

Research Report for the Seminar on

# The Rise of Post-Familialism: Humanity's Future?

Prepared by CSC Senior Visiting Fellow

**Joel Kotkin**

With contributions from

Anuradha Shroff, Ali Modarres, Wendell Cox

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Published by  
Civil Service College, Singapore  
Centre for Governance and Leadership  
31 North Buona Vista Road  
Singapore 275983  
www.ccollege.gov.sg

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#### **National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

Kotkin, Joel.

The rise of post-familialism : humanity's future? / Joel Kotkin ; contributing author, Anuradha Shroff, Ali Modarres, Wendell Cox ; edited by Zina Klapper. – Singapore : Civil Service College, c2012.

Includes bibliographical references.

p. cm.

ISBN : 978-981-07-3896-9 (pbk.)

1. Childfree choice. 2. Childfree choice - Singapore. 3. Childfree choice - United States. 4. Family demography. I. Shroff, Anuradha. II. Modarres, Ali. III. Cox, Wendell. IV. Klapper, Zina. V. Title.

HQ755.8

306.87 -- dc23 OCN811554601

ISBN-13: 978-981-07-3896-9 (PAPERBACK)

ISBN-13: 978-981-07-3897-6 (PDF)

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## PREFACE

This research was undertaken to look into the causes, economic and social implications of childlessness, particularly in high income nations. The research made extensive use of both primary and secondary data, including the landmark work of Wolfgang Lutz, as well as extensive reading on the history and trajectory of the family around the world. This was conducted primarily by Joel Kotkin and Zina Klapper. We also relied on extensive interviews of residents of Singapore, and arranged discussions with experts working in this field.

Anuradha Shroff researched, analysed and wrote up the Singapore story. Her colleague and fellow Senior Researcher from the Civil Service College, Soh Tze Min, provided research on China's demographic trends and population policy.

In examining both past and projected trends in population and related issues, we relied principally on United Nations data collected and analysed by Wendell Cox. More detailed data was obtained, as appropriate, from regional statistical sources (such as Eurostat) and national statistics bureaus.

Our maps for the major US metropolitan areas were developed by Ali Modarres. He used the 2010 American Community Survey, provided by the US Census Bureau. We aggregated the individual level data to geographic units called PUMA (Public Use Microdata Area) and mapped the results. The maps on international trends on aging also were derived from United Nations data. Fertility data for the Middle Eastern-North African region was obtained from the World Bank.

Numerous people helped us in forging this document. We would like to thank Wong Hui Min of the Civil Service College, Singapore for help in arranging appointments and interviews. Gavin Jones of National University of Singapore and Yap Mui Teng at the Institute for Policy Studies helped us greatly with understanding the family dynamics of Singapore and the rest of East Asia. Mika Toyota provided tremendous insight that helped shape our treatment of Japan. Pastor Andrew Ong, Father Anthony Hutjes, Ustaz Ahmad Khushairi, Ustaz Yusri Yubhi Md Yusoff and participants of the focus groups discussions held by the Civil Service College in March 2012 graciously granted the team time for in-depth interviews.

In the United States, we could not have done this project without the active support of Chapman University, based in Orange, California, and its Chancellor, Daniele Struppa. Kevin Ross, Acting Dean at the schools' Leatherby Libraries was of great help, as was Sam Schleier, a student at Chapman University, who did extensive research on Latin America. We also want to acknowledge the contributions of Alejandro Macarrón Larumbe in Madrid, Spain, who has done landmark work on European demographics.

This report originated with a suggestion from philanthropist Howard Ahmanson, and was underwritten with a generous grant from Fieldstead and Company in Irvine, California. We want to thank Doug Swardstrom, Fieldstead's general manager, for his stalwart support.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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An internationally-recognised authority on global, economic, political and social trends, Mr Kotkin is the author of *The Next Hundred Million: America In 2050*, published by The Penguin Press. The book explores how the nation will evolve in the next four decades. His previous, also critically acclaimed book, *The City: A Global History*, was published in 2006 by Random House/Modern Library, with editions published in China, Spain, UK and the British Commonwealth, Japan and Korea.

**Anuradha Shroff** is Senior Researcher and Associate Facilitator at the Centre for Governance and Leadership, Civil Service College, Singapore. She graduated from the University of Sheffield and holds a BA(Hons) in Psychology/Sociology. Her primary research area is in complexity and its application to public policy, leadership development and organisational development. She was previously a lead strategist and facilitator with the Strategic Policy Office, Public Service Division, Singapore where she helped develop strategic planning capabilities across the Public Service and researched on global trends impacting the future of Singapore. She has contributed to the book *Conversations For The Future* published by the Public Service Division in 2011.

**Ali Modarres** is Professor and Chair of the Department of Geosciences and Environment at California State University, Los Angeles. He specialises in urban geography and his primary research and publication interests are socio-spatial urban dynamics and the political economy of urban design. He has published in the areas of immigration, race and ethnicity in American cities, social geography, transportation planning, environmental equity, and urban development and public policy. He is the Editor of *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning* and serves as an advisor and a board member for a number of local and regional planning organisations in California.

**Wendell Cox** is principal of Demographia, an international public policy firm located in the St. Louis metropolitan area. He has served as a visiting professor at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers in Paris since 2002. His principal interests are economics, poverty alleviation, demographics, urban policy and transport. He is co-author of the annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey. Mayor Tom Bradley appointed him to three terms on the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (1977–1985) and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich appointed him to the Amtrak Reform Council, to complete the unexpired term of New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman (1999–2002). He is author of *War on the Dream: How Anti-Sprawl Policy Threatens the Quality of Life* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse Inc., 2006)

**Zina Klapper** (editor and director of research) is a Los Angeles-based journalist, editor and research director. She is Deputy Editor of [NewGeography.com](http://NewGeography.com).





## INTRODUCTION

For most of human history, the family — defined by parents, children and extended kin — has stood as the central unit of society. In Europe, Asia, Africa and, later, the Americas and Oceania, people lived, and frequently worked, as family units.

Today, in the high-income world<sup>1</sup> and even in some developing countries, we are witnessing a shift to a new social model. Increasingly, family no longer serves as the central organizing feature of society. An unprecedented number of individuals — approaching upwards of 30% in some Asian countries — are choosing to eschew child bearing altogether and, often, marriage as well.

The post-familial phenomena has been most evident in the high income world, notably in Europe, North America and, most particularly, wealthier parts of East Asia. Yet it has bloomed as well in many key emerging countries, including Brazil, Iran and a host of other Islamic countries.

The reasons for this shift are complex, and vary significantly in different countries and cultures. In some countries, particularly in East Asia, the nature of modern competitive capitalism often forces individuals to choose between career advancement and family formation. As a result, these economies are unwittingly setting into motion forces destructive to their future workforce, consumer base and long-term prosperity.

The widespread movement away from traditional values — Hindu, Muslim, Judeo-Christian, Buddhist or Confucian — has also undermined familialism. Traditional values have almost without exception been rooted in kinship relations. The new emerging social ethos endorses more secular values that prioritise individual personal socioeconomic success as well as the personal quest for greater fulfilment.

To be sure, many of the changes driving post-familialism also reflect positive aspects of human progress. The change in the role of women beyond sharply defined maternal roles represents one of the great accomplishments of modern times. Yet this trend also generates new pressures that have led some women to reject both child-bearing and marriage. Men are also adopting new attitudes that increasingly preclude marriage or fatherhood.

The great trek of people to cities represents one of the great triumphs of human progress, as fewer people are necessary to produce the basic necessities of food, fibre and energy. Yet the growth of urban density also tends to depress both fertility and marriage rates. The world's emerging post-familial culture has been largely spawned in the crowded pool of the large urban centres of North America, Europe and, most particularly, East Asia. It is also increasingly evident in the fast growing cities of developing countries in south Asia, North Africa, Iran and parts of the Middle East.

The current weak global economy, now in its fifth year, also threatens to further slow family formation. Child-rearing requires a strong hope that life will be better for the next generation. The rising cost of urban living, the declining

number of well-paying jobs, and the onset of the global financial crisis has engendered growing pessimism in most countries, particularly in Europe and Japan, but also in the United States and some developing countries.

This report will look into both the roots and the future implications of the post-familial trend. As Austrian demographer Wolfgang Lutz has pointed out, the shift to an increasingly childless society creates “self reinforcing mechanisms” that make childlessness, singleness, or one-child families increasingly predominant.<sup>2</sup>

Societal norms, which once almost mandated family formation, have begun to morph. The new norms are reinforced by cultural influences that tend to be concentrated in the very areas — dense urban centres — with the lowest percentages of married people and children. A majority of residences in Manhattan are for singles, while Washington D.C. has one of the highest percentages of women who do not live with children, some 70%. Similar trends can be seen in London, Paris, Tokyo and other cultural capitals.<sup>3</sup>

A society that is increasingly single and childless is likely to be more concerned with serving current needs than addressing the future oriented requirements of children. Since older people vote more than younger ones, and children have no say at all, political power could shift towards non-childbearing people, at least in the short and medium term. We could tilt more into a ‘now’ society, geared towards consuming or recreating today, as opposed to nurturing and sacrificing for tomorrow.

The most obvious impact from post-familialism lies with demographic decline. It is already having a profound impact on fiscal stability in, for example, Japan and across southern Europe. With fewer workers contributing to cover pension costs,<sup>4</sup> even successful places like Singapore will face this same crisis in the coming decade.<sup>5</sup>

A diminished labour force — and consumer base — also suggest slow economic growth and limit opportunities for business expansion. For one thing, younger people tend to drive technological change, and their absence from the workforce will slow innovation. And for many people, the basic motivation for hard work is underpinned by the need to support and nurture a family. Without a family to support, the very basis for the work ethos will have changed, perhaps irrevocably.

The team that composed this report — made up of people of various faiths, cultures, and outlooks — has concerns about the sustainability of a post-familial future. But we do not believe we can “turn back the clock” to the 1950s, as some social conservatives wish, or to some other imagined, idealised, time. Globalisation, urbanisation, the ascendancy of women, and changes in traditional sexual relations are with us, probably for the long run.

Seeking to secure a place for families requires us to move beyond nostalgia for a bygone era and focus on what is possible. Yet, in the end, we do not consider familialism to be

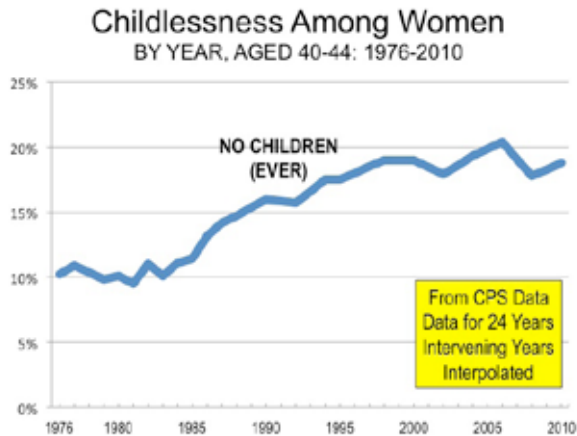
doomed. Even in the midst of decreased fertility, we also see surprising, contradictory and hopeful trends. In Europe, Asia and America, most younger people still express the desire to have families, and often with more than one child. Amidst all the social change discussed above, there remains a basic desire for family that needs to be nurtured and supported by the wider society.

Our purpose here is not to judge people about their personal decision to forego marriage and children. Instead we seek to launch a discussion about how to carve out or maintain a place for families in the modern metropolis. In the process we must ask — with full comprehension of today's prevailing trends — tough questions about our basic values and the nature of the cities we are now creating.

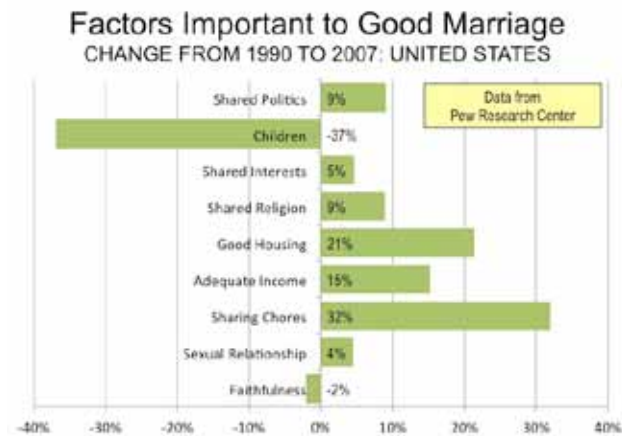
## SECTION ONE: THE GREAT SOCIETAL SHIFT

The arrival of post-familialism has come so quickly and is at such odds with humanity's traditions that it is only now being widely acknowledged. Here are some recent trends from the United States:

Since 1976, the percentage of American women who did not have children by the time they reached their 40s doubled to nearly 20%.



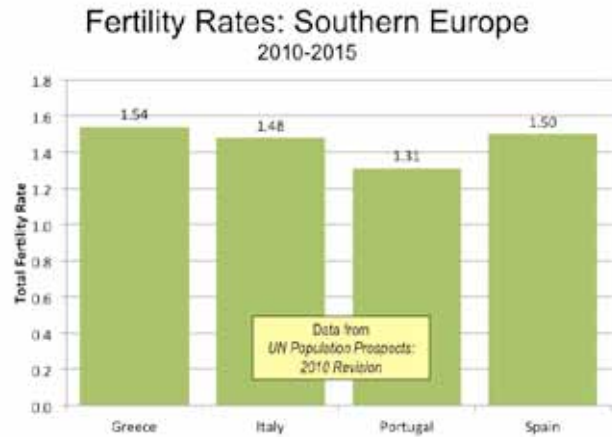
Over the past few decades, public attitudes toward childlessness have become more accepting. In a 2007 Pew Research Center survey, only 41% of adults said that children are very important for a successful marriage, a decline from 65% who said so in 1990.<sup>6</sup>



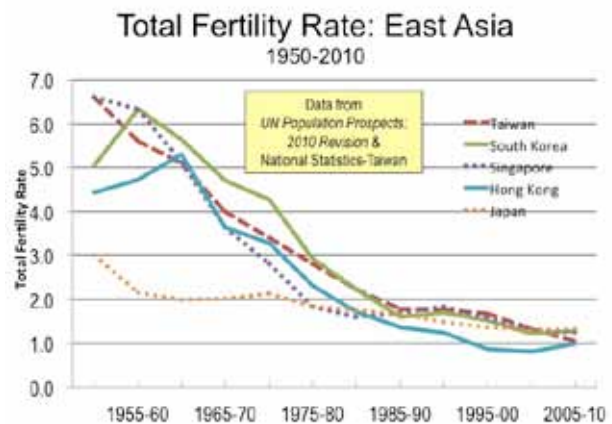
These trends are even more pronounced in other advanced countries. Gavin Jones, from the National University of Singapore (NUS), identifies the following forces as helping to undermine East Asia's family-oriented traditions: high levels of education, particularly among women; competitiveness; and a skyrocketing cost of living. These factors, he notes, "show no sign of letting up."<sup>7</sup>

Similar patterns can be seen in Europe, where the earliest shift to post-familialism took place. Today, 30% of German women say they do not intend to have children, and 48% of German middle-aged men contend that you could have a happy life without children, three times the number for their fathers.<sup>8</sup> Among German women aged 45 to 55, roughly one in five has remained childless,<sup>9</sup> more recent generations seem to be accelerating this pattern.<sup>10</sup>

In recent decades the childless trend has extended from northern to more traditionally family oriented southern Europe. Italy now records one of the lowest fertility levels in Europe. More than one-fifth of Italian women born around 1965 will remain childless, notes one recent study by scholars at the University of Pavia. Greek, Spanish and Italian birth rates are among the lowest in the world.<sup>11</sup>

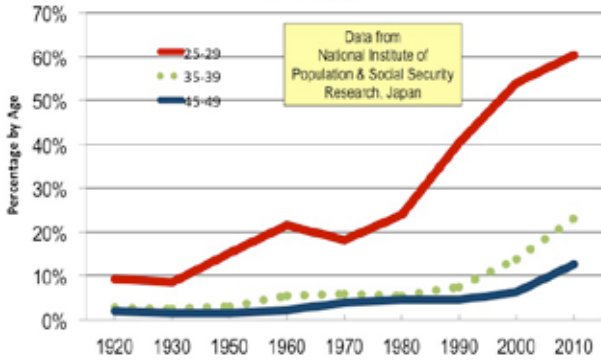


East Asia is famously considered to be communitarian and family oriented, but post-familialism may be growing more quickly there than anywhere on the planet (see our contributing author Anuradha Shroff's essay, "A Letter to the Women of Singapore", p.17). Gavin Jones estimates that up to a quarter of all East Asian women will remain single by age 50, and up to a third will remain childless. These countries, he adds, also now suffer among the lowest fertility rates in the world.<sup>12</sup>



Japan has been the leader in this transition. Sociologist Muriel Jolivet unearthed a trend of growing hostility towards motherhood — in part traced to male reluctance to take responsibility for raising children — among Japanese women as early as 1997 in her work, *Japan: The Childless Society*.<sup>13</sup> This trend has continued to develop over the next decade. By 2010, a third of Japanese women entering their 30s were single, as were roughly one in five of those entering their 40s — that is roughly eight times the percentage in 1960, and twice as many as in 2000. By 2030, according to sociologist Mika Toyota, almost one in three Japanese males may be unmarried by age 50.<sup>14</sup>

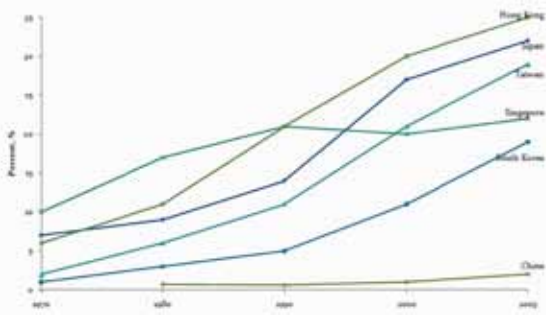
### Never Married Women: Japan by Age 1920-2010



This trend has now spread decisively to what used to be called “the Asian tigers”. In Taiwan, 30% of women aged between 30 and 34 are single; only 30 years ago, just 2% of women were. In three decades, “remaining single and childless have emerged from a rarity to a commonplace, and appears to be picking up momentum. In a 2011 poll of Taiwanese women under 50, a huge majority claimed they did not want children.”<sup>15</sup>

The effects of this may be greater than in Europe or America, where births without marriage are more common, since very few Asian women have children outside wedlock. Not surprisingly, these East Asian locations now have fertility rates almost 50% below the replacement rate of 2.1.<sup>16</sup> “People increasingly see marriage and children as very risky, so they avoid it,” notes Jones. “Even though there’s a strong ideology in Asia to have a family, it is fading. We are losing the concept of the ‘sacred child’.”<sup>17</sup>

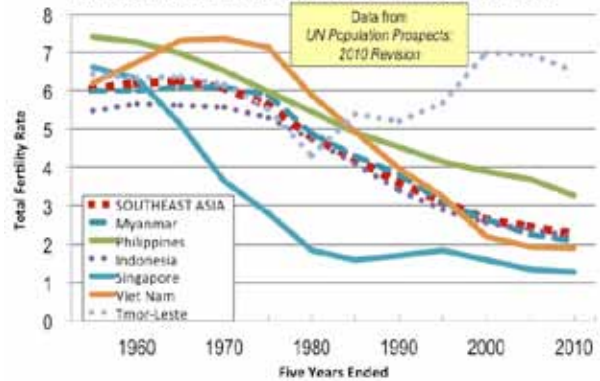
### Trends in proportions single among women aged 30-34 in selected East Asian countries, 1970-2005



Source: Gavin W. Jones and Zhang Yanxia, National University of Singapore

In the broader region, even relatively poor counties have exhibited low fertility rates. Vietnam has a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.89. Myanmar has a TFR of 2.08, while Indonesia’s is just above replacement, at 2.19, half its rate in the early 1970s.

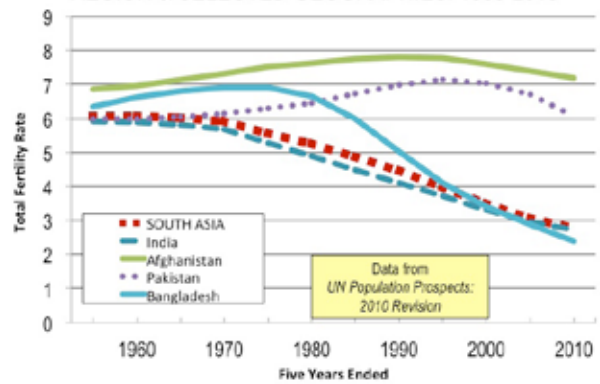
### Southeast Asia: Total Fertility Rate REGION & SELECTED GEOGRAPHIES: 1950-2010



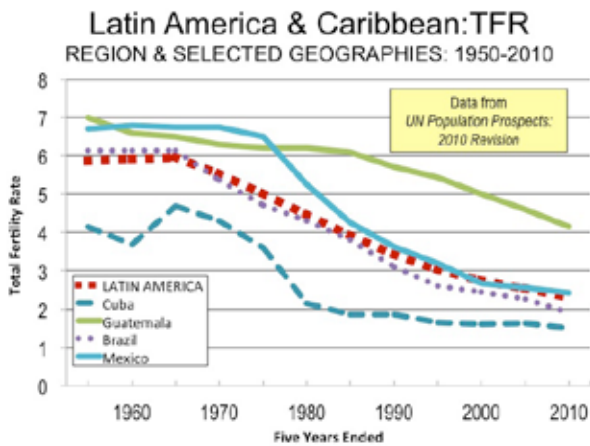
The TFR in South Asia is at 2.77, but down substantially, from over 5.00 in the 1970s. Bangladesh, with a GDP per capita of less than \$2,000,<sup>18</sup> has a fertility rate of 2.38, down drastically from 6.91 in the early 1970s. India’s TFR is 2.72, down from 5.26 in the early 1970s.

However, South Asia also includes some nations that still have very high TFRs. Afghanistan is at 7.19, down only slightly from the middle 1970s. The same is true of Pakistan, with a fertility rate of 6.07, only slightly below its peak of 7.14 in the early 1990s.<sup>19</sup>

### South Asia: Total Fertility Rate REGION & SELECTED GEOGRAPHIES: 1950-2010

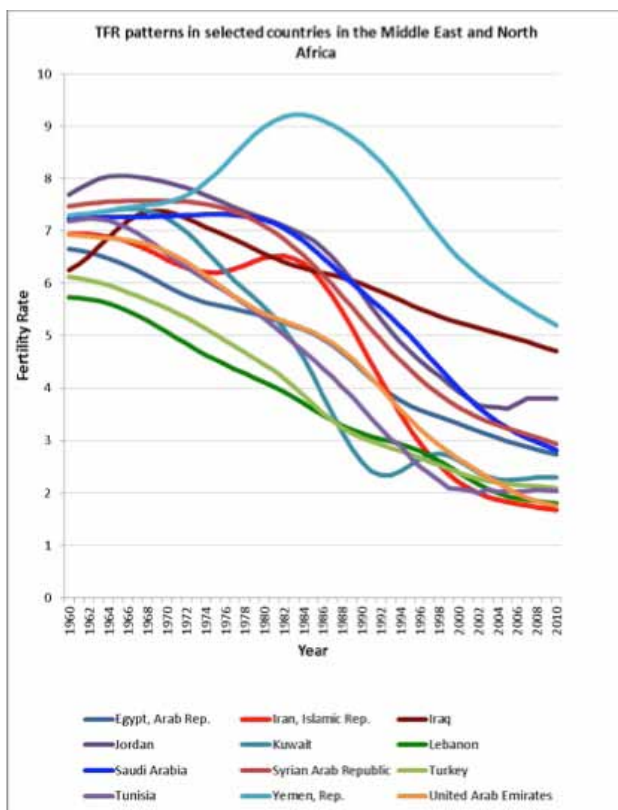


Post-familialism is particularly notable in parts of Latin America, especially Brazil, where fertility rates (now 1.9, from 4.3 in the late 1970s) are plunging to below those seen in the United States. Overall rates in Latin America and the Caribbean have dropped to 2.30, somewhat above the replacement rate of 2.10. Mexico remains slightly higher, with a fertility rate of 2.41. However, this is down from 4.25 in the early 1980s. Brazil’s birth rate has dropped not only among the professional classes, but also in the countryside and among those living in the favelas. As one account reports, women now say, “A fábrica está fechada” — the factory is closed.<sup>20</sup>



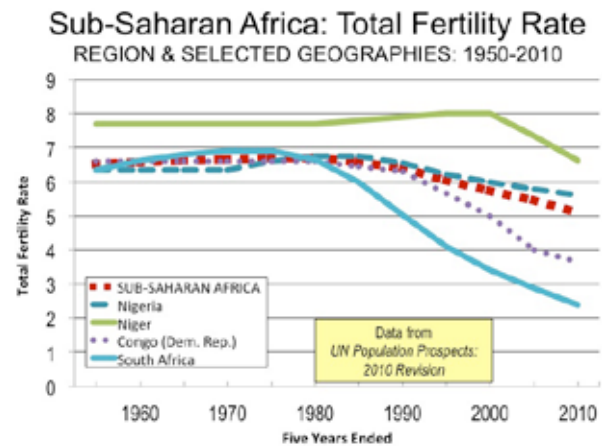
The lowest fertility rate in the Caribbean is in Cuba, which has reached 1.50, which is only slightly above that of Eastern Europe, including Russia. As is discussed later, such a low fertility rate is consistent with the experience of former Western communist countries.<sup>21</sup>

Even parts of the Islamic world — Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Iran — are seeing more people postpone marriage, and an increase in divorce rates. Those who choose to have children have increasingly fewer. Birth rates among Muslims in Europe, as well, have dropped.<sup>22</sup> Divorce over the past decade has grown by 135% in Iran, where women now constitute 60% of college graduates. Meanwhile, household size has declined to less than 3.5, according to the most recent national census.<sup>23</sup>



Sub-Saharan Africa remains the one broad region in the world with very high TFRs. The overall TFR there is 5.10,

down only modestly from 6.69 in the late 1970s. Its lowest fertility rate is in its industrial heartland, South Africa, at 2.38 down from 6.46 in the late 1970s. The region's most populous nation, Nigeria, has a TFR of 5.61. This is only a modest decrease from the 6.76 of the late 1970s. The TFR remains at a highly elevated level in another very populous nation, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at 6.06. Niger has the highest TFR, at 6.62.<sup>24</sup>



**THE IMPACT OF THE INFORMATION AGE**

In our Singapore interviews, declining TFRs seemed most often tied to economic stress, what Harvard's Robert Putnam defines as the curse of "pervasive busyness."<sup>25</sup> This does not mean women intrinsically do not want children suggests historian Goran Therborn, but have given other concerns higher priority. "First education, then a job and then a family," she observes. These are very much like the priorities usually associated with men.<sup>26</sup>

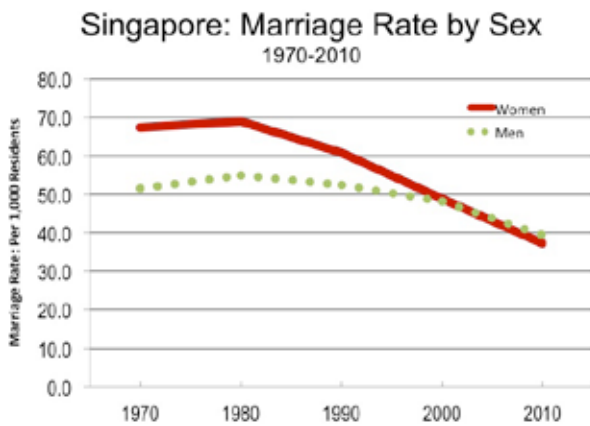
Changes inherent in post-industrial economies often seem to work against the traditional family. Hours are often less regular than in the past, and many careers require longer educations and greater challenges. "Just as the nuclear family was promoted by the rise of the factory and office work," futurist Alvin Toffler suggests, "any shift away from the factory or the office would also exert a heavy influence on the family."<sup>27</sup>

Huge time commitments at work, notes demographer Phil Longman, often work against potential parents. Many decide not to take the plunge, given the time constraints. He suggests, "As modern societies demand more and more investment in human capital, this demand threatens its own supply."<sup>28</sup>

Singapore, arguably the most successful capitalist city perhaps ever conceived, epitomises this conundrum. As its GDP per capita has gone from third world level to higher than virtually any nation in Europe or North America, Singapore's TFR has plunged to 1.15 births per female in 2010, one of the world's lowest.

Equally troubling, a relatively high proportion of males and females in their thirties had never married as of 2010. Among those aged 30 to 34 years, 37% of the males and

25% of the females remained single, compared to the 31% for males and 19% for females in 2000.<sup>1</sup> One of the most stark indications of the trend is the huge drop in the marriage rate (marriages per 1,000 unmarried residents), which has fallen precipitously, especially among women. For the first time, the marriage rate among women has fallen



below that of men.<sup>2</sup>

Singapore possesses the wealth, safety and cleanliness desired by modern families, but the hyper-competitive nature of the society — starting from pre-school — seems to work against marriage, family and procreation. Remaining unattached and childless has become a legitimate option for a growing percentage of the population. “The focus in Singapore is not to enjoy life, but to keep score: in school, in jobs, in income,” noted one 30-year-old scholar at the NUS Institute for Policy Studies. “Many see getting attached as an impediment to this.”

Demographer Wolfgang Lutz notes that Singapore, for all its pro-natalist policies, still operates an economic system that encourages, even insists on, long hours for employees, many of whom are women. Singapore’s labour force participation rate for women is almost 60%.<sup>29</sup> “In Singapore,” Lutz points out, “women work an average of fifty-three hours a week. Of course they are not going to have children. They don’t have the time.”<sup>30</sup>

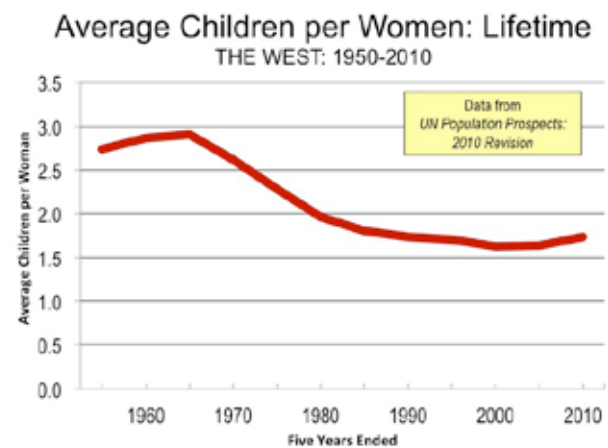
## THE RISE OF “SINGLISM”

University of California psychology professor Bella De Paulo has coined the notion of “singlism”. It starts off with a commendable attempt to rebut discrimination and stereotypes — from fecklessness to self-obsessiveness — often hurled at the unattached. In contrast, De Paulo portrays them as an advantaged group: more cyber, and “more likely to be linked to members of their social networks by bonds of affection”. Unlike families, whose members, after all, are often stuck with each other, singles enjoy “intentional communities” and are thus more likely “to think about human connectedness in a way that is far-reaching and less predictable.”<sup>31</sup>

For many individuals, she and others suggest, remaining single and childless makes logical sense. Some studies claim

that US couples who choose not to have children enjoy higher net wealth.<sup>32</sup> “Choice” is the key operative word here. As British historian Catherine Hakim suggests, the current rate of childless females today is not much different than a century ago, but in the past, childlessness was principally involuntary.<sup>33</sup>

In previous eras, people didn’t have children because of factors such as extreme poverty, mass emigration, war, disease or other major societal disruptions. Families usually had more children than is common today, which made up in numbers for those who did not have children. In contrast, today’s post-familialism has emerged at a time when, given the cost of raising children, the concept of quality over quantity has also become commonplace. We are more assured that the first child might thrive; assets are usually harnessed to give the best life possible to one or two kids, as opposed to three or four.<sup>34</sup>



The changes, even in the United States — still a relatively young country with many families — have been profound. “Singlism”, particularly in Europe and America, has been connected with personal liberation, particularly for women, and also with urban, “green,” and aesthetic values.

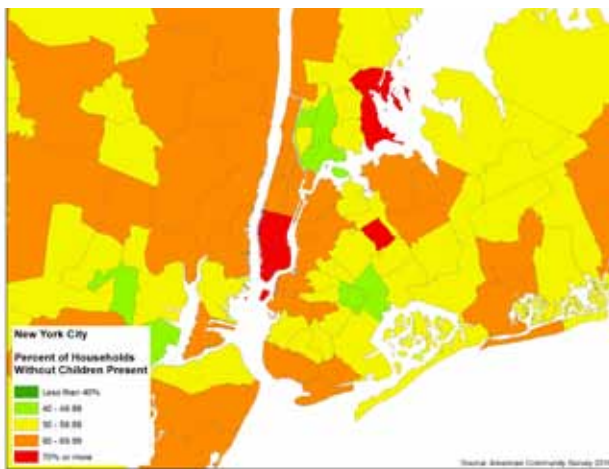
In his provocative 2012 book *Going Solo*, Eric Klinenberg points out that the percentage of Americans living alone has skyrocketed from 9% of all households in 1950 to roughly 28% today. In Scandinavia, the percentage of single households is even greater: 40% to 45%. Klinenberg traces this to, among other things, greater wealth, the rise of welfare states, and the rise of what sociologist Emile Durkheim called “the cult of the individual.”<sup>35</sup>

For the “hip” urban professionals so prized by many pundits and economic developers, living alone represents a “more desirable state”. Klinenberg suggests that “For young professionals, it’s a sign of success and a mark of distinction, a way to gain freedom and experience the anonymity that can make city life so exhilarating... it’s a way to reassert control over your life.”<sup>36</sup>

In contrast, the family, and particularly children, is often considered as something of an obstacle to the pursuit of happiness and self-fulfilment. Studies by Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert conclude that “happiness” falls for both men and

women after the first child is born, that “people without children are happier than people with children,” and that “people with young children living with them are the least happy of all.” For women, he adds, spending time with their children ranks about the same as vacuuming on happiness scales.<sup>37</sup>

The emerging single culture enjoys unprecedented cultural influence. In the United States, for example, influential media and information jobs generally are located precisely where levels of singleness and childlessness are highest, such as Manhattan, San Francisco or Seattle. This is true as well for such cultural centres as Tokyo and London, which have well below average numbers of families with children.<sup>38</sup> Of what are generally considered the six largest media companies in the US—Comcast, Disney, News Corp, Time Warner, Viacom, and CBS—four, are headquartered in largely childless, heavily single Manhattan.



This media culture, notes Singapore pastor Andrew Ong, is “about not growing up — when you get married and have kids you stop being cool.”<sup>39</sup> This represents a sharp break, particularly in Asia, where family and traditional values have long been paramount. The earliest signs of this new Asian culture were first evident in Japan with the rise of the so-called *shinjinrui* (“new race”) in the 1980s.<sup>40</sup>

In sharp contrast to their parents, who sacrificed for both their families and their countries, the “new race” prioritises cultural pursuits, travel, and an almost defiant individualism. Now in their 30s and 40s, many young Asians, particularly women, indulge themselves in hobbies, fashion or restaurants — personal pursuits not readily available to their home-bound mothers or overworked fathers. Mika Toyota observes: “People’s lifestyles are more important and their personal networks mean more than family. It’s now a choice. You can be single, self-satisfied and well. So why have kids? It’s better to go on great holidays, eat good food, and have your hobbies. A family is no longer the key to the city life.”<sup>41</sup>

## A RADICAL BREAK WITH THE VALUES OF THE PAST

This shift away from the family breaks the continuity of the human experience. Primate “social groupings” — families — evolved, notes palaeontologist Richard Leakey, because they proved “evolutionarily advantageous” for passing on information and for the more efficient exploitation of natural

resources. The need to sacrifice and share among family members, Leakey believes, was among the most important advantaged of our ancestors as they struggled to expand their biological niche in pre-historic times.<sup>42</sup>

Freud, among others, saw this need for family as intrinsic, combining the man’s need to support the family and for sex, and woman for the protection of children. “Eros and Ananke [love and necessity],” he writes in *Civilization and its Discontents*, “have become the parents of human civilization too.”<sup>43</sup>

Early civilisations usually placed a priority on children and family. In Judaism, for example, “Intentional childlessness was denounced as a serious sin,” notes the British Talmudic scholar Abraham Cohen. “Children, he added, “were thought of as a precious loan from God to be guarded with loving and fateful care.”<sup>44</sup> Focus on kinship defined the Sino and European cultures, precisely where post-familialism has taken the firmest root. These cultures, based around the Roman and Chinese empires, accounted for at least half of the global population around the birth of Christ.<sup>45</sup>

Islam also built on the traditional kinship values of early societies.<sup>46</sup> It provided detailed laws of inheritance and the responsibilities of parents to their children and children to their parents. The regulation of the treatment of women and children were codified and bequeathed divine blessing. The great Arab historian Ibn Khaldun saw an ebb and flow in “the shadow and power of group feeling” — lodged in clan and kinship relationships — as shaping powerful dynasties some linked directly to the family of the Prophet.<sup>47</sup>

Buddhism, too, placed the family high in its hierarchy of values. The family was to be animated by Buddhist virtues, and “the core” of the broader society. Respect for parents and proper relations within the family were a starting point for a more enlightened community. Notes the thirteenth century Zen Master Dogen, “Those who see worldly life as an obstacle to Dharma see no Dharma in everyday actions; they have not yet discovered that there are no everyday actions outside of Dharma.”<sup>48</sup>

In Hinduism, human life is believed to comprise four stages called “ashrams” that every man should ideally go through. The second stage, “Grihastha”, was conceived as the Householder/Married Family Man Stage. An important aspect of Hindu family life is the inter-dependence between members and the extended family provides considerable practical and emotional support, for example, when children are born.<sup>49</sup>

Like its Hindu counterpart, Chinese civilisation was built around a large extended family, often with several generations under the same roof. In Chinese tradition, “regulating the family” was seen as critical to both “ordering the state” and pacifying the world. Three of Confucianism’s five key relationships were familial, led by the all-important father-son tie.<sup>50</sup> Individual achievement and struggles were encapsulated within the context of the family; one never took credit, or shouldered blame, alone.<sup>51</sup>

As the Chinese began to spread to Southeast Asia and beyond, they carried elements of this family-centric culture with them. Kinship ties, according to the sociologist Peter Berger, constituted “the absolutely central institution” of overseas Chinese businesses in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Australia.<sup>52</sup>



Lum We Meng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

In ancient Greece and Rome blood ties were critical, and society ran along highly patriarchal lines.<sup>53</sup> But after the fall of the empire, while the family principle remained, ties between parents and children often remained tentative, in part because so many children, roughly half, died before reaching adulthood. Early Christianity also sought to reduce the primacy of kinship relationships in order to assert its more universal message. Even in the early modern period, many sought out a life as priests or as nuns. As many as one in ten women in sixteenth century Florence were celibate.<sup>54</sup>

The modern European concept of family arose with the rise of capitalism and the Protestant Reformation. The family, united by mutual affection and with the active presence of women and children, emerged in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. This reality was painted lovingly by Rembrandt and the other Dutch masters. Here, Phillippe Aries notes, “the child has taken a central place in the family.”<sup>55</sup>



Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn — Portrait of a Family, Reproduced with permission from the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig, Kunstmuseum des Landes Niedersachsen

Seventeenth century Dutch cities became home to what historian Simon Schama labelled as “the Republic of children.” The family stood at the centre of enterprise, and

raising children, rather than regarded as a burden, evolved into a task lovingly undertaken by striving families. As one Dutch poet put it:

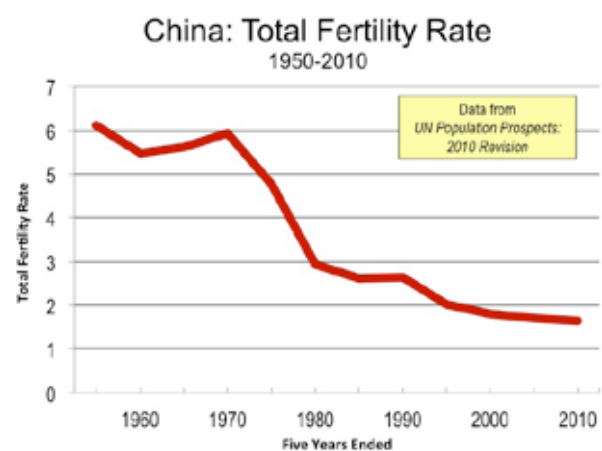
And I know of no one that has ever lived  
That has not had his childish dolls  
That has not sometimes fallen.  
...This game though it seems without any sense  
Has a little world therein  
[For] the world and its whole constitution  
Is but a children’s game.<sup>56</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE NEW VALUES?

With the emergence of the industrial revolution, the familial model came under increasing criticism. Frederick Engels suggested that the industrial revolution had overturned the comfortable old notions about “sex”. Increasingly, family and monogamy were seen as instruments of repression of women and injustice. Socialism, Engels believed, would engender a “social revolution in which the hitherto existing economic foundations of monogamy would disappear.”<sup>57</sup>

Following Engels, the Communists sought consciously to break with the traditional conception of the family, in order to complete what Leon Trotsky called “the state of radical reconstruction”.<sup>58</sup> The early Bolsheviks, notes historian Orlando Figes, sought “to facilitate the breakdown of the traditional family”; divorce was made easier, and de facto marriages received the same legal rights as officially registered ones. Casual relations were common among the early Bolsheviks.<sup>59</sup>

The Chinese Communists also assaulted the family’s long-hallowed place in society. Understandably concerned with the threat of overpopulation and stretched natural resources, China’s regime assumed control over procreation, initiating in the 1970s the “later, longer, fewer” campaign, which successfully reduced China’s fertility rate from 5.81 to 2.72 children per woman in 1978, a two-fold reduction within a decade.<sup>60</sup>

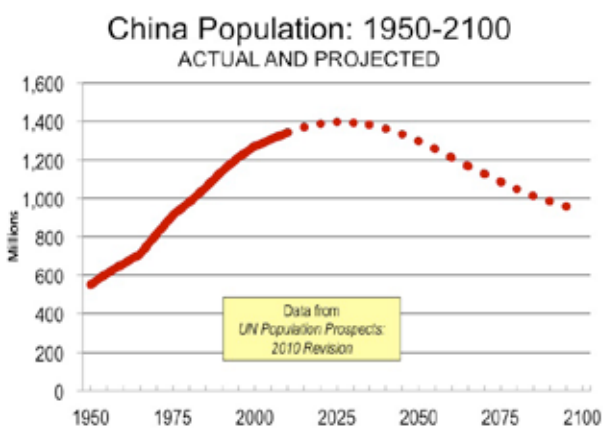


In 1980, the Party imposed the even more draconian one-child policy. Despite warnings from academics and demographers about the relation between ultra-low fertility and a rapidly ageing society, the Chinese government has persisted in defending the policy.<sup>61</sup>

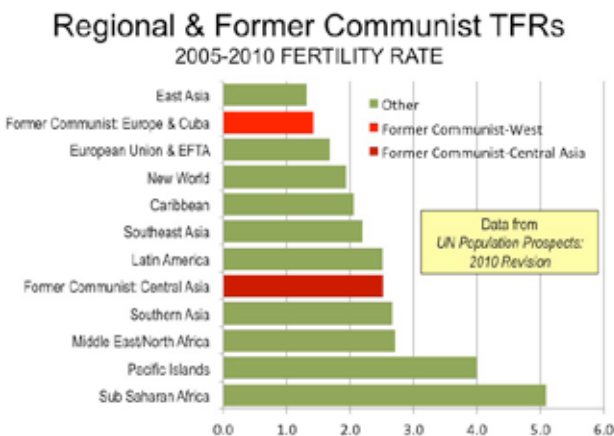


The Chinese government's resistance reflects the assumption that population control is central to the nation's economic growth: A growing population incurs high costs in education and childcare, and hampers savings for accumulation of capital stocks. These both impede economic growth. Yet the long-term demographic effects already are plain to see.

Cai Fang, China's leading demographer, suggests that the "one child policy" should have been a "one generation" policy, that already it is causing the Chinese labour force to shrink, leading to shortages and a rapid increase in wages. "There's a big disagreement between government and all the Chinese demographers," notes NUS' Gavin Jones. "They know there will be a big, uncomfortable impact."<sup>62</sup>



Marxism managed, Jones suggests, to greatly weaken traditional Confucian values, partly by bringing women into the workforce much earlier than other capitalist or traditional societies. Post-familialism has also remained strong in countries that no longer are formally Communist but endured this system for decades. Like China, Russia and the Baltic States have exceptionally low birth and marriage rates. Cuba, still Marxist-Leninist, has easily the lowest fertility rate of any country in Latin America, although the former communist nations of central Asia still retain above replacement fertility rates.



Yet it is critical to note smaller families — and, increasingly, non-families — are ascendant even in the absence of a Marxist legacy and in the absence of a government anti-

natalist. More than just politics, post-familialism reflects radical shifts in values about the nature of life, responsibility and the importance of children.

### THE DECLINE OF RELIGIOUS AND OTHER TRADITIONAL VALUES

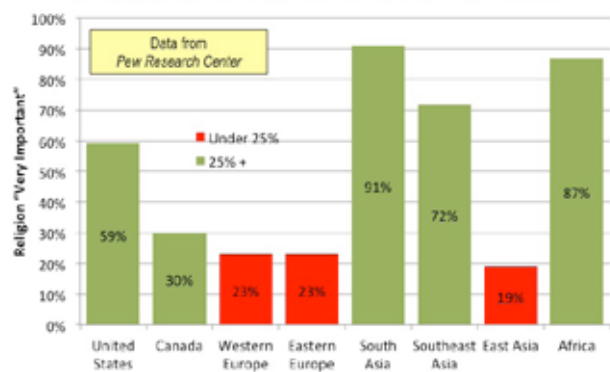
One possible factor in the big shift lies with the decline of religious affiliation and other traditional values. Virtually all religions are familialistic, and many rituals of religious life involve family. Secularism, however, does not readily spawn a desire for family or children. As author Eric Kauffman puts it, secularism appears to fail to "inspire the commitment to generations past and sacrifices for those yet to come."<sup>63</sup>

The relationship between religious belief and fecundity is particularly evident in East Asia. Despite strong active efforts among Christian and Muslim missionaries, religion continues to decline in most of Asia. Local traditions, often centred on the family, also have been undermined by cultural influences from the West. Notes Singapore pastor Andrew Ong: "My father was from the old generation. He came from a family of 16. Now people's priorities have changed. They don't really believe in sacrifice and family. They want the enjoyment of life, and children would impinge on that... they don't value family and children the way we used to."<sup>64</sup>

In our interviews, young Singaporeans explained their views in largely pragmatic terms. "Having kids was important to our parents," noted one 30-something civil servant in Singapore, "but now we tend to have a cost and benefit analysis about family. The cost is tangible but the benefits are not knowable or tangible."<sup>65</sup>

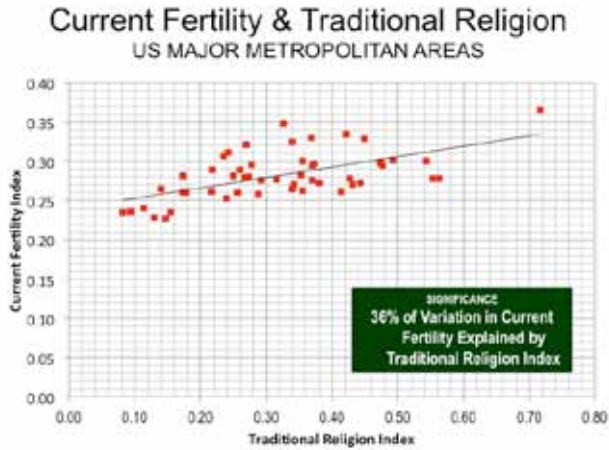
The decline of religiosity is even more notable in Europe. In 1970, 40% of Western Europeans went to church weekly; two decades later that number was reduced to 16.6%.

### Religion Rated "Very Important" by Region 2002 SURVEY: AVERAGE OF SURVEYED NATIONS



Critically, religion is losing adherents among the young. Half of Britons aged 18 to 34 consider themselves non-religious, compared to just 20% of those over 55. This is also occurring in the notably more religious United States. In 2007, barely 15% of boomers and 20% of Generation X said they were not religious; among the millennial generation, this runs to roughly one-third of the total.<sup>66</sup>

Overall, an analysis of major US metropolitan areas showed that, essentially, those who believe in some higher spiritual value are far more likely to have children than those more secularly oriented. The heavy lifting of child rising appears to be falling on the religious.<sup>67</sup>



Orthodox Jews, for example, have far more children than merely observant ones, and far more than the secular, with orthodox women producing an average number of children well above that of the overall average in Judaism (3.3 and over versus 1.9). Similarly, Salt Lake City, world centre of the Mormon faith, has both the nation's highest traditional religion affiliation rate and the highest number of children per family. Three of the top six US cities in terms of birth rates are located along the Wasatch Front from Ogden and Salt Lake to Provo.<sup>68</sup>

Much larger groups, such as evangelical Christians also marry and have offspring far more than those only mildly religious.<sup>69</sup> Muslim birth rates tend to be higher in less developed countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, than in more educated, advanced ones such as Iran or Turkey. Still, overall marriage rates are falling in many Muslim countries; the percentage of middle aged women who have never had children in Lebanon is already 15%, and that number is far higher in Beirut.<sup>70</sup> In conflict areas such as Iran and Iraq, there is also a persistent shortage of marriageable men for the current generation of unattached females.<sup>71</sup>

**THE DEINSTITUTIONALISATION OF MARRIAGE**

European scholar Angelique Janssens describes "the deinstitutionalization of marriage" as providing "the emancipation of individual members from the family." Between 1970 and 1999, the percentage of children born outside marriage rose in France from 6.9 %to over 40%. Similar patterns can be seen in such countries as Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. By 1999, over 50% of all children in Estonia were conceived outside of marriage.

To explain this atmosphere of secularisation, where traditional values are undermined, counselling authorities Eugene Kennedy and Sara Charles maintain, "standards fade

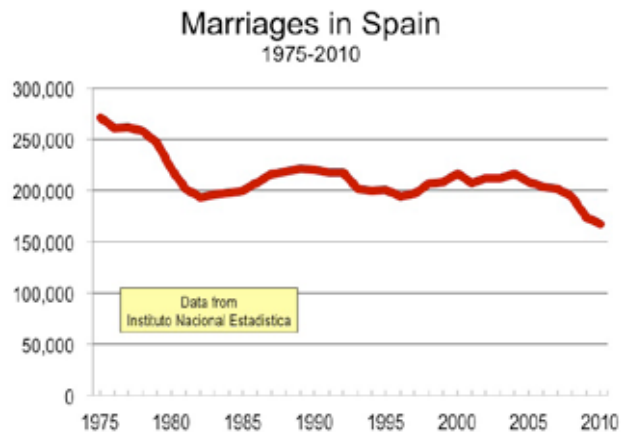
because they are cut off from their roots and pulled out of their nourishing soil."<sup>72</sup>

These shifts also affect both society and fertility. Co-habiting linkages, notes Netherlands-based sociologist Theo Engelen, tend to produce fewer children, and the "family" tends to last for a considerably shorter time.<sup>73</sup> In the United States, marriage has declined particularly among some minorities; it is increasingly evident among working class American whites as well, notes social historian Charles Murray. The percentage of US working class white children born without fathers has grown to 40%.<sup>74</sup>

Even in societies where co-habitation remains less widespread, such as Spain, the culture of marriage and family has declined. Alejandro Macarrón Larumbe, a Madrid-based management consultant and author of the 2011 book *El suicidio demográfico de España*, says today's decline in marriage and family is "almost all about a change in values" since the end of the brutally conformist Franco dictatorship.<sup>75</sup>

Dominated by the Catholic Church, Spain possessed one of the highest birth rates in Europe, with the average woman producing almost four children in 1960 and nearly three as late as 1975-1976. This fecundity was enforced by the state. There was, Macarrón notes, "no divorce, no contraception allowed".

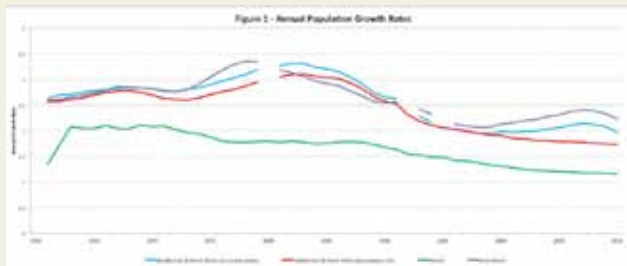
The new era certainly represents an improvement over the old fascist regime but social progress also exacted a toll on the once unassailable institution of the family in Spain. "Priorities for most young and middle-aged women (and men) are career, building wealth, buying own house, having fun, travelling, not incurring the burden of many children," observes Macarrón. Many, like their northern European counterparts, dismiss marriage together; although the population is higher than in 1975, the number of marriages has declined from 270,000 to 170,000 annually. The number of births is now lower than in the eighteenth century.<sup>76</sup>



## The Middle East's Cities of Disappointment

In 1950, on the eve of modernisation, the people of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) experienced some of the highest fertility rates in the world.<sup>1</sup> In numerical terms, the population in the MENA region grew from 104 to 432 million between 1950 and 2007,<sup>2</sup> a 4.15-fold increase (or an average annual growth rate of close to 2.6%).

As impressive as these figures might be, the expectation of continued massive population growth has not come to pass. The recent changes in the Islamic heartland of MENA reveal a different picture: one that shows declining growth rates (see Figure 1). In some key countries of the region, the current total fertility rates (TFRs) are not that different compared to those found in Europe, East Asia, or North America.

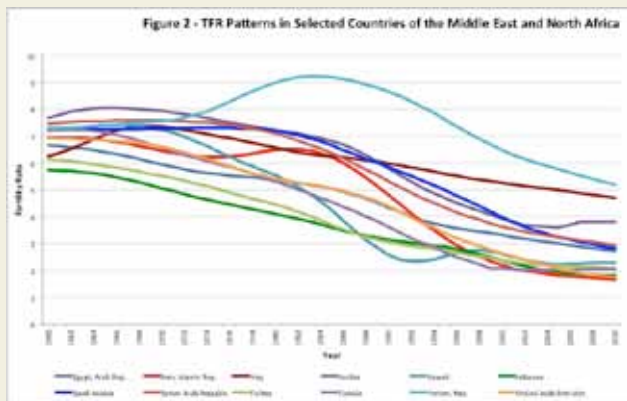


Data Source: The World Bank.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW>  
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Note: Data points for 1980, 1992 and 1995 were removed by the author. These appeared to be anomalous.

These declining TFRs suggest a significant transition. For example, Iran witnessed a declining fertility rate that shifted impressively from a peak of 6.5 in 1983 to 2.2 in 2000 and 1.67 in 2010 (see Figure 2). In less than three decades, Iran transitioned from rapid population growth to below replacement levels. Other MENA countries — United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Turkey — also have TFRs below the replacement level of 2.1.



Data Source: The World Bank.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>

It took the western world nearly a century to go through a similar fertility transition, so what has caused such a rapid shift in the MENA region? The simple answer could be rapid modernization and economic development (thanks to growing oil-dependent economies in selected countries), accompanied by urbanisation. However, the cause for such a rapid change is more complex.

One overlooked consideration has been the prioritisation of quality over the quantity of children.<sup>3</sup> Quality refers to potential human capital, generated through a higher level of education

a child will receive and the amount of resources allocated by parents and the society. As in East Asia, the increasing cost of raising children, including the time dedicated to childrearing, has led to a smaller number of children is equated with expansion in human capital and economic growth.

Over the last five decades, fertility rates dropped rapidly in Tunisia, arriving at below replacement levels as early as 1999 (see Figure 2). By 2001, Iran was also below the 2.1 TFR threshold. Achievement of these low TFRs, accompanied other socio-demographic changes such as a higher rate of schooling, improved female education,<sup>4</sup> increased per capita GNP, increased life expectancy (in Tunisia, it went from about 30 in 1950 to 74.5 in 2009<sup>5</sup>), declining illiteracy rates (particularly among women), delays in getting married (in 2007, female and male Tunisians were getting married on average at 27.1 and 32.4, respectively), and, increasingly, the rise of single populations. In both Iran and Tunisia, a larger number of men and women never get married.

The role of government in this process is important, particularly when related to abortion and use of contraceptives are concerned. The Tunisian government limited the number of children per family by cutting family allowances, legalising abortion in 1973, and promoting the use of contraceptives, which increased from 31% in 1978 to 60.2% in 2006.<sup>6</sup> The Iranian government's comprehensive family programme was also responsible for producing one of the fastest reductions in fertility rates in the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Contraceptive usage reached 74% in Iran by the early 2000s.<sup>8</sup>

However, in the end, it is likely the rising cost of urban living that proves prohibitive to having larger families and the promotion of quality over quantity of children. Rising unemployment, along with high housing cost and shortages, are also contributing to lower rates of family formation.<sup>9</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, the role of women in this demographic transition is important. As their education levels increase, many women may choose to stay single. Furthermore, as the number of children declines, many women become the sole caregivers for their ageing parents. Often sons may migrate, but daughters stay behind to help their families. In cultures where women are expected to help their in-laws when they get married, an unmarried daughter could prove an important asset.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, as women's educational achievements increase, finding suitable husbands for them may become a challenge, particularly as the number of women entering and finishing colleges surpasses that of men. In conflict areas (such as Iran and Iraq), higher mortality among men further reduces the number of suitable candidates for marriage. As such, the phenomenon of "marriage squeeze" has begun to appear in a number of countries. In the MENA region, the ratio of men aged 25 to 29 to women aged 20 to 24 was 0.86 in 2005 (compared to 1.01 in North America).<sup>11</sup>

Over time, the decline in fertility puts the MENA region in a precarious situation. As the working-age population declines over the next few decades, it becomes imperative that every able body is employed. Furthermore, in order to maintain current trajectories in economic growth, it is crucial that every child receives the best education and access to resources. This will allow the next generation to be highly productive, making up for a lower number of workers.

As such, women's empowerment and production-oriented economic growth should be the priority for the MENA region. However, investments in expanding educational resources alone will not be enough. The educated population, including women, should be gainfully employed. The currently high rates of unemployment among the youth, despite their educational attainment, could prove disastrous since the working age population will outnumber the dependent population (the very young and the very old) for only a short period of time. While lower TFRs can be seen as a pressure release valve for the current youth unemployment problem, without adequate planning, including further female empowerment and job market participation, the new demographics will not lead to positive results.

From an urban policy perspective, there are some things governments in the region could do. They must first recognise

that the so-called "marriage squeeze" and "delayed marriages" are largely driven by the high cost of living in cities, where incomes are inadequate for a suitable quality of life. In cities, like Tehran, housing has become equated with living in a small apartment/condominium in a residential building. Rarely does the younger population think about housing as a detached single-storey building. In such a high-density city, where the prohibitive cost of housing translates to constant worries about money and income, thinking about having even one child is prohibitive.

Until such issues are addressed, urban centres like Tehran will become cities of disappointment. Despite efforts to elevate educational attainments and skills, hope is being replaced by dismay and apathy, a combination that will do very little to elevate and activate the potential human capital in the region.

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## “THE NEW GIRL ORDER”

As in Spain, opportunities for women around the world have expanded a clearly positive development for both women and the economy. Yet throughout history women have both worked and managed to raise children. In the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic, women were instructed in such business fields as geometry and applied mathematics. They enjoyed a freedom of action that shocked many French and English observers.

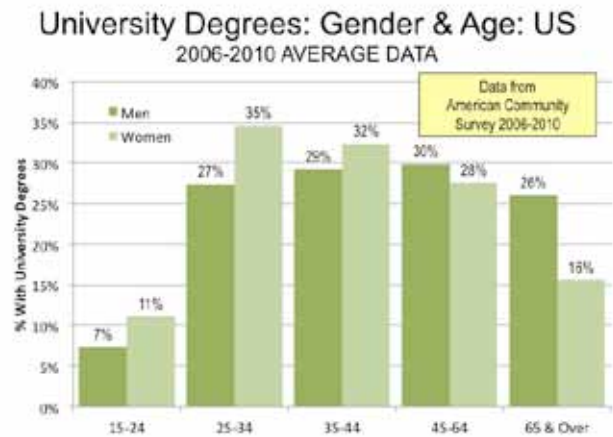
Later on, by the seventeenth century and beyond, women's roles became more circumscribed, and their ability to work through guilds was increasingly prohibited.<sup>77</sup> Author Stephanie Coontz notes that “the factory system established a more rigid division of labor and location”, further segregating women from the male dominated workplace. Yet this trend was far from absolute, particularly during the Depression, when married females' incomes were needed to help support their families.

The big change came with the Second World War. Some regimes, notably, the National Socialists (Nazis) in Germany, tried to limit women in the workplace, but most industrialised countries more rationally encouraged women to enter the workforce in ever larger numbers. In the United States between 1940 and 1945, the female labour force increased by 50%. The war, Coontz noted, eliminated many barriers between what was considered “women's work” and that of men.<sup>78</sup>

Initially, the immediate post-War period seemed to restore “domesticity,” as women left employment and returned to their former roles, but by the 1960s, the growing numbers of women in colleges and universities helped reshape workplace realities in higher income countries. Women's earnings also became critical to more and more family budgets, often replacing the share of family income once provided by child labour. Between 1900 and 1990, European female labour participation rates soared, particularly in northern countries like Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.<sup>79</sup>

In Asia, as well, there was a huge upsurge of women in the workforce, and they remained at work longer. In 1970, less than half of women in Japan and Korea, and only one-fifth in Singapore were working. By 2004, that number had increased to three quarters in Japan, and roughly three in five in South Korea and Singapore.<sup>80</sup>

Today's economic trends appear increasingly favourable to women. We are living in what author Kay S. Hymowitz has dubbed “the new girl order.” In the United States, for example, women between the ages 25 and 34 with college educations now outnumber men. The institutions that are educating women include many of the most elite colleges; women constitute the majority at Harvard, Brown, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia, and the Universities of California and of North Carolina.



Hymowitz suggests that, early on, women display “the right stuff” for success in our post-industrial world, starting with better performance in high school.<sup>81</sup> The gains among women are increasingly evident in the workplace as well. Not only are they an increasing proportion of the workforce, having nearly doubled from 30% since 1950 in the US, but their pay has grown 44% since 1970, compared to a mere 6% for males. Women now account for a majority of those in managerial positions and, according to one 2010 survey, single and childless urban women earn 8% more than men.<sup>82</sup>

This impressive rise has not been deployed to create stronger families. Rather, changes in society and the workplace have made life easier for affluent professional women who have chosen to eschew children and marriage entirely, notes the Center for Work life Policy.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the Center writes, on a statistical basis, according to a 2008 Wisconsin study, the very fact of having a child increases a woman's chances of being poor.<sup>84</sup>

At the same time, women, as has long been true for men, do not have to give up their sex lives if they remain single. Middle class women in their twenties and thirties, suggests Stanford sociologist Michael Rosenfeld, can enjoy “a second adolescence” seeking “new experiences” with a series of partners of considerable diversity.<sup>85</sup> Kate Bolick, writing in *The Atlantic*, believes that many of these accomplished women will do without long-term committed relationships, choosing instead “a room of one's own”; a place where a single woman can live and thrive as herself.<sup>86</sup>

The detachment of many women from familialism is becoming widespread, notes one University of Florida study. Perhaps most critically, the study found that women view childlessness more favourably than men.<sup>87</sup> “The costs that women experience related to childbearing are greater the higher their level of education in terms of potentially lost income, promotions and opportunities for career advancement,” said the study's author, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Florida, Gainesville Tanya Koropecj-Cox. “For men, however, fatherhood generally brings enhanced status and emotional benefits, with few if any costs in the labor market.”<sup>88</sup>

## THE DENSITY DILEMMA: POST-FAMILIALISM'S GEOGRAPHY

Cities and families have had a long, and sometimes, tortured relationship. For much of urban history, disease ridden and unsanitary cities kept death rates high, particularly among the young.<sup>89</sup> Some historians describe an “urban graveyard thesis,” which notes that plagues and higher infant mortality in cities were compensated only by migration from the countryside. “What life added,” noted historian Fernand Braudel, “death took away.”<sup>90</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, improved sanitation and rising living standards began to reverse this dreary reality. Families that crowded into large cities at least initially continued to grow, although not to the size of rural ones. In Paris in 1911, over 200,000 lived two or more to a room; Berlin was even worse, with the poor paying among the highest rents in Europe.<sup>91</sup> These urban families confronted enormous stress. Among Jewish immigrants to New York, for example, women and children were often deserted by restless husbands, part of what Irving Howe described as the “chaos of improvisation” spurred by location to the new, and very different, land.

The family network — a legacy of their native villages — helped the urban newcomers to survive and even thrive. Rules brought over from the home country, often enforced by the mothers, kept most children, and husbands, from straying too far.<sup>92</sup> The kinship ties also worked in the late twentieth century among East London’s Asian immigrants, primarily from Bangladesh. Self-supporting extended family networks often translated into greater success than that seen among the more welfare-dependent, nuclear family model of many long-term British residents.<sup>93</sup>

Yet virtually everywhere in the high-income world — exceptions would be landlocked geographies like Singapore and Hong Kong — families have been moving further out of the urban core. This occurred in Japan, Australia, Western Europe and America, starting as early as the late nineteenth century. There were powerful incentives. Outer-area housing was generally less expensive and larger. In addition, particularly in the US, as families moved away from denser, older neighbourhoods (or did not move into them), they avoided a rising tide of urban crime and poor schools.<sup>94</sup>

Suburbs had existed from the earliest days of cities, and, as early as the eighteenth century, started expanding rapidly from cities such as London. Later, H.G. Wells would foresee a new division in the urban landscape, defined in large part by a divide between families with children and others:

The world of the coming time will still have its Homes and Its real Mothers, the custodians of human succession, and Its cared for children, the inheritors of the future, but in addition to this Home world, frothing tumultuously over

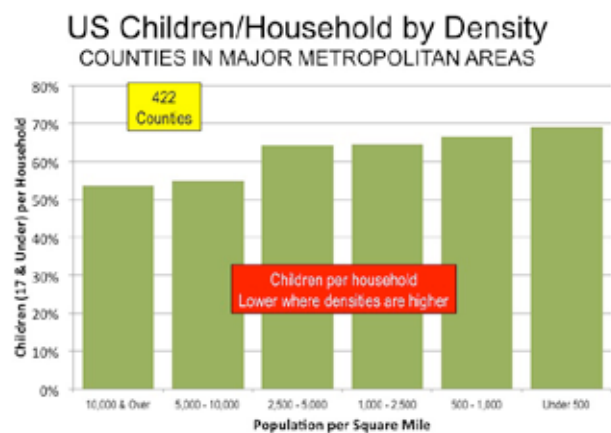
and amidst these stable rocks, will be an enormous complex of establishments and hotels, and sterile households, and flats, and all the elaborate furnishing and appliances of a luxurious extinction.<sup>95</sup>

## FAMILY FLIGHT FROM DENSITY

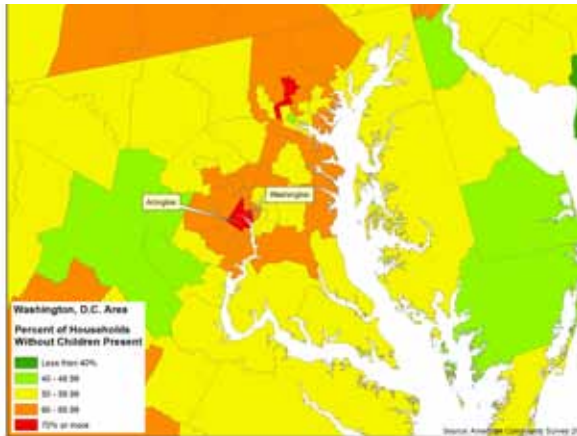
Contemporary urban regions often reflect the very division predicted by Wells in the last century. Many great urban centres, notably New York, London, Chicago and Tokyo, have all rebounded from their nadirs in the last three decades, but not primarily as places for families. The legacy, particularly in the US and Britain, of entrenched welfare cultures and poor schools has meant that even “successful” cities have not become great magnets for families with children.<sup>96</sup> In this context, the current obsession with promoting density among pundits, planners and many in the political class represents an assault on the aspirations of most families.

With the increasing number of women working, the focus on individualism, and the economic pressures of the hyper-competitive economy, some believe the new generation does not want a house in the suburbs, preferring instead high density development with great access to entertainment centres and restaurants. If developers can sell this model to more people, it creates a kind of “Catch 22,” in which people crowd into environments that promote post-familialism and thus propel the long-term decline in both demography and economy.

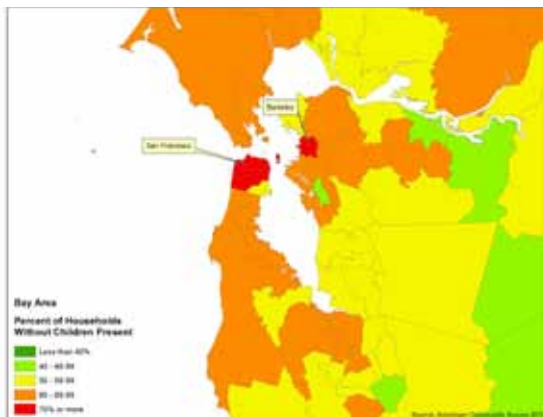
In the United States, where urban areas vary in terms of density, the pattern is clear: families concentrate overwhelmingly in less dense, more “sprawled” locations. Simply put, the percentage of people who do not having any children living with them is densest in urban districts; lower density, all things being equal, attracts households with children. There is a definite relationship between less-dense housing and fertility, according to an analysis of 422 American counties that constitute metropolitan areas over 1,000,000 population.<sup>97</sup>



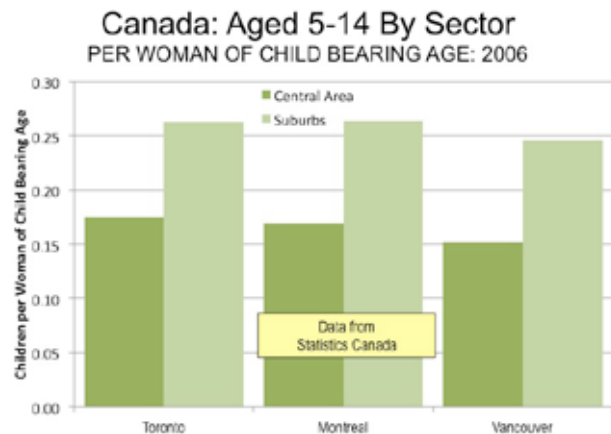
In contrast, the densest areas house the highest percentage of women who never had children. The US' highest percentage of unmarried women — a remarkable 70% — can be found in Washington, DC. All of these top locations, widely hailed as exemplars of an urban renaissance, show growth that is unlike that of the pre-World War II era. Their growth today has been sparked, in large part, by a rising numbers of non-families.<sup>98</sup>



In California, San Francisco epitomises these new trends. Over the past two decades, the city has lost middle class families at twice the state pace of California. Yet, at the same time, per capita incomes have soared to among the highest of any major core urban area; adding children tends to depress this particular statistic. Now much richer, San Francisco has become increasingly single and more nomadic, with many young people leaving, only to be replaced by newcomers in short order. It is also ageing far faster than the national average.<sup>99</sup>



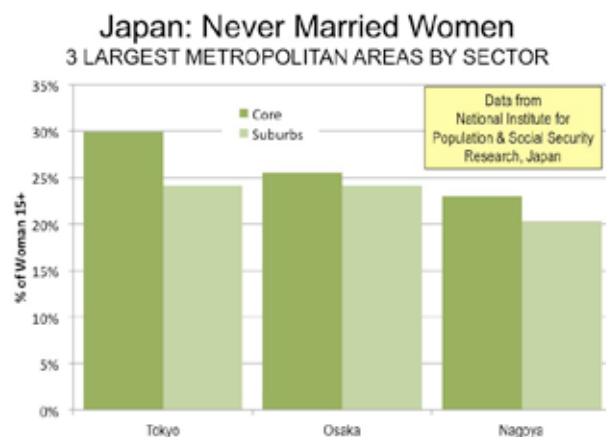
These same patterns can be observed in metropolitan areas in other high-income countries. In Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver suburbs the ratio of children per woman of child-bearing age is roughly 80% higher than in the urban cores.<sup>100</sup> The French national statistical agency indicates that principal reasons for the exodus of families from the ville de (city of) Paris to the suburbs lies with the unaffordability of housing, and the unsuitability of house sizes in the city for families.<sup>101</sup>



Researchers have found similar results in northern Europe. A Max Plank Institute study of fertility rates within four countries — Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden — found a strong correlation between higher birth rates and less dense suburban locations. These places, the study points out, offer larger apartments as well as single family homes attractive to families.

People in denser urban areas, where apartments tend to be smaller, marry later and have fewer offspring. In Denmark, for example, the fertility rates of suburbs and smaller towns were 50% or more higher than in the central core, particularly in the capital of Copenhagen. Similar patterns of “higher suburban fecundity” could be seen in the other countries.<sup>102</sup>

The impact of density on child-rearing raises a critical issue particularly in Asian countries, especially in the wake of changing social mores. Lacking the large land resources of the western metropolitan areas, Asian cities are among the most dense in the world, and also produce some of the lowest percentages of children. This can be seen particularly in Japan, where childlessness is particularly prevalent in the inner cities.

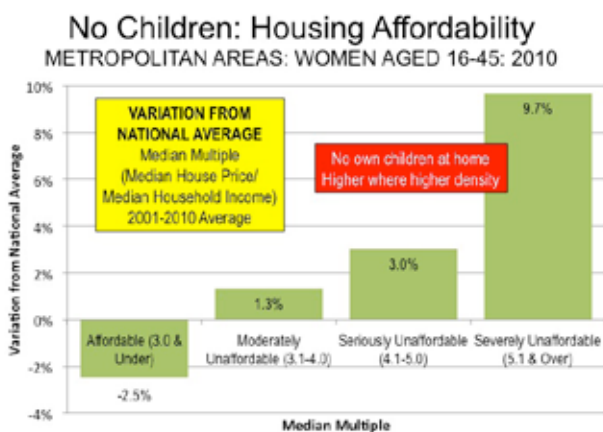


## THE ISSUE OF AFFORDABILITY

In all high-income countries, housing affordability can prove to be a significant problem for young householders interested in having children. Being in the early years of their earning capacity, young households often can afford to buy only entry level housing or may have to rent. The nature of urban housing markets is that land prices tend to increase from the periphery of the urban area to the core. Affordable entry-level houses with yards will normally be located near or even beyond the urban fringe.

By the 1960s, notes one Dutch researcher, families had come to recognise that “children became expensive in an urban setting.” Housing prices were rising, particularly on a per square metre basis.<sup>103</sup> Recent studies from Europe reveal a direct connection between housing costs and availability with fertility and family formation. A recent detailed Czech study also confirms this hypothesis. Women living in districts with highly affordable housing have their children sooner, while women living in districts with housing affordability problems tend to have their children later (provided that the effect of other important variables describing differences among districts is controlled for). Similarly, the TFR tends to be lower in districts where local housing prices are high in relation to local salaries (that is, housing is less affordable). Faced with the problem of high housing prices in some regions, young people living there tend to postpone having children to a later age as they need more time to become financially secure and get a good paying job (and eventually to save enough money for a down payment), so that they can acquire the housing they want before realising their reproductive plans.<sup>104</sup>

In the US, as well, greater housing affordability is associated with more children. We measure housing affordability in terms of the price relative to household incomes, what we call the “median multiple”, and the median house price divided by the median annual household income.<sup>105</sup>



Unlike most of the world, where sufficient land for urban expansion is readily available, both Singapore and Hong Kong lack the option to develop low-density, affordable options on their peripheries. Singapore, for example, needs to accommodate the housing requirements of their current population — including many childless people — as well as use its land for other urban development requirements. The rising cost of housing can certainly have a dampening impact on family formation. Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo and Seoul all have extraordinarily low birth

rates. “Fewer children when house prices head north,” concludes Tilak Abeyasinghe, deputy director of the NUS Singapore Centre for Applied and Policy Economics.<sup>106</sup>

The link between house price and the decision to have children came up repeatedly among people we interviewed in Singapore. As one young civil servant told us: “I feel Singapore is becoming more stressful — people are living in smaller spaces. There’s no room for a child. The costs are tremendous. A generation ago, it was different. My father was a bus driver and could get a big HDB [Housing Development Board] flat. For my generation, it will be harder.”<sup>107</sup>

While various reports (for example, Dettling and Kearney’s report on “Housing Prices and Birth Rates” published in October 2011, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17485>) suggest that the overall impact of housing prices on fertility may be unclear especially for home owners, alongside an impressive home ownership rate of 88% in Singapore (Department of Statistics, 2011), perceptions can differ.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE CITY: ENTERTAINMENT MACHINE?

Not surprisingly, post-familial advocates remain upbeat on the evolution of the largely childless city. UC’s De Paulo speaks about “urban tribes” made up of mostly single people “creating community ties that connect people to one another through work and leisure, holidays and crises.”<sup>108</sup>

The lifestyle of today’s predominately single “urban tribes”, notes Eric Klinenberg, emerged among the bohemians of the 1920s who drifted to the Parisian Left Bank and New York’s Greenwich Village. These areas provided what Gertrude Stein described as “life without father”. They created “the cradle of liberated personae” that could now “fully realize themselves”, largely without the burden of monogamous marriages or children.<sup>109</sup>

Klinenberg, unsurprisingly, strongly supports efforts to density cities and discourage single family homes. To him, the 2,500-square-foot (232 m<sup>2</sup>) home in the suburbs represents both an environmental disaster and a threat to the affordability of small residences for “singletons”.<sup>110</sup>

Developers are now hoping to accommodate the post-familial demographic by creating ever-smaller apartments, with sizes smaller than 300 square feet (28 m<sup>2</sup>). These apartments, which have gained the support of mayors such as New York’s Michael Bloomberg,<sup>111</sup> obviously are intended to house single professionals; it is inconceivable for middle or even working class families to inhabit such spaces. Similar plans have been announced in Singapore, where developers have unveiled three-bedroom, 635-square-foot apartments also aimed primarily for singles and childless couples.<sup>112</sup>

What kind of city is emerging? Urban theorist Terry Nichols Clark perhaps gives the best definition: “the city as entertainment machine”. In the new milieu, “citizens” expect their cities to provide “quality of life”, “treating their own urban location as if tourists, emphasizing aesthetic concerns.” In the context of Singapore, this could presage the rise of a “hotel Singapore”, in which the Republic serves a largely transient workforce that comes and goes at their convenience.



Such changes, Clark admits, represent a clean break from the city of the past where key local amenities were schools, churches and neighbourhood associations. The new city, built around the needs of childless and often single professionals,

focuses primarily on recreation, arts, culture and restaurants; a system built around the newly liberated individual. In this urban schema, family remains peripheral, largely irrelevant to the city's long-term trajectory.<sup>113</sup>

## *A Letter to the Women of Singapore*

*Dear women of Singapore, I empathise with the increasing number of you who prefer not to get married or have children. You said you have lots of options besides raising a family. Marriage has become a game of “cost-benefit analysis”: It seems more beneficial to stay single and have friends through “networking hobbies” rather than raise kids in isolation, which is also very costly. The increasing divorce rate is a turn off, and increases your scepticism about finding the right partner. You lament, “Why should I produce kids for society?” when that would mean counting the years until the time when you could get a job and a house. Furthermore, you feel that you are “hyper-connected” with others, and can still easily switch off when you need “me” time. The high cost of living, high cost of education, uncertainty about the economy, and the norm that women juggle both family and work are reasons why you delay marriage or do not have children altogether.*

*It feels as though an ecosystem has been created where childlessness is the preferred option. We live in a prosperous society that reveres material success. Glossy advertisements for luxury goods, apartments and fancy holidays feature elegantly dressed individuals, or couples living the high life with no kids in sight. We have a growing sense of failure due to the prevalent achievement mentality that has come with growing prosperity. People around us say that familialism is breaking down, and that maybe a lack of deep intimacy — characteristic of societies that exhort material success — could be having an impact on childlessness.*

*What we need to remember, though, is that a society with no kids has only wisdom, but that this needs to be counterbalanced with the dynamism and enthusiasm which we can only get with young people.*

*But the idea of bringing up children is not very appealing to you. How will you manage the prevalent cultural premise of the “sacred child” among your family members? Children’s education is a conversation topic at the dinner table as soon as the baby is conceived, and there is an inordinate amount of focus on quantifiable education rather than experiential education, because the former is deemed as the key to the successful life.*

*Quite frankly, singlehood seems like a legitimate option for many of you, rather than the traditional family life with the “marriage package” of children and in-laws. Even though some of you who are single may actually want children, you know that births outside of marriage and cohabitation are not accepted norms in your society — yet.*

*Dear women of Singapore, I personally do not have the answers to these questions, but I share with you one thought. As a mother of three young children, I have had my share of agonising and frustrating moments of motherhood in an urbanised society. However, during all my frustrations, my husband has been my pillar of strength and support. I believe the role of men in the creation of a nurturing society for parenthood is critical. We need to start recognising this, and giving men the support and motivation to be the best fathers they can be.*

Sincerely,

Anuradha Shroff

## SECTION TWO: FUTURE IMPLICATIONS OF POST-FAMILIALISM

Whether you consider post-familialism to be a threat to human society or an evolutionary advance, these trends are likely, in the short run at least, to become ever more pronounced. Much of this reflects what has been described by Austrian demographer Wolfgang Lutz as “the low fertility trap”, that is, the tendency for countries with very low birth rates to remain well below replacement rate even in the face of efforts by governments to increase marriages and birth rates.

Lutz traces these developments primarily in Europe, the initial heartland of both low fertility and post-familialism. He eloquently describes “plausible self-reinforcing mechanisms” that work to reduce birth rates in already low fertility environments; people brought up in small families, for example, have few aunts and uncles; their lives are not centred on broad kinship ties.

Essentially, Lutz believes we may be entering a period of radical adjustment away from family and children, just as we have witnessed other changes in attitudes, for example, towards female empowerment, and towards interracial and homosexual marriage: “...the evolutionary link between the drive for sex and procreation has been broken, and now reproduction is merely a function of individual preferences and culturally determined norms. Since social norms can change, and in related fields, such as the role of women in society, have indeed shown fundamental changes over recent history, it cannot be ruled out that the social norms about the desire to have children will see similar, fundamental changes over the coming decades.”<sup>114</sup>

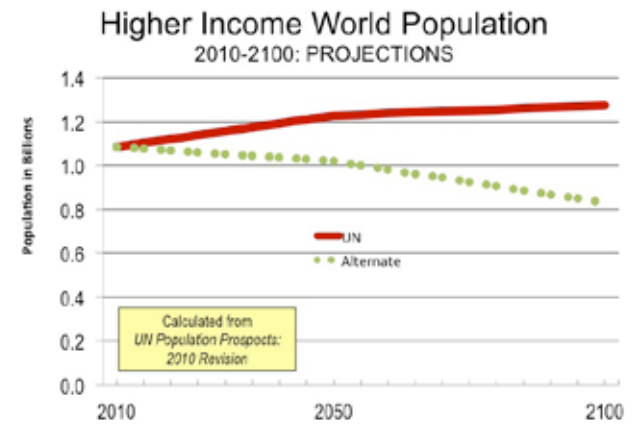
### THE DEMOGRAPHIC WINTER

Like Lutz, our demographic team assumes that — barring some unexpected change — birth rates will continue to be impacted as more women choose to remain childless for their entire lives, or, if they have children, to have no more than one. Our future scenarios are based on the assumption that fertility rates will stay at their low level over the next century.<sup>1</sup> This creates the phenomenon widely known as “demographic winter”, reflecting a society whose workforce is shrinking as it ages ever more rapidly. Already a majority of the world’s population lives in countries with below-replacement fertility rates.<sup>115</sup>

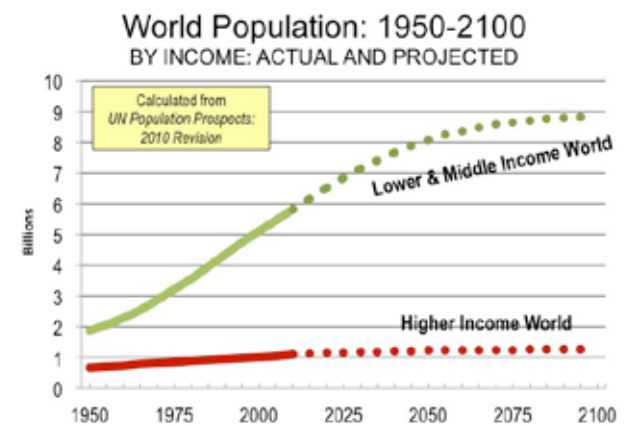
If the trend toward post-familialism and childlessness grows, as we expect, future populations may drop below the commonly accepted projections developed by the United Nations. The UN population projections assume a strong rise between 2050 and 2100. For example, Singapore, which has a 1.15 TFR, would recover to 1.85 by 2050 and nearly reach replacement rate (2.04) by 2100. Hong Kong would more than double, from the 2010’s 0.99 to 2.02 in 2100. In our opinion, such assumptions are ungrounded, and could lead to over-projection of 2100 populations, at least in higher income, low fertility countries.

Of course, projecting population and fertility rates is difficult, and there remains a large margin for error. For example, the UN projects Japan’s 2100 population at 91

million, while the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research of Japan projects a population of 48 million, nearly one-half lower.<sup>116</sup>



World population growth could continue to increase strongly, though principally in the less developed world. Overall population is expected to rise from 7 billion in 2010 to 10 billion in 2100; virtually all growth will take in the less developed world.<sup>117</sup> But many parts of the developing world will also see plunging birth rates. In the Maghreb in North Africa, for example, TFRs are forecast to drop below the rates of Western Europe.<sup>118</sup>

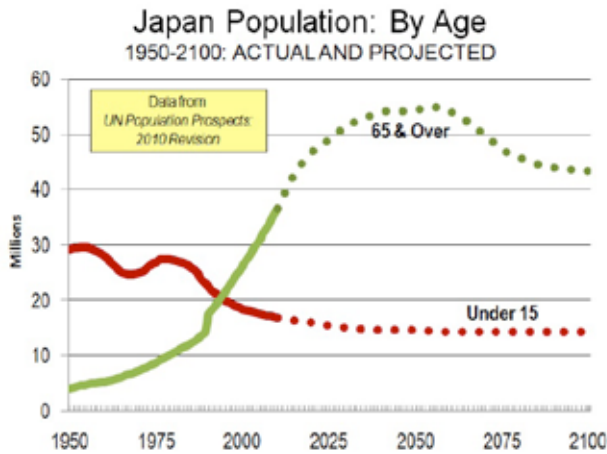


The current population trajectory poses particular challenges to many leading Asian countries, notably Japan, but also Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and, increasingly, urban China. Japan is the archetype for the emerging Asian demographic. It is now watching the slow eclipse of its brilliant civilisation.

Canadian demographer Vaclav Simril describes Japan as “an involuntary global pioneer of a new society”. Japan’s population growth peaked in December 2004. Between 1970 and 2006 its TFR was reduced by half, and reached a very low 1.3, well below replacement. With this dearth of children, some demographers estimate the country’s population will be cut in half yet again by the end of this century.

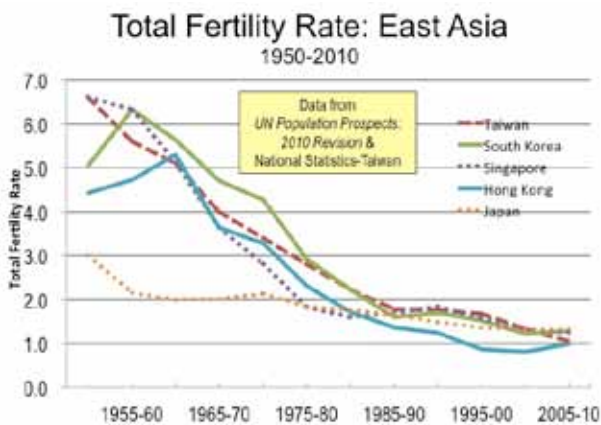
Japan’s biggest challenge will not be, notes Simril, the smaller body count; throughout history, relatively small places have thrived, such as Venice or contemporary Hong Kong or

Singapore. Its challenge will be rapid ageing, exacerbated by the country's long life spans. By 2050, according to UN estimates, Japan will have 3.7 times as many people 65 and older than 15 and under. By comparison, as late as 1975, there were three times as many children (15 and under) as people 65 and over. In 2050, the number of people over 80 will be 10% greater than the 15 and under population.<sup>119</sup>



Such demographic trends threaten what one think-tank calls “the very existence and viability of Japan as a country.”<sup>120</sup> Yet Japan’s fate may not be only its own. Over the past few decades, many of the more successful Asian Tigers — Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong — have all suffered hauntingly similar demographic trends. Right now, the gap between these places and Japan lies in timing; they may be seen as entering the tail end of autumn, precursor to the onset of “demographic winter.”

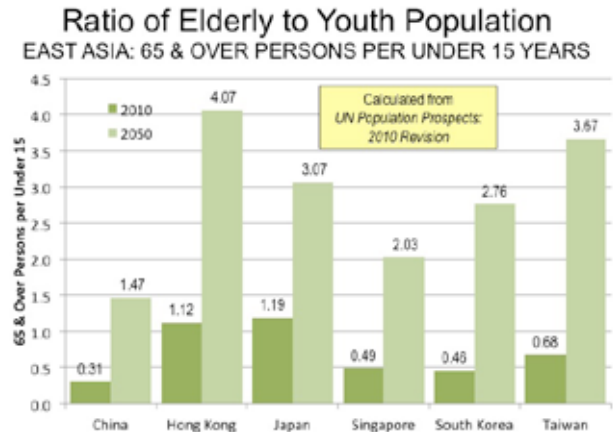
When Japan’s population first fell to near replacement levels in the mid-1970s, other East Asian countries were still having five or six children per family. But as these societies progressed, with prodigious rapidity, birth rates dropped. Singapore fell to replacement rate soon after Japan, and the other societies did so by the 1980s. This was a huge drop from 1950, when the TFR was 6.6, according to the UN.<sup>121</sup> In all these countries, the decline continued in the ensuing decades; by 2005, the TFR was actually lower in the other Tiger nations than in Japan itself.



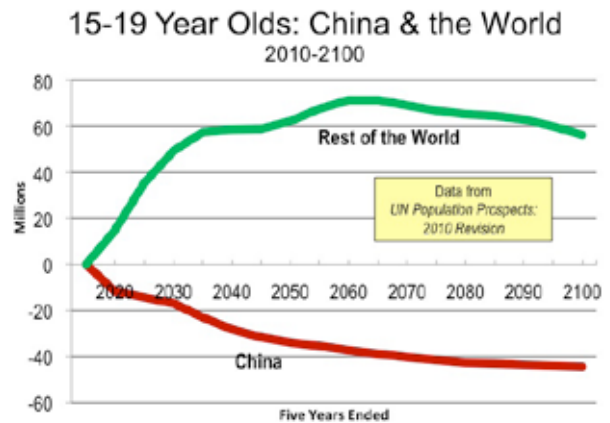
All the trends driving this process are likely to increase in coming generations, notes NUS demographer Gavin Jones; he makes the point that, as women marry later, they do not

have any more offspring after age 35 than they did in previous generations.<sup>122</sup>

All this suggests that, without policies designed to address these trends aggressively, the Asian Tigers will catch the very cold that is now afflicting Japan. Taiwan, for example, expects its over-65 population to pass its 15 and under population by 2017;<sup>123</sup> for Singapore and South Korea, this likely will occur by the middle of the next decade.<sup>124</sup> By 2050, the 80 and over population could exceed the under-15s by 75% in Hong Kong, and by 30% in Taiwan.<sup>125</sup>



There are, of course, differences between all these countries. For example, Singapore’s role as an immigrant entrepôt and Hong Kong’s ability to draw people from the mainland could provide some demographic relief from relentless aging and population decline. From a global perspective, the most important demographic trends can be seen in China itself. Chinese fertility rates have been dropping for decades, and are now approaching among the lowest of the world. As China progresses and urbanises, its demography increasingly mimics that of the Tigers, just as they now resemble Japan. China will lose 60 million people under 15 years of age by 2050, approximately Italy’s population. It will gain nearly 190 million people 65 and over, approximately the population of Pakistan, which is the world’s fourth most populous country.<sup>126</sup>



Ultimately China will face its own “demographic winter,” although sometime later than Japan or the Tigers. The US Census Bureau estimates that China’s population will

peak in 2026, and will then age faster than any country in the world besides Japan.<sup>127</sup> Its rapid urbanisation, expansion of education, and rising housing costs all will contribute to this process. Most of the world's decline in children and young workers between 15 and 19 will take place in China.

This accelerating decline, of course, has much to do with the one-child policy, but also with China's rapid urbanisation. With more and more of its population housed in giant apartment blocks, it seems logical that the Chinese will respond similarly to their counterparts elsewhere, by having few or no offspring.

The impact on the world of China's entrance into the demographic doldrums will be consequential. It may, as author Ted Fishman has noted, be a more jolting experience than in generally far richer Europe, where "winter" has been setting for several decades and, for the most part, demographic decline has become an accepted reality. In a still relatively poor society where younger members of the family historically provided for their parents, the smaller number of offspring could create considerable hardships for the elderly. Parents and their offspring are being further separated by the rapid urbanisation of the nation, as the elderly tend to stay in rural areas, while younger people move to the cities.

The demographic winter may not be as sudden or as "cold" in Western Europe as in East Asia, but the welfare states of Western Europe may face economic challenges every bit as severe as those facing Japan, South Korea and Singapore. Overall, the EU hovers around a 1.5 TFR, and in some countries the demographic decline is even more severe. No country matters more in Europe than Germany, and it seems chained to a very low fertility future. Germany has experienced low birth rates for decades. Its number of babies born has now dropped below the levels of the turn of the century. Not surprisingly, the UN expects Germany's population to drop 9% by 2050.

Live Births in Germany  
1975-2011



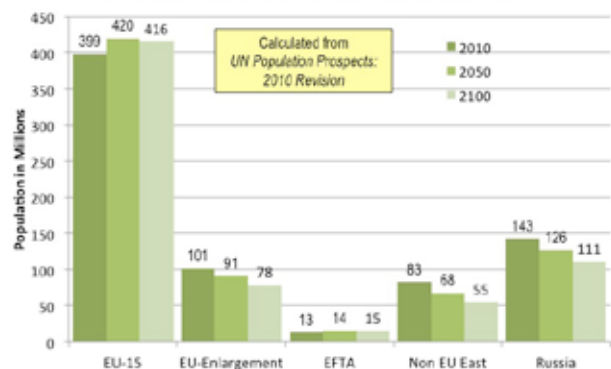
Germany may have fewer children than it did in 1900, but Spain's total number of births has dropped well below the rates of 1858, and may match those of the eighteenth century. Birth rates are expected to keep falling, according to the national Institute of Statistics; in this decade they are projected to decline by over 18%.<sup>128</sup>

Bucking this trend, the United Kingdom is expected to add 17%, Sweden 16% and France 15% to their population. Each of these nations is expected to have above European average fertility rates and strong migration. As a result of the growth in these countries, the core European Union-15 (EU-15) is expected to grow by 5% to 2050, maintaining nearly the same population to 2100. Yet these numbers, we believe, could prove optimistic, particularly given the declines in fertility in traditional sending countries such as Turkey and the Maghrebian countries of North Africa.<sup>129</sup>

Declines in population growth and births may be far more precipitous on the EU's frontiers, which already have been exporting younger populations to both North-western Europe and the Mediterranean countries. By 2050, Bulgaria is expected to lose 27% of its population, while the Latvia, Lithuania and Romania are expected to lose over 10% of theirs.<sup>130</sup>

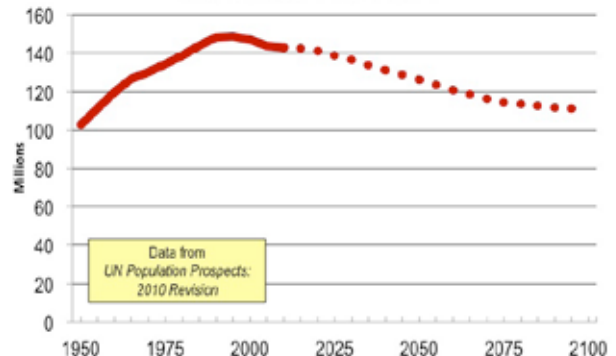
"Demographic winter" will fall hardest on the eastern fringe of the European continent. By 2050, the populations of almost the all of Eastern Europe will fall, according to recent projections. Non-EU Eastern Europe, excluding Russia, is expected to experience even greater losses of 19% to 2050 and 34% to 2100.

Europe: Population: 2010, 2050 & 2100  
BY POLITICAL & GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS



Russia's population decline — spurred by unusually low life spans among males due to such things as excessive drinking — has already begun, with a loss of nearly ten million people since the collapse of the former Soviet Union. By 2050, Russia's population could fall from 2010's 142 million to as low as 126 million. President Vladimir Putin has identified the "demographic crisis" as Russia's "most urgent problem."<sup>131</sup>

Russia Population: 1950-2100  
ACTUAL AND PROJECTED



## ECONOMIC STAGNATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE

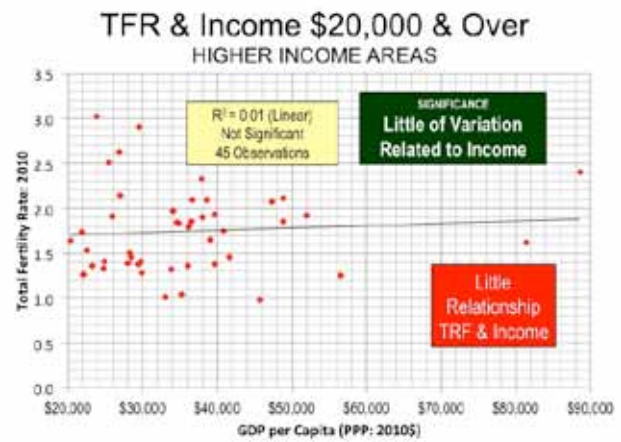
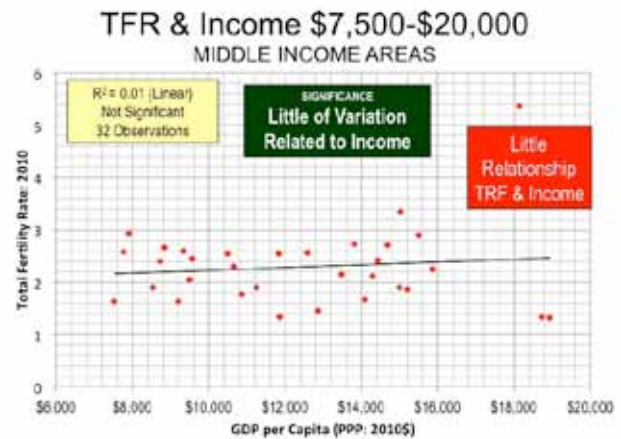
Poor economic conditions — now entering their fifth year in some countries — could further accelerate demographic decline. Throughout history, economics have driven both population growth, and its decline. “The human battle for existence,” observed Braudel, “was waged... against scarcity and the inadequacy of the food supply.”<sup>132</sup>

Until around 1000 AD, the world was in what some historians call an “era of Malthusian stagnation”. Initially, much of the population growth reflected the rise of powerful empires in the Islamic Middle East, China and India. Between 1000 and 1500, for example, China’s population doubled until it was roughly twice the entire population of Europe.<sup>133</sup>

Population growth in the West came later, but again largely accompanying economic expansion. At the regional level, Venice, for example, was in its heyday in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with families, particularly among the nobility, that produced many offspring. But as the world economy moved away from the Mediterranean towards the Atlantic in the eighteenth century, these same families scrupulously reduced their number of children, in order to preserve their estates and forestall poverty.<sup>134</sup>

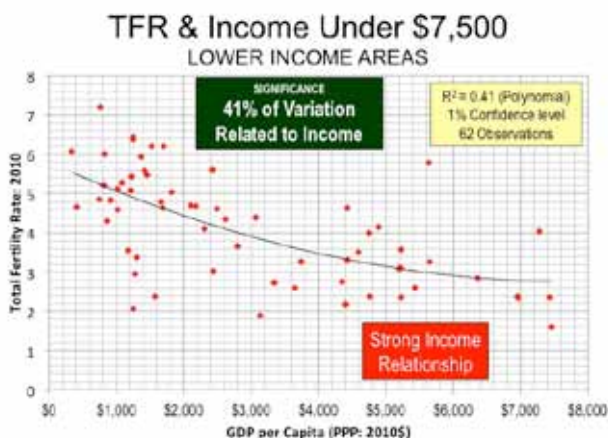
For much of this period, both living standards and birth rates oscillated with changes in climate, plague and the state of crops. It was only with the rise of the modern economy in the eighteenth and particularly the nineteenth century that European populations begin their inexorable rise, which extended into the Americas.<sup>135</sup>

Of course, as societies achieved mass affluence, the initial affect was to slow population growth. Yet today, economic stagnation increasingly seems to go hand-in-hand with lower rates of marriage and fertility in countries that have achieved middle incomes, higher education rates and greater female emancipation. This can be seen in many countries of the former Soviet bloc, which have among the lowest fertility rates in the world. For the most part, these countries have far lower per capita incomes than northern European countries, but often produce considerably fewer offspring. There is variation between countries, but higher incomes in affluent countries do not seem to have a depressing effect on TFRs.<sup>136</sup>

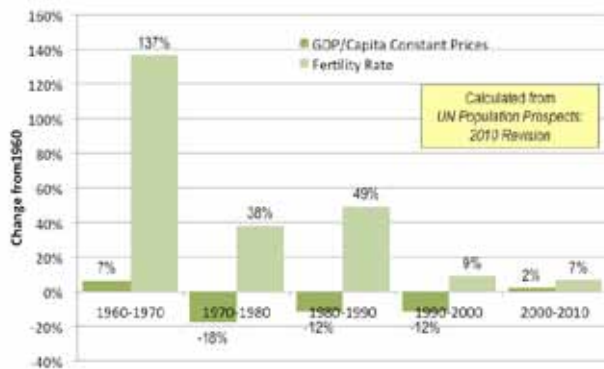


Indeed, it may now be argued that in many higher-income countries, it is not so much affluence but rather slow economic growth — and consequent pessimism about the future — which depresses growth rates. This relationship reappeared with the slowdown of birth rates first in Europe and America in the 1970s, and later in East Asia, particularly Japan, starting in the 1990s. “A more pessimistic economic outlook” in surveys among younger Europeans, notes Lutz, appears to have depressed birth rates and slowed family formation. This represents not so much a return to poverty as a growing perception that economic progress will be slower in the coming decades than in the previous ones.<sup>137</sup>

Yet it is Japan that perhaps shows this renewed relationship most clearly. In 1991, many economists predicted that Japan would overtake the US economy; instead, US GDP grew much faster, and China supplanted Japan in 2010 as the world’s second largest economy. As prices deflated and opportunities shrivelled, the Japanese no longer were interested in starting or growing families. “The Japanese used to be called economic animals”, said Mitsuo Ohashi, former CEO of a Japanese chemical firm. “But somewhere along the way, Japan lost its animal spirits.”<sup>138</sup>



### Total Fertility Rate & GDP/Capita: Japan 1960-2010



Other parts of East Asia have not yet experienced this decline. Yet it appears clear that rising economic stress has played a critical role in declining birth rates. Taiwan, for example, may be a rich country, but wages have fallen by 3% over the past decade.<sup>139</sup> Concerns about competition — not to mention a potential invasion — from China may well have undermined confidence about the future, further depressing both marriage and birth rates.<sup>140</sup>

NUS' Jones links low marriage and birth rates in part to extreme competition that forces people to work long hours. Despite successes over the past few decades, the degree of economic uncertainty has grown considerably in these Asian countries, all of them faced with increased competition from China. Faced with these challenges, Singapore employers, Jones reports remain "generally unforgiving of the divided loyalties inherent in the effort to combine child-raising with working." Society is also "unsupportive" of any child-raising that does not focus on providing "maximum performance." Such pressures were repeatedly reported in our numerous interviews with younger Singaporeans. "People are consumed by their work," one young Singaporean told us. "There's a lack of time. You would expect nature will take care of this but it doesn't."<sup>141</sup>

According to surveys, Singaporeans have lower life satisfaction, higher materialism, and less enthusiasm toward marriage and children than Americans. Materialistic standards of success were also related to the emphasis women place on potential marriage partners' earning capacity. Study results suggest that a consideration of psychological variables such as materialism, life satisfaction, and mate preferences may lead to a better understanding of large-scale socioeconomic issues, including low fertility rates among developed East Asian countries.<sup>142</sup>

Perhaps the most dramatic recent evidence of the linkage between economics and post familialism exists in places most impacted by the current economic downturn, notably Europe and the United States. In recent studies, European demographers established a strong connection between economic growth or recession and birth rates; slowdowns were shown to dampen population growth in the vast majority of high-income countries. Recessions, they added, particularly hurt younger families just starting out.

Given that women in most European countries have their children late, a prolonged recession would likely create a more lasting "birth dearth".<sup>143</sup>

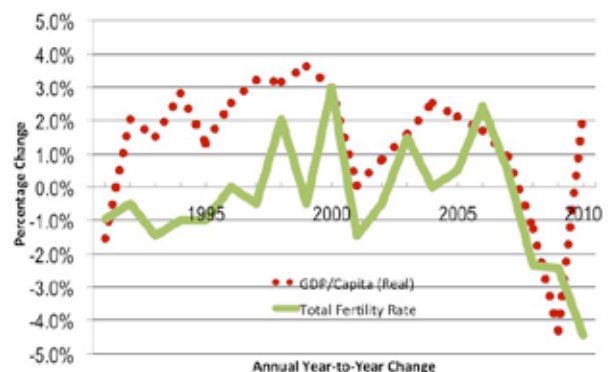
This is borne out in the current economic doldrums. In 2011, European birth rates fell in eleven of the fifteen countries that reported results, including Scandinavian countries such as Finland and Denmark, where rates had been ticking slightly upwards. The impact has been even greater in countries like Spain and Greece where overall joblessness hits one in four, and unemployment among youths reaches roughly 50%.<sup>144</sup>

Not surprisingly, the poor economy has created greater pessimism. In 2010, according to Gallup, far more people in most European countries expected a weaker economy than a stronger one; pessimism was particularly prevalent in Spain, Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom.<sup>145</sup> Stories about divorced Spanish or Italian young fathers sleeping on the streets or in cars in the Mediterranean do not provide exactly a strong advertisement for choosing parenthood.<sup>146</sup>

The onset of the great Recession has slowed fertility even more dramatically in the United States, the one large high income country with fertility rates above replacement levels. In the late 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium, America actually saw its fertility rate tick upwards. Now more Americans are postponing both marriage and having children, according to a recent Pew Foundation study.

Part of the reason undoubtedly lies with the disproportionate impact on young people of the poor job market: almost two in five of unemployed workers are between 20 and 34. The fertility rate has dropped from over 2.1 in 2007 to 1.9, the lowest since the mid-1980s and below a replacement TFR. Pew suggests that this decline follows almost precisely the decline in per capita income that occurred with the onset of the housing bust and the world financial crisis. Despite a total rise in population of 27 million,<sup>147</sup> there were actually fewer births in 2010 than there were 10 years earlier.<sup>148</sup>

### Change in Annual TFR & GDP Per Capita UNITED STATES: 1990-2010



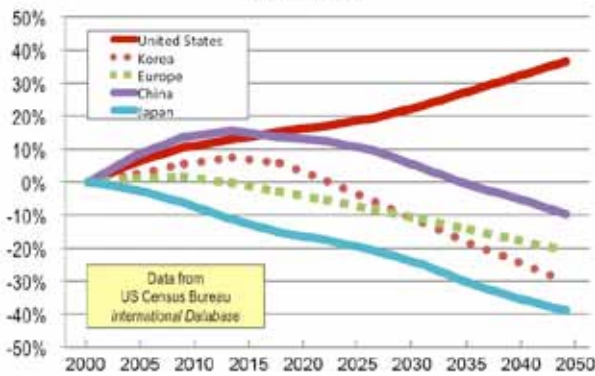
The steeper drop in American birth rates may also reflect the relative weakness of the country's social safety net. As Finnish demographer Anna Rotkirch has pointed out, European family support programs may have cushioned the fertility rate decline that would have been expected in the recession.<sup>149</sup>

Without strong economic growth — even with state aid — it seems likely that family formation and birth rates will continue to drop. Indeed, were an expanded welfare state and growing debt to diminish growth, this could, in the long run, hasten further the onset of “demographic winter”, setting the stage for an even greater financial crisis in the decades ahead.

**THE DEPENDENCY RATIO**

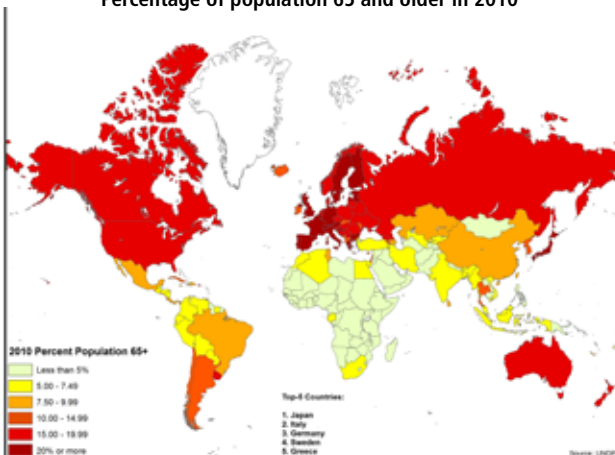
We envision in many countries an enormously expanded burden on a diminishing workforce. By 2050, there will be 40% fewer workers in Japan, 25% less in Europe and 10% less in China than there were in 2000. The big exception to this trend among wealthier nations is the US, which is expected to have robust future growth. But this expectation could be dampened, as discussed earlier, if economic growth continues to be slow, and without strong policies to counteract post-familial trends.

**Labor Force Growth  
AGE 15-64**

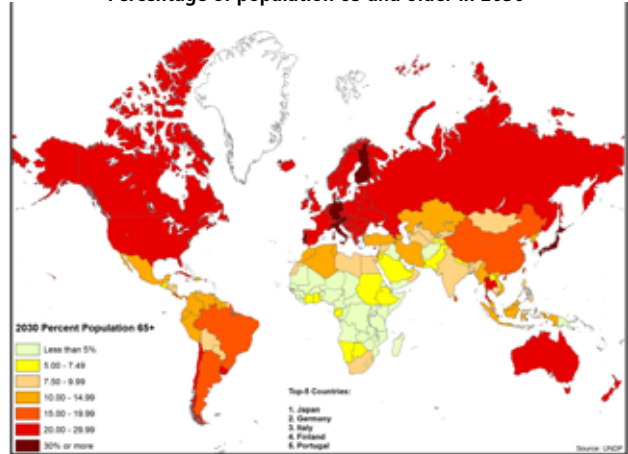


Among the 23 most developed countries, the percentage of population 65 or older was roughly 9% in 1960; it is 16% today. By 2030, this could reach as high as 25%.<sup>150</sup> Many countries, notably Germany, and Singapore by 2050 will have about 57 people over 65 for each 100 workers. Japan by then will have 70. Although not as severely impacted, the US will also see its old age “dependency ratio” soar by half to 35 per 100 workers.<sup>151, 152</sup>

**Percentage of population 65 and older in 2010**



**Percentage of population 65 and older in 2030**



**WHO SPEAKS FOR THE FUTURE?**

These numbers will have difficult ramifications, particularly for younger workers. Former US Treasury Secretary Pete Peterson estimates that most developed countries will need to increase their spending on old age benefit promises from 9% to 16% of GDP over the next thirty years. This, he suggest, will require an increase in taxes of 25% to 40% — even in the high-tax countries of northern Europe.<sup>153</sup> Even Singapore, considered among the best managed countries, likely will have to boost taxes to pay for increased social spending to serve an ageing population.<sup>154</sup>

Essentially, today's young people — facing weak economic prospects — are being asked to pay for the comfortable retirements of their parents and grandparents. Guarantees of poverty-free later years, particularly among Europeans, are so extensive as to swallow virtually every other budget consideration.<sup>155</sup>

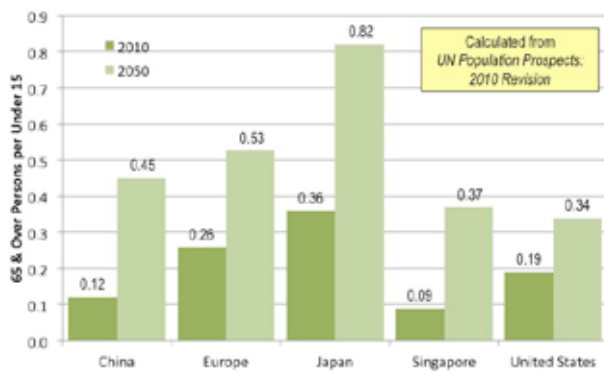
The drive to insure retirement security through additional taxes on the young can already be seen in Germany. A recent proposal by Chancellor Angela Merkel would put in place a 1% income tax as a “demographic reserve” to make up for a workforce expected to shrink by seven million by 2023. “We have to consider the time after 2030, when the baby boomers of the ‘50s and ‘60s are retired and costing us more in health and care costs,” explained Gunter Krings, who drafted the new proposal for Germany's ruling Christian Democrats.<sup>156</sup>

Even in the relatively youthful and traditionally free market-oriented United States, transfer payments have reduced poverty rates for the elderly while guaranteeing ever greater returns for boomers. According to the Brookings Institute, America spends 2.4 times as much on the elderly as it does on children. Over the last few decades, the net worth of those over 65 compared to those under 35 has shifted from being ten times greater to being over fifty times greater.<sup>157</sup>

Not surprisingly, these dynamics are starkly evident than in Japan. The willingness to keep the yen high helps the senior population by keeping costs down, but limits opportunities for exporters and growth industries. In addition, the government

recently doubled the value added tax in response to the country's debt. As Japan ages, such taxes are likely to slow the opportunities for younger workers, as companies merge and invest elsewhere in order to tap into more vibrant markets. In 30 years, the prospect for growth in Japan and likely Germany could shrink as the population ages, stagnates and eventually declines.<sup>158</sup>

### Ratio of Elderly to Working Age Population 65 & OVER PERSONS PER 15-64 YEARS



Over time, these demographically driven taxes are likely to impact consumption and economic growth. Yet the impacts would not be felt equally among generations. As populations decline, notes demographer Nick Eberstadt, a country's GDP can remain high on a per capita basis.<sup>159</sup>

Future generations — and particularly new or prospective parents — are being asked to accept a far lower standard of living while paying off the pensions of older generations. Homeownership whether in an American suburb or a flat in the urban core (such as an HDB flat in Singapore) could be priced out of sight for the newcomer. Some suggest that young people would be better off renting a smaller space — in fact, renting cars and even furniture — and live a nomadic existence.<sup>160</sup> All these ideas are clearly incompatible with family formation.

## THE POLITICAL SCENARIO

Demographic trends have turned families with children into one of the developed world's most threatened constituencies. The political class often refers to families, while working against their interests. Younger voters participate less in politics in most countries and, as their numbers shrink relative to seniors, their leverage decreases. As Alejandro Macarrón notes, voters over 60 are already 30% of Spain's electorate; in 2050, they will constitute close to a majority. Spain's *indignados* — largely young and unemployed — protest the inequity of an economic system which guarantees the jobs and pensions of their elders, but leaves them with little option but short-term temporary employment. This kind of protest could become commonplace throughout the entire high-income world.

### Voters Aged 60 & Over: Spain 1977-2050



"Parents and grandparents may be worried about their offspring's prospects," notes economist Robert Samuelson, "but not so worried as to sacrifice their own. There are real conflicts between the young and old; so far, the young are losing."<sup>161</sup>

In addition to the swelling numbers of pensioners, there also is arising a huge population — in some countries as many as one in three people — who have no offspring. Like seniors, they can be expected to look after their own interests first, and, having no children of their own and increasingly no close living relatives, they may be less focused on those things necessary to assure a better future for the next generation.

Already, in the current American presidential election, President Obama has targeted "single women" — many of them childless — as a core constituency second only to African-Americans. Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg has dubbed them "the largest progressive voting bloc in the country."<sup>162</sup> Singles almost elected John Kerry, and helped put Obama over the top.<sup>163</sup>

Over time, singles seem destined to become a growing political force as their numbers swell, reaching to a third of the American adult population, and perhaps more so in East Asia and Europe. Right now much of their concern has rightly focused on not being demeaned or stereotyped. But in the future, as has happened with other emerging minorities, they may develop a more aggressive agenda.

The singleton approach to public policy, as Eric Klinenberg notes, will likely embrace a "new social environment" favourable to higher urban densities; one that appeals to the unmarried and childless, their needs and tastes. Their rising numbers should give them increased influence in the next decades, even though their grip may not be fundamentally sustainable long term since they, by definition, have no heirs, notes author Eric Kauffman.<sup>164</sup>

"At the end of the day, in demographic terms," suggests Father Anthony Hutjes, parish priest at Singapore's Blessed Sacrament Church, "the religious will meet each other in the future. The next generation will be more orthodox than this one."<sup>165</sup>



Yet before that day, post-familialism will have already changed the nature of political discourse. Adapting to a "slimmer family", the new childless and often unmarried class will identify less with their parents and grandparents, or even with their traditional cultural traditions, notes Terry Nichols Clark. Rather, their affiliation will be with others who share their particular cultural and aesthetic tastes. They will have

transcended the barriers of race and even country, embracing what he hopefully calls "a post materialist" perspective that focuses on more abstract, and often important, issues such as human rights or the environment as well as aesthetic concerns. No longer familial, as people have been for millennia, they could be harbingers not only of a "new race, but even a new politics."<sup>166</sup>

## SECTION THREE: A BRAVE NEW WORLD?

In his brilliant and insightful 1932 novel, *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley described a future post-familial society where the words “mother” or “parent” are described as “smut”; almost too embarrassing to mention.<sup>167</sup> Instead, society is made up entirely of unrelated — in terms of parentage — individuals, where over-strong attachment to others are discouraged in favour of a society built around the three principles of “community, identity and stability”.<sup>168</sup>

Today we are far from Huxley’s post-familial dystopia, but we seem to be moving — particularly in the high-income world — towards a society where the traditional primacy of parenting is being supplanted by a new vision that embraces the lone individual, the networked single and the childless couple. Whether families will also be able to thrive in this new landscape could well be the leading societal question of our day.

### SCARCITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

There are some who see the movement away from traditional familism as a positive development, even a necessity for the future of humanity. Decades before Paul Ehrlich’s blockbuster *The Population Bomb* appeared in 1968, an influential group of scientists, planners and top executives expressed great concern about the impacts of an ever-growing population on food stocks, raw materials and the global political order. In 1948, environmental theorist William Vogt argued that population was outstripping resources and would lead to the mass starvation predicted in the early nineteenth century by Thomas Malthus.<sup>169</sup>

Ehrlich’s particular skill at apocalyptic prognostication would inform the more extreme wings of the “green movement” for decades to come. He starts *The Population Bomb* by recounting his disgust at the crowding he encountered in places like India and lamenting the drop in death rates, particularly in developing countries. By the late 1970s, he predicted mass starvation in much of the world as population would outstrip food supply. Ehrlich espoused draconian steps to limit fertility, imposed by what he saw as a “relatively small group” of enlightened individuals. He even raised the possible feasibility of placing “sterilants” in the water supply, and advocated tax policies that discouraged child-bearing.<sup>170</sup>

Ehrlich’s dire predictions proved widely off the mark. Food production soared, and population growth rates slowed significantly, and appear likely to continue to do so in the near future. Nevertheless, support for population limitation grew. Ernest Callenbach, author of the influential novel *Ecotopia*, drew a picture of an environmentally advanced republic along the west coast that would limit child-bearing to one child, and largely turn child rearing responsibilities over to the larger community.<sup>171</sup>

Many nations and even governments embraced population limitation, not often for long-term ecological reasons, but rather to spur economic progress.<sup>172</sup> In Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, India and China, large families were widely seen as a threat to long-term GDP growth

and improved living standards. These efforts were not unrewarded, as population growth rates and family size dropped precipitously.

Along with early, necessary attempts to encourage a slowdown of rapid population growth, the environmental movement deserves great credit for many of the last decade’s improvements in air, water, and wildlife conservation. Yet, as it has grown, the “green” movement has been less adept at adjusting demographic, economic and technological changes that have occurred since the 1970s. The huge increases in agricultural productivity and energy resources have been largely ignored or downplayed; the writ remains that humanity has entered an irreversible “era of ecological scarcity” that requires strong steps to promote “sustainability”.<sup>173</sup>

Similarly, attitudes on population also have not adjusted to a rapidly changing demographic picture. Many environmental organisations and pundits continue to favour strong steps to discourage people from having children,<sup>174</sup> rapidly ageing populations and looming economic decline for many high-income, and even some developing, countries.<sup>175</sup>

Concern over population has been increasingly tied to climate change. Peter Kareiva, chief scientist for the US-based Nature Conservancy, concluded that not having children is the most effective way for an individual in the developed world to reduce emissions, although he adds that he himself is a father. In the United Kingdom, Jonathan Porritt, an advisor to Prince Charles, has claimed that having even two children is “irresponsible,” and has advocated for the island nation to reduce its population in half in order, in large part, to reduce emissions.<sup>176</sup>

The focus on carbon emissions has shifted attention towards consumption patterns in the high-income world, and away from the developing world. The new target: babies in affluent countries. Poor people, after all, generate less carbon than wealthier ones. One British writer argues for government incentives, including free trips to Florida, for couples choosing to have no more than one. More than one would be taken away from the family’s “carbon allowance”.<sup>177</sup>

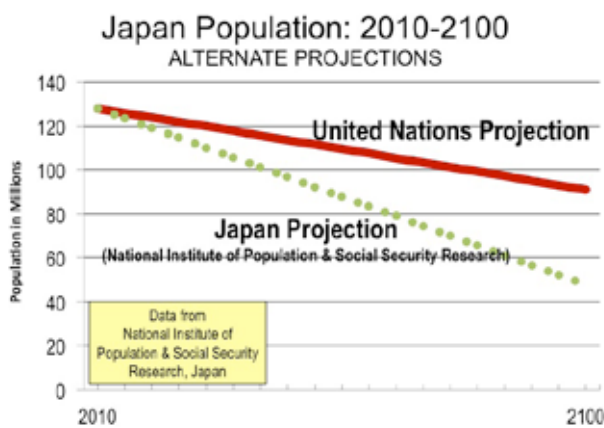
Others suggest even one is too much. Lisa Hymas, senior editor at the US-based green magazine *Grist*, suggests that since her “carbon footprint” may be 200 times that of an Ethiopian or 13 times that of the average Indian, she must join a “fledgling childfree movement” ready to stand up against a “pro-natal bias that runs deep”. Her self-designation: “GINK, green inclinations, no kids”.<sup>178</sup>

### THE JAPANESE MODEL?

Author and environmental journalist Fred Pearce predicts that a world dominated by seniors, with very slow and even negative population growth, will be “older, wiser, greener”. Following the adolescent ferment of the twentieth century, Pearce looks forward to “the age of the old” that, he claims, “could be the salvation of the planet.”<sup>179</sup>

The very country that Pearce identifies as the leader in the new demographics — Japan — may provide less a role model for the future than a cautionary tale. In the 1980s and 1990s Japan was held by historians like Paul Kennedy as the most likely to be “well positioned for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” Kennedy also included in these ranks other Asian countries, such as South Korea, and several northern European countries.<sup>180</sup>

Yet, today, Japan not only endures among the world’s lowest birth rates, but has morphed into the oldest major country in history. Even the central area of Tokyo, which has continued to enjoy relatively robust growth, is expected to see its population cut in half by 2100 to a level smaller than at the beginning of World War II; 46% of the reduced population will be over 65. National projections indicate even larger losses in rest of the nation, which includes the balance of the Tokyo area.<sup>181</sup>



The consequences of this rapid ageing, and low birth rates, are already evident. Japan has suffered two decades of tepid economic growth, a declining labour market, and a loss of overall competitiveness. It suffers the world’s largest government debt and rising rates of both poverty and suicide.

Less obvious has been the breakdown in traditional relations between the sexes. Many young Japanese are not marrying and increasingly show little sexual interest in each other. The percentage of sexually active female university students, according to the Japanese Association for Sex Education, has fallen from 60% in 2005 to 47% last year.

Rates of sexual interest have also dropped among young Japanese males — sometimes labelled as “herbivores” — who appear more interested in comics, computer games and socialising through the internet than in seeking out the opposite sex. In a sense, Japanese males and females are even evolving into distinct races in terms of their physiques: while Japanese females are actually getting thinner, the males are getting much heavier.<sup>182</sup>

Despite a mounting labour shortage, many young Japanese, according to a study by the Nomura Research Institute, are highly alienated from their jobs, and an increasing number are dropping out of the labour force or

contenting themselves with part-time employment. Tight inter-personal familial ties are being replaced by more *ad hoc* relationships based on common interests, suggests sociologist Mika Toyota.

One has to wonder what kind of country Japan may become over time, and whether other nations, in Asia and elsewhere, will wish to follow their path. By 2060, 40% of the population will be over 64 years old. In some places in the countryside, this elderly cast is already a reality. There are increasingly fewer children to take care of elderly parents. This has led to a rising incidence of what the Japanese call *kodokushi*, or “lonely deaths” among the aged, unmarried, and childless.<sup>183</sup>

## TOWARDS PRO-FAMILY POLICIES

The Japanese “model” still has its defenders, including those in the US who point out that low demographic growth allows, in the short term, for greater per capita wealth for those remaining and lower carbon emissions. To be sure, Japan remains a supremely civilised country, with low crime rates, a brilliant artisanal tradition, and modern infrastructure.<sup>184</sup> Yet many Japanese realise their society is no longer sustainable. The Japanese government has attempted to make child-rearing easier by providing cash payments for families and expanded child care. This represents an attempt to counter the economic calculus that, in an advanced society, children are increasingly a luxury. As Toru Suzuki, senior researcher at the National Institute of Population and Society Security Research puts it: “Under the social and economic systems of developed countries, the cost of a child outweighs the child’s usefulness.”

Some claim Japan’s pro-natalist policies are too little, too late. Makoto Atoh, human sciences professor at Waseda University, estimates that Japan spends barely a quarter as much on support for families and children as the Scandinavian countries do.<sup>185</sup> In addition, the persistence of traditional attitudes about familial roles makes giving up singleton status unappealing, particularly to women, whom one government minister described as “birth giving machines”.

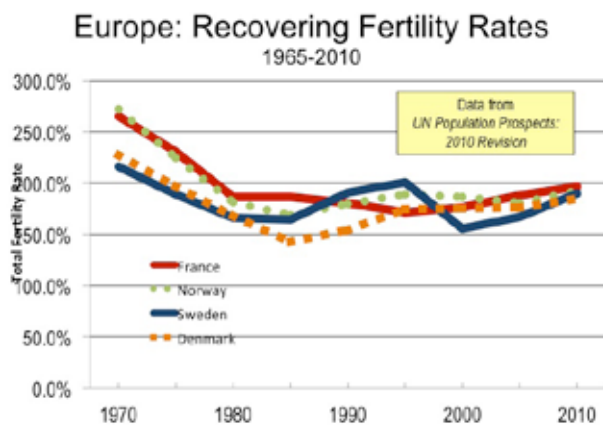
Such attitudes, one Osaka blogger observed, make young people, particularly women, reluctant to form families. She observed among her friends “an unwillingness to throw away the freedoms of single life to comply with the strict societal demands accompanying cohabitation or marriage.”<sup>186</sup>

Clearly, more than just money may drive successful pro-natalist policies. In high-income countries, some policies explicitly seek to shift child raising responsibilities beyond the sole realm of women. Sweden, for example, provides for one month’s leave after birth for fathers; if it is not taken, both members of a couple lose their leave time. Swedish parents are also granted upwards of 480 days of paid leave before the child’s eighth birthday, with 80% of their salary paid by the state.

In sharp contrast to southern Europe, Sweden has been able to raise its fertility rates to around the replacement rate. Some of this increase, however, is due to the higher fertility rates of immigrant women.<sup>187</sup>

France, among the first nations to experience demographic decline, has maintained a package of pro-natalist policies for generations. Multiple categories of cash benefits begin with a universal family allowance; in addition, there are specific allowances for orphans, handicapped children, children under age three, single parents, and children entering school. Since 1946, France has provided paid and job-protected maternity leaves for working women, subsidies for in- and out-of-home care for children and, since 2001, a cash benefit covering income foregone if a parent must leave work to care for a seriously ill child. Services include a universal, voluntary, and free public preschool system that covers all three- to six-year-olds and almost 40% of two-year-olds in a very popular programme, along with extensive subsidies for infant and toddler care, and an outstanding maternal and child health system.<sup>188</sup>

The Swedish and French examples, provide arguably the most effective policies, as a 2005 RAND study notes, since they seek to “remove workplace and career impediments to childrearing.” Fertility rates have remained higher in countries with these programmes, perhaps helped by newer societal attitudes that embrace the male role in child-raising.<sup>189</sup> Tax incentives for child-bearing have resulted in increased fertility rates in at least three places: Israel, France and Quebec.<sup>190</sup>



Other northern European countries have also taken strong steps to reverse fertility decline but sometimes with little apparent success. German Chancellor Merkel recently adopted a proposal to subsidise parents of very young children wishing to stay out of the workforce. It has met fierce opposition from feminists who see the measure as an attempt to reinforce traditional familial patterns.<sup>191</sup>

Russia has also implemented pro-natalist policies that go beyond its already substantial financial incentives. The “mother’s fund” (Maternity Capital Fund) provides up to the equivalent of US\$17,000 to encourage second and later births. The money is available for housing, education and for supplementing the pensions of mothers.<sup>192</sup> Russia is also

planning to grant families land for home building upon the birth of their third child.<sup>193</sup> Further, the national government has implemented a 140% expansion of the Moscow city limits into rural areas that is intended to reduce overcrowding and provide more living space.<sup>194</sup>

The more child-friendly policy environment appears to have produced at least a temporarily higher TFR. After dropping nearly 70% after the fall of communism (from 1.90 in 1990 to 1.20 in 2000), Russia’s TFR was restored to 1.61 in 2011, the highest rate since 1992.<sup>195</sup> The TFR continues to rise. In the first half of 2012, births per 1,000 rose 7.5% relative to the same period in 2011.<sup>196</sup>



In China, only minority and rural regions have benefited from policies allowing for two children rather than one. But it is clear that some Chinese authorities are concerned about the impact of deteriorating family relations, particularly care for ageing parents. The government has started a campaign to push the ideal of “filial piety”, a surprising embrace for Confucian ideals from a state that previously attempted to liquidate China’s historic traditions.<sup>197</sup>

This concern over family obligations can also be seen in South Korea. Shin Kyung-Sook’s highly praised bestseller, *Please Look After Mom*, which sold two million copies, focused on “filial guilt” in children who fail to look after their ageing parents and hit a particular nerve in the highly competitive East Asian society.<sup>198</sup>

Hong Kong, which now suffers one of the world’s lowest TFRs, has taken more direct action, raising tax breaks to HK\$100,000 per child. Yet, as in other countries, the costs of raising children appear simply too high for these tax breaks to ensure a significant effect, with a recent Hang Seng Bank study estimating the cost of raising a child in Hong Kong to be HK\$4 million (US\$515,000).<sup>199</sup>

In the 1960s, Singapore, like many East Asian countries, was concerned about a rising population, and undertook a campaign to limit births. But after the 1980 census showed that better educated women were not replacing themselves and many were remaining single, incentives were put in place: Singapore’s two-child policy was replaced by “three, or more if you can afford it”.<sup>200</sup>

Today, Singapore probably provides among the world's lucrative financial incentives for child-bearing. According to the Prime Minister's Office, the total financial incentives for an additional child are the equivalent of up to S\$142,000 (US\$135,000) over the first seven years of a child's life.<sup>1</sup> The total benefits can rise to S\$160,000 (US\$152,000) over the life of the child. This is nearly 2.7 times the annual GDP per capita.<sup>201</sup> This policy proved initially successful, notes Mui Teng Yap of the Institute of Policy Studies, but has since appeared to lose impact as the fertility rate remains very low.<sup>202</sup>

### Singapore Marriage & Parenthood Package SUMMARY OF BENEFITS



### THE THREE ESSENTIALS: MIGRATION, HOUSING PRICE AND RESTORING FAITH IN THE FUTURE

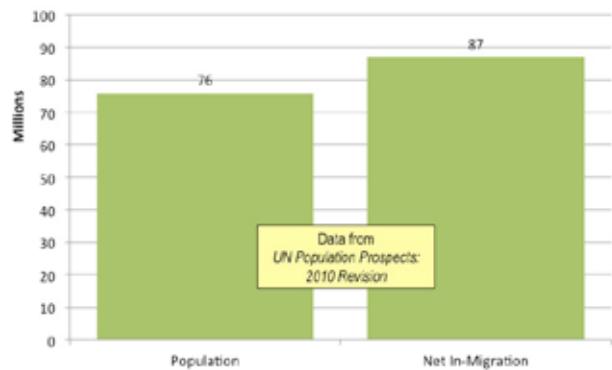
The limited gains of specific initiatives to increase marriage and family formation in high-income countries suggests that policymakers, and societies, need to confront more fundamental issues impacting the overall sustainability of families. This includes broader considerations of how societies operate and restoring the notion of a better future

These can be broken down into three main areas: migration, housing costs and economic growth. All of these are systemic issues that impact the demographic vitality of countries over time.

#### Migration

For many high-income countries, immigration provides a means to forestall some of the worst immediate effects of post-familialism. By bringing in newcomers from elsewhere — often the developing world — societies can not only find new workers and consumers, and sometimes populations more willing to have children than native-born residents. Overall international migration will be responsible for *all* of the growth in the more developed world estimates.

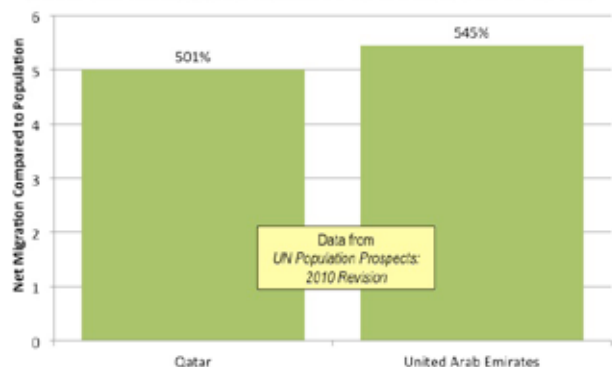
### Population Growth & Migration: 2010-2050 UN DEFINED MORE DEVELOPED REGIONS



Even with historically higher birth rates, the US relies greatly on immigrants for its demographic vitality. Immigrants tend to have higher birth rates than the native born; overall, migrants and their offspring have accounted for one-third of the nation's population growth over the past three decades.<sup>203</sup> The newcomers have also become a critical component of the country's entrepreneurial and innovation culture.<sup>204</sup> Net international migration has proved even more decisive in Canada, where two-thirds of the population growth between 2001 and 2011 was due to immigration.<sup>205</sup> Similarly, more than one-half of Australia's growth between 2000 and 2009 came as a result of international migration.<sup>206</sup>

The Middle East, specifically the Persian Gulf, has become the epicentre of some of the world's largest migrations. There are nearly nine million Asians now working in this part of the world, which has experienced by far the highest international in-migration compared to its population; net migration into Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, net migration has been equal to more than 500% of the 1980 population.<sup>207</sup> Yet unlike immigrants to the US, Singapore, Canada, Australia and France, few of these newcomers become citizens and relatively few have families in there.<sup>208</sup>

### Net Migration & Population: UAE & Qatar 1980-2010 MIGRATION COMPARED TO 1980 POPULATION



The role of migration has also become critical in the world's two most rapidly ageing regions, Europe and East Asia. Phil Longman compares Europe to a woman whose "biological clock is running down. It is not too late to adopt more children, but they won't look like her."<sup>209</sup> The EU-15 reflects this truth; it has sustained its population in large part due to net in-migration largely from developing countries and countries along its European periphery.<sup>210</sup>

Yet despite this migration, the overall European workforce is expected to decline by as much as 25% by 2020. Yet migration patterns suggest that these losses will not be equally distributed between the continent's members. Germany, with its ultra-low birth rate and rapidly ageing population, epitomises the stakes of the migration arbitrage. By 2025, Germany's economy will need six million additional workers, or an annual 200,000 new migrants to keep its economic engine humming, according to government estimates.<sup>211</sup>

In the recent past, newcomers flocked there from Turkey and other Islamic countries, but this migration is widely believed to have failed to deliver workers with enough skills, and to have put in motion conflicts concerning widely divergent cultural values. So the Germans — as they did back in the 1960s — are turning their attention to the diminishing pool of skilled workers from equally ageing states on the EU southern periphery, notably Spain and Greece. These economically beleaguered countries have become a major source of new migrants to Germany, who numbered roughly one million in 2011, a 20% increase from the previous year.<sup>212</sup>

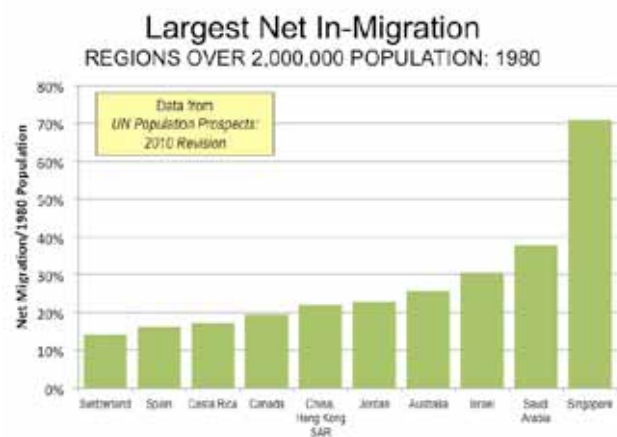
Other European countries, including economic distressed Italy, are playing the immigration arbitrage game by importing young workers from rapidly depopulating South-eastern Europe. The Milan area, for example, added 634,000 foreign residents in just six years (2000 to 2008, the latest year for which data is available), with the largest share from Romania, followed by Albania. Over the period, more than 80% of Lombardy's growth has come about as a result of international immigration.<sup>213</sup>

Immigration arbitrage will also shape the future of East Asia. Some countries, such as Japan, seem determined to maintain their homogeneous culture even in the face of almost certain demographic decline. In fact, the numbers of foreigners living in Japan — roughly 1.7% of the population — has actually begun to drop. Short-term importation of workers still takes place; it's now roughly 200,000 total. But it has already stirred controversy both from the Japanese and from immigrant workers, who claim they are being cheated and abused.<sup>214</sup>

Korea, another country with a looming shortage of children and workers, appears to be more open to the idea of welcoming at least some foreigners into the country. Drawing largely from the rest of East Asia, upwards of 10% of Korea's population, according to one recent study, could be from

other nationalities and the result of mixed marriages by 2050. Yet this pace may be slowed by increasing opposition among native-born Koreans; roughly two-thirds of those surveyed feared a growing immigrant population could lead to social unrest and even riots.<sup>215</sup>

The real Asian pioneer in migration is Singapore. With one of the lowest birth rates in the world, it now must fill its workforce with imports of both high- and low-skilled labour. It now leads the high income world in percentage growth in migration. The island Republic is increasingly dependent on imported workers; the percentage of Singaporean citizens among the residential population has dropped from 90% in 1970 to barely 63% today.<sup>216</sup>



Immigration to East Asia reflects the need for workers — largely from India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sri Lanka — to do work that is considered "dirty, dangerous and difficult" (or the 3-Ds).<sup>217</sup> But places like Singapore and Hong Kong also have a bull market for high-skilled workers in order to maintain their increasingly financially and technologically oriented economies.

Yet migration, as the recent Rand report suggests, is not an adequate long-term solution to demographic decline. Growing political resistance to increased immigration has been mounting throughout Europe, particularly in regards to newcomers from Africa and the Middle East. Some two thirds of Spaniards, Italians and British citizens believe there are already "too many immigrants," while majorities in countries as diverse as the United States, Germany, Russia and Turkey also hold negative views about newcomers in their midst.<sup>218</sup>

A strong anti-immigrant attitude also has developed in Australia, which had the largest share of international migrants relative to its population between 1980 and 2010. In Hong Kong, as well as Singapore, there is growing opposition to immigration, including from people who share a common Chinese heritage.<sup>219</sup> Reliance on migration challenges even the most enlightened societies concerning their cultural and ethnic futures.

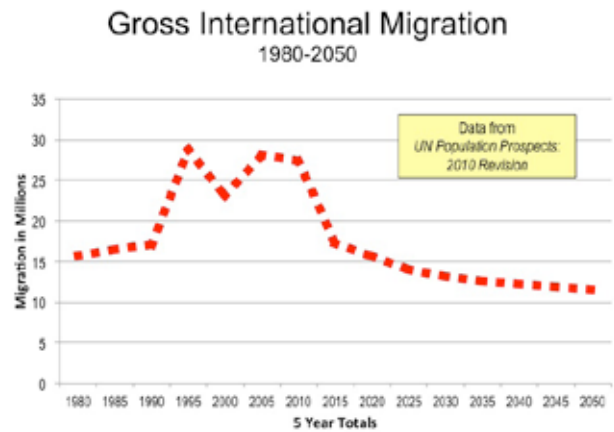
Ironically, this is occurring even as migrants drop as a share of the world's population. Migration, in per capita terms, actually, peaked in 1995 and has been falling since. Between 1980 and 2010, gross international migration peaked at 28.8 million.<sup>220</sup> By 2050, the United Nations (UN) projects that this gross migration rate will fall three-quarters, to approximately 0.12%.



This pattern is likely to continue. Already many of the primary immigrant-sending countries, such as Mexico, have experienced a radical reduction in both its TFR and its population growth rate. This is already credited, along with a weak American economy, for a two-third drop in Mexican immigration to the United States since 2005.<sup>221</sup>

Across the Atlantic, we see the emergence of a similar pattern of slow population growth in key immigrant-supplying countries. Tunisia, Morocco and Turkey all are experiencing massive reductions in their birth rates. The situation in the Balkans and Eastern Europe will be even graver: population growth has already stopped and many potential families have migrated. In the coming decade, suggests the UN, migration will continue to fall not only in percentage but in gross numbers.

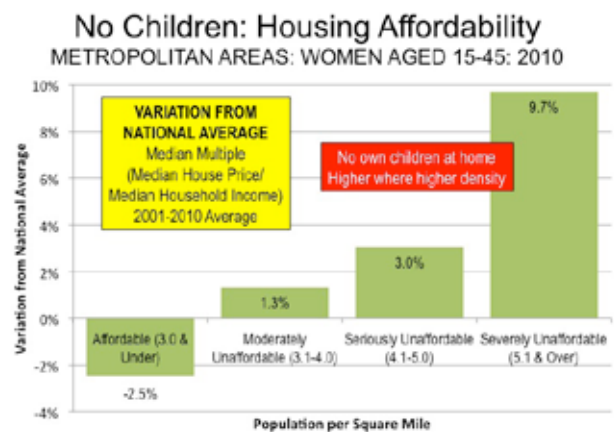
Overall, the UN projects that international migration will continue to drop over the coming decades from over 25 million annually today to barely 10 million in 2050. In the next 20 years, countries that are currently losing population will have fewer people to send, and will be hard-pressed to make up for deficiencies in the high-income world. Those most likely to have surplus workers, such as Africa, tend to have less educated populations, and can ill afford to export their skilled workers. Migration may solve some of the consequences of post-familialism for some period of time, but it remains a partial and, in most countries, an inherently short-term, solution to a more deep-seated problem.



### Maintaining Housing Affordability

An often cited constraint in the ability to start families is housing costs. Virtually all the countries with ultra-low birth rates — Italy, Japan, Hong Kong — have suffered from very high housing prices. In Japan, notes Mika Toyota, her parents could afford a suburban house; she would be “lucky” to own a small apartment. In four East Asian countries, Singapore’s Gavin Jones, Paulin Tay Straughan and Angelique Chan report that “a housing and urban environment unfriendly to children” was a principal reason for the reluctance of women to have children (or more children).<sup>222</sup> The ideal is obviously housing of sufficient space, inside and outside, that is affordable.

The experience in the US shows precisely how high prices affect family formation and fecundity. Virtually all the areas with the lowest percentages of children are those with the highest prices relative to incomes (the “median multiple”, as discussed earlier).



Ironically, the dominant trend in urban planning favours restrictions against the lower density housing preferred by families, essentially raising its price. This is one reason for the growing divergence of housing affordability between US metropolitan areas. Those metropolitan areas which have adopted more restrictive land use policies — such as New York, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Miami, Seattle and Portland —all experienced explosive price inflation during the great housing bubble of the last decade (and earlier in some cases). In some places, the median multiple jumped to over 10.<sup>223</sup> None of the major metropolitan areas in the US resisted the more restrictive land use regulations suffered house price increases relative to inflation much above the post-World War II norms.<sup>224</sup>

One answer to the problem in many countries lies with dispersion, both within urban areas and within nations. Taking advantage of its vast land resources, as mentioned above, has become a principal policy in developing the area around Moscow. Chinese urban policy has encouraged the same trend, though municipal monopolies on residential land have propelled rapidly increasing house prices. Where there is a competitive land supply for residential development, housing prices tend to be less relative to household incomes.<sup>225</sup>

The opposite of dispersion is happening in Japan, where population growth is concentrated in the high-priced Tokyo area, which accounts for one-third of the entire country's GDP.<sup>226</sup> This intensification has kept housing costs high, and reduced the opportunities to purchase the spacious residences appropriate for modern families. A similar concentration of growth is occurring in Seoul, Korea, where high housing prices have long been blamed on overly-restrictive land use policies.<sup>227</sup>

Perhaps the biggest challenges exist in land-scarce places like Hong Kong and Singapore. These markets have international border (virtual or actual) constraints; large-scale suburban development is largely unimaginable. Not surprisingly, prices have shot up, especially in Hong Kong.<sup>228</sup> This may explain, at least in part, the ultra-low birth-rates in this special economic and political jurisdiction. Hong Kong's price increases have been attributed to its restrictive land use policies,<sup>229</sup> (in contrast to its fabled "free market" policies in other sectors) and to a huge increase in investors, especially from mainland China.

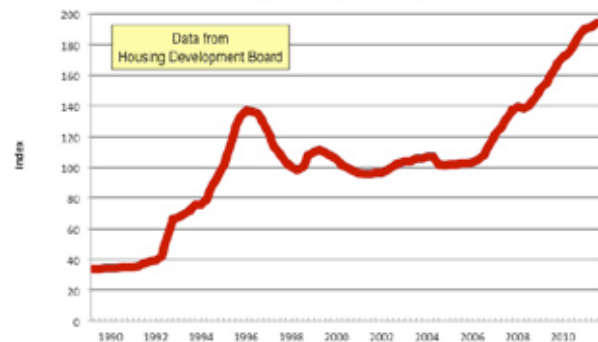
In contrast, house price increases in Singapore appear to have been more modest. This can be attributed to conscious government policies to provide a sufficient supply of housing to meet demand, and restrictions on foreign investment that might accelerate high prices.

Singapore's system may be amenable to change, since the vast majority of housing units are built by the Housing & Development Board (HDB) (established in 1960). In Singapore, approximately 85% of the population live in HDB houses, of

which 90% are home-owners. It has transformed what had been a city with many slums, into a clean and comfortable environment.<sup>230</sup>

The HDB plays a critical social role, ensuring that government subsidies benefit the largest number of citizens, and promote the familial structure now favoured by the government. This has meant a lower priority assigned to unmarried applicants, as well as incentives for "extended families" and for nuclear families applying for flats in the same HDB estate in which the applicants' parents live.<sup>231</sup>

### Singapore HDB Flat Resale Price Index QUARTERLY: 1990 - 2010



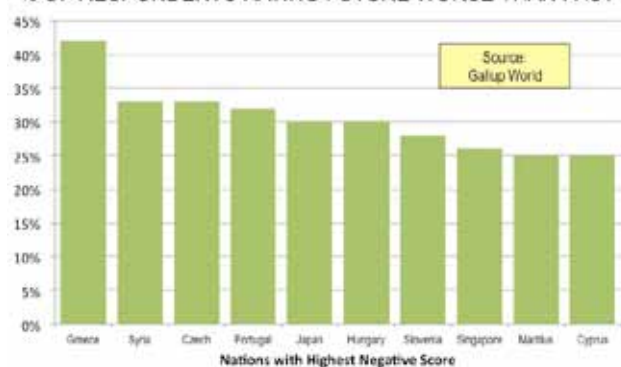
This policy was recently augmented by National Development Minister Khaw Boon Wan, who gave his assurance that there were no plans to shrink the HDB flats, and that any future changes in flat sizes would depend on family sizes. This should be reassuring to families and people intending to start families.<sup>232</sup>

### **Economic Growth and Prospects for a Better Future**

The decision to start a family, like that to stay single, remains fundamentally one of individual choice. In modern societies, people often weigh decisions according to their perspective about the future. In recent years, many of the societies with the lowest rates of family formation — Greece, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Japan, Slovenia, Hungary and surprisingly Singapore — are also those with highest percentages of people who believe their future will be worse than their present.<sup>233</sup>

### Most Pessimistic Nations: 2011

% OF RESPONDENTS RATING FUTURE WORSE THAN PAST





In many countries, particularly in Europe, this can be traced to a sense of diminished employment prospects. Roughly 70% of all Europeans and two-thirds of residents of the former Soviet Union and the Middle East consider this to be a “bad time” to find a job. In Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom, over 70% also feel this way. In Greece, Ireland, Italy and Serbia, this perspective is shared by a remarkable 90% or more.<sup>234</sup>

Clearly, tough economic times have slowed child-bearing in many countries. Close to one-third of US adults aged 25 to 34 have moved back with their parents, notes a recent Pew study, people who otherwise might have gotten married and started families of their own. While still considered less than ideal, Pew suggests this arrangement has become more socially acceptable among young people.<sup>235</sup>

If bad times suppress family formation, better times seem to spur it. Interestingly enough, fertility rates were rising before the economic crisis in many countries, including the United States. In fact, during the relatively flush times in the mid-2000s, the number of births to women with two children had started to inch up. This phenomenon was cited in one study of the affluent suburbs of such cities as Boston.<sup>236</sup>

The notion of a better future has long provided the impetus for demographic vibrancy. Ascendant societies, such as those of ancient Rome or renaissance Venice, tended to be fecund; as they declined, so too did their birth rates, often with historically catastrophic results for their economies and future.<sup>237</sup>

In more recent times, growing prosperity and belief in the future increased family formation and drove population growth. Britain’s population, despite massive outmigration, grew during the nineteenth century by a remarkable 250%; the number of people living in America expanded by 13 times.<sup>238</sup> Tennyson, poet of Britain’s great expansive period, wrote: “Forward, forward let us range. Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change.”<sup>239</sup> Tennyson’s words may seem naïve, yet he captured the progress that led to the end of the Malthusian era, and a rapid growth in population in the Americas and Europe.

That era’s economic growth, with rapid and huge increases in GDP, was due in large part to the economic pie getting bigger. Of course, some perceived that the pie was fixed and others maintained the prosperity of some could only be achieved by the impoverishment of others. Yet over time, the free-market and entrepreneurial gains of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries diffused wealth far beyond anything that could have been anticipated, not only for the rich, but also for middle-income households and even the poor. Even critics of capitalism, such as Karl Marx, and more moderate socialists like H.G. Wells, believed in the ideal of technological *progress* that could create a better future for the vast majority of people.<sup>240</sup>

Today we might look back at such optimism with some nostalgia. In many high-income countries, enthusiasm for the future has been greatly diminished. Even as technology has allowed humanity to avoid the mass starvations and resource shortages predicted by Ehrlich in his *Population Bomb*, the expectation of a worsening future remains deeply imbedded — and may be worsening — in many advanced societies, and in some developing ones as well.

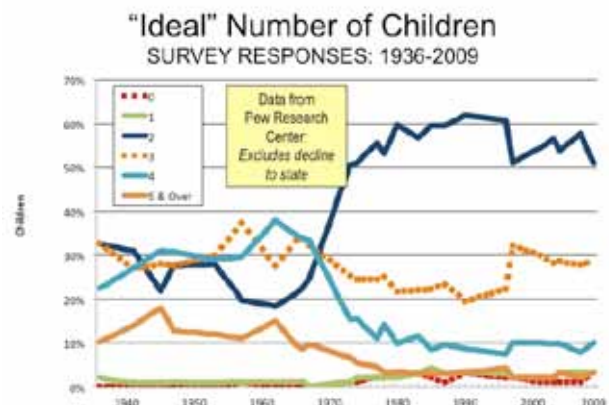
As economist Benjamin Friedman has observed, “sustainability” should not become a watchword for economic stagnation. Rather, the concept should incorporate “investment” in human and physical infrastructure, and in policies that drive steady economic growth. Only a growing economy, he notes, can be successfully “open, tolerant and democratic.”<sup>241</sup> Economic progress is also the best way to restore faith in the future, which appears critical to maintaining a modicum of demographic health in high-income countries.

## WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY DO WE WANT?

The familial world as experienced throughout history is unlikely to return. The forces shaping the new reality — economic competition, the education and advancement of women, environmental forces — will continue to shape the futures of both high-income societies and of many developing countries as well.

Yet it is critical to note that the impulse for family formation has not been extinguished. Many young people, even in the most advanced societies, appear to yearn for the comforts and rewards of family life. In most of Europe, the ideal number of children in a family stands close to two, well above the 1.5 TFR found on the continent.<sup>242</sup> Similarly, in Singapore, most young people express a strong desire to get married and have children, preferably more than one.<sup>243</sup>

Perhaps the most startling evidence of pro-familial views comes from the US, the one large high-income country with a TFR at or close to replacement rate. In a survey conducted by the Pew Foundation, nearly half of adults surveyed identified two as the “ideal” number of children — a number that has been consistent since the early 1970s — while over a quarter preferred three and nearly 10% four. In contrast, barely 3% opted for one, while a similar number chose none.<sup>244</sup>



Equally revealing Pew surveys of the “millennial” generation (born after 1983) in America find that a majority ranked being “good parents” as their highest priority, followed by a third who identified having a successful marriage. In contrast, having a “high paying career” was named by 15%. Another survey, conducted by the music network MTV and the Associated Press, found that “spending time with family” was named the primary way young Americans found happiness. Generational chroniclers Morley Winograd and Mike Hais describe millennials as a “civic generation”, more communitarian and family oriented than their boomer parents; in this sense, they argue, their values are close to those of their grandparents from the “GI generation” that survived the Depression and the Second World War.<sup>245</sup>

There is also some evidence that childlessness among highly educated women has declined even as it has increased among the less schooled.<sup>246</sup> All this suggests that, although the conditions for having children have become more problematic, the desire to have families, and children, has not waned irretrievably. There is still hope to contain post-familialism’s impact, but this requires finding ways to make family formation more practical and preferable in the coming decades.

## THE HUMAN CITY

In the end, the real question then becomes: What is a city, and society, for? Post-familial theorists like Eric Klinenberg envision a dense urban landscape where connections forged among individuals who are not related. These “singletons” live mobile lives, and “are anchored by themselves”. There is a “rich social life” linked by interest on the internet, such as on Facebook, but not limited by kinship ties. “Living alone,” he asserts, “might be what we need to reconnect.” This, of course, means ties will drift from the family. A recent Australian study found, for example, found that Facebook users were no less bonded to friends, but tended to be far less tied to family.<sup>247</sup>

The emerging childless city, with its small apartments and few families, represents a kind of evolutionary leap not only from the village but from the family-centric city that thrived in neighbourhoods, be it either in New York’s outer boroughs or the Singaporean “heartlands”. These dense largely childless cities are hailed by some urbanists as more creative, efficient, environmentally sound and socially more progressive.<sup>248</sup>

Such broad shifts in the nature of society threatens to break the frankly prejudicial bonds that have tied people together in matrimony and as parents— but also held cities and societies together through millennia. As Freud observed, such non-family specific patterns of association can weaken the intense ties that have existed between parents, children, siblings and others sharing a common kinship. “A love that does not discriminate,” he wrote, “seems to me to forfeit a part of its value, by doing an injustice to its object.”<sup>249</sup>

These familial bonds remain critical to the vitality of the urban future. Over time families — until we achieve the technology in *Brave New World* — remain the only source of newer generations, which provide an irreplaceable source of inspiration and intense economic motivation. Replacing the agency of family with the internet, or what Martin Earnshaw calls the “therapeutic intervention” of the state, does not reconstruct society in the long run, but invites its gradual dissolution.<sup>250</sup>

Ultimately, we argue that urbanism must re-discover its humanity, that stands largely on the firmament of the family, need to be more than “entertainment machines” or as dense receptacles for those who wish to reduce their carbon footprint.<sup>251</sup> Cities are about people, and about creating conditions for upward mobility, including for the next generation. “Men come together in cities in order to live,” Aristotle wrote, “but they remain together in order to live the good life.”<sup>252</sup>

## RETHINKING THE “CASH NEXUS”

Today’s market system has created wonders and spread prosperity around much of the world, but this same system also threatens the primacy of family. The ideal corporate executives, futurist Alvin Toffler noted, are those who have “dissolved” themselves from “their deep emotional attachments with their families of birth”. The corporate man, somewhat like the Bolsheviks of revolutionary Russia, is often motivated to embrace a post-familial value system in order to serve his employer most efficiently.<sup>253</sup>

Ever more intense global competition has led firms to demand long hours for both male and female workers. This may increase productivity today, but clearly makes matrimony and child-raising more difficult. In this sense, business is setting into motion forces that will reduce both the future workforce and the consumer base.<sup>254</sup> To reverse this pattern, companies, as well as the public sector, need to explore ways to extend flexibility in the workplace, and find ways, particularly for mothers, to re-enter “the fast track”, if they so desire, as their children mature.<sup>255</sup>

Familial values need to command the attention of both policymakers and business leaders. As one Institute of Policy Studies researcher put it there needs to be a revaluing of what is “success”; an understanding that “a healthy family life is just as much a form of success as is good standing in one’s chosen profession.”<sup>256</sup> Given our much longer life-spans, it seems logical that we should find ways to carve out time for families and the next generation.<sup>257</sup>

Another at least partial solution lies with what Toffler called “the electronic cottage”. Allowing people to work from home not only saves time and energy, but allows for more of a home-based economic system. This kind of system provides greater flexibility to all parents, including women nursing infants, and allows families to move to more

affordable, less space-constrained environments.<sup>258</sup> In high-density environments like Singapore, we might also consider placing work spaces within housing estates or above shops to reduce commute times, returning at least some hours back to the family.<sup>259</sup>

### **IN THE END, IT'S ABOUT VALUES**

In the end, we need to choose the kind of society we want. Do we want families to succeed, or do we want to ride the great shift without significantly trying to reverse its course? As Fernand Braudel observed, the “force of inertia... is one of the great artisans of history.”<sup>260</sup> Only by re-valuing family now can the ageing societies that are forming across the planet recapture a demographic vitality.

Even if policymakers seek to address familial concerns in a coherent way, we cannot anticipate a return to any imagined “golden age” of traditional arrangements. The family will more likely continue to morph, becoming more egalitarian in its approach to childrearing and, above all, more flexible, with perhaps an expanded role for the growing ranks of childless aunts and uncles.<sup>261</sup>

Many forces — greens, urban land speculators and some feminists — may see the shift towards childless and single households as either a source of profit or a sign of social progress. Yet post-familialism remains at the most fundamental level demographically and socially unsustainable. In the coming decades, success will accrue to those cultures that preserve the family's place, not as the exclusive unit in society, but as the one truly indispensable for the ages.

## NOTES

- 1 The United Nations Population Prospects defines the more developed world as Europe (including Russia and Eastern Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. All other parts of the world are classified as the less developed world. This inexplicable definition leaves out Singapore, which had the fourth highest GDP per capita in the world in 2010, according to the International Monetary Fund. It also excludes Hong Kong, South Korea and a number of other regions. This report has reclassified the UN data into "higher income" and "medium and lower income" regions, with those above a 2010 GDP per capita \$20,000 being "higher income.
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## NOTES

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