

Effects of the Global Population Growth

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Abstract

The demographic factor is not purely natural. It is a social body that has its own structure and is manifested through a series of processes that make up its movement: birth rate, death rate, longevity, migration etc. All these processes depend on the social and economic environment in which people live. The growth of the world's population will have multiple effects on the environment, the economy and society as a whole.

Key words: population, famine, illiteracy, aging, access to drinking water

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1. Introduction

Growth of the world's population is one of the major challenges for governments around the world. The fact that mankind has already surpassed 7.4 billion people today is a very worrying situation for both developed and developing countries. The consequences of overpopulating the planet are not delayed. Nature, economy, the society are subjects to unprecedented pressure. Mankind has to learn to manage its resources to cope with this worrying phenomenon.

2. Uncontrolled propagation of the population and its effects

In the long run, there is a pronounced trend to reduce the world mortality rate, worldwide, especially in poor countries. Since the mortality rate has not experienced significant changes, it can be said that this is the most powerful factor that influenced the population growth in the post-war period. The special role of this factor would not have been possible without a series of improvements in the field of production factors, without the spectacular development of antibiotic production, accompanied by increased labor productivity and substantial price reductions. Uncontrolled population propagation will lead to hunger, illiteracy, conflicts and national and international migration. Researchers say that, as the population grows at such a rate, the planet is rapidly moving to ecological overburden, famine, and a fragmented state.

Hunger is present in our world now more than ever. It is found that famine is directly proportional to the increase in the world population. Worldwide, 795 million people suffer from lack of food. The need for food will increase by 70% by 2045 due to population growth.

Illiteracy is a real problem even in the 21st century. According to UNESCO, there are over 770 million people around the world who can not write or read.

Sub-Saharan Africa, southern and western Asia have the biggest problems with illiteracy, with over 50% of people unable to read and write. Even in the United States, the illiteracy rate is about 14%, which means over 43 million citizens of the world's largest economic power.

Illiteracy has a stronger impact on women. According to the UN, nearly two-thirds of the planet's adult women don't know to read.

However, there are signs of an improvement in this situation. According to UNESCO, since 1990, countries with the highest illiteracy rates have taken important steps. Arab states, for example, have seen a 20% increase in adult literacy over the last 20 years.

Water resources are an aspect that reflects a link between environmental degradation and the *outbreak of conflicts*. Tensions about water between countries are often generated by reasons such as high population density, low income per capita, hostile relations and minority groups that determine the internationalization of the problem of water scarcity, the implementation of extensive water projects, and the limitation of fresh water treaties.

Freshwater is a fundamental resource essential to agriculture, the functioning of industries, energy supply, and health and hygiene.

Water resources are sadly distributed very unevenly. Some areas of the planet have abundant freshwater resources. According to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, over 40% of countries are in areas where water is a problem.

According to a UN report, the world has only 60% of the *water* it needs in the next 15 years, unless countries do not dramatically change the use of its resources.

Many underground water reserves are already exhausted, while the rainfall regime is influenced by climate change. If the world's population grows to nearly 10 billion by 2050, additional water will be needed for agriculture, industry and personal consumption.

The report estimates that global demand for water will increase by 55% by 2050, while reserves are decreasing drastically.

With less water, there is a danger of disasters on several levels: crops could fail, ecosystems would stop working, industry could collapse, diseases and poverty could worsen, and conflicts for water access could occur more frequently.

The UN report, published before World Water Day (World Water Day is on March 22 and has been set by the UN General Assembly since 1993), invites policymakers and communities to rethink the policy of using water, urging conservation, as well as to wastewater recycling. Countries can also consider rising water prices as well as look for new ways to make water-intensive sectors focus on more efficient and less polluting use.

Approximately 748 million people around the world have limited access to drinking water, the report warning that not economic growth itself is the solution - it could really worsen the situation, unless emphasis is placed on reforms based on efficiency and less pollution.

An important component of population growth is its movement, its movement from one country to another, respectively *international migration*. An essential cause stems from the breakdown of population number and resources, with the effect of reducing income and the impossibility of satisfying needs. Also, it can be generated by internal conflicts that arise, especially in developing countries, where access to resources is limited. Thus, in 2015, Europe faced an unprecedented immigration when thousands of migrants from Asia and Africa chose to leave their home countries because of famine, war, dictatorship and poverty. The political, economic and social consequences and implications for European countries are hard to quantify. In this context, migration will play a major role in the dynamics of the population of developed European countries.

The process of population migration is not linear, but it is known to grow or fall. Migration also has other forms, such as the movement of the population from rural areas to urban areas, causing excessive urbanization. So the growth of the urban population will be enormous, and the city will have to take the necessary measures for the future city to meet the needs of its locals. On this background, we will also witness an increase in unemployment in urban areas, especially in the future, the increase in labor productivity in some economic sectors will lead to the disappearance of other jobs.

3. Population aging - a real problem of advanced states

Another real problem of the beginning of the millennium is the *aging of the population*. According to the UN, as the global population grows, the number of pensioners will reach one billion.

Countries like Japan and Italy are hit hard. It is estimated that the population of Japan will decrease by 30% by 2060, when 40% of the population will be over 65 years old, according to official data. The medium and long-term consequences can be very serious, especially on the labor market and on pensions and health insurance.

Table no. 1 Countries with the most aging population in the world

Rank	Country	% of population over 65 years old
1	Japan	26.3 %
2	Italy	22.4 %
3	Greece	21.4 %
4	Germany	21.2 %
5	Portugal	20.8 %
6	Finland	20.5 %
7	Bulgaria	20.0 %
8	Sweden	19.9 %
9	Latvia	19.4 %
10	Malta	19.2 %
11	France	19.1 %
12	Denmark	19.0 %
13	Croatia	18.9 %
14	Estonia	18.8 %
15	Lithuania	18.8 %
16	Spain	18.8 %
17	Austria	18.8 %
18	Belgium	18.2 %
19	Netherlands	18.2 %
20	Czech Republic	18.1 %
21	Slovenia	18.0 %
22	Switzerland	18.0 %
23	Hungary	17.8 %
24	United Kingdom	17.8 %
25	Romania	17.3 %

Source: World Facts, *Countries With The Largest Aging Population In The World*, [online] Available at: <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-largest-aging-population-in-the-world.html> [Accessed 28 April 2017]

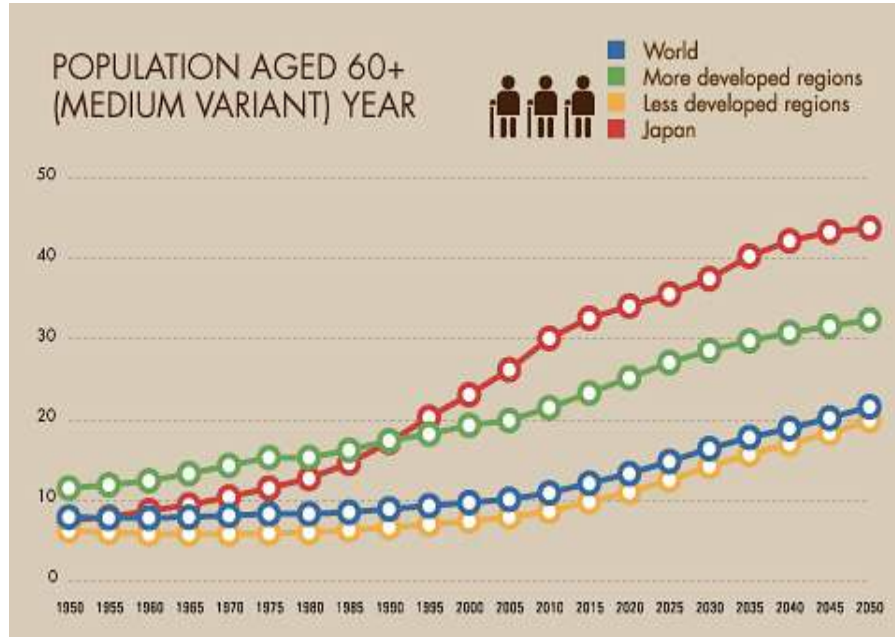
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As a result of decreased fertility and longevity growth, the population of most countries suffers from rapid aging. The number of people that have less than 15 years will drop sharply, while the age group of people over 65 will increase a lot. In developed areas, the elder population will double from more than 245 million today to 406 in 2050.

The causes of this phenomenon are the decrease in birth rates in developed and emerging countries as well as the increase in life expectancy as a result of medical advances and improvement of the quality of life.

Ageing affects all societies – high-income as well as low and middle-income societies – but at a different pace. Japan is no exception: it is now the most aged society in the world.

Figure no. 1.



Source: <http://wisdom.unu.edu/en/ageing-societies/> [Accessed 28 April 2017]

Both in developing countries, but especially in developed ones, the decrease in the mortality rate will lead to an increase in the number of the elderly compared to the number of people who are able to work, and even to the absolute decrease of the labor force.

In other words, the number of assisted people (net-consuming) will exceed the number of people working (net-producing). The support rate, ie the ratio between the population aged 16-65 and the population over 65 will decrease dramatically in the coming decades.

Basically, over the next few years, the world will face two big problems[3]:

- decrease in the support rate (or increase in the number of elderly people);
- reducing the number of people employed globally.

These two demographic changes will have strong economic implications, such as a drop in saving capacity and, in general, a slowdown in economic growth.

According to specialists, the solution would be to further raise the retirement age. The increase in support rates during the 1990s has also led to a fall in retirement age in countries such as Japan, the US, Germany or China. If we follow the aging trend of the population, it is possible that by 2050, the retirement age will increase and reach a minimum age of 70 years.

Also, in many upper-middle-income countries, the share of the working-age population is presently reaching a peak. In the coming decades, these countries are expected to experience accelerated population ageing and declining economic support ratios, reaching levels similar to those of the high-income countries today. The decline in the support ratio is projected to be more pronounced in countries with more aged populations, such as China, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Slovenia and Thailand, where the economic support ratios are projected to decline by more than 0.5 per cent per year over 2015-2050.

4. Conclusions

Population growth is a phenomenon characteristic of the contemporary world. What will its effect on economic development be? Trying to answer this question many specialists use the notion of *demographic pressure*. Population growth could, in their opinion, reduce the pace of economic development. Today's reality shows us that there are exceptions, China's case being extremely loud.

It succeeded, relying on the large and cheap labor force, to evolve economically and to become one of the central pawn on the current global elite map. Even in countries such as Mexico and India, examples are relevant to this. Of course, it still cannot be about achieving a demo-economic balance.

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