

NEGATIVE POPULATION GROWTH



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Press Release

For immediate release

New NPG Forum Paper Asks if Population Growth Is So Important, Why Is Japan Thriving?

Faced With a Declining Population, Japan Is Doing Better than Fine

Alexandria, VA, (June 21, 2022): While the U.S. continues to churn out alarmist headlines on low birth rates, one country is currently experiencing a population decline and thriving at the same time: Japan. If we are to believe the civic and social welfare of our nation depends on growth-based economics, then what is going on in Japan? This question is the thrust of author Nathaniel Gronewold's new Forum paper, published by Negative Population Growth, Inc. His work, titled *Japan's Ride into the Demographic Danger Zone – and Why It's Nothing to Fear*, explores some of the differences between population trends in Japan and the U.S. Gronewold's piece takes the reader from perspective to perspective as he navigates population patterns and outcomes in Japan and how they relate to the U.S. “The evidence is mounting,” he shares, “a declining population need not spell economic doom and could even usher in something of a renaissance.”

Gronewold summarizes the work of the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan (IEEJ) economist Akira Yanagisawa to illustrate the “how” behind Japan's success, sharing: “Japan is boosting its power consumption even as the number of Japanese falls because the nation’s economy is becoming more efficient and technologically advanced, especially in its manufacturing sectors. Humans certainly consume lots of electricity, but not as much as robots do – that's where the extra power demand is coming from.” Alongside Japan’s advanced technology, Gronewold sees another positive: “IEEJ's electricity data shows the Japanese economy is becoming more productive. In other words, Japan is generating more output with fewer workers.”

After establishing Japan’s current situation, Gronewold takes the time to tackle a few state-side naysayers. These professionals see population concerns as minor and irrelevant in the face of the United States’ dire need to fill every square mile full of working people from coast to coast to keep the lights on. He highlights their talking points such as: “The U.S. has too few births, too many deaths, and not enough immigrants,” and “it costs relatively little to allow more people to enjoy the benefit from America’s Constitution, its favorable business environment, and its nuclear umbrella.” Gronewold then uses examples from Japan to share why he thinks these statements are not in-line with reality, stating: “The Japanese are already proving you can increase output with fewer people... there's emerging evidence that population decline can lead to better public welfare and a happier society over time.”

Leaning into the favorable situation in Japan, Gronewold shares research from Japan and studies completed outside of the country to fortify his stance. Data collected and analyzed in Portugal found, in Gronewold’s

words: “older people are more productive than economists give them credit for, and a declining population doesn’t seem to harm workers. Savings and consumption actually increase, so a positive development emerges.” He also shares research conducted by economist Atsumasa Kondo that “shows how an economy’s response to a declining population depends greatly on the policy implementations and amendments by the government.” And “a country’s economy can expand even in the face of a declining and aging demographic profile.”

Not to be forgotten, behind this wave of scientifically analyzed data is the wave of media hype and content pointing towards population growth being the only way forward. Gronewold embraces the opportunity to challenge this noise with the small (but growing!) public narrative that questions continued growth at the expense of existing folks and communities. He shares that in a recent poll, “the people surveyed said they expect mainly benefits to be had from a declining population, especially of the environmental kind.” Gronewold then highlights another voice from this like-minded group, Joseph Chamie, to drive his point home. The professional demographer and former director of the United Nations Population Division recently wrote: “There is hardly any major problem facing America with a solution that would be easier if the nation’s population were larger. On the contrary, population stabilization would help resolve several.”

Founded in 1972, NPG is a national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to educating the American public and political leaders regarding the damaging effects of population growth. We believe that our nation is already vastly overpopulated in terms of the long-range carrying capacity of its resources and environment. NPG advocates the adoption of its Proposed National Population Policy, with the goal of eventually stabilizing U.S. population at a sustainable level – far lower than today’s. We do not simply identify the problems – we propose solutions. For more information, visit our website at NPG.org, follow us on Facebook @NegativePopulationGrowth or follow us on Twitter @npg_org.