

NEGATIVE POPULATION GROWTH

Press Release

For immediate release

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New NPG Forum Paper Takes Issue with *The New York Times* Article Focused on Declining Population Trends, Points to Reader Comments to Illustrate Alternative Way of Thinking

Should *The New York Times* Take Another Crack at Their May Article About Population Trends?

Alexandria, VA, (August 24, 2021): Negative Population Growth, Inc. has published a new Forum paper discussing the content of *The New York Times*. The paper, titled [*The New York Times' Readers Want to Re-Write the Paper's Gloomy Narrative on Population Decline*](#), considers the general conversation around environmental topics printed at *The Times* and their readers' reactions. Written by Alan Saly, this paper takes issue with an article published on their front page on May 22, 2021, which decried recent data illustrating a slow-down in population growth and analyzes the readers' responses.

Saly begins his work by summarizing *The Times'* content, noting: "A primary concern of *The Times* is, in fact, the alarming situation of the environment, with species loss and habitat loss exacerbated by climate change. Unsustainable fossil fuel extraction, overfishing, pollution, and the ever-increasing inroads by man into pristine nature are thoroughly documented. But a major solution to these problems is hardly ever mentioned." The solution Saly is referring to is a reduction in population growth, which he explains shortly afterward, stating clearly: "The idea that a lower population would lead to lower greenhouse gas emissions is obvious – but this appears to be out of bounds at *The Times*."

Moving forward, Saly highlights *The Times* article as his central talking point. The article, entitled "Long Slide Looms for World Population, with Sweeping Ramifications," surveys recent data and sounds the alarm on a world that will waste away with too few people to build the future and take care of an aging population. Saly spotlights stark statements throughout the article, like: "Maternity wards are already shutting down in Italy" and "Ghost cities are appearing in northeastern China," to illustrate the heightened drama surrounding the new data suggesting a population slow-down. He then surmises: "A reading of the article will confirm that the main narrative is that population decline will leave a dearth of workers and will result in the sad spectacle of fewer children. Secondarily, the article points to the difficult situation of women who can't afford to have families. That's the note the article concludes on, which means that it sticks in the mind of the reader."

To gain perspective on *The Times* readers' reactions, Saly then turns his lens to the comments section and notes the following:

- A solid majority (of commenters) says population decline is positive, not negative
- 437 commenters – 73% of the 594 total – strongly dispute the tone of the article, with many directly assailing the paper for presenting a positive trend (population decline) as a negative
- These comments were recommended 31,211 times, representing 80% of all recommendations made

Saly adds that many of the commenters who say population decline is a good thing and that the paper got it wrong “also discuss the positive consequences of the empowerment of women and the spread of literacy and higher education as positive forces in the world.” He also noted: “Throughout the comments, readers echo concerns and solutions put forward in NPG forum papers over the last decades.”

Concluding his analysis, Saly looks to the future and gently proposes *The Times* should get with the times (i.e., their readership) and look at population trends from more than just one angle, saying: “The future is staring at the face of today’s young adults, and large percentages are delaying marriage, postponing or even declining to have children. *The Times*, to maintain their loyal readership may have to shift its emphasis and consistently make the specific case for how a lower population can be a win-win for humans and the wider natural world.”

Founded in 1972, NPG is a national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to educating the American public and political leaders regarding the damaging effects of population growth. We believe that our nation is already vastly overpopulated in terms of the long-range carrying capacity of its resources and environment. NPG advocates the adoption of its [Proposed National Population Policy](#), with the goal of eventually stabilizing U.S. population at a sustainable level – far lower than today’s. We do not simply identify the problems – we propose solutions. For more information, visit our website at NPG.org, follow us on Facebook [@NegativePopulationGrowth](#) or follow us on Twitter [@npg_org](#).