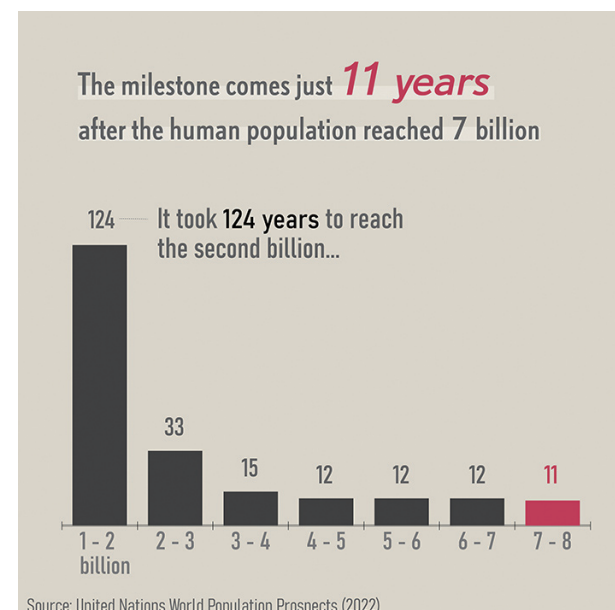
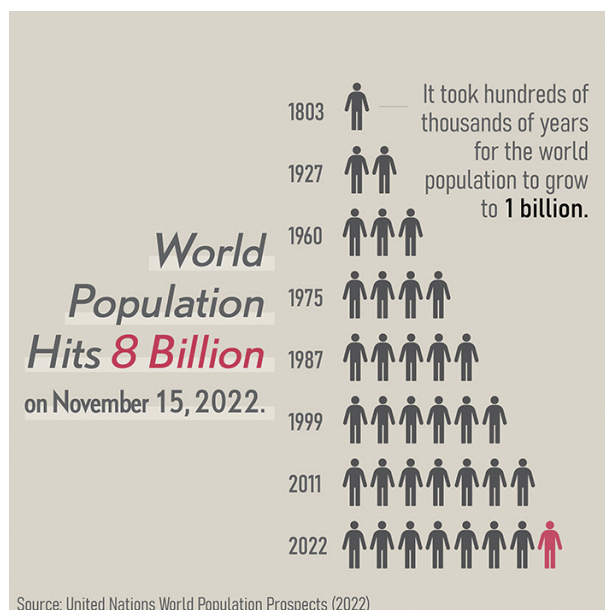




This photo taken on October 20, 2022 shows people at a subway station in Hong Kong. The global population hit the symbolic level of 8 billion on November 15, according to the UN. — AFP



Chinese views on more births changing as world population hits 8b

Wan Lixin

In ancient China, having a large family was considered a sign of good fortune and prosperity.

During the period of strict family planning policy, a large family was often associated with poverty and illiteracy.

In rural China, it was often blamed on a single-minded desire to continue the family line.

So, seeing a photo of a couple with seven children shared by the chancellor of NYU Shanghai, Tong Shijun, gives a jolt and evokes a range of emotions among people my age. It's almost like a scene from the film *The Sound of Music*.

But this was the family picture of David Hunsaker, assistant professor of management and organizations. Tong said the Hunsakers had five children when they joined NYU Shanghai in 2018. In the following years, the couple welcomed two additional children, and they are expecting their eighth next year.

"We could easily attract talent of such (high) calibre, those who could have found employment at any (top) school in the world, and this should be attributed not only to the environment for conducting scientific research in Pudong, but also to all kinds of amenities in daily life across the Huangpu River, which affords them a stage to live their lives in all their vigor and many colors," Tong said on November 7 at a seminar on the flow of global talent, as part of the Fifth Hongqiao International Economic Forum.

In hammering home his message, Tong alluded to the Confucian tenet *jinzhe yue yuanzhe lai*, which translates as "(Good government obtains) when those who are near are happy and those who are far off are attracted."

In a nation that is rapidly aging, attracting foreign talent is as important as fixing the inherent demographic imbalances.

In a dramatic reversal of the decades-long, stringent family planning regulations, many regions in China are now introducing

incentives to encourage couples to have more children.

For instance, one recent policy on family planning incentives and subsidies stipulates that both parents are entitled to five days of child care leave every year until the child turns 3.

This approach might help address some of the ills associated with an aging society, but its impact on the long-term trend is likely to be limited.

According to the United Nations, the global population hit 8 billion on Tuesday, and will rise to 10.4 billion by 2080.

China remains the world's most populous country, though India may surpass in 2023, with its population reaching 1.7 billion by 2050.

Hence the challenge for China to maintain its advantage in human resources in the face of diminishing demographic dividends. China's meteoric ascent as a global industrial hub has been closely connected to its labor force availability in the 1980s and 1990s.