

Advantages of population growth

More people leads to greater human capital

If there are more people, the probability of finding a genius like Einstein, Marie Curie, Beethoven increase. These exceptional people can lead to technological and cultural masterpieces which enrich our lives. The past 200 years have shown exponential growth in technical development and innovation. There are many factors behind this, but the world's growing population means we have a bigger pool of human capital and the possibility of these cutting-edge discoveries increase.

Higher economic growth

Population growth will lead to economic growth with more people able to produce more goods. It will lead to higher tax revenues which can be spent on public goods, such as health care and environmental projects.

- The obvious evaluation is to say, the crucial thing is not GDP, but GDP per capita. If economic growth is at the same rate as population growth, average living standards will not increase. However, it is possible population growth can also improve per capita incomes. As the population increases, the economy can benefit from a bigger talent pool, economies of scale and greater specialisation. All this can enable higher per capita income, which we have seen in major developed economies.

Economies of scale

Farming and industry have been able to benefit from economies of scale, which means as the population grows, food output and manufacturing output have been able to grow even faster than population growth. For example, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Thomas Malthus predicted population growth would lead to famine as we would be unable to feed the growing population. However, his dire predictions failed to materialise because he failed to understand, that the productivity of land, labour and capital could all increase more than proportionately. 300 years ago, most of the population worked on the land. Technological innovation and economies of scale, mean productivity of land has vastly increased as farmers make use of mechanisation and economies of scale for increased food production.

The efficiency of higher population density

In terms of per capita carbon footprint, areas with a high population density are significantly more efficient than rural areas and places with a low population. When people live in densely populated areas, they are more likely to use public transport, live in apartment buildings which are easier to heat. In big cities, transport and the delivery of goods is much more efficient, whereas for low population densities, the average cost and environmental footprint are much higher. Therefore, population growth which leads to growth in city conurbations (which is a feature of global growth in past) is not as environmentally damaging as we may think. In Green Metropolis, by David Owen he argues living in closer proximity in cities is a key aspect of sustainability.

The improved demographic structure of society

Many western economies are now experiencing a falling population, with the result that their population demographic is being skewed to old, retired people. This is imposing costs on society as we struggle to pay for health care and pensions. Moderate population growth helps to rebalance the population with a higher share of young, working people.

Critical mass

Higher populations can enable a critical mass of people to enable a sicker, more vibrant society. With low populations, there is less scope for diversity. But, when the population grows, it can enable the support of a broader cultural range of activities.

Disadvantages of population growth

Cost to the environment

Population growth exacerbates many of the existing environmental problems

Trying to reduce carbon and methane emissions to reduce global warming is relatively more difficult as the population.

There will be greater threat on natural habitats as a greater population has greater demand for housing and farmland. This will increase pressure to cut down forests to make way for farming and housing.

Higher population will lead to a greater consumption of non-renewable resources, leading to a faster depletion of natural resources.

Higher population will lead to greater pollution levels in air, water and land. Higher pollution is associated with a range of health issues, such as cancer and asthma. The pollution also harms animals and plants.

Soil degradation. To feed a growing planet, we have seen serious degrading of farmland. This is due to factors, such as overgrazing, use of chemicals, climate change and use of chemicals.

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Energy crisis

Population explosion accompanied with rapid industrialization and urbanization has led to greater demand for already deficient energy (fuel wood, fossil fuel and electricity).

Pressure on food, clothing & housing

A country with fast growing population has to face a serious problem of scarcity of necessary food, minimum clothing & proper housing facilities, which are basic needs of human life. Thus, it affects the life style and results slum areas, starvation etc.

Standard of living

The overpopulation creates or give rise to large families with low income reducing the standard of persons living therein. The slum areas, starvation and frequently epidemics are the results affecting health and standard of persons within such nation.

Eco-degradation

Overpopulation leads to eco-degradation by increasing air, water, soil and noise pollution, unhygienic condition, deforestation leading to flood and soil erosion. So rapid human population growth is creating increased pressure on the infrastructure, economy, environment, availability of primary health care and nutrition.