



events like global conflict or a disease pandemic, would still likely result in 5–10 billion people by 2100.’

The researchers constructed nine different scenarios for continuing population ranging from ‘business as usual’ through various fertility reductions, to highly unlikely broad-scale catastrophes resulting in billions of deaths.

‘We were surprised that a five-year, WWII scenario mimicking the same proportion of people killed in the First and Second World Wars combined, barely registered a blip on the human population trajectory this century,’ says Professor Brook.

‘Often when I give public lectures about policies to address global change, someone will claim that we are ignoring the “elephant in the room” of human population size.

‘Yet, as our models show clearly, while there needs to be more policy discussion on this issue, the current inexorable momentum of the global human population precludes any demographic quick fixes to our sustainability problems.

‘Our work reveals that effective family planning and reproduction education worldwide have great potential to constrain the size of the human population and alleviate pressure on resource availability over the longer term. Our great-great-great-great grandchildren might ultimately benefit from such planning, but people alive today will not.’

Professor Bradshaw adds: ‘The corollary of these findings is that society's efforts towards sustainability would be directed more productively towards reducing our impact as much as possible through technological and social innovation.’

Source: University of Adelaide

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