

# Population growth and the environmental virtue of small families



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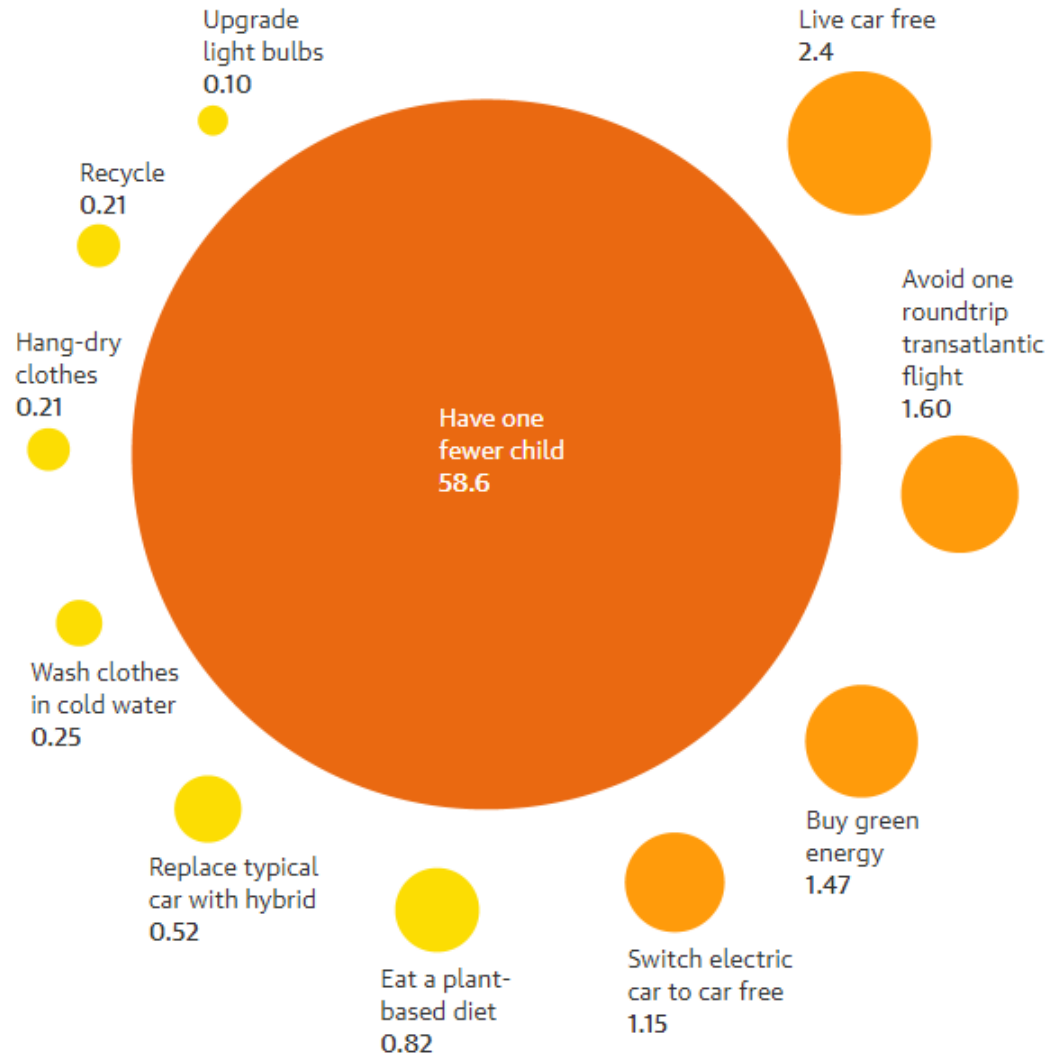
**Sustainable Population Australia**

H.O.P.E. Youth Summit – 19 April 2021



# Want to fight climate change? Have fewer children

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jul/12/want-to-fight-climate-change-have-fewer-children>



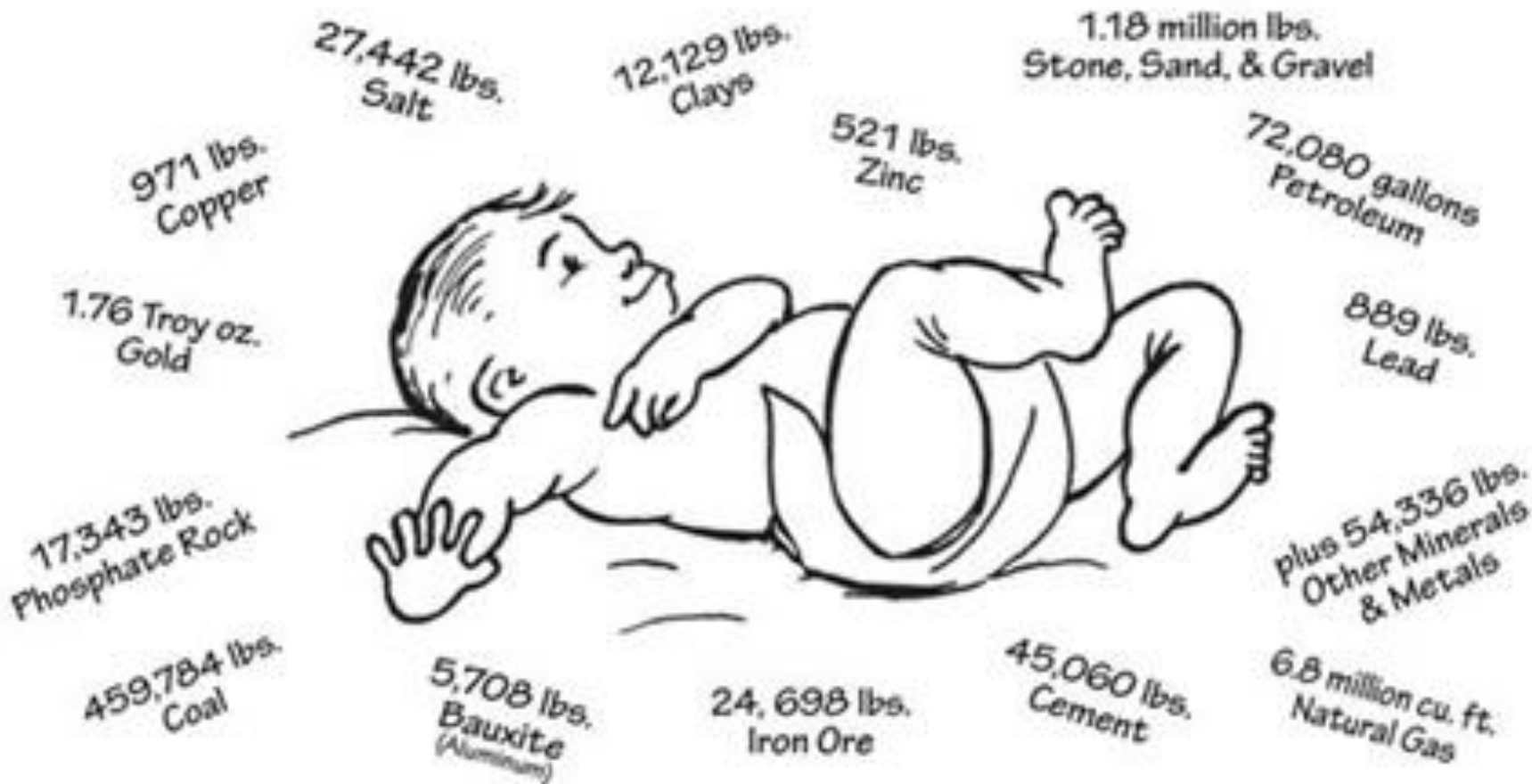
<http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aa7541>

**The climate mitigation gap: education and government recommendations miss the most effective individual actions**

Wynes and Nicholas (2017)

[Environmental Research Letters, Volume 12, Number 7](#)

# Every American Born Will Need...



**3.03 million pounds of minerals, metals, and fuels in their lifetime**

(3.03 million pounds = about 1,400 metric tonnes)

# Biodiversity loss is now in crisis

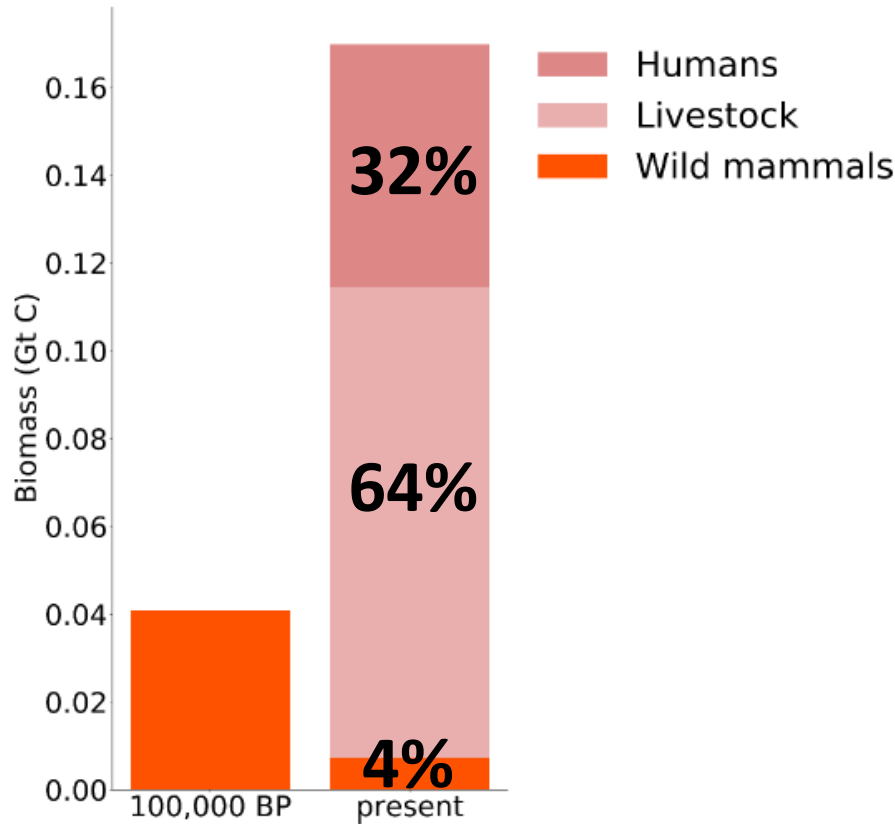
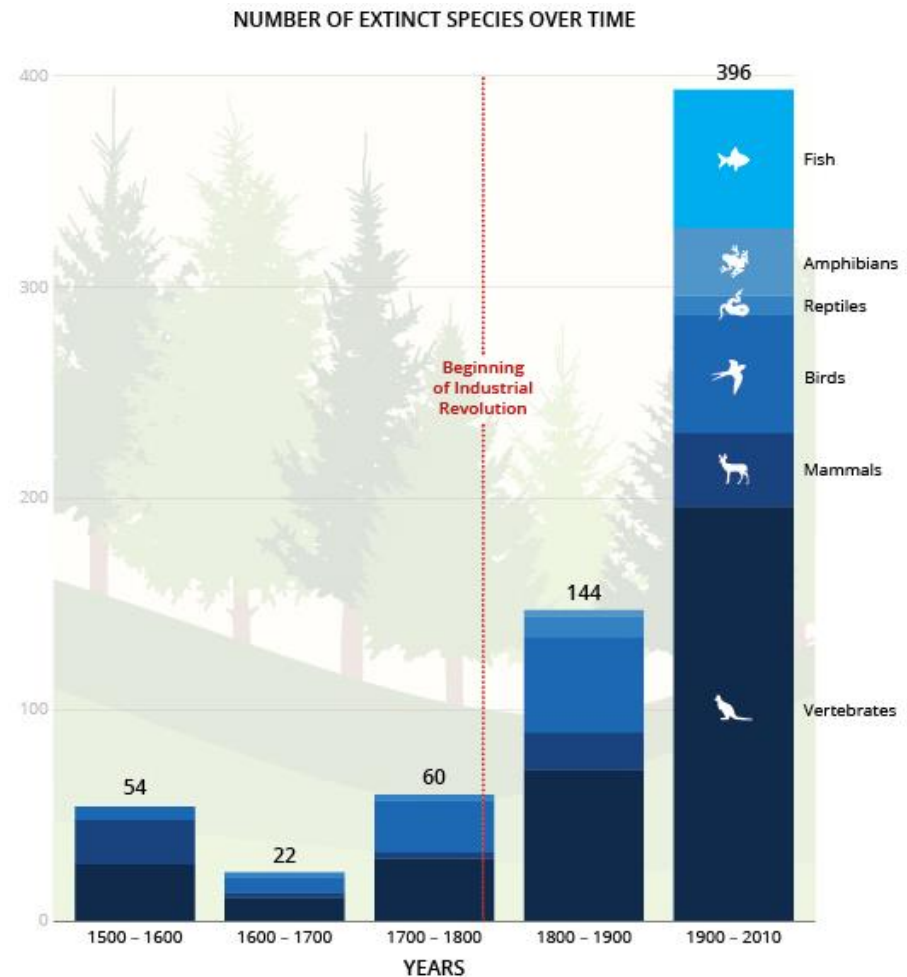


Fig. S5. The impact of human civilization on the biomass of mammals. The biomass of wild mammals, livestock (dominated by cattle) and humans before human civilization and at present. Values are based on estimates presented in detail in the relevant sections for humans and livestock, wild mammals and pre-human biomass.



Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature

Source: Bar-On et al. 2018. The biomass distribution on Earth. PNAS  
[www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1711842115](http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1711842115)

Source:  
<http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/1/5/e1400253>

# Isn't it more important that people in high-fertility countries have fewer children?

**Yes, but for different reasons**

Rapid population growth makes poor countries poorer, and large families prevent women from controlling their own lives.



*“Family planning could bring more benefit to more people at less cost than any other single technology now available to the human race.”*

UNICEF Report, 1992

NOW.. FOR RELIGIOUS  
AND POLITICAL REASONS,  
LET'S PRETEND NONE OF  
THESE ARE RELATED TO  
OVER-POPULATION...

WELCOME  
CONVENTIONAL  
WISDOM

CLAP-CLAP-CLAP!  
CLAP-CLAP!  
CLAP-CLAP!

CLAP-CLAP!

CLAP-CLAP



ENERGY CRISIS



FOOD CRISIS



ENVIRONMENTAL  
CRISES



WATER CRISIS  
(GET READY)

# Our responsibility to our children, future generations and other species



The United Nations recognises:

“All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so.”

Small families should be recognised as an environmental virtue, like recycling or eating less meat or not flying or driving so much.