

Zero Population Growth Encyclopedia Article

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Malthus's *Essay on Population*, published in 1798, still plays a role in environmental policymaking. The discrepancy between rates of human population growth and agricultural productivity lies at the heart of Malthusianism. One dynamic leads to ever-increasing population; the other to diminishing food and ecological degradation.

To avoid human suffering, Malthusians pursue worldwide zero population growth (ZPG). Because worldwide mortality levels are low, a society can attain ZPG through replacement fertility. If the average number of children born to women in a particular society equals two, then it has reached replacement fertility or ZPG. Governments today annually spend a total of \$900 million to promote ZPG, mostly in less developed countries. ZPG is also the name of a nongovernmental organization that advocates for population awareness. Its origin in 1968 was inspired by Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb*.

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