

GLOBAL TRENDS

The most obvious global trend is population growth, especially in the developing world, and the impact it will have on the planet's natural resources. Experts predict that the population of the developing world will reach 11.6 billion by 2050 unless fertility rates change compared with 1.2 billion for the developed world. Clean air, fresh water and fossil fuels will become increasingly scarce. In addition:

- If current consumption rates remain the same, 70% of annual available freshwater will be used by the world's population in 2025.
- Oil prices will continue to rise over the long term, making gasoline and other fuels more expensive.
- The United States will experience increasing pressure to maintain and repair aging infrastructures. In 2006, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimated the cost at \$1.6 trillion over the next five years.
- Tourism will continue to be an increasingly important component of life in the developed world.
- The northern Mexican states will become increasingly integrated with the U.S. economy.
- Globalization of the economy will continue with India and China leading the way. These huge populations will be increasingly well-educated and motivated by the desire to end poverty and improve their lives.
- Global warming will continue in the near term, resulting in wild weather that will disrupt agriculture, transportation and commerce.
- Nanotechnology, the ability to see into and manipulate matter at the level of its basic building blocks (molecules and atoms) marks the beginning of the next industrial revolution.
- By 2030, nearly 60% of people in the developing world may live in cities compared with the current 40%.
- At “replacement-level fertility,” the average couple has only enough children to replace themselves. The United States has a “replacement-level fertility” of 2.0, and the entire developed world has a rate of only 1.5. A level of 2.1 is required to have replacement-level fertility.
- By 2035, there will be 2.5 working-age adults to support each elder (65 and older) compared to a 7-to-1 ratio that existed when many entitlement programs were established.
- Advances in biotechnology, genomics and systems biology have the potential to extend life spans even further.
- At the same time, the obesity epidemic will get worse unless something intervenes, posing the possibility that young people will have shorter life spans than their parents.

Sources: National Intelligence Council, The Futurist Magazine, www.futurist.com, www.pbs.org