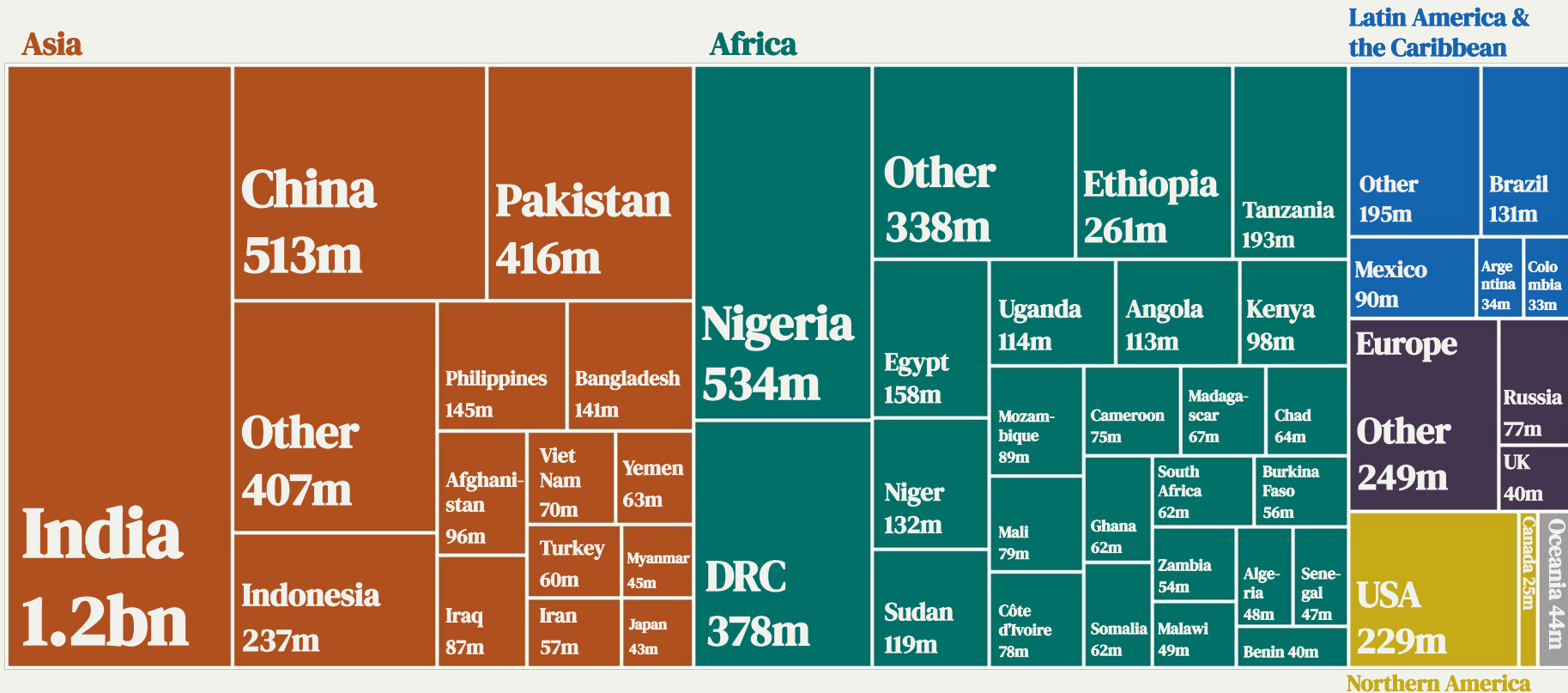
o understand the future, we need to know **where future generations will be born.**

When we compare today's 8 billion to the Next 8 Billion, we find that they are more likely to live in the **Global South**, and in countries that are currently **economically and politically marginalized.**

They are also more likely to live in today's **young countries** - reflecting a deepening divide between societies where youth is a scarce resource and those that still have large numbers of young people.

Without action to harness the potential of the Next 8 Billion, tomorrow's demographic shifts will **amplify today's inequalities.**

The Next 8 Billion will overwhelmingly be born in **Asia (44%)** and **Africa (42%)**. Fourteen of the **top 20 countries** are outside the G20: **Nigeria, Pakistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Egypt, Philippines, Bangladesh, Niger, Sudan, Uganda, Angola, Kenya, and Afghanistan.**



Northern America

The Next 8 Billion will mainly be born in what are currently low and lower-middle income countries - and in families and communities that still have **significant unmet human development needs**. More than half will be born in countries with **low levels of gender equality**.



Income Group



No Data



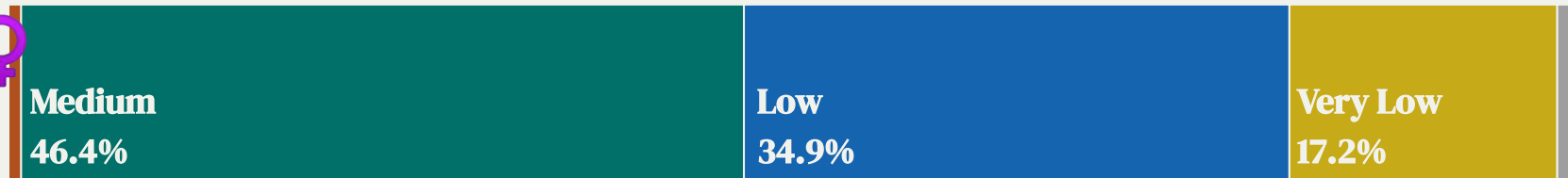
Human Development Index



No Data



Gender Inequality Index



No Data

The 21st century will see the culmination of a shift of **demographic power** - that has seen first Asia and now Africa gain in weight and influence.

As the century progresses, the world's **young people** will increasingly be concentrated on the African continent. In 2100, the median African will be in her **mid-thirties**, while the median Asian will be in her late-forties.

Historically, economies and institutions have struggled to adapt to demographic change - exacerbating **existing patterns of exclusion and inequality**.

We cannot prepare for the future if we continue to be constrained by the patterns of the past.

Living and Future Majority Countries

*“We act as we do **because we can get away with it**: future generations do not vote; they have no political or financial power; **they cannot challenge our decisions.**”*

Gro Harlem Brundtland – The Brundtland Report



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lobally, our analysis **balances** living and future generations - each with 8 billion people.

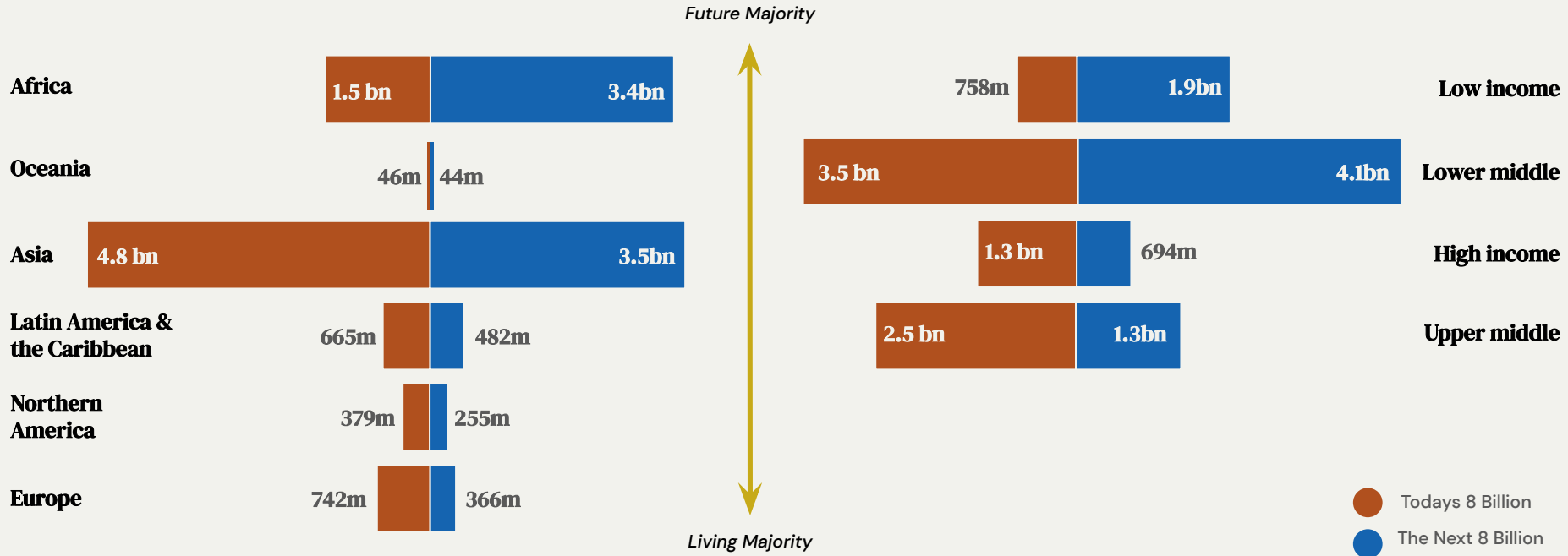
But within countries and regions, the picture is different. Some have a **Living Majority** - more people alive today than will be born in the 8 Next Billion. Some a **Future Majority**, where the reverse is true.

This lens deepens our understanding of the **spatial dimensions** of intergenerational inequality.

It reveals parts of the world which may have an **undervalued interest in the future** - and those which may have strong incentives to perpetuate the inequalities of the present and the past.

Africa is the only region with a **Future Majority**, with more than twice as many Africans in the Next 8 Billion as currently alive. **All other regions** have **Living Majorities** - with the balance towards living generations more pronounced in Europe.

Low and lower middle income countries have Future Majorities. **Upper middle and high income** countries have a Living Majority.



In a ranking from the greatest **Future Majority** to the most pronounced **Living Majority**, all countries (and areas) in the top twenty are from Africa. Non-African countries in the top 50 include Afghanistan, the Solomon Islands, Iraq, and Pakistan.

Only **two G20 countries** are in **the top 100**, while four G20 members have among the biggest **Living Majorities** in the world.

-  Niger (first)
-  DRC (2)
-  Chad (3)
-  Somalia (4)
-  Mali (5)
-  Central African Republic (6)
-  Angola (7)
-  Benin (8)
-  Tanzania (9)
-  Mayotte (10)

-  Côte d'Ivoire (11)
-  Mozambique (12)
-  Cameroon (13)
-  Senegal (14)
-  Zambia (15)
-  Burundi (16)
-  Mauritania (17)
-  Togo (18)
-  Sudan (19)
-  Nigeria (20)



- South Africa (85)
- Saudi Arabia (96)
- Indonesia (103)
- India (107)
- Argentina (119)
- Australia (120)
- Mexico (123)
- Turkey (124)
- USA (130)
- Canada (136)
- Brazil (154)
- UK (159)
- France (161)
- Russia (177)
- Germany (196)
- Italy (230)
- China (231)
- Japan (232)
- Republic of Korea (236)

*Living Majority countries tend to be **richer and more powerful** than those with Future Majorities. Globally, they dominate the UN Security Council, G7 and G20, and Bretton Woods Institutions. Within each country, **older citizens** tend to dominate decision-making.*

*Future Majority countries have **fewer levers** to protect both today's and tomorrow's citizens. Many have less national capacity to **engage with the future** in their governments, universities, and civil society.*

*This is where global cooperation can promote **intergenerational solidarity** and help Future Majority protect their **stake in the future**.*

**We an international system that can
think, plan, and act for the future.**

Eight Questions for the Next 8 billion

“Solutions from the past will not, alone, meet the challenges of the future.”

The UN Deputy Secretary-General



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A serious commitment to the future has an **immediate** and a **longer-term** dimension.

Right now, we need to redouble efforts to meet SDG commitments on **people, planet, prosperity, and peace** through targeted action with and for the world's youngest countries.

Longer-term strategies must be shaped by an understanding of the likely impacts of social, technological, economic, and environmental change on the places where future generations are most likely to be born.

We invite you to contribute your insights on the **drivers** and **levers** that will influence the lives of the Next 8 Billion - and to join the debate about a **policy agenda** for future generations.

1. Smart buys for the future

How do we deliver SDG commitments to enhance the health, education, productivity, and empowerment of the Next 8 Billion?

2. Inclusive or exclusive growth

At a time of rapid technological and geoeconomic change, how do we create economic opportunities in countries where the future will live?

3. People on the move

Do young people move to where the economic opportunities are, the opportunities move to the young people, or neither?

4. Planetary emergency

How can an accelerated transition to Net Zero, an end to biodiversity loss, and adaptation to environmental damage reduce risks and create opportunities for the Next 8 Billion?

Towards An Agenda for the Peoples of the 21st Century

5. Intergenerational impacts of conflict and violence

How can we break cycles of violence and build more peaceful and inclusive societies for future generations?

6. Catastrophic and systemic risk

How can we understand and mitigate the potential impact of increasingly serious and interconnected threats on the Next 8 billion?

7. National governance for the future

How can young countries strengthen strategic foresight, manage risk, and foresight, and future proof policies?

8. An international system for future generations

How to build global institutions that can think, plan, and act for the future, while increasing the international influence of young countries and young people?

Towards An Agenda for the Peoples of the 21st Century

*In 2024, the UN will hold the first **Summit of the Future** “to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like.”*

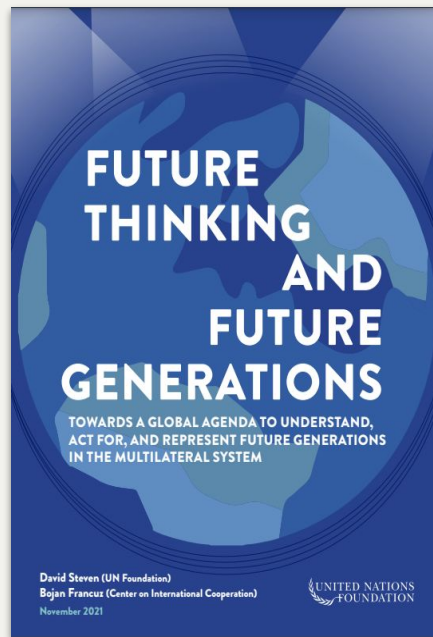
*This is a chance to build a **platform for future generations** - and to agree an intergenerational agenda for all of the peoples of the 21st century.*

*Future generations are usually discussed **in the abstract** - as an amorphous mass of people yet to be born. While we cannot name the people of the future, we have the knowledge and tools to explore their distribution, nature, and needs.*

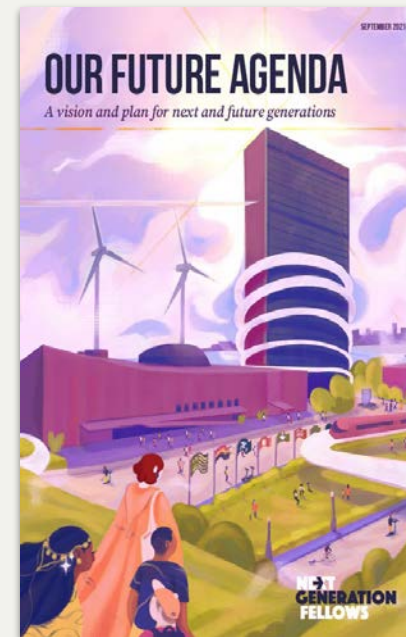
The Next 8 Billion may not have a voice but they can still speak to us. Will we listen?



[Our Common Agenda](#)



[Future Thinking and Future Generations](#)



[Our Future Agenda](#)

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Credits

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