

Transition demographic theory

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



Transition demographic theory In the middle of the twentieth century, demographic transition theory became the dominant theory of population growth. Based on observed trends in Western European societies, it argues that populations go through three stages in their transition to a modern pattern. Stage one (pre transition) is characterized by low or no growth, and high fertility is counterbalanced by high mortality. In Stage Two (the stage of transition), mortality rates begin to decline, and the population grows at a rapid pace. By the end of this stage, fertility has begun to decline as well. However, because mortality decline had a head start, the death rate remains lower than the birth rate, and the population continues to experience a high rate of growth. In Stage Three (post transition), the movement to low fertility and mortality rates is complete, producing once again a no-growth situation. The theory of demographic transition explains these three stages in terms of economic development, namely industrialization and urbanization. Since about 1980, demographic transition theory has been criticized on a number of grounds, including its assumption that the demographic experience of non-Western societies will inevitably follow that of the West; its failure to consider cultural variables; and its hypothesized relationship between population growth and economic development. Indeed, all three theories above contain assumptions about population growth and economic development; however, there is mounting evidence that this relationship is complex and varies from context to context. As the twenty-first century begins, the attempt to erect a general theory of population growth has been abandoned, signaling for some an alarming trend in population studies. In the earlier theories of population it is mentioned that population increases

fast but its rate of growth falls with the industrial development. Improved medical facilities also ensure low death rates. The historical sequence led to demographers to ask whether this process will continue with industrialization. The theory of demographic transition explains that a stage is arrived at where population tends to stabilize once a certain level of economic development is achieved. There are three stages of demographic transition. There are as follow: Stage I: In this stage both death rates and birth rates are high. Due to this reason population growth remain fairly stable. This stage is found in traditional societies. Stage II: In these stage birth rates remains high but death rates fall due to availability of medical facilities and better living standards. This stage is found in all developing societies. Population increases quite fast in this stage. Stage III: In this stage both death rates and birth rates starts declining and settle at a low level. The functionalist perspectives on population Malthus stated that, the populations of the world would increase in geometric proportions while the food resources available for them would increase only in arithmetic proportions. In simple words, if human population was allowed to increase in an uncontrolled way, then the number of people would increase at a faster rate than the food supply. A point would come when human population would reach the limit up to which food sources could support it. Any further increase would lead to population crash caused by natural phenomena like famine or disease. According to Malthus, human society could never be perfected. He believed that man is a lazy animal, who would lead a satisfied life and procreate as long as his family was well fed. However, as soon as human population would feel constraints in food supply due to increase in

population, he would again work hard to provide enough for his family. This might lead to an increase in agricultural production to provide for all, but at the same time man would be back to his complacent stage, where all his needs would be fulfilled. This would start the cycle of overpopulation and food shortage, all over again. Having been a clergy, Malthus validated his theory on moral grounds that suffering was a way of making human beings realize the virtues of hard work and moral behavior. Such kind of suffering due to overpopulation and limited food supply was inevitable.

Proposed Solutions

In his first edition of the essay, Malthus proposed two main solutions to the problem of population explosion, namely:

Positive Check This method results in increase in death rate. He described this as God's way of restoring the Natural Order. It includes famines, hunger, epidemics, war and other natural miseries which cause large-scale deaths. Although it helps in controlling the population growth, it brings with it widespread misery and pain. Hence, it is not regarded as an ideal solution to population problem.

Preventive or Negative Check This method refers to human effort in reducing the birth rate. It is more practically and logically applicable. Abortion, prostitution, postponement of marriage, birth control and celibacy are few measures that were advised to be strictly followed in order to help solve the problem. In his second edition of the same essay, Malthus laid more emphasis on:

Moral Restraint This is regarded as a universally applicable solution keeping up with the ideologies of virtue, economic gain and social improvement. According to this principle, one should refrain from marriage till the time he is capable of supporting a family with food, clothing and shelter. Until then he should follow strict celibacy. In the words of Geoffrey

Gilbert, " He (Malthus) went so far as to claim that moral restraint on a wide scale was the best means indeed, the only means of easing the poverty of the lower classes." The conflict perspective on population Marx and Engels reacted very strongly against Malthus' population theory which they saw as an apology for the status quo and all throughout their work they referred to Malthus in a very ironic and disdainful manner. At the most general theoretical level Marx and Engels see in Malthus' principle of population another instance of the way in which bourgeois economists reify social relations. Marx did not believe that all hardships with which the people were suffering were due to man's tendency to grow in numbers faster than his production of subsistence would permit. On the other hand, he believed that man's tendency to press on the means of subsistence has due to evils of capitalism which would disappear with the emergence of communism. He related population growth with present economic system and for him both were inseparable. Marx held that poverty and unemployment were not due to increased population, but on due to capitalist system which failed to provide jobs. Surplus population was the consequence for real production and uneven distribution of wealth and for providing jobs to only few persons. According to Marx, in no country of the world population increases on account of fertility but it increases only on account of capitalist policies. The capitalists make labour part of their production and still something out of that. By installing labour saving machines a capitalist wants to have maximum surplus value out of that. As a result of this unemployment spreads, wage declines and poverty increases. The poor population cannot nourish their children on account of their poverty and as such the question of

surplus population arises. He came to the conclusion that main cause of surplus of population was nothing else but wrong politics of the capitalists. There is also less production of food supplies from the land due to capitalists system where they were uncertainty about ownership of land. According to Marx, " It is working population which, while effecting that accumulation of capital, also provides means whereby it is itself rendered relatively superfluous, is turned into relative surplus population and it does so to an ever increasing extent. This is law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production." Marx also believed that in every period of production there is separate law of population. The mode of production undergoes a change from time to time which necessitates new approach to the problem of prevailing in capitalistic society, cannot be made applicable to the socialist and so on. Neo Malthusian theory According to Neo-Malthusians, population problem is presently exists in underdeveloped counties it is an inevitable result of the reproductive behaviors of man. Neo-Malthusianism generally refers to people with the same basic concerns as Malthus, who advocate for population control programs, to ensure resources for current and future populations. In Britain the term Malthusian can also refer more specifically to arguments made in favors of preventive birth control, hence organizations such as the Malthusian League. Neo-Malthusians seem to differ from Malthus's theories mainly in their enthusiasm for contraceptive techniques. Malthus, as a devout Christian, believed that " self-control" (abstinence) was preferable to artificial birth control. In some editions of his essay, Malthus did allow that abstinence was unlikely to be effective on a wide scale, thus advocating the use of artificial means of birth control as a solution to

population "pressure". Modern "neo-Malthusians" are generally more concerned than Malthus was with environmental degradation and catastrophic famine than with poverty. Many critics believe that the basis of Malthusian theory has been fundamentally discredited in the years since the publication of *Principle of Population*, often citing major advances in agricultural techniques and modern reductions in human fertility. Many modern proponents believe that the basic concept of population growth eventually outstripping resources is still fundamentally valid, and "positive checks" are still likely in humanity's future if there is no action to curb population growth