Population Dynamics

Death rates are falling faster than birth rates, driving up global population. Developed, and even some developing, countries are facing aging societies while cultural and economic change is placing pressure on infrastructure and services.
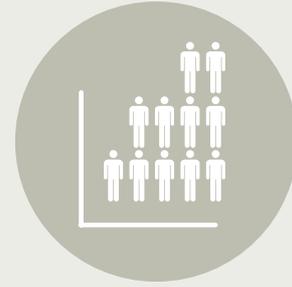
The global population is expected to increase from 7.2 billion today to 10 billion by 2050, with developing countries accounting for 97% of this growth. Factors driving this include rising life expectancy, falling child mortality, and high birth rates particularly in developing countries.

While population is growing overall, there are regional variations. Birth rates in many developed nations are declining, leading to an ageing population and rising welfare costs. Rising youth populations in some developing economies are straining saturated labour markets. International migration is likely to grow faster than in the past 25 years due to globalisation, age, economic imbalances, employment needs, environmental change and conflict.

Migration within countries due to urbanisation is likely to be even more significant than international migration, particularly in developing regions. By 2045, 70% of the global population is projected to be living in urban areas. The infrastructure investment required to match urban growth is estimated at $41 trillion globally by 2030.

Challenges

★ Can we cater for a growing proportion of elderly people in society?

★ Can the challenges of immigration be managed and positive impacts resulting from diversity to create a cohesive society?

★ How can urban areas be designed to accommodate population growth or decline and what does this mean for critical infrastructure such as housing and transport?

★ How might new social and technological trends, such as changing retail patterns or internet communication, affect demographics?

★ Can infrastructure provision be used to reduce inequality and population change against the backdrop of slow economic recovery, regional imbalances and high national debt?

Key Facts:

1. Global population is expected to increase from 7.2 billion today up to 10 billion by 2050, with developing countries accounting for 97% of this growth[1,2].

2. By 2030, the number of people aged 65 and older will double to 1 billion globally, equal to approximately 13% of the total population[3].

3. In 2014 there were roughly 232 million people living outside of their country of origin, with migration not expected to decline under current trends[1].

4. By 2045, 70% of the global population is projected to live in urban areas, increasing most rapidly in the developing economies[1].

5. Globally, 15-24 year olds comprise 40% of the total unemployed population[3].

6. The infrastructure investment required to match urban growth is estimated at $41 trillion globally by 2030 [1].

The U.K. population has grown from nearly **53 million** in the 1961-71 census to an estimated **63 million** in 2011-2021.

England needs an extra **222,000** homes a year between 2011-31, but **312,000** per year for the next 5 years.[8]

1971   2021
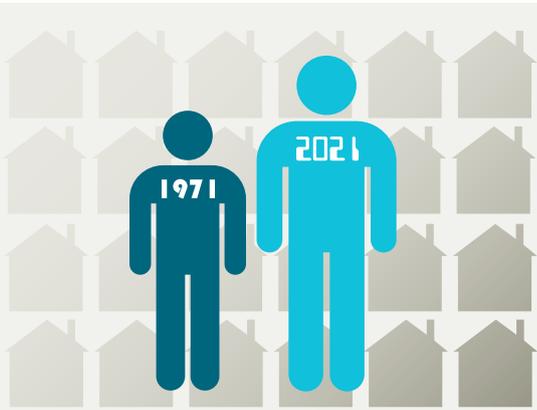
LDA Design Insights:

UK population is set to reach 75 million by 2035, driven largely by immigration and people living longer[6], while the number of people in an average household is shrinking as more people live alone. This is placing pressures on already strained infrastructure and services and will exacerbate the housing shortage.

★ Without public sector involvement, private housing delivery has failed to meet demand. Rising prices and extensive use of property as an investment has made housing unaffordable for many, particularly in the south of the country. In other areas properties lie empty and low values are resulting in underinvestment in maintenance and quality. Private and public sector expertise, assets and finance need to be mobilised to deliver volume, quality and supporting infrastructure.

★ Household formation rates have dropped since 2008, due to high house prices and levels of personal debt, creating long-term structural changes in the market. To make up for housing shortfalls, 312,000 new homes per year are needed through to 2020[7]. This will not be achieved by the private sector alone.

★ The design and provision of infrastructure and services will be shaped by demographic trends, including a growing proportion of elderly people[6] and the need to integrate diverse social and cultural groups. The opportunities and risks must be understood and managed by planners, developers and designers. Uncertainty around future needs means flexibility must be designed into projects to ensure long-term resilience.

★ Early and effective community engagement is essential in understanding and delivering on local needs, and generating support for development. Local authorities and others with strategic responsibility should seek to ensure local needs are balanced with national goals and communicated appropriately.

★ Managing change while ensuring social equity will be a challenge. Place-making has an important role to play, for example, by providing open spaces, cultural activities and affordable housing. Local Enterprise Partnerships and combined authorities need to prioritise challenges that have spatial consequences: for example, without defences, sea level rise will inundate settlements and much of our best agricultural land.

★ While demographic changes present challenges, they also bring benefits. Migration can boost productivity, fill gaps in the labour market and promote greater social and cultural diversity.

What is LDA Futures?

The world is changing in response to a set of environmental, economic, social and technological drivers, and these are shaping the types of infrastructure and development we need and the way we use land.

LDA Futures explores these drivers and their implications to enable us to make appropriate responses through our projects and the advice we give to clients.

References

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