

Head Count

On Oct. 31, the 7 billionth person is projected to be born. What do our growing numbers mean for our future?

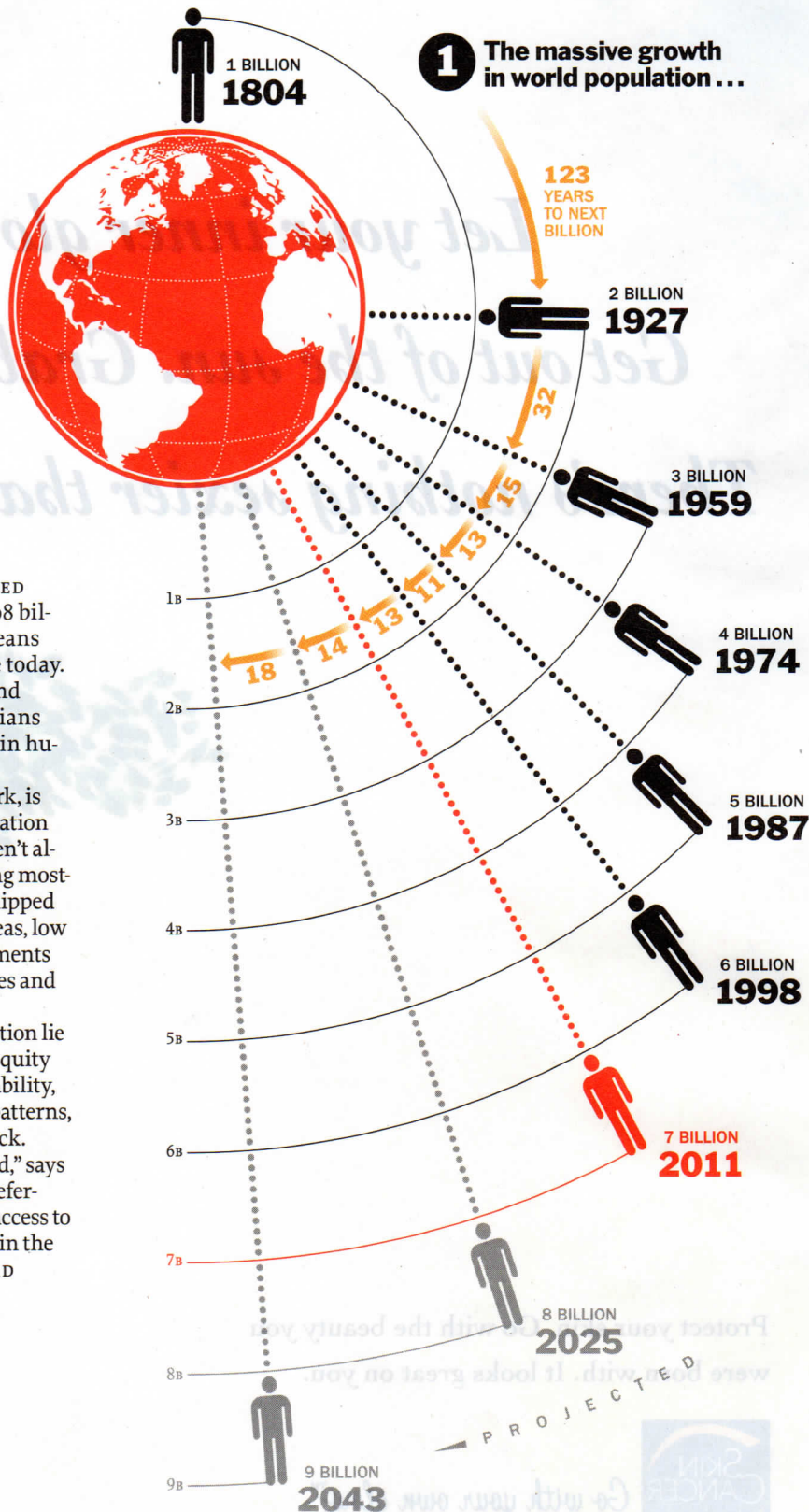
SINCE MODERN *HOMO SAPIENS* FIRST APPEARED around 50,000 B.C., an estimated total of 108 billion people have lived on earth—which means that about 6.5% of all humans ever born are alive today. That's a lot of bodies to feed, clothe and shelter, and economists, demographers, scientists and politicians have long fretted over our world's ability to sustain humanity as it multiplies.

The good news, as we approach the 7 billion mark, is that we likely have the resources to sustain a population of that size. The bad news is that those resources aren't always where the people are. Populations are booming mostly in the poorer regions of the planet—the least equipped to accommodate additional life—while in other areas, low fertility rates and increased life spans have governments concerned about maintaining productive economies and providing for the rising numbers of elderly people.

The challenges of the expanding human population lie not so much in curbing growth as in addressing inequity around the globe: finding ways to promote sustainability, support aging generations and adapt to migration patterns, all while keeping our footprint on the planet in check. "Generally speaking, countries do have enough food," says Carl Haub, senior demographer at the Population Reference Bureau. "It's just that many people don't have access to it because of poverty." That's something to work on in the 14 years between now and 8 billion. —ANDRÉA FORD



ALL TOGETHER
If you packed the world's population in at New York City's density, we would fit inside the state of Texas



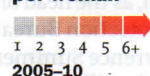
10 MOST POPULATED COUNTRIES ↑ = 15 MILLION

CHINA
1.3 BILLION

INDIA
1.2 BILLION

2 ... is being fueled by high fertility in poor regions

Children per woman

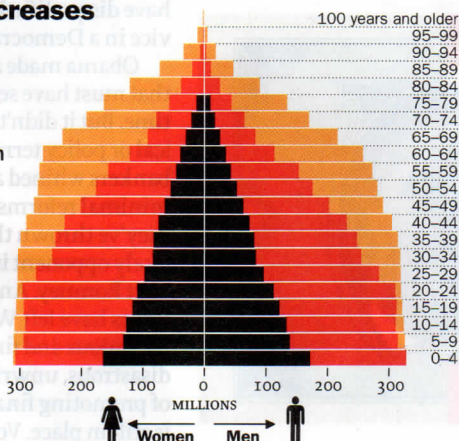


The global fertility rate has fallen by nearly half in 50 years but remains high in less developed countries

3 ... and by increases in life span

There were 12 working-age people for every person over 65 in 1950; by 2050 there will be 3

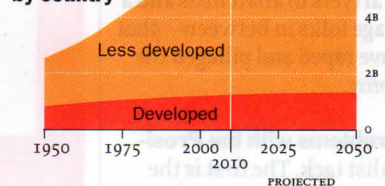
Population by age and sex



4 So the need for development will become even more critical

Experts believe the economic crisis pushed an additional 64 million people into extreme poverty

Population by country

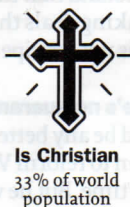


1 in 8 people is undernourished

1 in 3 people lacks a hygienic toilet

1 in 3 city dwellers lives in a slum

THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE OF OUR 7 BILLION ...



U.S.
310 MILLION

INDONESIA
240 MILLION

BRAZIL
195 MILLION

PAKISTAN
174 MILLION

NIGERIA
158 MILLION

BANGLADESH
149 MILLION

RUSSIA
143 MILLION

JAPAN
127 MILLION