



Malawi is experiencing rapid population growth—the result of historically high fertility rates coupled with decreased mortality rates. This growth trend will significantly affect the country’s ability to meet basic needs such as those related to health, education, economy, and agriculture. It will also create challenges related to urbanization and infrastructure, including the ability to provide enough clean water and electricity. Formulating policies and programs to help Malawians access voluntary family planning services and meet their reproductive intentions will help decrease the fertility rate and slow population growth.

The Population Unit of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the Department of Population Studies at Chancellor College, University of Malawi—with support from the Health Policy Plus project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development—used the Resources for the Awareness of Population Impacts on Development (RAPID) model to project the social and economic implications of population growth on various development sectors. The results show how the country would be influenced by a reduction in the fertility rate from 4.4 children per woman in 2015 to 2.3 in 2050, illustrating the need to take action to ensure strong programs and policies to enable slower population growth and greater socio-economic development.



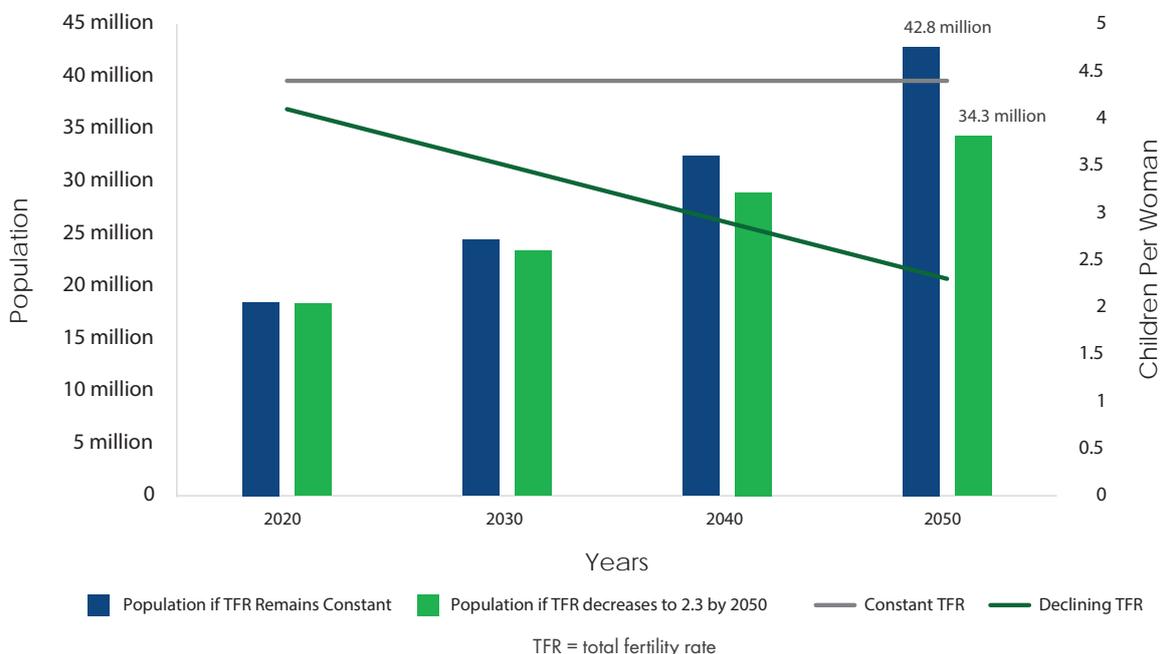
## Fertility Rate

Malawi’s total fertility rate—a measure of the average number of children a woman will have over her lifetime—has decreased significantly over time. However, both women and men have consistently reported that their ideal family size is smaller than the national total fertility rate; often couples have more children than they want. Access to quality family planning services can help address this.

## Impact of Slower Population Growth

If the fertility rate decreases, this will remove some of the pressure on resources, making it easier for development to keep pace with population growth across sectors, and creating potential for a more prosperous country.

Projected Population Growth: Two Scenarios



## If Malawi's fertility rate decreases from 4.4 children per woman to 2.3:



The population is expected to reach **34.3 million in 2050**, **20% lower** than if the fertility rate remains unchanged



**371 fewer**

**hospitals and health centres** will need to be built by 2050



**96,000 fewer**

**additional teachers** will be needed in 2050

**\$25% higher** **GDP per capita** is projected to be in 2050



**14 million fewer**

**metric tons of maize** will be needed from 2015 to 2050



There will be **2.6 million fewer** people in urban areas in 2050



**407 million m<sup>3</sup> less**

**water** will be needed in the next 35 years



**51%** of the population is expected to have **access to electricity** in 2050, compared to 41% if fertility remains unchanged

# What We Can Do

## Investing in family planning leads to positive outcomes across all sectors.

Investing in quality family planning programs will help Malawians meet their reproductive intentions and slow population growth. Malawi has a Family Planning 2020 goal of ensuring everyone has access to voluntary family planning and that at least 60% of all women use modern contraceptives by 2020. Reaching this goal will require adequate financial backing and alignment of existing social sector investments with population and development goals. All sectors can benefit from lower fertility rates, and have a responsibility to advocate for increased investment in family planning programs.

## Different sectors can help address population growth.

To address population growth and mitigate its effects, stakeholders from various sectors can consider including interventions in their strategic plans that:

- Promote access to family planning funding, information, services, and supplies
- Develop programs to keep girls in school
- Strengthen access to social services
- Improve the health system and child health outcomes
- Create job opportunities for youth
- Improve agricultural yield interventions and economic diversification
- Incentivize the expansion of urban infrastructure, safe water, and electricity

Increasing investment in family planning can improve the lives of citizens and allow the country to fully realize the benefits of adequate access to education, economic opportunities, health services, and other vital day-to-day needs, such as food, clean water, and electricity. Such gains will help ensure sustainable socio-economic development and contribute to transforming Malawi into a middle-income country.

## Policies

Malawi's policies—2020 Vision, the National Population Policy, and the Growth and Development Strategy III—set the stage for the country's development goals, including those related to sustainable socio-economic development, improved health, and equal opportunity for all. Future population size and structure will have a big impact on the likelihood of achieving these goals.

This fact sheet is based on the Republic of Malawi's 2017 *RAPID: Estimating the Impact of Population Growth on Development in Malawi*. Additional Malawi RAPID resources can be found at <http://populationmalawi.org>.

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