

Environmental concerns call for reduced immigration

We need at least 80,000 new homes per year, says the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. The reason is "a forecast net of another 100,000 more residents per year in our country for the foreseeable future, driven by migration" (SvD, March 1). We emphasize here that the number of people in the country is determined by choices among alternatives that should be further analyzed and that environmental impacts should be central to the election.

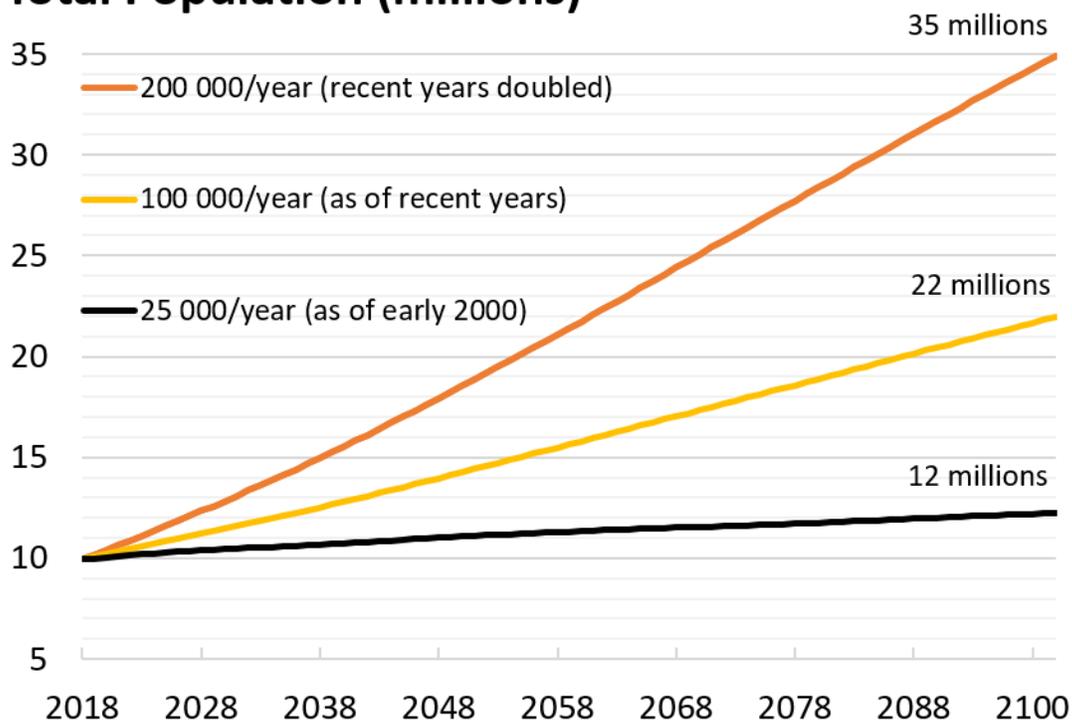
Migration and immigration have long been debated in Sweden. The strong increase in asylum seekers in recent years has made immigration a major issue before the general elections in the fall. However, important perspectives are lacking in the debate. A country's population policy has major consequences for environmental issues such as consumption, resource consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and exploitation of nature.

Environmental impacts are usually determined by the number of people, times the average consumption per person. This applies globally, as well as nationally. In many poor countries with strong population growth, resources such as forest, wood and water are overtaken, in rich countries, consumption is too extensive and, among other things, leads to many greenhouse gases.

The [IPCC](#), the UN Climate Panel, has established that population growth and consumption increase caused increased greenhouse gases. The Paris agreement can hopefully reduce emissions, especially for rich countries. But today it looks bad, with [increasing consumption per person in Sweden](#). Our so-called [ecological footprints](#) are increasing, especially abroad when transport and air travel increase.

Population policy is largely determined at national level, where the environment should be in focus - for new generations, for our ecosystems and our nature, and for the country's footprints. With the help of demographic software, we show three options for Sweden's population development, which is now largely determined by net immigration. In option 1, an annual immigration of about 25,000 persons is required (e.g. for asylum reasons). Sweden was at this level around 2000, and it indicates a slight increase in population until 2100.

Total Population (millions)



Option 2 corresponds to immigration in recent years (about 100,000 people per year), leading to an increase of 10 to about 22 million inhabitants in 2100. Option 3, double level in recent years (200,000 per year, may correspond to open borders?), gives about 35 million people in Sweden in 2100.

Options 2 and 3 give serious negative environmental effects. For example, they would mean a sharp increase in greenhouse gas emissions. International research shows that emissions in a country [increase proportionally with the number of residents there](#). Roughly speaking, if the conditions are unchanged in the future, a double population would double the emissions of greenhouse gases. Both options 2 and 3 counteract the foreseeable climate policy that Sweden is now trying to establish.

Furthermore, these options mean very extensive expansion and densification of existing buildings, such as decreasing green areas in our cities. The settlement also takes on productive arable land on the outskirts of towns, reducing our self-sufficiency. We therefore recommend option 1, where the vision can instead be refurbishment of current older buildings and the conservation of green areas and arable land.

Option 1 also provides less greenhouse gases. We can more and more protect ecosystems and nature for well-being and tourism, and invest more on aid. Countries compete in many ways: Sweden can compete with a foresighted population and environmental policy. Industry and entrepreneurs may want to increase the size of their market through more and more people in

the country, but it is likely to increase income gaps and environmental problems, making our country a worse example and tourist destination. Strongly expanded labor supply (through large immigration) can create increasing gaps, by lowering wage levels or raising contributions.

Most Swedes believe that population growth is a problem and future threat. A [survey](#) of the Global Challenges Foundation in nine countries 2014 showed that the majority were negative to population growth in these countries, and Swedes and Germans were most negative.

There are obvious grounds for our politicians to take into account the environment in the population policy. Previous research has not shown environmental alternatives in this policy, something we are now studying in our research group. Citizens in our country should be informed of these options.

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