

LIMUN

LICEO'S MODEL UNITED NATIONS



General Assembly

Topic A: "The declining growth of the worldwide population and how that shall affect our future ."

Written by: Ximena González Aceves

I. COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The General Assembly is the first committee of the United Nations (UN). Here, delegates meet to discuss contentious issues, mainly those related to international peace and security. As well as this, the General Assembly is also responsible for overseeing the UN budget, the general functioning of the organization and the admission of new members.

Today, the General Assembly is made up of 193 UN members, each of whom has a voice and a vote. And all have a collaborative responsibility to find solutions on important issues such as political, humanitarian, social, economic and legal matters. Its objective is to reach a general agreement to achieve the 4 purposes of the UN. Such as: to maintain international peace and security, to foster relations between nations and to favor international cooperation to solve problems and always respect human rights.

II. HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

Ever since the beginning of the century, there has been a gradual but alarming decrease in worldwide population in developed and industrial nations. As prosperity increases, the birth rates have steadily declined, and, with the baby-boom generation about to enter retirement, the public pension programmes provided by countries have come under massive pressure to raise contribution levels or cut the size of benefits. Because of the drop in birth rates, the workforce does not have the means to regenerate themselves when the time comes, further bringing more problems for the governments. Over the last 50 years, fertility rates have dropped drastically around the world. In 1952, the average global family had five children—now, they have less than three.

Japan, whose population enjoys the greatest longevity worldwide, will be particularly affected. By 2025, there will be roughly one elderly person for every two persons of working age. The share of elderly people as a percentage of the working population in Japan is already one of the highest in the world, whereas the fertility rate is among the lowest, implying that the age distribution of the population will shift rapidly in the coming decades.

Theories suggest that a variety of potential factors are responsible for the decline, such as greater take-up of highly effective contraception, improved occupational opportunities in the workforce for women, a higher cost of raising children in this capitalist and consumerist world, the high level of student debt carried by young adults, cultural issues, a pessimistic outlook of the future for many of the younger generations, a change in social attitudes (for example, acceptance of alternative lifestyles, including choosing not to have children), and the rise of individualism.

We can further support these claims with some contrasting data, such as the rates in Niger and Uganda, some of the poorest countries in the world. The situation in Niger and Uganda is a

combination of taboo and lack of access to contraceptives and a bias towards larger families. As a consequence, an average woman in Niger has around eight children in her lifetime. This is a considerable difference from the global average of three per woman.

Alongside declining birth rates, there are some other factors to consider when talking about an aging population, such as life expectancy increases due to improved lifestyle. Because of the change in culture, people have improved diets, partake in exercise more, and more importantly, access to quality health care: medications, treatments, expertise, surgical procedures, technology. All of these lead to a longer life expectancy.

Generally, an increase in life expectancy is a good thing, but if changes are not happening in the economically active population, the size of the labor force will tend to decrease. This then limits the economic capacity to cover the needs of those who already retired. In other words, if there are no changes in policies, the cost of services to support the aging population will be higher as more people will be demanding health care services. Especially, because illnesses present in older populations require more complex and expensive treatments.

B. Evolution of the topic

Researchers and economists all over the world have found some very real threats to our way of life because of this issue at hand, and those can be narrowed down to two main issues.

First of all, there will be a struggle from part of the government at the moment of giving out pensions, healthcare and social services for the general population, but especially for elderly people. As time goes by, elderly people become more dependent on their pensions as they reach retirement, and their declining health makes them more needy of healthcare services of all kinds, which makes them a major economic and resource intensive cost for governments. This is

all alongside a workforce that is not regenerating themselves to sustain the elderly with their labor and the money created because of said labor. An increase of government expenses can be easily predicted for the future worldwide. According to a study of Uruguay's economy, which is also suffering consequences because of a drop in birth rates and aging population, if there isn't a change in policy, the percentage of GDP allocated to basic social services like health and social protection will increase from less than 25% in 2013 to nearly 43% in 2100.

Secondly, because of the lack of workforce compared to past generations, a decrease in productivity can be predicted worldwide. Researchers believe it will reduce the annual per capita GDP growth rate by 0.40 percentage points below its potential. Economists came up with this figure with the stipulation that an aging population will mean fewer people in the workforce, limiting productivity.

III. CURRENT ISSUES

A. Points of view

Japan

As it has been previously mentioned, Japan is one of the countries with the most alarming rates of aging population, and this is because of multiple factors, some cultural and some social. Its 'super-aged' society is the oldest in the world: 28.7 % of the population are 65 or older, with women forming the majority. After decades of improving life expectancy and falling birth rates, as more and more people moved into the cramped conditions of its cities, Japan's population of 127 million is forecast to shrink by about one-third in the next five decades.

In fact, the Japanese government, in efforts to fight this very issue, has enacted multiple social programmes in which social and economic aid is given to mothers, encouraging young women to consider the possibility of children in their lives. The Lump-Sum

Allowance for Childbirth in Japan pays mothers-to-be 420,000 yen per baby under the Lump-Sum Allowance for Childbirth.

Regarding the drop in the workforce of the country, Prime Minister Abe has tried to introduce policies to fill the growing labor gap, even allowing some immigration into the country. This may come as a big issue to a country such as Japan, because of its cultural skepticism toward allowing foreign workers into the country. Other tactics have included plans to quadruple the size of the robotics industry in the country, encouraging automation.

Uruguay

Compared to other countries in Latin America, Uruguay typically stands out as a model nation for its successful democracy, strong education, low levels of inequality and poverty, and its social security systems (The World Bank in Uruguay, 2019). Yet, Uruguay still has challenges that lie ahead—one of them being its aging population that negatively affects sustainability and economic prosperity. A recent study finds that by 2100, more than 30% of Uruguayans will be over the age of 65.

USA

In the US, for families in the Baby Boomer generation, the fertility rate was 3.7 births-per-woman, and over the last few decades that number had dropped significantly.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the current fertility rate is, which is lower than 2.1 babies-per-mother replacement rate needed to keep a population steady. Studies show that when a country's fertility rate falls consistently below the replacement rate, the balance between young and old shifts and older citizens come to represent a larger portion of the population.

China

According to Chinese state data, the number of births fell by about 630,000 year in 2017 while the percentage of the population aged over 60 rose from 16.7% in 2016 to 17.3% in 2017. Because of previous laws and restrictions that has since been abolished, such as the one-child policy (program in China that limited most Chinese families to one child each), there has been a massive cultural and populational shift for the country. China also has very specific issues regarding this as well, such as a gender imbalance, in which the nation has 37.17 million more males than females. This further aggravates the problem.

Aware of the threat of a decreasing labor force, China has invested heavily in the jobs of tomorrow.

I. CONCLUSION

Now, why is it important to talk about this issue? Some may argue that fewer people are good for the environment, but the economic and political consequences are severe. In the 1960s, there were six people of working age for every retired person. Today, the ratio is three-to-one. By 2035, it will be two-to-one.

Some say we must learn to curb our obsession with growth, to become less consumer-obsessed, to learn to manage with a smaller population. That sounds very attractive. But who will buy the stuff you sell? Who will pay for your healthcare and pension when you get old? If we want to have a future at all when we're in old age, we must start acting now.

Because soon, humanity will be a lot smaller and older than it is today.

II. QUESTIONS

- Which actions can the committee take to further prevent the decreasing level of productivity of society?
- How will developed and developing nations acquire the necessary funds to pay expenses for their elderly populations?
- How do these impactful changes affect future generations?
- What are some positive effects to the declining population?

REFERENCES:

- Birthrates are declining globally – here’s why it matters. (2022, 20 mayo). World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/06/birthrates-declining-globally-why-matters/>
- TopTenz. (2018, 19 diciembre). 10 Problems Countries with Ageing Populations are Facing. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_N6LHUuUmo
- Giving Birth In Japan: How Much Does Childbirth And Childcare Cost? (2020, 1 agosto). MATCHA - JAPAN TRAVEL WEB MAGAZINE. <https://matcha-jp.com/en/9962>
- Kearney, M., Levine, P., Pardue, L., Neely, E., Kaplan, R., Levine, P., Lindo, J., Kelly, A. M., Packham, A. & Slusky, D. (2022, 16 febrero). The Mystery of the Declining U.S. Birth Rate | Econofact. Econofact | Key facts and incisive analysis to the national debate on economic and social policies. <https://econofact.org/the-mystery-of-the-declining-u-s-birth-rate>
- Japan: Population Aging and the Fiscal Challenge. (2001, marzo). International Monetary Fund. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fondd/2001/03/muhleise.htm>
- 7 gráficos que explican: ¿Qué es una «población envejecida»? (s. f.). aetna. Recuperado 26 de octubre de 2022, de https://www.aetnainternational-com.translate.goog/en/about-us/explore/future-health/ageing-population-graphics.html?_x_tr_sl=en
- Wikipedia contributors. (2022, 16 octubre). Aging of Japan. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aging_of_Japan

COUNTRIES:

- Japan
- Uruguay
- USA
- China
- India
- Portugal
- Poland
- Canada
- Greece
- Hungary
- UK
- Russia
- Germany
- Spain
- Finland
- Georgia
- South Korea
- Chile
- Argentina
- Italy