

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: The question of the diminution of the birth index

Student Officer: Emmeleia Kokolaki

Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Emmeleia Kokolaki and it is my honor to be serving as the Deputy President of the Economic and Social Council in the 3rd ACGMUN conference. I am grateful that I was given the opportunity to experience MUN through the eyes of a Student Officer in my school for the very first time and I am sure that I will not let anyone down. Although I do not have any other chairing experience, I do have leadership skills and I am always willing to cooperate, provide help and show my love for MUN, which will surely be transmitted to you throughout the conference.

It is also of great importance to refer to this year's Economic and Social Council Agenda. As the Economic and Social Council is dealing with both economic and social issues, with the aim of achieving global sustainability and development, you are expected to form powerful alliances (keeping in mind that "the UN is neither a G8 nor a G20 but a G193"), find valuable and realistic solutions to all the crucial issues, debate actively and respectfully with other delegates and finally vote the resolutions that you consider the most effective. It is also worth mentioning that all topics require solutions as soon as possible and you are called upon to have a fruitful and challenging debate to form resolutions of utmost value.

Writing on behalf of my Co Chairs, we would appreciate to see your interest, debate skills and good preparation. However, should you need any further explanation or clarification regarding this specific topic/Study Guide, please feel free to contact me via my personal email at any time: E.Kokolaki@acg.edu.

Thank you for choosing the Economic and Social Council and I am already looking forward to cooperating with you all.

Best regards,

Emmeleia Kokolaki

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The anatomically modern man first showed up on earth 200.000 years ago and by 1850 he had reproduced so successfully that there were 1 billion people on the planet. Since then, 1 billion people is added to the planet every 12 years so by 2011 the world population reached 7 billons. Nowadays, the world is facing two pressing issues that need to be tackled: Overpopulation and low birth index.

It is worth mentioning that the global average fertility rate is below 2.5 children per woman, but over the last 50 years it has halved. Factors that influence the population growth are access to healthcare/medical technology, availability of family planning education and birth control, ability to prevent diseases, both political and economic stability, food/water availability, energy/waste disposal technology, adequate resources and culture-

social norms like gender equality, religious beliefs, the age at which marriage is socially acceptable, etc. On the one hand, the highest birth index is recorded in African countries with an average of 6 children per woman, where poverty and bad living conditions are inextricably linked to high death rates as well apart from that fact that since the 1960s child



#1: Born twins in Edna Adan Maternity Hospital, Somalia

mortality has declined steadily due to advances in medicine, immunization and access to vital services. On the other hand, mainly European countries (e.g. Portugal, Greece, Poland) and Taiwan have the lowest fertility rates on the planet with an average of 1.2 children per woman.

To conclude, the case is not only taking measures to diminish the birth index across the globe but also to guaranteeing that corresponding measures are taken to benefit countries with dangerously low birth rate.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Population Growth

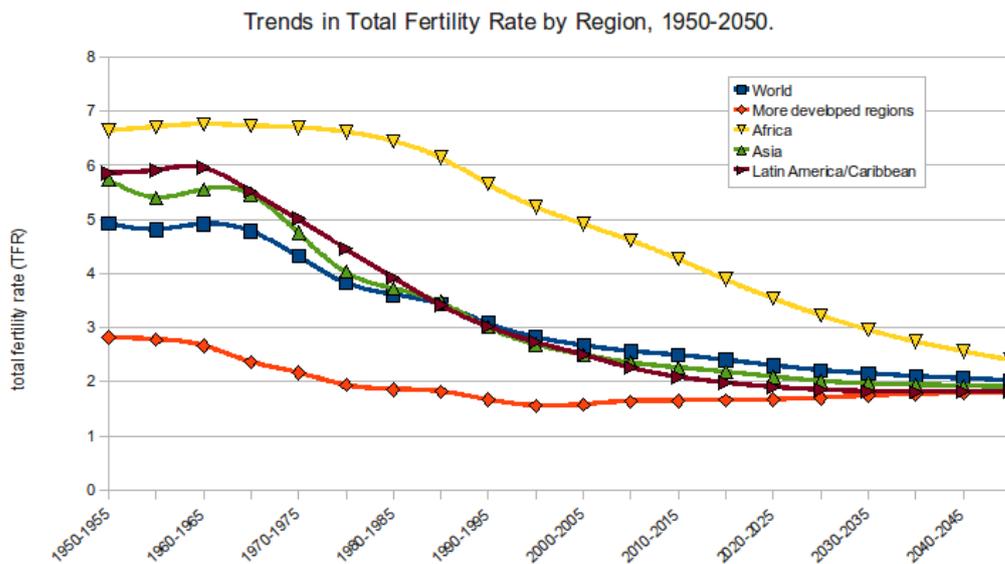
Population growth is defined as the increase in the number of individuals who reside in a country, state or city. The term usually refers to human populations in demography. To determine if there has been population growth in certain communities or regions the formula, which is used is the following: (birth rate + immigration) – (death rate + emigration)¹.

Birth certificate

A vital record that documents a baby’s birth and gives details of the birth, such as the names of the parents, the date, time and place. The term refers to either the official document certifying the birth or to an original copy of it or representation of the ensuring registration of the birth²

Total fertility rate

Total fertility rate of a population is the average number of children who would be born per woman or per 1,000 women over her/their lifetime “if she/they were to pass through the childbearing years bearing children according to a current schedule of age-specific fertility rates”³.



#2: Total fertility rate projections by region, 1950-2050

¹ “What Is Population Growth? Definition and Meaning.” BusinessDictionary.com, www.businessdictionary.com/definition/population-growth.html.

² “Birth Certificate.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Dec. 2018, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birth_certificate.

³ “Total Fertility Rate.” The Financial Management System Produces Accurate, Timely Information - MEASURE Evaluation, 26 Jan. 2017, www.measureevaluation.org/prh/rh_indicators/family-planning/fertility/total-fertility-rate.

Family planning

Family planning enables individuals to attain and determine freely their desired number of children, the spacing of pregnancies as well as how this may be achieved (e.g. certain contraceptive methods, treatment of infertility)⁴.

Life expectancy

Life expectancy refers to a statistical measure of the average time an organism and in this case an individual is expected to live, based on demographic factors such as gender, current age and year of birth⁵.

Urbanization

The massive movement of the population of a country from rural areas to urban residency⁶.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Increasing longevity around the world

Demographic research suggests that in the early 1800s there was no country that had a life expectancy over 40 years but over the next 150 years life expectancy for the newborns was over 60 years in Europe, some parts of America, Oceania and Japan due to substantial health improvements. The decline of child mortality was important for the increase of life expectancy and by extension for the rapid progress in health the world has made. Nowadays, the global average life expectancy of 71 years shows that after two and a half centuries of progress people can expect to live more than twice as long as their ancestors. Considering that global inequalities in healthcare still exist in the 21st century, it is obvious that human species as a biological success story can do much better.

⁴ "Family Planning/Contraception." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception.

⁵ Ospina, Esteban Ortiz. "Life Expectancy' – What Does This Actually Mean?" Our World in Data, Aug. 2017, 28, ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy-how-is-it-calculated-and-how-should-it-be-interpreted.

⁶ "What Is Urbanization and What Are the Positive and Negative Effects?" Conservation Institute, 2 Nov. 2018, www.conservationinstitute.org/what-is-urbanization/.

International Migration

In terms of the migrant crisis, it is no coincidence that migrants flow towards nations with more resources that typically have lower birth rates and more stable population densities over the past couple of decades. Such immigration has



enhanced population growth in many MEDCs up to 60%. Exacerbating the problem will be impacts of human-caused climate change.

#3: Shipwrecked migrants being rescued

Serious environmental crises in Southeast Asia, northeast Africa, and to the Arab Spring, which are the poorest, most densely populated, and politically unstable regions in the world, have caused many people to find shelter in MEDCs. Concerning labor migration, most migrants move with their families because they are looking for better jobs and higher salaries or since the money that migrants send back home is added to the family income. Policy makers in MEDCs are voicing concern about the social, economic and population growth problems created by rapid urbanization and large-scale international migration.

Effects of human overpopulation



#4: Population Growth

The main effect of overpopulation is the unequal use of resources. Although the planet has a limited capacity to generate raw materials, the consumption of resources is done at a faster rate that the planet can generate them. Therefore, in MEDCs overpopulation causes geopolitical tensions to control resources. Furthermore, environmental degradation is also one of the major effects of the matter. For instance, the more people living on the planet the more emissions of greenhouse gas pollute the environment. Apart from environmental issues, it is a fact that although there is a high number of workers there is a limited number of vacancies, which is likely to lead into rising unemployment in the short run. Finally, unequal distribution of resources, inadequate supplies, environmental pollution and

joblessness could in turn provoke rising crime, social revolt, poverty and famine that usually affect the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Effects of low birth rate

How declining birth rates affect the economy is a major and existing problem. Low birth rates affect the society both in the short and the long term, since the aging population has more needs and thus the state has higher social and medical costs because there are many old people that need to be looked after or retired. The age imbalance is Japans crucial problem in 21st century as it is not repopulating rapidly enough to sustain its current population. Apart from that, 46% of the world's population lives in countries that are below the average global replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman, which means fewer future workers and by extension less taxes coming in to keep the society functioning.

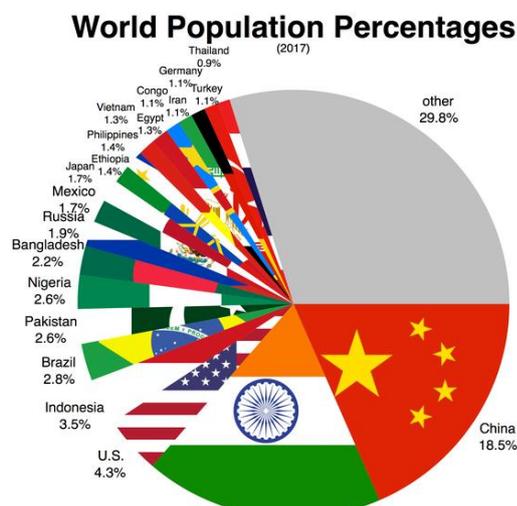
Urbanization

One of the effects of population growth that was not mentioned before is urbanization. Approximately 54% of the world's population lives in urban areas, whereas this is the largest wave of urban growth in history. However, due to the fact that masses of people concentrate in cities, there is a huge number of people undergoing terrible living conditions. For instance, both severely limited water supplies, and inadequate sanitation are responsible for waterborne illnesses that are the main causes of death among children. Moreover, the illegal development of slums and informal settlements in overcrowded cities is a result of urban planning failure, lack of investments in infrastructure in the face of urbanization and political will to improve such informal settlements.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

China

China is the world's most populous nation with 1.3 billion people. China's population after the social unrest and famine of the 1950's developed rapidly over the following years with a 0.6% increase in population from 2006 to 2018. Due to the high birth index of the country (17.23 million births per year), China was first subjected to the one-child



policy in 1979. Although it slowed down the population growth, it had multiple negative side effects such as but not limited to the shift in demographics towards an older demographic, which was caused the government to reconsider the law. Thus, on the 29th of October 2015, the existing law was relaxed to a two-child policy and became effective on January 1, 2016. As a result, in 2016 the number of births grew by 1.31 million births compared to the previous year. During the last decade, the Chinese population gradually migrated from rural to urban areas while urbanization has gained momentum following the reform of the policy.

India

According to recent studies, India is set to surpass China as the world's most populous country by as early as 2024. The fertility rate of the nation has more than halved over the last 40 years, down to 2.2 births per woman, due to corresponding legislation. Falling fertility rates are important owing to the fact that they typically correspond with rising life expectancy and quality of life. Approximately 31% of India's population currently lives in urban areas, but this number is projected to increase to 50% by the end of 2050. India is indeed an overpopulated country, but with sustained efforts to combat it, not only poverty but also population can be brought under control.

United States of America

"Population at the beginning of 2019 was over 328 million"⁷. Although, birth rate has fallen to a 30-year low and it is also projected that it will continue to decrease in the next decades, the USA has had the highest population growth of all industrialized countries. This population is responsible for over 3 times the greenhouse gas emissions of the global average. It is worth mentioning that each year there are twice more births than deaths, but this uncontrolled growth of population needs to be addressed so that population stabilization can be achieved⁸.

Africa

If UN forecasts are right, by 2050 Africa will have three times the population of Europe. What could change the picture is the promotion of family planning by the African governments except of Malawi and Rwanda that have done so. It is up to the governments to create both better educational system and schools, provide security for their citizens and invest in family planning.

UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

⁷ "The U.S. Population Situation." World Population Balance, www.worldpopulationbalance.org/us_population.

⁸ Elbel, Fred. U.S. Immigration, Population Growth, and the Environment - SUSPS, www.susps.org/overview/birthrates.html.

The United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency is UNFPA. It calls for the realization of reproductive rights for all and supports access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services like voluntary family planning, maternal health care and comprehensive sexuality education⁹.

Population Institute

The Population Institute is an international non-profit organization with the aim of raising public awareness about population issues, educating policymakers and the media, promoting universal access to family planning information and improving the health and well-being of people and the planet by supporting programs that promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
October 3, 1946	Commission on Population is established.
1955	3 billion people on the planet according to the World Factbook.
1970	Tracking fertility rates at 4.5.
1979	One-child legislation is established in China.
September 5-13, 1994	International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is established in Cairo by 179-member states, which adopted the ICPD Programme of Action.
2014	At the 20 th anniversary of the ICPD, the “ICPD Beyond 2014” is implemented, with the aim of fulfilling the commitments made in Cairo twenty years ago.
December 27, 2015	National People’s Congress Standing Committee passed the two-child legislation, which relaxed the one-child policy.
January 1, 2016	China’s two-child policy is in effect.
April 5, 2017	The two-child limit is in effect in the United Kingdom (tax credits to the first two children of a family).

⁹ “About Us.” United Nations Population Fund, www.unfpa.org/about-us.

2018	7.7 billion people on the planet according to the World Factbook.
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RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The one-child policy in China (1979-2016), during these 37 years, caused the aging issue and since then the country faced challenges with its new births and the rapidly ageing population. Therefore, on the 27th of December 2015 the National People’s Congress Standing Committee passed the two-child legislation, which is effective since the 1st of January 2016.

Apart from this, the two-child limit is in effect in the United Kingdom from the 5th of April 2017. Certain child benefits or tax credits are restricted only to the first two children in a family. Of course, there are quite a lot of exceptions of the two-child limit (e.g. adoptions, different fertilization methods, etc.). However, it is foretold by the Finance Minister that this policy will lead the United Kingdom into further problems, such as poverty and it has already been claimed by many campaigners and religious leaders that it conveys the idea that some children worth more than others, depending on their place in the sibling birth order.

Additionally, Vietnam’s population policy, emphasizing the ideal family size, which is one or two children per family, has been into force for over 50 years since 1960 and it continues in a modified form even today. The total fertility rate of Vietnam is approximately 1.8, which is way below the replacement-level fertility. Replacement level fertility is defined as the average number of children born per woman, at which the population manages to replace itself from one generation to the next, without immigration and this rate is for most countries 2.1 children per woman. According to the World Resources Institute “1.8 is the rate at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next”¹⁰.

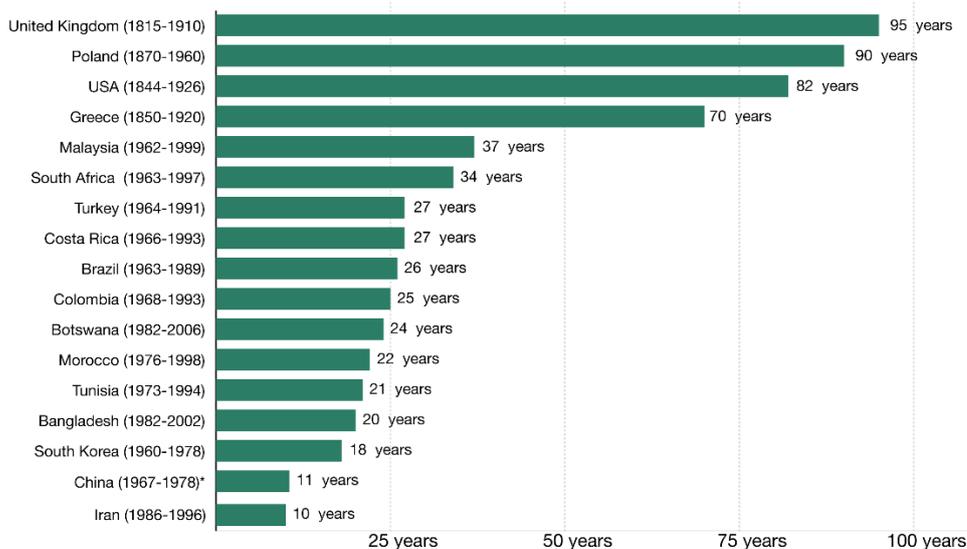
As long as it regards the action of the United Nations Population Fund, it collects various information about different populations, provides sexual reproductive healthcare to both sexes and promotes universal access to family planning whereas the 5th International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) convenes policy-makers, scientists, researchers and organizations from approximately 120 countries to share their best practices and use their knowledge so that access to family planning services can be expanded.

¹⁰ Bworldonline.com. (2019). BusinessWorld | Population planning. [online] Available at: <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Opinion&title=population-planning&id=121205> [Accessed 20 Jan. 2019].

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

It is a fact that there have been numerous attempts to tackle the issue of both high birth index and overpopulation. For instance, in 1979 the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping established the one-child policy, which remained in effect for almost 40 years although it was at first considered as a temporary measure. However, citizens of non-urban areas and minorities were not subjected to the law.

How long did it take for fertility to fall from more than 6 children per woman to fewer than 3 children per woman?



* The one-child-policy in China was introduced after the decline of the total fertility rate below 3. It was introduced between 1978 and 1980.
 Data source: The data on the total fertility rate is taken from the Gapminder fertility dataset (version 6) and the World Bank World Development Indicators.
 The interactive data visualization is available at [OurWorldinData.org](https://ourworldindata.org). There you find the raw data and more visualizations on this topic. Licensed under CC-BY-SA by the author Max Roser.

#6: How long did it take for fertility to fall from 6 children per woman to fewer than 3 children per woman?

It is also worth mentioning that the Singapore Family Planning Association started promoting family planning in 1949, and it has made an important progress since then. This program was designed to reduce Singapore’s birth rates from 30 to 20/100 in 5 years’ time and it had successfully reached half its target in the first 2 years.

Regarding, Iran’s family planning conduction (1990-2006), it encouraged couples not to have more than two children and at the same time it promoted the idea that one is the ideal number of children per woman.

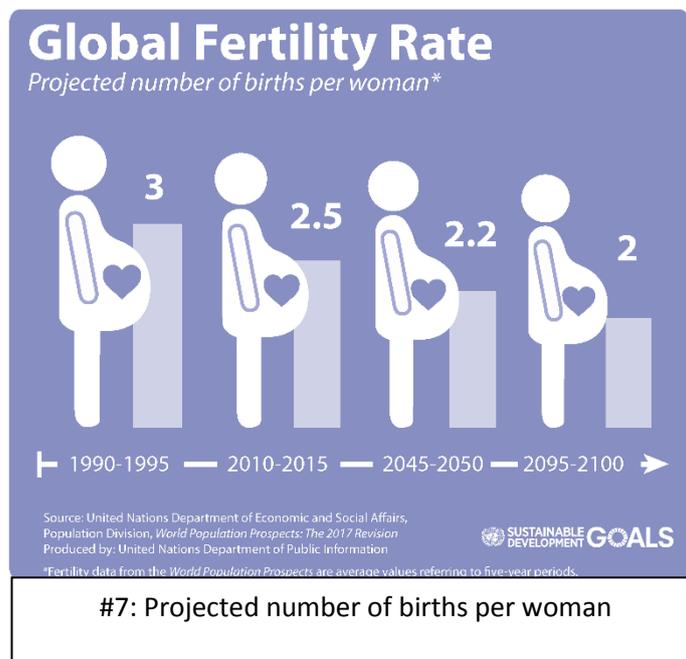
In July 2007, it was proposed by the UK-based charity “Population Matters” that a two-child policy would not only combat the issue of population growth, but it would also combat climate change in the island. In October 2012, it was suggested by the Conservative Party the policy of paying child benefit for the first two children of unemployed parents, but in 2015 such plans were denied by the then Prime

Minister. However, the Finance Minister soon announced that such tax credits would be strictly limited to the first two children.

Finally, right after the establishment of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), its 179-member states took action by adopting the ICPD Programme of Action. This program advances human well-being that places the human rights of individuals, at the center of the global development agenda, highlights the value of investing in women, affirms the significance of reproductive health, including family planning, links the health rights of individuals with almost every aspect of population and promotes gender equality.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The diminution of the birth index is a highly complicated issue, since countries have differing opinions on whether the total fertility rate should be diminished or amounted. For example, China and India, whose fertility rates overcome the replacement-level fertility, need to take measures in order to reduce their birth index, but if countries with low fertility rates, like Greece, were to undergo such measures, it



would mean their destruction on a social, economic and environmental level. But what is for sure is that there is a huge need and desire to change the status quo.

Social

It is a fact that both fertilization and high/low birth index is a crucial issue that does not concern exclusively women but also men. Thus, it should be guaranteed that sexuality education for both sexes is provided at schools from a young age, where children will not just gain general knowledge but specific education on the different effective contraceptive options, multiple methods of fertilization, etc. In addition, the UN is aiming to achieve gender equality therefore the enhancement of women on such a pressing for women matter is more than

essential because evidence suggests that “countries in which women's education increased from close to 0 to around 6 years, experienced a decline in fertility of around 40%”¹¹. However, countries should think how women’s position in the society (workplace, government, household, NGOs and more) can be empowered, based on their own data. According to the World Health Organization, “the promotion of family planning – and ensuring access to preferred contraceptive methods for women and couples – is essential to securing the well-being and autonomy of women, while supporting the health and development of communities”¹². Evidence suggests that family planning can actually prevent pregnancy-related health risks in women, since it prevents unintended pregnancies and by extension unsafe abortions, controls the spacing of pregnancies and it helps to prevent HIV and AIDS. Briefly, family planning is the key to slowing unsustainable population growth and the resulting negative impacts on the economy and environment and all countries should provide their citizens such services. Finally, universal access to not only safe but also effective contraceptive options, especially to counties, where abortions are forbidden, or the methods used unsafe is more than required, since the world is likely to prosper from the high birth index issue in a short period of time.

Political

As seen in the previous attempts to solve this issue, making changes to the current political and legislative system. It is of utmost importance that countries with high birth index need to reconsider their positions towards one or two-child legislation. On the contrary, countries with low birth rates should review their policies on immigration by letting more immigrants in and by extension creating conditions friendly to them that would meet their needs. Additionally, by extending the right to request flexible working to all employees and by increasing (paid) maternity leave (e.g. up to 23 weeks) and paternity leave, couples will be encouraged to have more children, since they will have enough time to dedicate themselves to the newcomers.

Economic

Moreover, changes need to be made in the economic sector as the economy of a nation is inextricably linked to its population and the UN is aiming to maintain economic stability. To name a few, families with many children (e.g. 2-4 and more) in countries with high birth index should be subjected to higher taxation whereas countries with low birth index should support financially the larger families by

¹¹ Roser, Max. "Fertility Rate." Our World in Data. 2 Dec. 2017. 20 Jan. 2019
<<https://ourworldindata.org/fertility-rate>>.

¹² "Family Planning/Contraception." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception.

imposing lower taxation or offering specific discounts depending on the members of the families. Keeping in mind that adopting a child can be extremely expensive, parents who chose adoption over fertilization or even adopt a child although they have their own, can claim many of these costs on their tax return, known as adoption credit, “by filling Form 8839, the Qualified Adoption Expenses form”¹³. Apart from that, there are multiple child tax credits that parents can claim such as student Loan Interest and Child and Dependent Care Credit.

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¹³ “5 Child Tax Credits Parents Can Claim.” US Tax Center, 10 Sept. 2012, www.irs.com/articles/5-child-tax-credits.

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“5 Child Tax Credits Parents Can Claim.” US Tax Center, 10 Sept. 2012, www.irs.com/articles/5-child-tax-credits.

Multimedia Resources

Image #1: www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/population/

Image #2: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_fertility_rate

Image #3: saiaa.org.za/research/the-tortured-path-of-global-migration-reforms/

Image #4: www.niusp.org/article/lower-world-population-growth-matter-cultureune-moindre-croissance-demographique-mondiale-une-question-de-culture/

Image #5: <https://curiousindians.blogspot.com/2017/05/india-china-overpopulation-reasons.html>

Image #6: <https://ourworldindata.org/fertility-rate>

Image #7: www.un.org/development/desa/publications/graphic/wpp2017-global-fertility-rate