

Population Matters A RAND LABOR AND POPULATION PROGRAM

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About the Program

Demographic Trends and Population Research

Nations and families around the world face serious challenges related to population trends, such as the effects of differing fertility rates (high fertility in some developing countries, declining fertility in others, and very low fertility in many developed countries), the disruptive potential of mass migration, and the growing proportion of elderly.

Over the past two decades, demographic research has produced a large body of scientific findings that have illuminated the causes and consequences of demographic trends more clearly than ever before, as well as shedding light on the dynamic relationships among demographic factors and other phenomena, such as environmental change and international security. Informed and responsible policymaking could benefit from understanding the policy implications of this research. However, the public-policy debate over population-related issues has in recent years been tinged by advocacy and dominated by special-interest groups. Meanwhile, demographic researchers have tended to communicate findings to colleagues rather than to policy audiences and have had little professional incentive to make explicit the policy relevance of their work.

As a step toward remedying these problems, RAND launched *Population Matters*, a program for research communication that uses different means, methods, and formats for reaching audiences that influence the making of population policy in the United States and abroad. The program, which was created in 1996, addresses the concern that empirical population research is missing opportunities to inform policymaking and public awareness. RAND's involvement is also intended to fill the need for an objective "information broker" who does not espouse a political or ideological point of view on population issues.

Project Design

Population Matters is a part of RAND's Labor and Population program. Project activities are guided by a steering committee headed by project leader Julie DaVanzo, senior RAND researcher and director of RAND's Center for the Study of the Family in Economic Development. With the help of outside experts, the steering committee identifies central population issues and recruits leading scholars to produce synthesis documents on the relevant research. Integral to the project team are RAND communications specialists, who work with scholars to generate products with a strong scientific base that are tailored for dissemination to broader audiences. We draw on technical experts for peer review of synthesis papers and comment on other publications. The project's dissemination strategy includes the following kinds of publications and activities:

- Peer-reviewed background papers that explore and synthesize the policy implications of scientific demographic research on specific issues
- Short, peer-reviewed issue papers and two-page briefs that summarize the findings and policy implications of the background papers
- Presentations to target audiences
- Dissemination via the World Wide Web. The project's website also links to other population research and information sites.

Publications

Population Matters publications are available in HTML and/or PDF format. Hard copies may be ordered from RAND Distribution Services (Telephone: 310-451-7002; FAX: 310-451-6915; or Internet: order@rand.org).


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