

Lab: Population vs Consumption: Which is a Bigger Problem for the Environment & Who is Getting the Lion's Share of the World's Resources?

Name:



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The human population is expanding at an alarming rate, as there are far more births than deaths each year. How soon will the earth reach its carrying capacity—the limiting number of humans that the earth is able to sustain? Scientists don't know.

There's more to the story than just numbers of people. What those people do, and how much they use of the earth's resources has an enormous impact on our planet. This lab will help you get thinking about human populations and resource use (consumption).

Procedure:

Participate in the population vs. consumption role-playing activity as directed by the teacher.

Analysis (follow-up questions to be answered after the role-playing activity):

1. Which is a bigger problem for the environment—a family of 4 in the USA that compared to the other countries in the activity took up almost 30% of available energy, or a family of 8 from Kenya that only uses a very tiny bit of the energy available? Why?

2. *If you only got a few candies:* How did it feel to have to support a large family and only get a tiny bit of energy and resources when you saw the people from rich countries getting so much more than they could possibly need?

If you got a lot of candies: How did you feel about having so much more than you needed, with starving people all around you?

3. Did the people who got more candies (energy & resources) work any harder than the people who got fewer? (That is, did anyone deserve more candies than anyone else?)

4. Were the people who got a lot willing to share/give up? In your opinion, why or why not?

5. Should the people who got a lot be forced to share/give up some of their candy? Why or why not?

6. Should we—all the residents of Earth—focus on slowing population growth or on equalizing consumption?

7. How willing would you be, as an individual from a rich country, to have a little less energy and resources so that someone somewhere else can have a little more? Make two lists, one of resources you don't want to give up and one of the things you'd be willing to give up to help equalize resource use.

I wouldn't want to give up:

I'd be OK giving up: