



# EACME ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019: Rethinking Ethics In 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe

## A Shift From Human-Centered Ethics To All-Life Ethics

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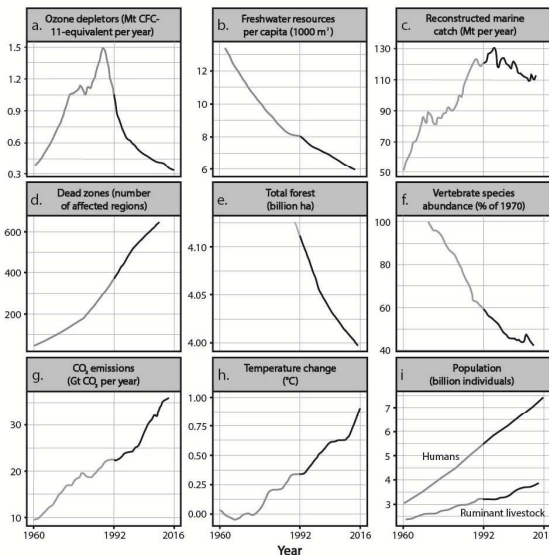
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### Background:

A significant number of current global problems, as well as those expected in the future, is directly linked to the size of the human population. Namely, the human overpopulation that we are witnessing today is causing severe environmental, healthcare, political, economic, and social problems. In the 2017 report *World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice*, human overpopulation was identified as the main driver of environmental degradation; deforestation; resource depletion; climate change; species extinction; and the increase in ruminant livestock, marine catch and coastal dead zones.

### Results:

Since 1950, humanity has witnessed a rapid population growth. Even though the fertility level has declined and population growth has slowed down, the human population grows by over 80 million people a year. In mid-2019, the world's population reached 7.7 billion. According to United Nations projections, the human population will keep growing until 2100, reaching 9.7 billion in 2050 and nearly 11 billion in 2100. In contrast, the world's biodiversity is vanishing at an alarming rate. Since 1970, the populations of vertebrate species have declined by 58%. Apart from this, rapid population growth contributes to other severe problems such as environmental degradation, deforestation, climate change, and the increase in ruminant livestock (see figures).



Source: *World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice*

### Keywords:

human overpopulation, environmental degradation, species extinction, human's rights, family planning

### Objectives:

The objective of this report is:

1. to inform the audience how rapid population growth is and identify which current global problems it causes
2. to remind the audience that the most humane way of solving this problem is a focus on human rights and voluntary family planning (it is generally considered to be a fundamental human right to freely choose the number and spacing of children)
3. to show the audience that, given the magnitude of problems population growth causes, implementing the suggestions in (2) might not be enough, and that a paradigm shift from human-centered ethics to all-life ethics will be required

### Methods:

This report is based on data from the United Nations (*World Population Prospects – 2019 Revision*), the Alliance of World Scientists (*World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice*, 2017), the World Wildlife Fund (*Living Planet Report 2016: Risk and Resilience in a New Era*), and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (*FAOSTAT Database on Agriculture*, 2017).

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### Key Messages:

1. human overpopulation and, by extension, rapid population growth are the main drivers of many problems that humanity and the planet Earth now face
2. the most humane way of solving this problem is a focus on human rights, women's education and empowerment, and voluntary family planning
3. (2) helps to reduce unintended pregnancies, thus lowering population growth, for which reason health care providers are (or should be) providing family planning services
4. however, given the magnitude of problems rapid population growth brings, it is time for a paradigm shift from human-centered ethics to new ethics that carefully balance both the rights of humans and other species inhabiting the planet
5. this requires human rights to be redefined in order to consider the rights of yet-unborn humans as well as the rights of other species
6. new ethics should also guide healthcare providers not to think exclusively about their human patients without considering whether their acts are harmful to other life