

Depopulation in Japan, its causes and consequences

Toshihiko HARA

Sapporo City University, professor emeritus, Sapporo Japan

< Abstract >

This study focuses on Japan as a precursor case of the worldwide depopulations, looking for causes and consequences of the First and Second Demographic Transition (FDT/SDT). Total population in Japan reached a peak of 128.08 million in 2008 and began to decline. Since 2007, the natural dynamics turned negative, and population is shrinking. Japan loses one megacity with over a million people every 5 years. Changing CBR, CDR from 1873 to 2019 show the FDT from high fertility and mortality to low fertility and mortality, and the SDT, where the natural dynamics turned negative (because of low fertility and aging) and depopulation began. The FDT started with modernization from the end-1860s and continued to the mid-1970s. The growing social capital extended the average life span of women from 50 to over 70 years, thus the survival rate at the end of their reproductive period rose from 50 % to nearly 100 %. The replacement level of fertility was reduced from 4 to 2 children. The higher risk of having too many children promoted birth control to keep TFR within replacement level. The SDT was caused by the shift of reproduction to a higher age. With the liberalization of marriage behaviors, late marriage and late childbearing were promoted. The reproductive period of women was cut back and, as a result, marriage couples became rarer, and childless couples or with only one child are more usual. Conversely, the multiple child household is vanishing. Thus, TFR stays far below replacement level.

My preferred theme ;

1. Demographic projections

2. Fertility and the family

3. Ageing and morbidity