

# WorldPop

February 2026

**Welcome to the WorldPop newsletter,  
your update on population data and insights.**



The WorldPop user requirements survey, 2026

## **Making decisions count everyone, everywhere**

Welcome to our February 2026 newsletter. We're very pleased to be back with an update on what's happening in our innovative, open, geospatial, demographic [research programme](#).

WorldPop produces estimates of populations with age/sex breakdowns for each 100m x 100m grid square on the planet. These are used as open access demographic datasets by international agencies and companies, such as UNHCR, ESRI and Google, to support and plan humanitarian and development interventions, and help governments fill census gaps.

In this edition we're asking for your feedback on WorldPop open data and how would you like to use it in the future. We celebrate more than [a million open demographic data downloads](#) from our WorldPop website since 2019, [refute claims of systematic rural underrepresentation](#), focus on our recent [co-development and capacity strengthening](#) work, and our [free online training](#), and highlight significant [academic journal articles](#) produced by our team.

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## Our new user requirements survey



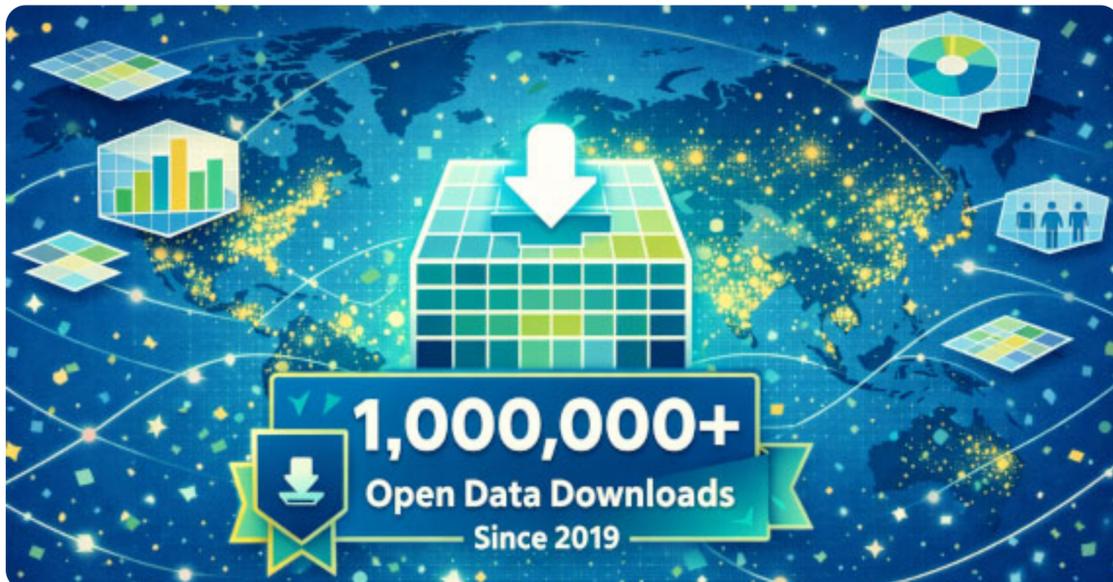
We're running an anonymous survey to better understand how our data is used and how it could better support your work. Your input will help shape future WorldPop open data products for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners worldwide.

👉 Scan the code or read more and take the survey

[Read more...](#)

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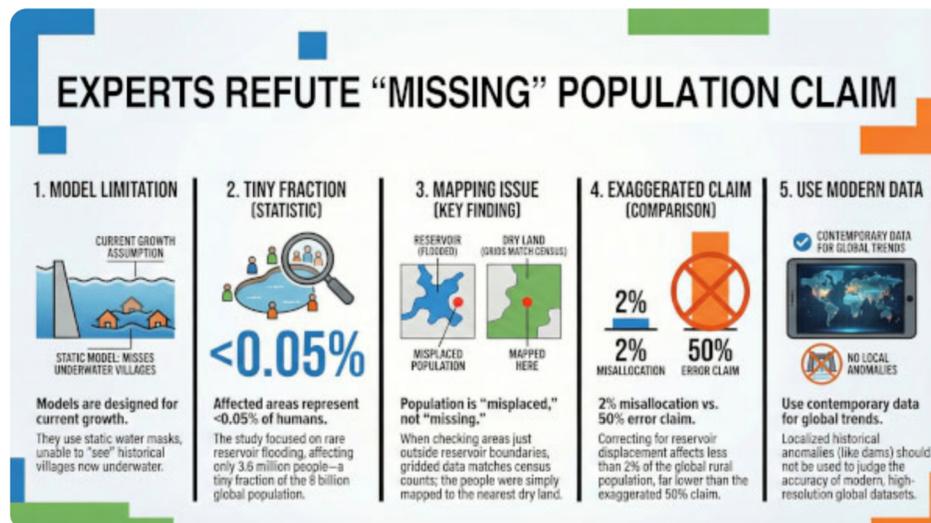
## Celebrating a Milestone: 1 Million Downloads and Counting



We're proud to mark a major milestone in our mission to ensure everyone, everywhere is counted in decision-making. Since 2019, WorldPop's open spatial demographic datasets have surpassed one million downloads from our website alone, reflecting the growing global demand for high-resolution population data to support health, development, and crisis response. From governments and UN agencies to researchers and NGOs, our data is helping shape smarter policies and plan for the future. As we celebrate this achievement, we're also inviting our community to share how they use WorldPop data and help inspire others.

[Read more...](#)

## WorldPop refute claim that global population data are undercounted



Recent research argued that widely used gridded population datasets significantly underrepresent rural populations. In response, WorldPop and partner researchers have published a detailed rebuttal, explaining that the alleged “underrepresentation” stems from misinterpretation of isolated local cases rather than a true systematic bias in global data. They highlight known technical limitations - like static water masks and assumptions about built environments - that can affect how rare events, such as newly flooded villages, appear in models, but do not mean rural populations are broadly missing from the data.

[Read more...](#)

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## The Degree of Urbanisation: Explained Simply



Discover how the Degree of Urbanisation classifies every settlement worldwide - from rural villages to major megacities - using one harmonized method.

Our latest video introduces the Degree of Urbanisation (DEGURBA), a UN-endorsed methodology that uses population density and distribution to consistently classify settlements across the urban–rural spectrum. The video explains how DEGURBA provides a robust and comparable way to understand settlement patterns, and supports our European Commission-funded project to evaluate the robustness of the DEGURBA method, developing intuitive GIS-based tools and high-resolution data to support its application. This work is particularly focused on supporting National Statistical Offices in low- and middle-income countries, enabling local experts to use their own data to inform impactful policymaking and future strategies.

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## Co-development and Capacity strengthening

Over the past 3 months our co-development and capacity strengthening work has continued to grow. In addition to online engagement we delivered in-person workshops to national statistics offices, ministries of health, and UN agencies in low- and middle-income countries.

### December 2025



A ground-breaking hybrid census workshop in Yaoundé, Cameroon led by Dr Chris Nnanatu and Dr Ortis Yankey with partners from UNFPA and FAO provided hands-on training in spatial statistics and hybrid census methods. Over seven days,

participants from government, academia and international agencies explored how combining satellite data, surveys and modelling with traditional enumeration can help ensure everyone counts, even in hard-to-reach regions - a vital step as Cameroon prepares for its first national census in nearly two decades.

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Dr Sarchil Qader and Dr Aubrey Steingraber completed WorldPop's first automated census-mapping workshop in Malawi, marking a major milestone in preparing for the country's 2028 national census. Over two intensive weeks, statisticians and students learned to use innovative geospatial tools to automate enumeration area delineation - a shift that promises to boost accuracy, cut costs, and ease logistical challenges compared with manual methods.



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DEGURBA workshops are equipping countries with the skills to apply the UN's harmonised urban–rural classification method to real-world data. In Cameroon and Namibia,

Senior Enterprise Fellow Graeme Hornby and GIS Technician Iyanuloluwa Olowe led hands-on sessions where participants learned to classify landscapes using modelled population and settlement data, linking results to key development indicators like access to safe water and sanitation. Enterprise Fellow Dr Thea Woods joined the training in Namibia, helping teams gain confidence to complete the full DEGURBA workflow independently - a critical step toward smarter planning and more informed policymaking.

[Read more...](#)

## January 2026

“Counting Everyone in a Changing City,” was a technical working group meeting held in Bangkok that brought together Thailand's National Statistical Office, UNFPA partners, and WorldPop



researchers to tackle the challenge of estimating populations in hard-to-reach urban areas. The event was coordinated by Dr Chibuzor Christopher Nnanatu and included insights shared by WorldPop Research Fellow Dr Somnath Chaudhuri, showcasing how cutting-edge methods and collaboration can help ensure no one is left invisible in fast-growing cities.

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## Conferences and meetings

### October 2025

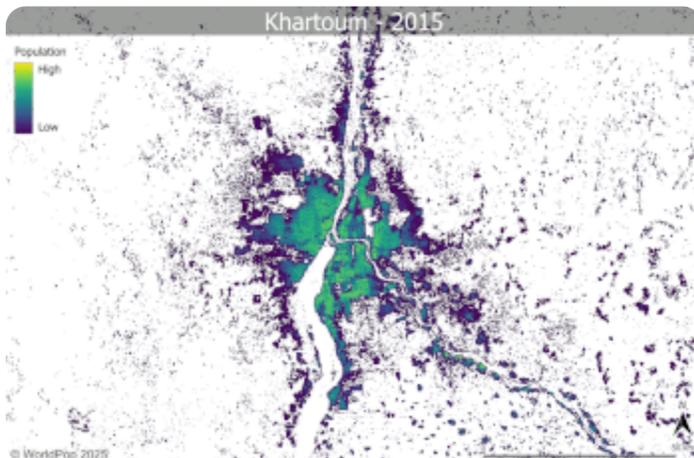
WorldPop strengthened regional ties and championed better data systems at CARICOM's 50th Standing Committee on Caribbean Statistics meeting in Willemstad, Curaçao, where Deputy Director Ian Coady, Senior Enterprise Fellow Dr Natalia Garavito-Tejedor and



Senior Programme Coordinator Kathryn Baxter joined statistical leaders from across the Caribbean to advance a shared vision for robust, people-centred statistics. The gathering focused on modernising national statistical systems and enhancing collaboration with partners like CARICOM, UNFPA and ECLAC to ensure that high-quality, open demographic data drives decision-making for resilience, development and inclusion across the region.

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### November 2025



At the Human Planet Forum 2025, WorldPop joined leading experts in population modelling, urban analytics and Earth observation to showcase cutting-edge advances in open demographic and urban data. A highlight was Professor Andy Tatem's presentation of our new

Global 2 high-resolution population datasets that provide annual, global, age- and sex-disaggregated population estimates from 2015 to 2030, and set the stage for richer insights into how populations are distributed around the world.

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Senior Research Fellow, Dr Sarchil Qader represented WorldPop at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Workshop on



Leveraging Technology for Resilience, where he highlighted the power of high-resolution, age- and sex-disaggregated population data to support recovery and development in conflict-affected settings. His talk underscored how granular geospatial demographic data can help policymakers and humanitarian actors pinpoint vulnerable populations, plan services more effectively and target resources where they are needed most. [Read more \(LinkedIn\)...](#)

## January 2026

WorldPop is delighted to be forging stronger academic ties in the Middle East, as Dr Sarchil Qader recently visited Komar University of Science and



Technology (KUST) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to explore exciting avenues for collaboration. Discussions with Dr Salahaddin Saeed, President of KUST, focused on creating student and staff exchange

opportunities, expanding

postgraduate pathways at the University of Southampton, and strengthening research capacity in the region.

[Read more...](#)

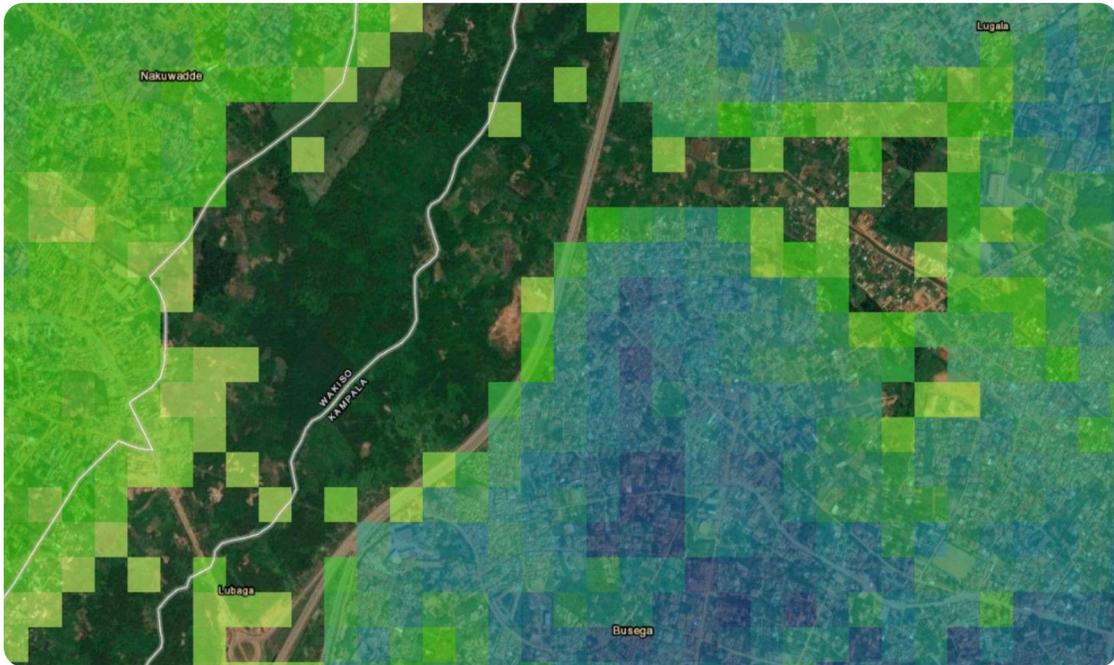
The WorldPop senior team met with the DHIS2 team at the University of Oslo to explore how our population datasets can better integrate with the world's largest digital administrative system. DHIS2



is used across sectors - from health and education to climate and social services - reaching systems that serve an estimated 3.2 billion people globally.

[Read more...](#)

## [Our latest publications](#)



Our team have recently authored or co-authored significant papers on:

- [Reply to: Global gridded population datasets systematically underrepresent rural population](#)
- [Social Media Data for Population Mapping: A Bayesian Approach to Address Representativeness and Privacy Challenges](#)
- [Degree of Urbanisation classes using WorldPop Global2 R2025A population data with the GHSL GHS-DUG tool](#)
- [Combined benefits of multi-hazard early warnings on human mobility resilience to tropical cyclones](#)
- [Geographic access to care for unvaccinated children in LMICs, 2021](#)
- [Advances in Small Area Population Estimation in the Absence of National Census Data \(Preprint\)](#)
- [Assessing context-dependent effectiveness of heat adaptation through human mobility under different heatwave regimes](#)
- [Assessing the impacts of gridded population model choice on degree of urbanisation metrics](#)
- [Social, mobility and contact networks in shaping health behaviours and infectious disease dynamics](#)
- [Human mobility in epidemic modeling](#)

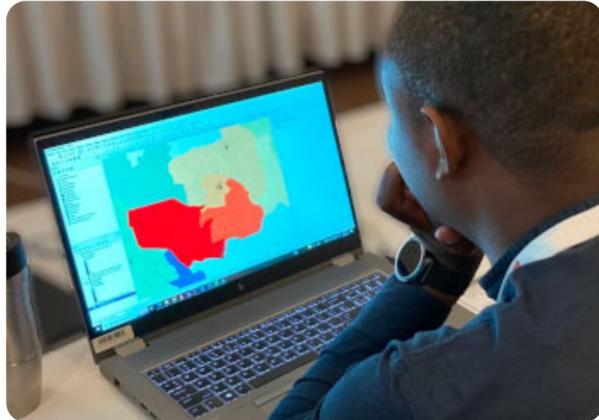
- [Global 1 km-grid population projections for 2025-2100 consistent with the Shared Socioeconomic Pathways \(SSPs\) national population projections, version 0.2](#)
- [Modelling practices, data provisioning, sharing and dissemination needs for pandemic decision-making](#)

See our [publications list](#) and search more than 300 highly cited papers published since 2004.

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## [Online training](#)

It's never too late to deepen your understanding of population science with WorldPop's free, expert-designed learning resources. Whether you're just curious or aiming to build practical skills, there's something for everyone - from the comprehensive WorldPop Book of Methods, which reveals how our



high-resolution population maps are built, to the Online Learning Portal offering self-paced courses in geospatial tools like QGIS with certification and community support. For those interested in hands-on techniques, the Population Modelling Training Manual and step-by-step tutorials - including guides to QGIS plugins and spatial workflows - offer pathways from foundational concepts to real-world applications that support planning, research and decision-making around the globe.

[Read more...](#)

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## **We hope you enjoyed our newsletter.**

If you did, please share it with your friends and colleagues.

Our next edition will be published in Spring, 2026.

## Subscribe to our newsletter



The WorldPop research programme, based in the School of Geography and Environmental Science at the University of Southampton, is a multi-sectoral team of researchers, technicians and project specialists that produces data on population distributions and characteristics at high spatial resolution.



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