

## UNESCO

### United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Population Control

#### Overview

Population control refers to measures taken by a government aimed at controlling population size, growth, distribution, or composition.<sup>1</sup> This concept has earned a greater focus in modern society, with a dual focus on overpopulation and population decline, as both sides of the issue are prevalent and dangerous realities in different areas of the world. Population decline, also known as depopulation, is the phenomenon wherein human population size decreases, which is becoming more prevalent due to an increasing societal trend of fewer young citizens and far more elderly citizens. This disparity, a result of lessening birth rates, can cause significant damage to the able-bodied workforce of a country. To elaborate, several wealthy countries across the globe are undergoing demographic crises with rapidly aging populations, including Germany, Norway, Japan and many others. While one may think that such a phenomenon could allow countries to better allocate their resources to their shrinking populations, such a demographic situation would only put a strain on a shrinking working class, now being forced to prop up the pensions of retirees. Specifically, Gary Burtless and Barry Bosworth state that “The increased cost of retirement benefits will put enormous pressure on public sector budgets at a time when the workforce is scarcely growing or even shrinking.”<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, countries undergoing rapid population growth often suffer from equally, if not more immediately, troubling problems. Countries like Niger, South Sudan, and China have undergone rapid population growth, which has had negative impacts on the lives of their civilians. Having a massively growing population can limit the resources of the populous, lead to food scarcity and can cause epidemics. The National Library of Medicine claims that “rapid

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<sup>1</sup>“Population Policy.” n.d. Ined - Institut National D’études Démographiques.  
<https://www.ined.fr/en/glossary/population-policy/>.

<sup>2</sup> Bosworth, Barry P., and Gary Burtless. 1997. “Budget Crunch: Population Aging in Rich Countries.” *Brookings*, June 1, 1997.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/budget-crunch-population-aging-in-rich-countries/#:~:text=Over%20the%20next%20several%20decades,percent%20in%20Germany%20and%20Japan.>

population growth is one of the major contributing factors to the poverty and under-development of Third World countries--especially African countries".<sup>3</sup>

### *What is UNESCO?*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, also known as UNESCO, is an agency founded in 1945 with the mission to promote international security and peace for everyone through cultural, scientific, and educational reforms. UNESCO is well known for their world heritage program, in which they work tirelessly to protect sites of immense cultural and natural heritage to humanity and/or the planet. UNESCO seeks to efficiently combat population control, an issue becoming progressively more prevalent in society, before its consequences worsen.

### **Source of Issue**

There are many elements at play which contribute to the overpopulation or depopulation of society at large. To start, significant reductions in mortality rates over the past century along with increased life expectancies have allowed for populations to increase at an unprecedented in human history.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, while the use of contraception has become more widespread, it is not yet fully accessible to the entirety of the world, leaving billions without the option. The Population Media Center estimates that 214 million women in developing countries who want to avoid pregnancy are not using modern contraceptives.<sup>4</sup> In addition, population momentum is of concern. As with so many people of reproductive age in today's society, overpopulation almost becomes an inevitability, especially due to how birth leads to exponential growth. Cultural norms can also affect overpopulation, since there are many cultural standards worldwide that promote large families and childrearing.

### **Initiatives to Control Population Size**

#### *Immigration*

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<sup>3</sup> Stallworthy, Ben. 2024. "People Power Not State Power – Population Policies That Work." Population Matters. May 8, 2024. <https://populationmatters.org/news/2023/07/population-policies-that-work/>.

<sup>4</sup> Bish, Joseph. "What Is Overpopulation? Causes, Effects, and Solutions." Population Media Center, June 24, 2024. <https://www.populationmedia.org/the-latest/overpopulation-cause-and-effect>.

Rapid population growth can exacerbate the struggles that lead many to leave their native countries, migrating to less dense first world environments in search of better opportunities. The European parliament states that the main factors driving people away from their home countries are “poor labor standards, high unemployment and the overall health of a country’s economy.”<sup>5</sup> Many of these issues are linked to overpopulation, as “...the competition for limited resources... results in higher poverty rates and higher levels of unemployment exacerbating social inequalities within communities.”<sup>6</sup> While the immigrants benefit from superior job opportunities, this immigration can also advantage host countries in need of people of working age to perform labor-intensive tasks. In Canada, for example, recent immigrants compose “...8% of the total employed labour force, but accounted for 13% in the accommodation and food services sector, 11% in the professional services sector, and 10% in the manufacturing and transportation sectors.”<sup>7</sup>

While some claim that this influx of immigrant labourers can be detrimental to the local populations, possibly making it more difficult for local, unskilled labourers to find job opportunities, much of the research in this subject has determined the opposite. Immigrants often accept jobs that natives don’t want or can’t do. In fact, Amelie Constant, a research affiliate at the University of Pennsylvania, found that “...[Immigrants] create new jobs by increasing production, engaging in self-employment, and easing upward job mobility for native workers.”<sup>8</sup> However, an influx of new immigrants can often overload a country’s social services and housing markets. France in particular had to reconsider their policy concerning social services offered to migrants, with those migrants previously imposing a heavy burden on taxpayer funded services. Following a new French immigration bill, “...citizens from non-European Union member states working in France will have to prove they have been in the country for 30 months

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<sup>5</sup> “Exploring Migration Causes: Why People Migrate | Topics | European Parliament.” 2020. Topics | European Parliament. January 7, 2020.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20200624STO81906/exploring-migration-causes-why-people-migrate#:~:text=Demographic%20and%20economic%20migration%20is,of%20living%20and%20educational%20opportunities>.

<sup>6</sup> Population Media Center. 2024. “Overpopulation: The Global Challenge and Its Far-reaching Impacts.” August 13, 2024.

<https://www.populationmedia.org/the-latest/understanding-the-overpopulation-crisis-in-kenya#:~:text=The%20competition%20for%20limited%20resources,mental%20health%20and%20well%2Dbeing>.

<sup>7</sup> Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. 2022. “The Daily — Immigration as a Source of Labour Supply.” June 22, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220622/dq220622c-eng.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Constant, Amelie. 2014. “Do Migrants Take the Jobs of Native Workers?” *IZA World of Labor*, January. <https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.10>.

before they can receive welfare benefits such as child care”.<sup>9</sup> This aims to lessen intense immigration for immediate benefits while still giving legal newcomers equal rights in due time, balancing migrant numbers.

### **Government Support to Boost Fertility Rates**

Governments often intervene in response to declining birth rates and aging population. Many countries have found ways to either boost fertility rates or the inverse. For one, France has a long standing history of pro-natalist policies, dating back to the early 20th century. Concerns over a declining birth rate after World War I led to the Code de la Famille in 1939, a policy framework that incentivized families to have more children through subsidies, tax breaks, and benefits<sup>10</sup>. Since then, France has maintained and expanded these measures, including paid parental leave, universal daycare, and cash incentives. As a result, France has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe, reaching around 1.8 children per woman in recent years, partially credited to these pro-family policies.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Thailand, in the 1970s, experienced rapid population growth that raised concerns about poverty and resource management. Recognizing this, the government collaborated with the Population and Community Development Association (PDA) to promote family planning<sup>11</sup>. Thailand focused on a grassroots approach to contraception, making birth control affordable and accessible, and spreading information through humor and community engagement. The PDA launched campaigns that included the use of condoms, vasectomies, and birth control pills, which were often promoted with culturally relevant messaging. These efforts led to a dramatic decline in fertility rates, with Thailand’s approach often cited as a successful, non-coercive model of population control that relied on education and access to contraception.\*

*\*Delegates should investigate which policies surrounding population control would be most beneficial in ensuring demographic stability.*

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<sup>9</sup> Reuters. “French immigration bill tightens welfare benefits for foreigners.” December 20, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/french-immigration-bill-tightens-welfare-benefits-foreigners-2023-12-20/>

<sup>10</sup> Leclerc, Jean. “Pro-Natalist Policy (France).” THE GEOGRAPHER ONLINE, 2020. <https://www.thegeographeronline.net/pro-natalist-policy-france.html#:~:text=In%201939%2C%20the%20French%20passed,Subsidising%20holidays.>

<sup>11</sup> Raman, Sandhya. “Two Countries, Two Different Approaches to Population Programs.” Roll Call, February 22, 2023. <https://rollcall.com/2023/02/22/two-countries-two-different-approaches-to-population-programs/>.

## Moral Considerations

After covering the measures that can be taken to manage over/underpopulation, one must also consider the moral/ethical implications of taking such measures. Population control methods involve manipulating individual rights to make your own reproductive choices. Policies that restrict family size, for example, are generally viewed as unethical because they deny individual rights. Furthermore, from an ethical standpoint, many argue that government action should avoid coercion and forced compliance, and focus on incentivization instead. Population control policies should not unfairly target or disproportionately impact certain groups. UNESCO is concerned with balancing these considerations with effective policy to create positive change in society.

### *Asylum Seekers*

Article 14 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution".<sup>12</sup> Practically, this means that if one were to come to a country's border, seeking protection from a legitimate danger in their home country, they must be offered citizenship. The number of asylum claimants over recent years has grown massively. According to the UNHCR, "Canada received a record number of asylum claims in 2023, which is more than 1.5 times the previous record set in 2022".<sup>13</sup> Moreover, as the population of asylum seekers has grown, so too have governments' troubles processing and providing social services to them. In the US in particular, according to the International Rescue Committee, The backlog of asylum cases has led to unprecedented waiting times, forcing asylum seekers to endure waits of up to seven years"<sup>14</sup>. Delegates should explore the ability of their governments' to provide for these asylum claimants as well as their governments' policies surrounding their processing.

## Questions to Consider

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations. n.d. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations."

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights#:~:text=Article%2014,principles%20of%20the%20United%20Nations>.

<sup>13</sup> "Statistics on Asylum-Seekers in Canada - UNHCR Canada." 2024. UNHCR Canada. April 30, 2024.

<https://www.unhcr.ca/in-canada/statistics-on-asylum-seekers-in-canada/>.

<sup>14</sup> IRC. 2024. "What Happens Once Asylum Seekers Arrive in the U.S.?" The IRC. November 1, 2024.

<https://www.rescue.org/article/what-happens-once-asylum-seekers-arrive-us#:~:text=There%20are%20currently%20more%20than,of%20up%20to%20seven%20years>.

1. Should first world countries with aging populations look to put in place policies that contribute to rising fertility rates or increase immigration from third world countries?
2. Are laws such as China's former "one child policy" (where Chinese families could only birth one child in an attempt to forcefully curb population growth) morally wrong if they achieve the desired result? Consider the devastating effects of overpopulation on the quality of life of civilians.
3. What are the potential long-term economic impacts of population control policies? How do policies like the one child policy affect the labor force, economic growth, and what measures can be taken to mitigate these effects?
4. What strategies can be used to incentivize people to take immediate action towards population control rather than through coercion.
5. How can immigration affect the culture and values of the host country?

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