Population policies proposed or supported by the Optimum Population Trust in 2002-2008

Policies to stabilise and gradually allow populations to adjust to an environmentally sustainable level include measures to reduce birth rates, balance migration, and achieve fuller employment to counter the impact of ageing populations. The Optimum Population Trust, which changed its working name to Population Matters in 2011, continues to campaign for international and UK population policies.

Global population policy

- **AIM** To reduce projected population growth of 2.3 billion by 2050 by at least 1.3 billion - to reach no more than 8 billion by 2050 instead of 9.1 billion.
- Every country should have a population policy that is environmentally sustainable for its own citizens and for citizens of the world as whole.
- An international protocol should be agreed which commits all nations to achieving environmentally sustainable population levels by peaceful and democratic means.
- Every country should act urgently to make family planning services easily accessible.
- Every country should act urgently to improve women’s rights and education, including removing barriers to women’s control over their own fertility.
- Every country should encourage parents to voluntarily have two or fewer children.
- Every country should ensure that its own population has full access to employment, and that older people are enabled to extend their working lives.
- Every country should put its population policy into action alongside environmental policies to curb emissions and reduce consumption and resource depletion, to ensure global environmental survival.

EU population policy

- **AIM** To achieve expected population stabilisation of the EU 27 member states at 497 million in 2021-2023 and gradual decrease thereafter to a level which is environmentally sustainable in the long term.
- Encourage parents to voluntarily have two or fewer children except in EU states with very low fertility rates.
- Financial incentives can be tailored to include tax allowances, benefits and other social subsidies, such as maternity or paternity leave, which taper off after the second child, but with the proviso that “safety net” arrangements are in force to ensure that children from later births do not suffer.
- Offer citizenship to more refugees but fewer economic migrants, to ensure a balanced level of migration that does not incur population growth.
- Offer full and flexible employment opportunities to the unemployed and enable older people to extend their working lives.
- Raise state and corporate pension ages in line with rises in life expectancy.

UK population policy

- **AIM** To achieve stabilisation within five years and decrease of not less than 0.25 per cent a year thereafter to a level which is environmentally sustainable in the long term.
- Bring immigration into balance with emigration (zero net migration) to ensure a level of migration that does not incur population growth.
- Offer citizenship to more refugees but fewer economic migrants. Encourage parents voluntarily to have two or fewer children.
- Financial incentives can be tailored to include tax allowances, benefits and other social subsidies, such as maternity or paternity leave, which taper off after the second child, but with the proviso that “safety net” arrangements are in force to ensure that children from later births do not suffer.
- Make greater efforts to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies.
- Offer full and flexible employment opportunities to the unemployed, including the young or disabled, and enable older people to extend their working lives.
- Raise state and corporate pension ages in line with rises in life expectancy and encourage people to save more for their old age.

Global fertility policies

- Efforts to encourage, voluntarily, small families by education should be maintained, and should include an environmental justification.
- Fiscal incentives specifically intended to encourage women to have large families should always be opposed. Employment and taxation policies that enable women to combine careers with bringing up small families should be encouraged.
- Education and women’s empowerment in the area of reproductive and sexual health and the removal of all obstacles to birth control, together with the services to deliver the means of contraception and safer sex, need to be given the highest priority in all countries. This must include reducing gender discrimination and sexual abuse in its many forms together with removal of barriers to women’s control over their fertility.
- Resourcing an effective and fully accessible supply chain for methods of family planning should be made a priority in every country. This applies especially to long-acting methods such as injections, intrauterine devices and implants (discussed below). This supply chain should avoid medical barriers by primarily using so-called “social marketing”, through small shops and pharmacies, with subsidies to bring down the price for the consumer. It should include not only condoms but also over-the-counter provision of emergency pills, the regular Pill and injections.
- Sterilisation, for males (vasectomies) as well as females, must be readily available, as a choice among other methods, but the fact that it is not easily reversible poses problems and should be clearly stated, and attention drawn to the widest possible range of reversible methods – especially the long-acting and reversible contraceptives (LARCs) such as IUDs, injectables and implants.
- Education is of paramount importance and must involve the media in providing correct information about methods of contraception and correcting misinformation.
- The independent media should play a part by broadcasting information about contraception that is accurate and impartial. TV and radio story-lines should encourage pregnancy by choice rather than by chance. Where appropriate, this could take place through the development of voluntary media-industry guidelines.
- With one-third of the world's population aged under 20, efforts to reduce teenage pregnancies and encourage later marriage should be continued and strengthened.
- Financial incentives can be tailored to include tax allowances, benefits and other social subsidies, such as maternity or paternity leave, which taper off after the second child, but with the proviso that “safety net” arrangements are in force to ensure that children from later births do not suffer.

UK Fertility policies

- Government agencies should develop joined-up action by co-ordinating all the stakeholders, to avoid wasteful duplications and gaping omissions.
- The government should establish new voluntary guidelines for the portrayal of sex and fertility issues by broadcasters, print media and internet service providers, drawn up through consultation with industry, health agencies such as the Teenage Pregnancy Unit (TPU) and relevant NGOs and aimed at countering the glamorisation of sex and motherhood among vulnerable groups, and stressing personal and social responsibility.
- The government should improve Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and access to Family Planning and Sexual Health (FPSH) services, in a sympathetic and confidential context.
- LARCs such as “forgettable” contraceptive implants, injections and the intrauterine methods should be made much more readily available.
- NHS primary care trusts should reverse the trend of attrition of staff and facilities involved in the provision and training for LARCs.
- The government should provide more support and education for parents in the UK for their neglected role of providing good SRE for their own children, aimed at helping parents develop confidence and skills in talking to their own children about sex and relationships.

**UK Migration policies**

From 2000-2008 net inward migration was the main cause of UK population growth. The Optimum Population Trust therefore made and campaigned for a series of migration policy proposals between 2002-2008, many of which had become government policy by 2011. In 2008 a ministerial pledge made the UK the first EU member state to promise to cap its population size, and the government which came to power in 2010 has put in place policies to reduce net migration from its previous high levels to “tens of thousands” by 2015. While Population Matters no longer makes detailed policy proposals on migration, details of past policies are available on request.