

# NEGATIVE POPULATION GROWTH



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## Press Release

*For immediate release*

## New NPG Forum Paper Chronicles the Ebb and Flow of Life Expectancy

### How Does Life Expectancy Tie into Population Growth in the U.S. and Abroad?

Alexandria, VA, (March 29, 2022): Homicide, opioid overdose, and suicide contribute to the widening life expectancy gap between the U.S. and other wealthy countries. Negative Population Growth, Inc's newly published Forum paper, titled: [\*Life Expectancy Drives U.S. and World Population Growth\*](#), by Edwin S. Rubenstein, explains the nuances of population growth in tandem with life expectancy. With such a large scope at hand, Rubenstein starts with comparisons between the 1918 flu and the COVID-19 pandemic before discussing the many contributing factors that tie into the world's Total Fertility Rate, the history of life expectancy, and possible outcomes in the future.

Beginning his narrative with data covering the 1918 influenza pandemic, Rubenstein compels readers to look critically at the differences between the 1918 flu and the COVID-19 pandemic, starting with how many deaths occurred during each worldwide scenario. "The best estimates," he shares, "suggest as many as 100 million people died from the Spanish Flu that eventually circled the world. To put that in context, as of January 14th, 2022, 5.5 million people have died from all COVID variants, on a planet with four times as many people." During the 1918 flu life-expectancy "plunged by 12 years, from 51 in 1917 to 39 in 1918," before returning to pre-pandemic life-expectancy estimates in 1919.

Rubenstein then zeros in on the different factors that play into life expectancy in the U.S., sharing that opioid overdoses, suicide, homicide, and infant mortality are causes of death that affect young people (which, in turn, dramatically affect life expectancy trends). Expanding to include the world in his analysis, Rubenstein highlights another part of the life expectancy equation: the impact of the Total Fertility Rate (TFR). He illustrates the significance of its impact with an example, sharing: "Even slight changes per woman translates to around 500 million more individuals on the planet in 2100." Rubenstein tells readers the population will peak, decline, and stabilize in the future, noting: "World population will likely peak at 9.7 billion in 2064, and then decline to about 8.8 billion by 2100 – about 2 billion lower than the latest UN projection."

Touching on life expectancy history, Rubenstein notes that data was not collected on the subject until the 1600s, fueled by the curious elite. Then, the smallpox vaccine allows everyone to live longer lives until industrialization develops and negatively affects human health. Along with industrialization came the prevalence of another lethal blow to young lives: milk. It would take decades for widespread acceptance of pasteurized milk to take hold in the early 1920s. Soon after the advancement of milk processing, science

confirms that chlorine (in microscopic doses) in water eliminates water-borne diseases. By the 1950s, there was safe milk, clean water, and vaccines for the most lethal diseases – all positive gains for human health and longevity.

At this point, another critical medicine was added to our collective human arsenal: penicillin. “This antibiotic,” Rubenstein states, “triggered a revolution in human health...The mass production of antibiotics, the Green Revolution, the rise of international health organizations lifted global life expectancy – especially in the world’s poorest countries.” Given this wide birth of positive outcomes (longer life expectancy) over the last 100 years, Rubenstein points to what can only be called the elephant in the room, saying: “the last century was marked by nearly unbroken increases in life expectancy. This century may not be as kind. The problem is human population growth.” Rubenstein ends with a concise quote from journalist Steven Johnson: “All those brilliant solutions we engineered to reduce or eliminate threats like smallpox created a new, higher-level threat: ourselves. Many of the key problems we now face as a species are second-order effects of reduced mortality...Runaway population growth – and the environmental crisis it has helped produce – should remind us that continued advances in life expectancy are not inevitable.”

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](http://NPG.org), follow us on Facebook [@NegativePopulationGrowth](#) or follow us on Twitter [@npg\\_org](#).