**Population Policies**

**Pro-Natalist vs Anti-Natalist**

Natalism (also called pronatalism or the pro-birth position) is a belief that promotes human reproduction. Natalism promotes child-bearing and parenthood as desirable for social reasons and to ensure national continuance. Natalism in public policy typically seeks to create financial and social incentives for populations to reproduce, such as providing tax incentives that reward having and supporting children. Adherents of more stringent takes on natalism may seek to limit access to abortion and contraception, as well. Economic prosperity has been linked with having a good population size, lots of workers, and lots of consumers. Countries like Sweden have adopted pro-natalist policies. Iran also had it because of the devastating loss in their population after the Iran-Iraq War. Now, due to this, 75% of their entire population is under the age of 30. On the other hand, countries may implement anti-natalist policies to reduce a growing population. An example of this is China’s one child policy.

Anti-Natalist policies are policies that are against human reproduction. These policies are created to solve demographic problems such as overpopulation, famine, and depletion of energy resources. An influential rationale for antinatalist policies was provided in a study by Ansley Coale and Edgar Hoover (1958), who argued that high births ages of population jeopardized long term economic development by diverting resources from growth enhancing investments to the mere maintenance of population. Reduced fertility rate on the other hand, could speed economic development by freeing more resources for investment in productivity enhancing activities.

**Why are population policies in place?**

Governments become concerned when birth rates fall too far. For example, Italy’s current population of 56 million is expected to decline to around 41 million by 2050 likely to create problems with:

* Too few consumers and skilled workers to keep the economy going
* Decreasing tax revenues and increasing pension and health care costs as the population ages.

Germany provides another good example of having a declining population. Without an increase in the current birth rate or increased immigration, the German workforce will fall by 40% over the next 50 years. Since growing the workforce is one of the important factors in generating a country’s overall wealth, it is likely that Germany’s prosperity may be damaged. Even if the birthrates doubled overnight, it could take at least 20 years for a country such as Germany to turn around the negative impacts of declining population. From predictions like these, it is necessary to implement population policies, because it may lead to a future economic crisis, with the limited working population.

Pro-Natalist Policies

**France**

France was a country with concerns that professional women were choosing not to have children. The government was worried that the population was not going to replace itself over time. France and most other European countries have a birth rate that is lower than its death rate which means its population is declining. This can have severe consequences as it strains government resources. Therefore they need a working class to ensure there is economic stability and also to support the elderly hence the implementation of pronatalist policies.

France first introduced the political policy “Code de la Famille” in 1939 which banned the sale of contraceptives, provided subsidized holidays, and offered cash incentives to mothers who stayed at home with children.

France’s recent pronatalist policies (to encourage three child families)

* Mothers in France are incentivized with cash to stop work for a year and have a 3rd child.
* Monthly grants for both mother and father to put work on hold to raise a 2nd or 3rd child.
* Maternity leave from work can vary from 20 weeks for the 1st child and up to 40 weeks for the 3rd child. There is also a 26 month prenatal leave.
* France provides cheap, high quality child care for parents who do work.
* Nursery school is free for every child from the age of 3
* Some families can get a monthly allowance for a family of 3
* Tax benefits and breaks to families up to the age of 18.

France’s birth rate is 1.9 to each woman, which is now one of the highest in Europe. They also have a high immigration rate. France has one of the highest employment rates for women within the European Union (approximately 81% for women ages 25-49, 75% with 2 children, and 51% with more than 2 children).

France’s population now continues to grow. A prediction of 75 million by 2050.

**Japan**

Women have an average of 1.34 children, one of the lowest rates in the world and below the 2.8 needed to replenish the population. Japan’s birth rate is low due to several factors:

* Working and raising a family in Japan is almost impossible because of the amount of commitment needed in their jobs.
* The biggest single cause of the declining birth rate is the growing number of people opting to stay single in their twenties and thirties. Women have become the new driving force of the economy, many have well paid jobs and are opting to stay in the work force through their thirties.
* Both men and women are marrying later than ever and even when they do, many are having just one or less children.
* Cost to raise children is growing.

Japan has an ageing population. Over 20% of the population is over 65 which is the highest in the world. This could eventually lead to a dramatic decline in population by 2050.

The government introduced pro-natalist laws in which parents can receive:

* 8weeks paid leave from work
* shorter working hours
* a maximum of 24 hours overtime per month
* Economic incentives….
  + Yamatsuri (a town north of Tokyo) offers parents 4600 for the birth of a child and 460 per year for 10 years.
  + Daihatsu and the city of Ikeda (western Japan) jointly offered residents 200,000 yen for a 4th child, plus free rental of a car for a year.

**Italy**

Until the 1970s, families of up to 5 children were common in Italy. However the birth rate is now 1.3 per 1,000 and is the 2nd lowest in Western Europe. Italy’s population is also quickly ageing. The number of Italians over 65 is likely to double by 2050. The government introduced a pronatalist policy in 2003 called the “baby bonus” Couples having a 2nd child received a financial bonus.

Anti-Natalist Policies

**Singapore**

The government introduced a massive family planning scheme in the late 1960s. The main objectives were:

* To establish family planning clinics and to provide contraceptives at minimal charge
* To advertise through the media the need and advantages of having smaller families.
* To legislate so that under certain circumstances both abortions and sterilization could be allowed.
* To introduce social and economic incentives such as paid maternity leave, income tax relief, housing priority, cheaper health treatment, and free education which would cease as the size of the family grew.

By the early 1990s the policy had been so successful that the country had an insufficient supply of labor to fill the growing number of job vacancies and fewer young people to support an increasingly ageing population. Singapore is now starting pro-natalist policies.

**China**

China is one of the most well known anti-natalist countries. In 1953 the population of China was 583 million. In 2010 the population of China was 1.3 billion. The birth rate has been calculated at 12.25 births per 1000 and the death rate at 7.31 deaths per 1000.

State family planning was introduced in the 1970s. By 1975 the average family size had fallen to 3 children but this was still regarded as being too many. The state began an advertising campaign (later marriages, longer gaps between children, and fewer children). The state also decided to introduce a rigorous one child per family policy in 1979.

Incentives included….

* Free education, priority housing, pension and family benefits
* All the above were lost after a 2nd child was born and fines of up to 15% of the family income were imposed.
* The marriageable age for men was set at 22 and for women at 20 with couples having to apply to the state for permission to marry and later to have a child.
* Couples who had more than 1 child were subject to economic penalties, women pregnant for the 2nd time would be subject to abortions, and persistent offenders might be offered sterilization.
* Work places and homes were subject to visits from family planning officials and the infamous “granny police” would try to ensure families did not break the rules/laws.
* Contraceptive advice and devices were pressed upon the people and over 80% of China’s women had access to contraception.

After 1987 China relaxed their rigid policy. Complications resulted from the difference between rural areas and urban, as well as the Han majority (which accounted for 92% of the total population).

The Han were allowed 1 child only, unless the 1st child was mentally or physically disabled or died under these circumstances…..in which case, these parents could apply to have a 2nd child.

In many rural areas, farmers could have a 2nd child if their 1st born happened to be a girl. If the 2nd child was a girl then that was “tough luck”.

In some rural or underpopulated areas, parents could apply to have up to 4 children.