

# **Policy Responses to Low Fertility: Cross Cutting Issues and Lessons Learned**

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# **Fertility Decline in Economically Developed Countries**

**Variations in patterns of decline**

# Path Dependence

**Fertility changes will occur within a pre-existing institutional, cultural, and historical setting**

**Fertility and institutional background co-evolve together**

# Key Issues Affecting Fertility

## Easy entry into adult roles

Finishing school

Getting a job

Establishing an independent household

## Reconciliation of parental and work roles

# Key Issue 1: Labor Market

- **Shorter and more flexible full-time work (+)**
- **Availability of high-status part-time work with benefits (+)**
- **Low unemployment rate (+)**
- **Flexibility for mothers to reenter the labor market (+)**
  
- **Precarious jobs (-)**
- **Labor market insecurity (-)**

## **Key Issue 2: Childcare, Parental Leave, Child Allowances**

- **Subsidized childcare (+)**
  - Open during working and commuting hours
  - High quality, for children of all ages
- **Maternity and paternity leave (+)**
  - Paid at high levels of wage replacement
  - Ease of return to work
- **Government subsidies for families with children (+??)**

# Key Issue 3: Housing

- **Affordable housing for ownership and rental (+)**
- **Location near workplace (+)**
- **Access to affordable mortgage (+)**
- **Availability of public housing (+)**

# Key Issue 4: Marriage-Childbearing Link

- **Strong disapproval of non-marital childbearing (- ??)**
  - **Affects both mothers and children**
  - **May delay childbearing**



# Key Issue 5: Primary and Secondary Education

- **School provides lunch and long school hours (+)**
- **After-school programs (+)**
- **High level of expectation for parent's involvement (-)**
- **High level of demand and cost for after-school private lessons (-)**

# Key Issue 6: Tertiary Education

- **Relative ease of returning to education after discontinuing (+)**
- **Rigid ranking of colleges and universities, strongly linked to employment opportunities (-)**
- **High cost (-)**

# **Key Issue 7: Gender Considerations**

- **Gender equitable sharing of housework and family care (+)**
- **High level of gender equity in work place (+)**

# Economic Development, Gender, and Fertility

- In general, negative correlation between GDP per capita and period fertility
- Positive correlation for GDP per capita above US\$30,000
- Exceptions due to gender equity
  - France and Australia – higher fertility
  - Japan and Singapore – lower fertility
  - All have similar GDP per capita

# Key Issue 8: Immigration

- **Migrants tend to have slightly higher fertility than native populations, but the overall effect is small (+)**
  - **Migrants tend to be at peak childbearing ages**
  - **Many wait to have children until they settle in the destination country**

# Do Policies Make Difference?

# Direct vs. Indirect Policies

**In France, Singapore, Republic of Korea, many policies have demographic motivations**

**Many policies in Northern Europe, motivated by gender and employment considerations, have demographic effects because they promote work-family reconciliation**

**Many policies designed as anti-poverty measures have demographic effects**

# **Institutions and Family Policy**

**Institutional context presents a potentially important constraint on what is seen as possible policy innovations**

**History and cultural heritage, family system, labor market, educational system, housing market, gender equity**



# Policy Making

- **Communicating research findings to policy makers**

## Role of media

- **Political considerations**
  - **Balancing interests of elderly and young adults**
  - **Public responsibility for individual well-being**
  - **Fiscal burden**