

Falling Birthrates



Reading

Current trends show the size of families is changing, impacting societies worldwide. Women are marrying later, and couples are waiting longer to have children. And the longer couples wait to have children, the fewer children they have.

Two key factors that impact family size are the education and the employment of women. Studies show that the more education women get, the smaller families they have. Moreover, the longer women stay in school, the better their opportunities for employment. Working women are less likely to marry young and have large families.

In addition to the failing birthrate, there is a rising life expectancy. With people living longer and longer, families are going to have to face the challenges posed by an aging population. The longer people live, the more care they require. Traditionally, children have cared for their elderly parents at home. However, the more the birthrate falls, the harder the future may be for the elderly. With fewer children, families may find it more and more difficult to care for their old members.

Source: Summit 1

Vocabulary

trends
impacting
moreover
birthrate
expectancy
posed
aging

Comprehension Check

1. According to the article, what factors explain why more couples are having fewer children?
2. Why do you think populations are living longer? What problems does a larger elderly population pose?

Let's Talk!

1. How would you describe the population of your country?
2. Is your society moving towards an aging population? Is this a problem? How did this happen?
3. How has your country's population changed over the years?
4. What factors influence changing population patterns?
5. What is the Japanese government doing to solve the population problem? Do you think it's going to be effective?
6. What do you think of the following means of increasing Japan's falling birthrate:
 - a. adopting foreign babies
 - b. inviting immigrants to live in Japan
 - c. encouraging international marriages
7. What do you think of 'one child per family' policies to curb population growth?
8. What will your country's population look like in 50 years from now?