



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 22, 2015

Eminent Scientist: Humans Will Be Extinct in a Century

Our “Anthropocene” epoch may be named after man, but it will also see man’s demise, says a prominent scientist. And, he avers, our end times are nigh — a mere 100 years off.



This warning was issued by Frank Fenner, an eminent Australian researcher credited with helping to eliminate smallpox. But now his concern seems to be that man is, at least by his lights, a pox upon the planet. And for it there is supposedly no cure, as we face what he calls the “irreversible” problems of overpopulation, environmental degradation, and climate change. Writes [Phys.org](#):

Fenner, who is emeritus professor of microbiology at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, said homo sapiens will not be able to survive the population explosion and “unbridled consumption,” and will become extinct, perhaps within a century, along with many other species.

... Fenner said that [climate change](#) is only at its beginning, but is likely to be the cause of our extinction. “We’ll undergo the same fate as the people on Easter Island,” he said. More people means fewer resources, and Fenner predicts “there will be a lot more wars over food.”

Critics would take issue, however, with the suppositions underlying the scientist’s doomsday predictions. First and foremost, Fenner joins most everyone else — from the man on the street to media figures to academics — in accepting a great myth of our age: that overpopulation threatens us.

It doesn’t for a simple reason: There is no long-term threat of overpopulation.

As I [wrote](#) in 2008 when reviewing the fine documentary *Demographic Winter*:

This may seem, well, counterintuitive. Isn’t the world’s population still increasing? *Demographic Winter* answers affirmatively, but also says the end of population growth is in sight. While man will add perhaps 1.8 billion more to his flock, it’s only due to improved healthcare and increased longevity — the number of children in the world is already declining. In fact, the statistics are staggering. Birthrates are now below replacement level (2.1 children per couple) in approximately 70 countries; in Western Europe, the figure is 1.38, and in northern Italy and parts of Spain it is below 1. As a result, Europe’s 65-year-olds now outnumber her 14-year-olds, and one German province had to close 220 schools in 2006. Children were present in 80 percent of U.S. households a century ago; that number is now 32 percent. And while this phenomenon is most acute in the developed world, other nations are beginning to follow suit. Amazingly, for instance, Mexico’s birthrate is declining at an unprecedented rate.

As to this, whereas the [Mexican fertility rate](#) was almost 7 children per woman in 1960, it now is approximately 2.2 — just slightly above replacement level — and it’s poised to drop below it. This is reflected in South America as well, where the average (and declining) [fertility rate](#) is also 2.2.



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This phenomenon is even apparent in the Muslim world (though it's in a far earlier stage there), where Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Turkey already have [fertility rates](#) at or below replacement level. And while fecundity still is the norm in some nations, professional demographers have long been reporting the simple truth: Ultimately, the world's population is not set to explode, but to implode. We may believe this is a good thing or a bad thing, but it's a real thing. And it's impossible to discuss matters intelligently unless we're armed with the facts.

Fenner's misconception is partially the result of ignoring recent trends. A good example is a chart provided at [Phys.org](#) that shows the exponential population increase that began a few hundred years ago, due to life-saving medical and scientific advances, but doesn't show the reversing of this population-growth trend now occurring. As a result, Fenner and others repeat the Malthusian Mistake.

This refers to English clergyman Thomas Malthus, who famously predicted in 1798 that the world's population would soon outpace our ability to sustain it. Of course, since Malthus lived at the very beginning of the population explosion and couldn't foresee technological advances that would greatly increase food production, his error was understandable. The same cannot be said of modern prophets of doom, however, who seem content to repeat past mistakes. For example, consider Paul Ehrlich, author of the immensely popular 1968 book *The Population Bomb*. As the *Telegraph* [wrote](#) in 2011, "The book opened with the words: 'The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate.' He predicted four billion deaths, including those of 65 million Americans."

Yet today the world population (approximately seven billion) is more than twice what it was when *The Population Bomb* was published — and the only thing consistently exploding are the predictions of the population paranoiacs. (Ehrlich had even once said he'd "take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000.") This isn't to say starvation couldn't befall us, but it would likely occur because of cataclysmic events that disrupt modern food production, not overpopulation.

Fenner sings the climate-change doomsday song as well, but those in that choir — Ehrlich is now among them, by the way — also have an apparently broken crystal ball. In the 1970s, they predicted catastrophic global cooling. In 2005, [reported](#) *The New American's* Alex Newman, United Nations Environment Programme predictions "claimed that, by 2010, some 50 million 'climate refugees' would be frantically fleeing ... the Caribbean and low-lying Pacific islands, along with coastal areas." There also was a 2003 Pentagon-commissioned report envisioning that the past decade would see "California flooded with inland seas, parts of the Netherlands 'unlivable,' polar ice all but gone in the summers, and surging temperatures," wrote Newman. Not only has none of this occurred, but worldwide temperatures have actually been stable or might have even dropped during the last 20 years.

The reality is that the climate-change agenda has long been supported with [manipulated statistics](#) and, at times, actual [scientific fraud](#). *The New American* has frequently reported on this issue, such as [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

At the end of the day, there's one kind of disaster that likely will never, ever threaten civilization:

The one everyone is worrying about.

The greater mass of people never foresaw the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, the 410 sacking of Rome, the Black Death, the Great Depression, or WWII. And the people of Easter Island, cited by Fenner as reflecting our end, never predicted the nature of their own demise. Will it be any different with us and



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overpopulation, “climate change,” or tomorrow’s doomsday boogeyman?

Yet we can safely make one prediction: People will continue making rash predictions. And that is something we certainly can’t do anything about.



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