

- **Population**

- 61 would be Asian
- 13 African
- 5 from North America
- 8 from South America
- 12 Europeans
- 1 from the South Pacific

- 52 women
- 48 men
- 30 children
- 70 adults.
- 7 aged.
- 70 non white
- 30 white

## •Faith/Belief

- 33 would be Christians
- 19 believers in Islam
- 13 would be Hindus
- 6 would follow Buddhist teachings
- 5 would believe there are spirits in the trees, rocks and in all of nature
- 24 would believe in other religions, or no religion.

- **Of the wealth in this village,**
  - 6 people own 59% (all from the USA)
  - 74 people own 39%
  - 20 people share the remaining 2%.
  - If you have money in the bank, your wallet and spare change around the house, you are among the richest 8.

- If you have a car, you are among the richest 7
- Among the villages, 1 has a college education
- 2 have computers
- 14 can't read.

- **Finally** - of the 100 people in this village
- 75 people have *some* supply of food and a place to shelter
- 25 do not.
- 17 have no clean, safe water to drink.
- 20 are undernourished,
- 1 is dying of starvation,
- 15 are overweight.



# It's *our* small world after all

Condensing the world into a village of 100 people produces a startling result.

Statistics. Now there's a subject with the romantic appeal of a solo, Friday night, macaroni and cheese dinner in front of the TV.

No disrespect to mathematicians with vast numerical acumen, but it's widely viewed that, given enough creativity on the part of the end user, statistics can be used to justify any political, commercial or even ethical stance.

But before we diss the number-crunchers (or more to the point the number interpreters), there are times when numbers can present a startling reminder about the nature of life, and how fortunate we in Australia are compared to many people in other less fortunate parts of our planet.

Enter David J. Smith and his book, *If the World Were a Village: A Book About the World's People*\*. Ostensibly a book to educate children about the nature of global life, Smith has taken the world's population (6.4 billion as of 2005) and created a statistical village of 100 people where each person represents roughly 64 million.

With Smith's work it's not so much a case of exact numbers but rather the sobering 'big picture' that's offered.

'By learning about the villagers—who they are and how they live,' Smith writes in the introduction, 'perhaps we can find out more about our neighbours in the real



world and the problems our planet may face in the future.'

For example, in Smith's village of 100 only one person would come from Oceania (Australia, New Zealand and some Pacific islands). By contrast, 61 would come from Asia, 13 from Africa and 12 from Europe (even the US and Canada together would only be represented by five people).

More disquieting than such 'objective' statistics of geographical representations are some of the social, financial and lifestyle inequalities that exist within the village.

For example, despite there being no shortage of provisions in the village, food is not divided equally. Indeed, half the villagers 'do not have a reliable source of food

and are hungry some or all of the time' and another 20 people are 'severely under-nourished'. Only 30 villagers always have enough to eat.

On top of that are some disturbing figures about education, wealth distribution and population growth.

'I'm often asked where it began,' says Smith, 'and the answer, not surprisingly for a lifelong teacher, is with my seventh graders. One day we were talking about how many French and Spanish speakers there are in the world. One of the students said, "Well, if this grade were the world, how many of us would speak French or Spanish?"'

This was an epiphany for Smith, who then hit upon the idea of putting information about the world's people into the framework of a group of 100 villagers' lives 'as a way to get across data about the real world that can otherwise be immense and confusing'.

Despite the sometimes grim nature of the world, the future need not be bleak, says Smith. While he acknowledges there are problems, it's encouraging children to become passionate about their world that offers the best hope for a positive future.

John Evans

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