

WHY DEMOGRAPHY MATTERS



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'Demographers threaten us with a world population explosion, an unsupportable burden of pensioners, migration run wild, even a eugenic threat! But Dorling and Gietel-Basten give us heart. Some threats turned into blessings while others proved as hopelessly inaccurate as an economic forecast.'

Richard Wilkinson, co-author of *The Spirit Level*

'Dorling and Gietel-Basten demonstrate how much we don't know when it comes to demographics. With encyclopaedic incision, the authors enjoin readers to consider the meaning, measurement and manipulation of demographics, eschewing hyperbole for common sense. Rejecting demographic fear-mongering and cloudy statistical thinking, *Why Demography Matters* provides a critical assessment of who counts and why, and explains the meaning of one of the world's most important drivers of change.'

Amy Glasmeier, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Demography is not destiny. As Giacomo Casanova explained over two centuries ago: **'There is no such thing as destiny. We ourselves shape our own lives.'**

Today we are shaping them and our societies more than ever before. Globally, we have never had fewer children per adult: our population is about to stabilize, though we do not know when or at what number, or what will happen after that. It will be the result of billions of very private decisions influenced in turn by multiple events and policies, some more unpredictable than others. More people are moving further around the world than ever before, but too often we see that as frightening, rather than as indicating greater freedom. Similarly, we too often lament greater ageing, rather than recognizing it as a tremendous and beneficial human achievement to which we must adapt.

Demography comes to the fore most positively when we see that we have choices, when we understand variation and when we are not deterministic in our prescriptions. The study of demography has for too long been dominated by pessimism and simplistic, inhuman forms of accounting. As this fascinating and persuasive overview demonstrates, how we understand our demography needs to change again.

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Cover design: www.simonlevyassociates.co.uk
Cover image: Shutterstock
Printed in Great Britain

politybooks.com
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ISBN 978-0-7456-9840-3



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